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Before You Fund Your Ad

Eight checks before you spend the first dollar on an ad: offer, objective, audience, creative, landing page, tracking, budget assumptions and the go decision.

For: Small business owners and marketing leads getting ready to fund an ad on social platforms or search engines.

Level: Beginner Version 1.0 · 2026-09-21

Why this sheet exists

A paid ad does not create demand out of nothing; it amplifies what is already there. If the offer is vague, the page people land on is slow, or you have no way of knowing who bought because of the ad, the budget will expose those problems quickly, and at your expense. This sheet walks you through eight elements to review before you pay, so that you spend knowing what you are testing, which number means success, and when you will stop.

Important: no budget or setup guarantees a specific result. Outcomes depend on the market, competition, season, the strength of the offer and changes in platform algorithms. What this sheet offers is a way to reduce waste and make an informed decision, not a promise of returns.

The principles are general and apply to most platforms: social platforms such as Meta and TikTok, and search engines such as Google. Setting names and options differ between platforms and change over time (as available at the time of writing, September 2026), so the focus here is on the questions that do not change.

The method: eight elements, in order

1. **Offer:** what exactly are you selling, and why would people choose it now?
2. **Objective:** what single action do you want from the person, and how will you measure it?
3. **Audience:** who needs this offer, and where will you find them?
4. **The creative:** does it deliver the message in the first few seconds?
5. **Landing page:** does it continue what the ad promised and make the next step easy?
6. **Tracking:** will you actually know what happened after the click?
7. **Budget assumptions:** what cost per result can you afford?
8. **Go decision:** launch now, fix something first, or postpone?

1. The offer

The offer is what the person gets in return for what they pay or do: the product or service, the price, the terms and what sets it apart from alternatives. A good ad will not rescue a weak offer, but a clear offer makes every other element easier.

- Can you explain the offer in one sentence that a stranger would understand?
- Is the price, or how the price is set, clear? If it varies, do you explain why and how?
- What makes someone act now rather than later (a season, limited quantity, a real deadline, an urgent need)? Do not invent urgency that is not true.
- Can you fulfil demand if the ad works? Think about stock, who will answer messages, and delivery time.
- Is there early evidence people want it: past sales, frequent questions, requests from existing customers?

2. The objective

Pick one main action for the ad: a purchase, a WhatsApp order, a form, a booking, a call or a store visit. A single objective makes it easier to choose the campaign type on the platform, write the ad, design the page and read the results.

- What is the one action? And what comes after it inside your business (for example, a message becoming a confirmed order)?
- How will you count that action: from the platform, from your order system, or manually from conversations?
- Does the objective you select in the platform settings match the action you actually want? Platforms optimise delivery for the objective you choose; pick "engagement" when you want orders and you may get plenty of engagement and few orders.
- What does not count as success? Likes and views are supporting signals, not the goal when you want sales.

3. The audience

Start from the need, not only from demographics. "Women aged 25 to 45" is an incomplete description; "office workers in central Tripoli who want a group breakfast delivered before nine" helps you write the ad and choose an area and timing.

- Who needs the offer, and what situation makes them look for it?
- Where are they? The area you can actually serve matters more than the widest reach possible.
- Are they actively searching for a solution (a fit for search ads), or do they not yet know they need you (a fit for discovery and social platforms)?
- Do you have an existing audience to start with: past customers, followers, site visitors? Use this data within platform terms and privacy law, and with consent where required.
- Who should be excluded? For example, areas you do not deliver to, or customers who just bought.

4. The creative

The ad must answer three questions fast: What is this? Why should I care? What do I do now? On fast-scrolling platforms, the first seconds of a video or the first line of text decide whether someone stops.

- Is the product, or the result of the service, clearly shown, rather than just a logo or a generic image?
- Does the hook (the first line or shot) speak to the need of the audience you defined?
- Is there one clear call to action, consistent with the objective?
- Is the Arabic text correct and legible on a phone screen? Is the type large enough?
- Have you prepared more than one version (two or three angles) so you learn what works, instead of betting on one design?
- Does the ad follow platform policy? Some sectors (health, finance, real estate, restricted products) have special rules. Check the current policy before designing.
- Do you have the rights to the images, music and faces in the ad?

5. The landing page

The landing page is where the person goes after the click: a page on your site, a product page, a WhatsApp chat or an in-platform form. Whatever you choose must continue the promise the ad made, with no surprises.

- Does the first headline on the page match the ad's message? If you promised a specific offer, the visitor should see it immediately.
- Is the page fast on an average phone and an ordinary connection? Test it yourself from a phone, not only from the office computer.
- Is the next step clear and easy? Few fields, a clear button, a WhatsApp number that works.
- Is there something reassuring: a real address, payment methods, a return or cancellation policy, genuine customer reviews?
- If the destination is a chat: who replies, and during which hours? Do you have saved replies for common questions? A message that goes unanswered is money wasted.

For a deeper review of the page, use the "Landing Page Audit Sheet" in this library.

6. Tracking

Without tracking, you will know how much you spent but not what that spending bought. Tracking does not need to be complicated, but it must exist and be tested before launch.

- Have you installed the platform's measurement tool (the pixel or conversion tag) on your site and confirmed it records the action you want? Test it yourself: place a test order and check that it appears.
- Do you use tagged links (UTM parameters) so each campaign's visits are distinguishable in your site analytics?
- If results come through WhatsApp or phone calls, how will you know an order came from the ad? Simple options: a pre-filled opening message, asking "How did you hear about us?", a dedicated number, or a daily sheet where staff log the source.
- Is there a way to reconcile platform numbers with your actual business numbers (confirmed orders and sales)? Platform figures are estimates and may differ from your records; what reached the till is

what counts.

- Does your site show a privacy notice and cookie consent options where required?

7. Budget assumptions

Do not start with "How much should I spend?" but with "How much can I pay to win one customer and still make a profit?" This is a calculation based on your own numbers, not on averages published somewhere, because averages vary widely by market, sector and season.

1. **Gross profit per sale:** selling price minus the cost of the product, delivery and fees.
2. **Maximum acceptable cost per customer:** the share of that profit you accept spending on advertising. If customers come back and buy again, you can calculate on their longer-term value, provided you have real data on repeat purchases rather than a guess.
3. **Internal conversion rate:** out of every ten people who contact you, how many actually buy? Use your past figures. If you have none, treat it as an unknown to measure in the first test.
4. **Maximum cost per enquiry:** the maximum cost per customer multiplied by the conversion rate. For example, if you accept paying \$10 per customer and 3 in 10 enquirers buy, the maximum cost per enquiry is \$3.
5. **Test budget:** enough to collect a reasonable number of results to learn from, and an amount you can lose without harming the business. Set the test duration in advance, and remember that many platforms need some time before a campaign's delivery settles.
6. **Stop and adjust rules:** write down in advance when you stop an ad (for example, above twice the maximum cost per enquiry after a set amount has been spent) and when you increase budget gradually.

The numbers in this calculation are **assumptions** you are testing, not guaranteed forecasts. The point is to know in advance which number keeps you going and which makes you stop, so you do not decide under the pressure of what you have already spent.

8. The go decision

After the review, put each element in one of three boxes: ready, needs a small fix, not ready. The practical rule:

- **Launch:** when all eight are ready, or only have small fixes that do not touch the offer or tracking.
- **Fix first:** when tracking is untested, the landing page is broken on mobile, or nobody is assigned to answer messages.
- **Postpone:** when the offer is unclear, you cannot fulfil demand, or the numbers show the margin cannot carry any reasonable ad cost. In that case, working on the offer or pricing comes before advertising.

Blank template

Pre-funding sheet

Project: [] Date: [] Owner: []

1) Offer

- The offer in one sentence: []
- Price or pricing method: []
- Real reason to act now: []
- Ability to fulfil (stock, replies, delivery): []

2) Objective

- Main action wanted: []
- How we count it and where the number comes from: []
- Objective selected in platform settings: []

3) Audience

- The need or situation that makes them look for us: []
- Area we can actually serve: []
- Searching actively or discovering us? []
- Who we exclude: []

4) Creative

- Hook (first line or shot): []
- Angles we will test: [1] [2] [3]
- Call to action: []
- Policy and rights check: [done / not done]

5) Landing page

- Destination (page / WhatsApp / form): []
- Matches the ad message? []
- Tested on a phone? []
- Who replies and when: []

6) Tracking

- Measurement tool installed and tested: [yes / no]
- UTM links: []
- How we identify the source of offline orders: []
- How we reconcile platform numbers with sales: []

7) Budget assumptions

- Gross profit per sale: []
- Maximum acceptable cost per customer: []
- Enquiry-to-sale conversion rate: []
- Maximum cost per enquiry: []
- Test budget and duration: []
- Stop rule: []
- Scale rule: []

8) Decision

Complete example

Illustrative example

Business: "Al Zaytouna Bakery" in Tripoli wants to fund an ad for a new service: office breakfast trays (assorted man'oushe and juice), ordered the day before and delivered before 9 a.m. All numbers below are invented for illustration.

1. Offer: "A breakfast tray for ten, at your office before 9 a.m., for \$30 — order by 5 p.m. the day before." The real reason to act now: trays are capped at thirty a day because of oven capacity. Fulfilment: one morning driver covering the city centre only.

2. Objective: a WhatsApp order. An order counts as confirmed when the customer sends the address and time. Every order is logged in a simple sheet with its source. In platform settings: a messages objective, not engagement.

3. Audience: office managers, secretaries and small-business owners in central Tripoli who organise morning meetings or staff occasions. Area: the neighbourhoods the driver can reach before nine. Excluded: areas outside delivery range. These people rarely search for "breakfast tray", so the start is on social platforms, with a small search test later.

4. Creative: three angles: (a) "Nine o'clock meeting? Breakfast gets there first", with a short video of a tray coming out of the oven. (b) A photo of the tray with price and quantity clearly shown. (c) "Order today, it arrives tomorrow", showing the three ordering steps. Call to action: "Order on WhatsApp". Images are shot at the bakery; music comes from the platform's licensed library.

5. Landing page: a direct WhatsApp chat opening with a pre-filled message (in Lebanese dialect: "مرحبا، بدي صينية فطور للمكتب" — "Hi, I'd like a breakfast tray for the office"). Saved replies cover ingredients, delivery and payment. Hiba answers from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

6. Tracking: the pre-filled message identifies ad traffic. Hiba logs every chat and order in a daily sheet: date, source, converted or not, value. Each week, platform numbers (conversations) are reconciled with the sheet.

7. Budget assumptions:

Item	Figure (assumed)	Where it comes from
Tray price	\$30	Price list
Ingredients, packaging and delivery	\$18	Bakery costing
Gross profit per tray	\$12	30 – 18
Maximum acceptable cost of a first order	\$8	Owner's decision: accepts a thinner margin on the first order because offices may reorder, and will check actual reorders within two months

Item	Figure (assumed)	Where it comes from
Chat-to-order conversion	Unknown	New service; starting assumption to test: 1 in 4
Maximum cost per conversation	\$2	$8 \times 1/4$
Test budget	\$150 over 14 days	An amount the bakery can absorb if the test fails

Stop rule: after \$40 spent on any angle, if cost per conversation is above \$4 or there are no confirmed orders, that angle is paused. **Scale rule:** if cost per confirmed order stays under \$8 for a full week, budget on the best angle is raised gradually, while watching the thirty-tray oven limit.

8. Decision: "Fix first": the pre-filled message has not been tested on both iPhone and Android, and the daily sheet is not ready. Once both are fixed within two days: launch. First review after seven days.

Common mistakes

- **Mistake:** boosting a random post because it got likes. **Fix:** start from the objective, then pick or design an ad that serves it.
- **Mistake:** choosing an "engagement" or "reach" objective and then waiting for sales. **Fix:** match the campaign objective to the action you want, and check it before publishing.
- **Mistake:** judging the campaign on day one. **Fix:** set the test duration and the spend after which you decide, and stick to them unless something is clearly broken.
- **Mistake:** relying on platform numbers alone. **Fix:** reconcile them weekly with confirmed orders and sales in your records.
- **Mistake:** an ad that brings messages nobody answers. **Fix:** assign the owner, saved replies and hours before launch.
- **Mistake:** building the budget on averages published for other sectors or markets. **Fix:** calculate from your own margins and conversion rates, and treat what you do not know as an unknown to measure.
- **Mistake:** changing everything at once when results are weak. **Fix:** change one element at a time so you know what made the difference.

Decision checklist before you pay

- ☐ I can explain the offer in one sentence, and the price or pricing method is clear.
- ☐ I can fulfil demand if the ad works (stock, replies, delivery).
- ☐ I have one main action, and the campaign objective on the platform matches it.
- ☐ I described the audience by need and situation, not only age, and set the area I actually serve.
- ☐ I prepared two or three ad angles, and the Arabic text is proofread and legible on a phone.
- ☐ I checked platform policy and the rights to images and music.

- ☐ The landing page matches the ad's message, and I tested it on a phone.
 - ☐ Someone is responsible for replies, with set reply hours.
 - ☐ Tracking is installed and tested with a test order, and I have a way to identify the source of offline orders.
 - ☐ I calculated the maximum cost per customer and per enquiry from my own numbers.
 - ☐ I wrote down the test budget, duration, and stop and scale rules.
 - ☐ I set the date of the first results review and who will attend.
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About the author — Mohamad Charafeddine is an entrepreneur from Tripoli, Lebanon: founder of the Passion digital marketing agency, president of Takaful Youth Association, and founder of digital platforms. He trains individuals and teams in applied AI and marketing.

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