

## **Case Study: How Pressure-Testing the Brief Created a Stronger Campaign**

### **Context**

This campaign was developed at DistiNCtly Fayetteville, where I currently manage paid digital strategy alongside broader marketing operations and performance reporting.

The original recommendation to management was clear and reasonable: launch a retargeting campaign to re-engage recent site visitors and drive incremental conversions.

The brief was not wrong. It was simply incomplete.

Before moving into execution, I evaluated whether retargeting was the right starting point or just the most familiar one.

### **Decision Checkpoint 1: Is retargeting the correct strategic entry point?**

I began by pressure-testing the assumption behind the recommendation:

- Who exactly are we retargeting? What action indicates intent rather than exposure?
- What evidence do we have that this audience is making the same decision?

To answer these questions, I analyzed GA4 behavior data.

Overall traffic volume supported retargeting. Intent signals did not. Some users showed clear engagement with planning-oriented content. Others had only passive exposure through reach and impressions. Treating these users as a single audience would have collapsed meaningful differences in motivation and timing.

At that point, retargeting stopped being the answer and became the variable.

### **Decision Checkpoint 2: Which behaviors actually signal readiness?**

Instead of building one retargeting pool, I redefined the audience based on observed behavior:

- Users who actively engaged with planning-focused paid and organic content
- Users who were exposed to the same content but did not engage

This reframed the problem. The question was no longer how to retarget, but which decision each group was realistically positioned to make.

### **Decision Checkpoint 3: Should messaging optimize for action or progression?**

The final question was strategic, not tactical.

Do we push both audiences toward the same action, or do we respect where they are in the decision process? The answer informed the structure of the campaign.

#### **Strategic Pivot**

The campaign evolved into two distinct paths:

- Two separate audiences with different intent signals
- Two ad sets designed for different decision stages
- Messaging aligned to progression rather than urgency

What began as a single retargeting initiative became a segmented growth strategy designed to preserve intent clarity.

#### **Execution**

I built and managed:

- Separate Meta audience definitions tied to behavioral signals
- Creative aligned to planning behavior versus immediate action
- Independent performance tracking for each ad set to prevent blended conclusions

To preserve intent clarity through conversion, I also aligned lead capture methods to audience readiness.

Users demonstrating planning behavior were directed to a website landing page with a contact form, where higher friction was acceptable in exchange for stronger signal quality. Users earlier in the decision process were routed through a native Meta instant form, reducing friction while still allowing us to capture meaningful interest without forcing premature commitment.

This ensured that conversion data reflected decision stage rather than form fatigue, and prevented false performance comparisons between audiences.

#### **Outcome**

The revised approach delivered:

- Clear performance insight by audience type
- More relevant messaging for users
- Stronger internal confidence in what was driving results and why

More importantly, it prevented the team from attributing outcomes to “retargeting” as a tactic when the true driver was intent alignment.

### **Why This Matters**

This campaign reflects how I approach marketing leadership. I do not start with execution. I start by evaluating whether the question being asked is strong enough to support the decision it is meant to drive.

Strong campaigns are not the result of better tools or louder creative. They come from questions that can withstand scrutiny and answers that are allowed to reshape the work.