



WORKING WITH THE ALGORITHM, NOT AGAINST IT

HOW TO SUCCEED ON META IN 2026

WHITE PAPER



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Introduction

For years, success on Meta was largely driven by targeting setup: precise audiences, interest targeting, lookalikes. Advertisers were the ones deciding who should see their ads.

In 2026, that approach has largely changed for two reasons.



On one hand, data has become scarcer. The introduction of ATT on iOS reduced part of the visibility advertisers once had, while detailed targeting has gradually lost relevance.



On the other hand, Meta's delivery algorithm has become powerful enough to make better and faster decisions than any manual setup. It now decides who sees an ad, where it appears, and at what cost. Most of the decision-making process sits with the algorithm. Trying to take back control means working against it and ultimately hurting performance.

Before

The advertiser decides

Manual targeting:

- ✦ Audiences
- ✦ Interests
- ✦ Lookalikes



Today

The algorithm decides

The algorithm decides:

- ✦ Who sees the ad
- ✦ Where it appears
- ✦ At what cost

What remains in your hands, however, is exactly what drives performance today:

- **The creative assets** you feed the algorithm
- **The campaign structure** it learns from
- **The quality of the signals** you send it
- **The timeframe** you give it to learn and optimize

Four levers, one core principle: performance is no longer about controlling every variable. It's about giving the algorithm the right conditions to learn and deliver results.

PART 1

CREATIVE:

YOUR ONLY REAL TARGETING LEVER



Creative: Your Only Real Targeting Lever

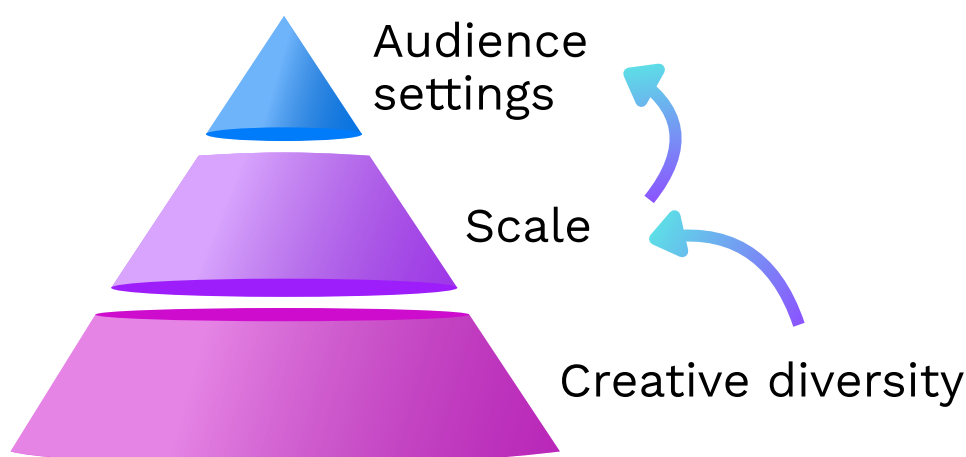
Creative is no longer just packaging. It's the signal you send the algorithm to tell it who to go after.

1.1 — Why Creative Has Replaced Targeting

In the past, performance was driven by audience setup: interests, lookalikes, and highly granular targeting. Today, performance works differently. With Advantage+, the algorithm evaluates a large number of creative variations and matches each asset with the users most likely to respond to it. You no longer decide directly who sees your ads. You provide the creative assets, and the algorithm uses them to identify the most receptive audiences.

The implication is straightforward. Weak creative limits the algorithm's ability to find the right users. Strong creative gives it a clearer, more actionable signal to optimize delivery.

Across many Meta accounts, priorities now look more like this:



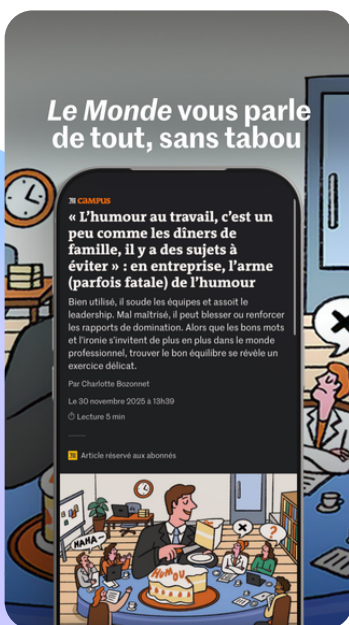
1.2 — Vary Your Creative to Expand the Signal Surface

If creative is a signal, multiplying creative assets means creating more entry points to reach different audiences. A single angle will only resonate with part of your audience. The goal is therefore not to find "the best creative" through A/B testing, but to combine complementary assets that appeal to different user profiles. By diversifying your creatives, you give the algorithm more opportunities to identify the people most likely to engage with your message.

Two dimensions matter: the angle (who you're speaking to) and the format (how you're delivering the message).

Varying Angles: Le Monde Example

To reach distinct audience segments, Le Monde adapted the same editorial format into messages targeting specific groups: professionals and employees, local elected officials and engaged citizens, and parents and families. Each angle opened a door that the others could not. Multiplying angles means increasing the number of people a campaign can resonate with.



Executives,
managers and
employees



Local elected officials
and engaged citizens

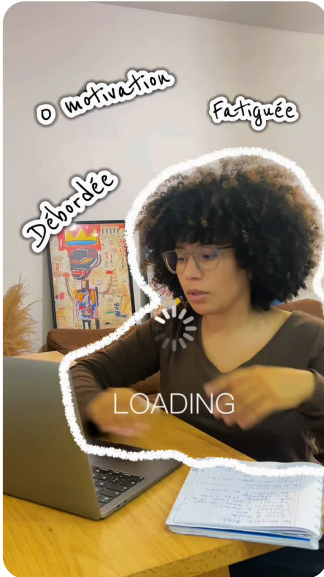


Parents and
families

Varying Formats: The Decathlon Example

While Le Monde diversified its messaging, Decathlon diversified its formats.

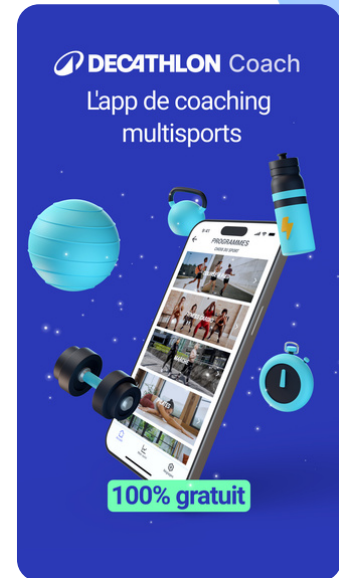
UGC



Video

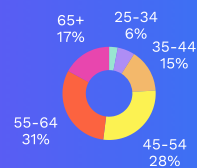
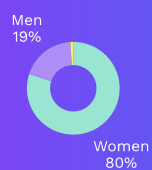


Static Ad



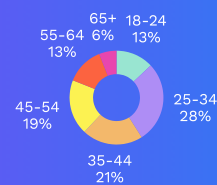
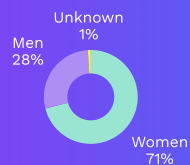
Within the same campaign, all three formats reached a predominantly female audience, but each resonated with a very different age group. UGC performed best among users aged 45+, video among those under 45, and static creatives among users under 35. No single format covered the entire target audience on its own. It was the combination of all three that delivered full audience coverage.

UGC



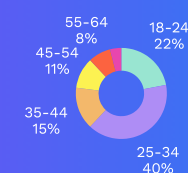
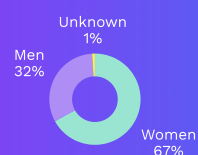
- ✓ Women
- ✓ 60% > 45 years old

Video



- ✓ Women
- ✓ 62% < 45 years old

Static Ad



- ✓ Women
- ✓ 62% < 35 years old

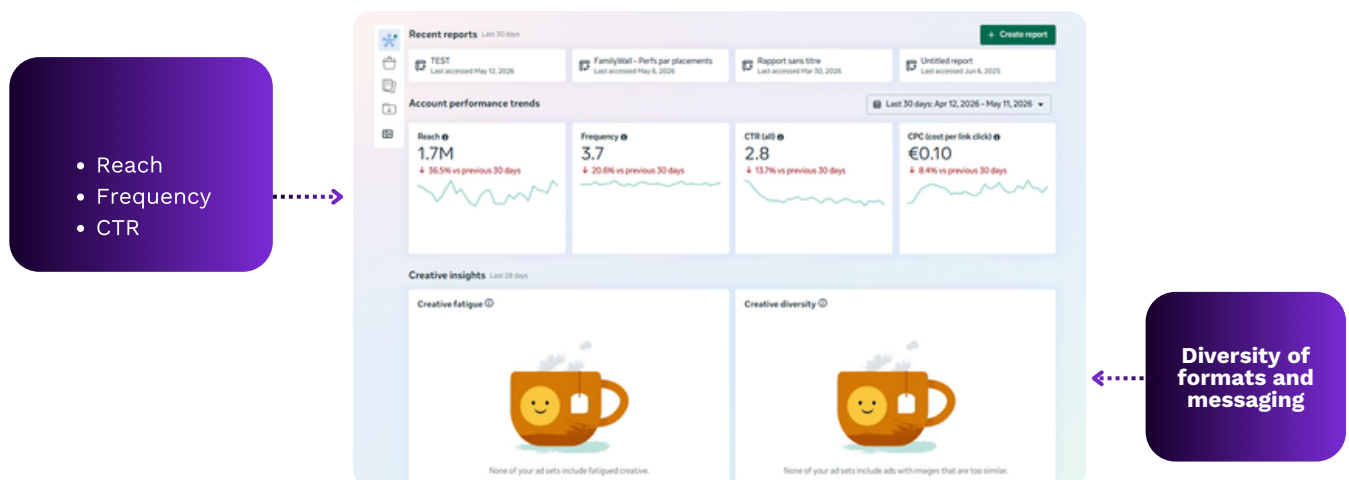
The takeaway from both examples is the same:

- A single angle or a single format only reaches part of the audience.
- Multiple angles and multiple formats create more opportunities to connect with different audience segments.

1.3 — Anticipating Creative Fatigue

Even high-performing creatives eventually lose momentum, and **creative fatigue** is almost always the first thing to investigate when a campaign starts underperforming. A useful rule of thumb: a declining CTR combined with rising frequency is often an earlier warning sign than increasing costs. **Waiting for CPA to deteriorate means reacting too late.** Identifying the first signs of fatigue and knowing when to refresh a creative is therefore essential. [We cover the key metrics to monitor and the actions to take in our dedicated article on ad fatigue.](#)

Meta also provides two creative-focused metrics in Ads Manager: **Creative Fatigue**, which identifies overexposed creatives whose performance is declining, and **Creative Diversity**, which highlights when your assets are too similar to be treated as genuinely distinct. Both are useful validation tools, but they remain descriptive. They tell you when fatigue is already happening, not how to prevent it.



Because the solution always starts upstream, in the production process. And that's where the real trap lies:



Ten variations of the same concept are not diversity. They're volume.

Because they are built around the same core idea, they often **appeal to similar audience segments** and tend to fatigue at the same time. **Advantage+** cannot create diversity that you haven't provided. Anticipating fatigue therefore means continuously feeding your creative pipeline with **genuinely different concepts** before the existing ones lose effectiveness.



Key takeaways

- **Creative is no longer just packaging.** It's the signal that defines the audience.
- **One creative isn't enough.** Combining different angles and formats helps reach different audience segments.
- **Creative fatigue is often the first sign of a campaign losing momentum.** Stay ahead of it by monitoring Meta's native signals and continuously introducing genuinely different concepts.

PART 2

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE:

WORK WITH THE ALGORITHM, NOT AGAINST IT

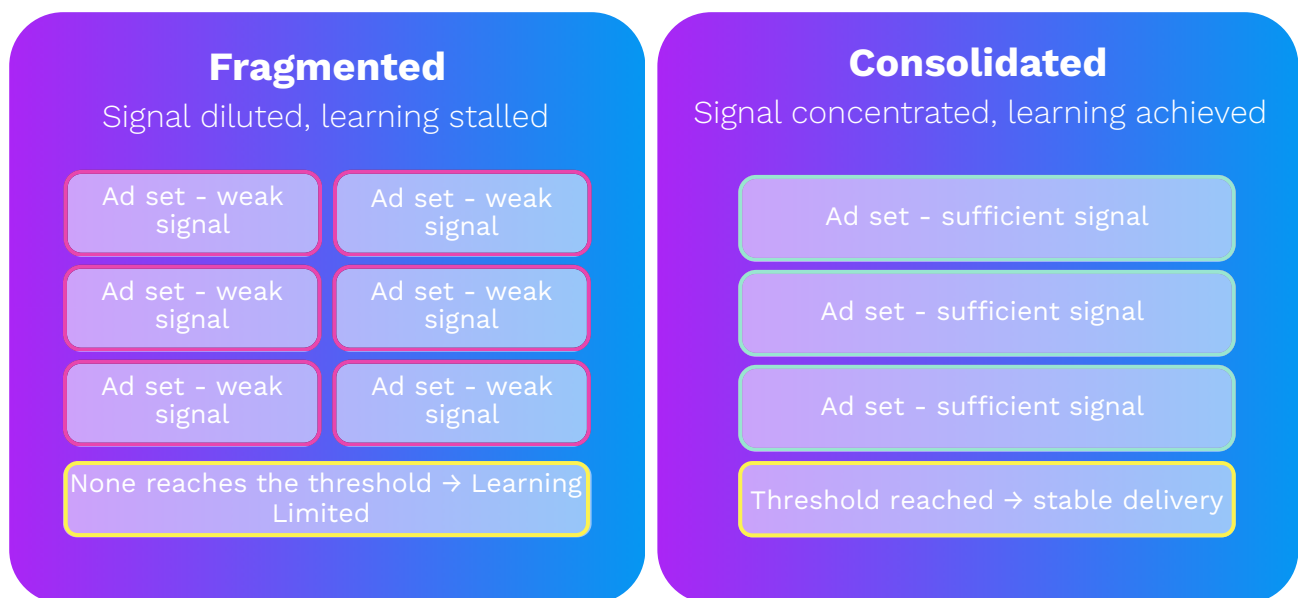


Campaign Structure: Work with the Algorithm, Not Against It

Strong creative alone isn't enough if your campaign structure prevents the algorithm from making the most of it. In 2026, good account structure is no longer about controlling everything. It's about creating the conditions the algorithm needs to learn efficiently. It's the bridge between creative and signal.

2.1 — Consolidate Without Limiting Learning

The old habit of multiplying campaigns and ad sets to "control everything" now works against you. Each ad set needs to generate enough conversions to exit the learning phase. Fragmenting your structure spreads the signal across too many ad sets, preventing any of them from gathering enough data. The result: campaigns stuck in Learning Limited, with unstable and expensive performance.



Same total signal volume, distributed differently.

How much signal is enough? Here are some Meta benchmarks:

Campaign type	Recommended signal volume
Standard conversions	~50 events/week/ad set
App Installs	Lower threshold (~10/week/ad set)
Value optimization	Higher threshold (100+/week/ad set)

Indicative benchmarks for exiting the learning phase. Actual requirements vary depending on account history and budget.

Consolidation is often the right place to start. But the real question isn't whether you should consolidate, it's how far.



Too much fragmentation limits learning. Too much consolidation reduces visibility and optimization opportunities.

The right balance depends on your budget, conversion volume, and market setup. Once your structure is in place, two common pitfalls remain:

- **Frequent resets.** Every significant edit can restart the learning phase. Avoid making constant changes during the first few days.
- The **"it's still spending" trap.** A Learning Limited campaign can generate just enough conversions to look healthy while quietly wasting budget. Knowing when to stop a campaign is just as important as knowing when to scale it.

2.2 — Embrace Broad Without Losing Control

Broad targeting isn't really a choice anymore. Since 2025, Meta has merged many interest audiences and gradually phased out detailed targeting. Advantage+ audiences have become the default foundation. More importantly, Advantage+ audiences tend to behave like pure broad targeting over time, regardless of the initial audience suggestions.

But broad doesn't mean losing control. The algorithm handles targeting, placements, and bidding. Your role is to stay in control of what actually matters.

The algorithm decides



Audiences



Placements



Bids

You stay in control of



Exclusions: existing customers, recent converter



Real constraints: geography, minimum age



Attribution window



Optimization event

Two of these levers are especially important.



Exclusions are the only real hard rules. Without them, acquisition quickly turns into recycling your existing customer base.



The optimization event is the objective you give the algorithm: install, subscription, purchase, and so on. It ultimately guides the entire delivery strategy.

2.3 — Advantage+ Is Only as Good as the Signal It Receives

Advantage+ is not a magic button. Left on its own, without a strong signal, it will naturally follow the path of least resistance: the cheapest conversions, meaning users who were already close to converting. In other words, **it captures existing demand rather than generating new demand.**

That's the core risk: **thinking you're prospecting when you're actually recycling conversions you would likely have captured anyway.** The difference isn't driven by campaign settings, but by the quality of the signal you send to the algorithm. Which raises one key question:

HOW DO YOU MAKE SURE META RECEIVES THE RIGHT SIGNAL?



Key takeaways

- **Consolidation is often the starting point.** Every ad set needs enough signal to learn. The question is not whether to consolidate, but how far.
- **Broad targeting doesn't mean losing control.** Exclusions, real constraints, attribution windows, and optimization events remain in your hands.
- **Advantage+ is only as effective as the signal it receives.** Without a quality signal, it recycles existing demand instead of creating new opportunities.

PART 3

SIGNAL:

WHAT YOU SEND DETERMINES
WHAT META OPTIMIZES FOR



Signal: What You Send Determines What Meta Optimizes For

As we've seen, the algorithm optimizes for whatever you ask it to optimize for. But first, it needs access to the right information. Tracking quality, conversion reporting, and consistency across environments all directly impact performance because they determine the signal Meta receives.

3.1 — The Algorithm Can Only Optimize What It Sees

The optimization event is the steering wheel of your campaign.

- Ask Meta to optimize for installs → it will find installers.
- Ask it to optimize for subscriptions or purchases → it will find users who are likely to subscribe or buy.



The chosen event determines the user profile, not the audience settings.

But selecting the right objective is only part of the equation. Meta also needs to receive the corresponding conversion data accurately. This is where the **Conversions API (CAPI)** comes in. It sends conversion data directly from your servers to Meta alongside the Pixel. On its own, the Pixel now misses part of the conversion data. On apps, reporting relies more heavily on the Meta SDK and/or an MMP. In 2026, these are no longer nice-to-haves. **They are prerequisites for giving the algorithm reliable data to optimize against.**



3.2 — Maintaining Visibility on iOS Despite ATT

On iOS, a portion of users opt out of tracking through ATT. As a result, Meta only has a **partial and modeled view of conversions**. The challenge is no longer to recover pre-ATT visibility, but to rebuild a usable view through the right measurement stack.

Component	Role
CAPI	Sends server-side web events despite browser-side data loss
AEM	Helps Meta measure and model conversions despite ATT limitations
SKAN	Anonymous, aggregated, delayed attribution for iOS apps

None of these works on its own. Together, they provide a usable view of performance.

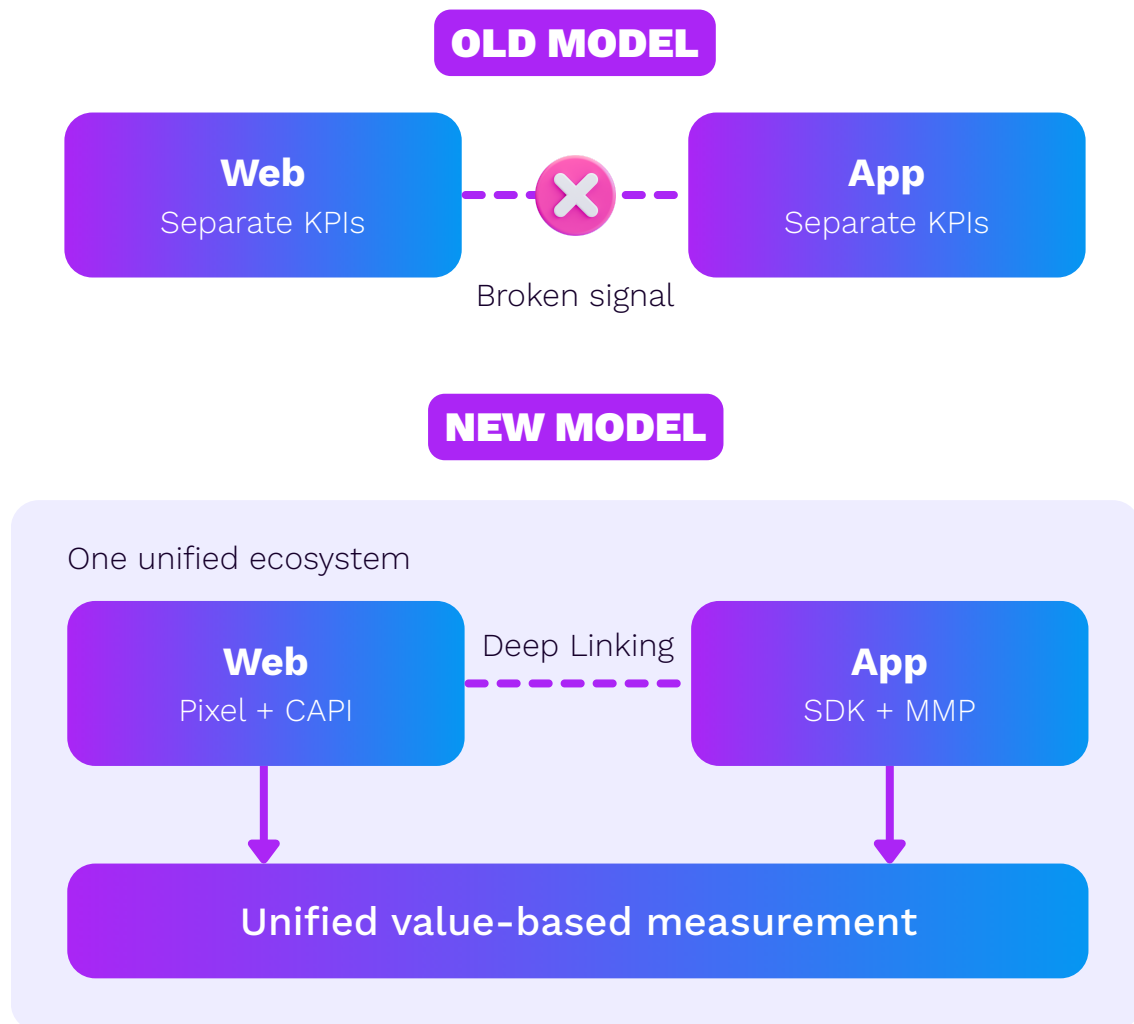
One final point: Meta and your MMP (AppsFlyer, Adjust, etc.) won't tell the same story. The goal isn't to choose one over the other, but to reconcile both views.

3.3 — Web-to-App: Don't Break the Signal Between Environments

Web-to-app is often approached from the wrong angle. The real challenge isn't driving web traffic to the app. It's preserving the signal when users move between the two environments.

Why does this matter? Because users rarely stay within a single environment. They might see an ad, land on the website, and convert in the app, or follow the opposite path. If those environments are disconnected, Meta only sees part of the journey. **It can't link the conversion back to the campaign that generated it**, under-attributes performance, and optimizes on an incomplete signal.

That's why a consistent measurement framework is essential, with each component playing its role: **deep linking ensures a seamless transition from web to app**, the Pixel and CAPI capture web activity, while the SDK and MMP capture app activity. Together, they **reconstruct the full user journey** instead of creating disconnected data silos.



This is exactly the approach Molotov adopted. **The company ran hybrid App & Web campaigns** on Meta designed to drive subscriptions and measure the true contribution of each environment rather than managing them separately. By connecting both environments around a single value-based objective, subscriptions, the algorithm was able to optimize across the entire user journey. **The result: a 22% decrease in CPA.**

Molotov's objectives:



Maximize subscriptions



Test offers and visuals to diversify audiences



Understand the involvement of each stakeholder: App / Web

Strategy:

Implementation of hybrid campaigns (App and Web) on Meta



Results

-22 %
CPA



Key takeaways

- **The quality of the signal sent** to Meta is just as important as the optimization objective itself.
- Post-ATT visibility isn't coming back. It has to be rebuilt by combining **CAPI, AEM, and SKAN, while reconciling Meta data with your MMP.**
- **Web-to-app is not a traffic challenge, it's a continuity challenge.** Without a unified measurement framework, part of the value becomes invisible.

PART 4

MOVING BEYOND SHORT-TERM THINKING:

FEED THE ENTIRE FUNNEL,
OPTIMIZE FOR VALUE



Moving Beyond Short-Term Thinking: Feed the Entire Funnel, Optimize for Value

The first three levers help the algorithm learn more effectively. The last trap is thinking too short term: judging acquisition solely by its cost, or focusing your entire strategy on the bottom of the funnel. In both cases, you limit Meta's ability to identify the users that matter most.

4.1 — From Cost to Value

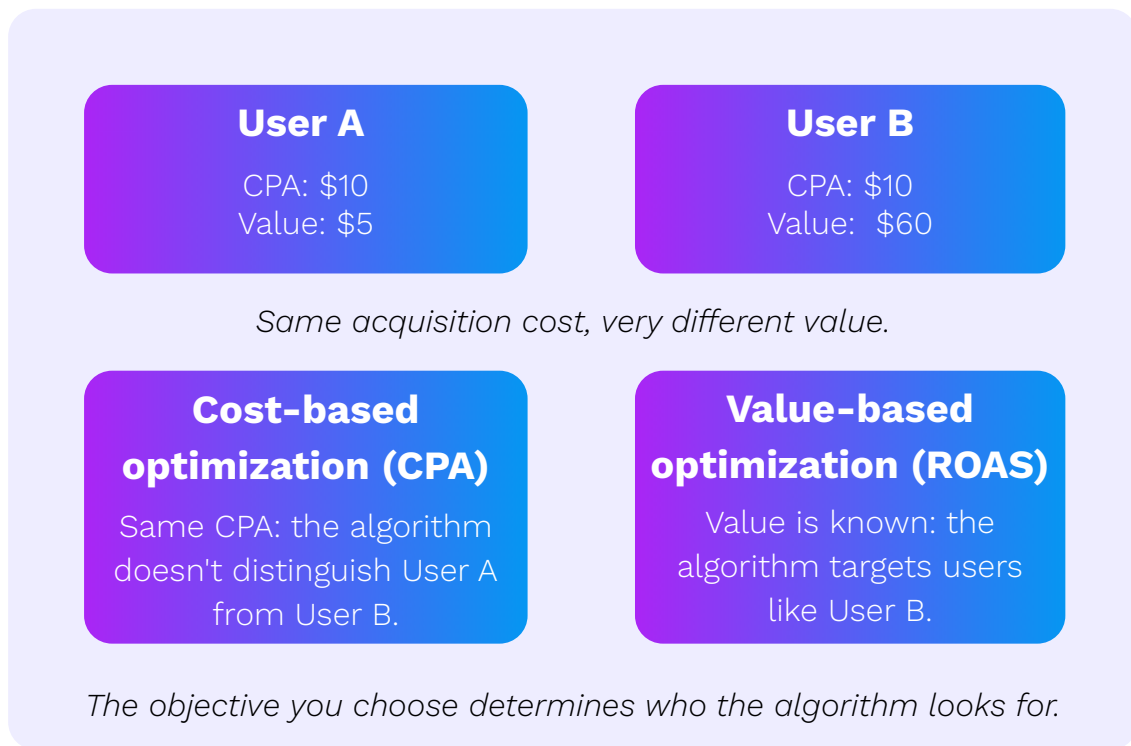
For years, the key question was: "How much does an acquisition cost?" (CPA, CPI). Optimizing around cost pushes the algorithm toward the cheapest conversions, not necessarily the most valuable ones. You can hit your volume targets while acquiring users who generate little or no revenue.



The real question is no longer "How much does an acquisition cost?" but:

HOW MUCH VALUE WILL IT GENERATE?

That's exactly what **Value Optimization** and the ROAS Goal bidding strategy are designed for. Instead of treating every conversion equally, Meta learns **to identify users most likely to generate value, whether through subscriptions**, higher basket sizes, or recurring revenue, even if they cost more to acquire. You're no longer optimizing for cost. You're optimizing for value.



Two users may be acquired at the same CPA while generating completely different value. Cost-based optimization treats them equally. Value-based optimization actively looks for more profitable profiles.

4.2 — Full Funnel: Algorithm Fuel, Not Branding

There is one condition, however: the algorithm needs enough data to recognize valuable users. And it doesn't learn only at the point of conversion.

Branding (awareness and consideration) is still often separated from performance (conversion). On Meta, that distinction is becoming less relevant. Upper-funnel campaigns don't just build awareness. They also provide additional signals that help the algorithm better qualify audiences further down the funnel. Conversely, focusing exclusively on conversion campaigns means repeatedly targeting the same audience pools. They eventually saturate, costs rise, and the algorithm has fewer signals to expand its learning.

In practice, awareness and consideration campaigns provide:

- **Additional signals** at every stage of the customer journey
- **A broader learning base**, resulting in better-qualified audiences downstream
- **Less pressure on conversion audiences**, which become exhausted and more expensive when targeted exclusively at the bottom of the funnel

Upper-funnel activity isn't branding opposed to performance. It's fuel for the algorithm.

The numbers support this. According to **Nielsen × Meta**, activating upper-funnel campaigns before conversion campaigns can increase **ROI by 70%**. Adding awareness campaigns to an already active performance strategy delivers an additional **13% uplift**.

+70%

ROI by activating upper-funnel campaigns

+13%

Adding awareness campaigns to an active strategy

FULL FUNNEL

The Operational Framework for Growth Teams

[Discover the white paper](#)





Key takeaways

- **Don't think too short term.** Optimizing for cost (CPA/CPI) and optimizing for value (ROAS) do not attract the same users.
- **Value Optimization** focuses on the most profitable users, not the cheapest conversions.
- **Upper-funnel campaigns are not the opposite of performance.** They provide the additional signals the algorithm needs to perform better.

CONCLUSION

Creative, structure, signal, and long-term thinking: these four levers now drive most of the performance on Meta. Before launching or scaling a campaign, make sure the fundamentals are in place.



Creative

- ✓ Multiple angles and formats
- ✓ Monitor fatigue and continuously feed with new concepts



Structure

- ✓ Collect enough signal to exit the learning phase
- ✓ Exclude to truly prospect, not recycle my existing base



Signal

- ✓ Properly set up tracking (CAPI, SDK, MMP)
- ✓ Have a reliable measurement system
- ✓ Tracking between app & web



Long-term thinking

- ✓ Manage by value, ROAS
- ✓ Activate top-of-funnel to feed the algorithm

Addict Mobile

Addict Mobile is an international performance marketing agency, offering a full-service range from campaign management to creative production, and providing in-house technology to optimize campaigns. With over 10 years of expertise, the agency has supported 650+ apps and games in deploying performance campaigns, regardless of source or format.

Le Monde

fubo^{TV}

SEPHORA

orangeTM

SUPERCELL

FRUITZ

Lime

COYOTE

Lalalab.



Taptap Send

Bonjour
RATP

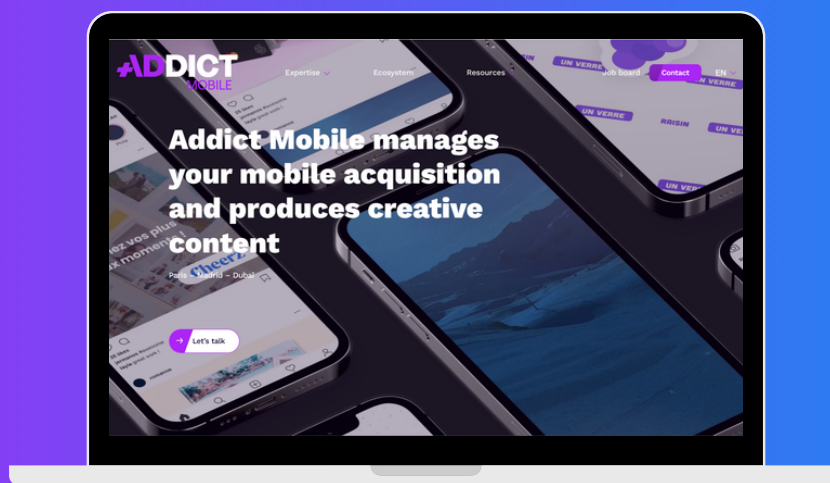
DECATHLON

LG

BESOCER

Western Union

Get in touch!



ADDICT
MOBILE