

Channel Pilot Solutions

+



INSIDER ONE



More Value per Click

The Full-Funnel Efficiency Playbook 2026/27

White paper for Online Marketing and E-Commerce-Teams
by Channel Pilot Solutions and Insider One

Contents

Management Summary p.3

1 *Why now: The gap between spend and results* p.3

2 *The efficiency loop* p.4

3 *Lever 1: Generate the right demand* p.5

4 *Lever 2: Turn the visit into a purchase* p.8

5 *Lever 3: Turn the purchase into a relationship* p.10

6 *The relevance of predictive and agentic AI* p.13

Conclusion p.14

Contact p.15

Management Summary

The business model on which a large part of digital commerce is built no longer works. It was based on a simple idea: invest more budget in paid reach, get more visits, and turn more visits into more revenue. The problem is not the advertising itself, but what happens afterwards. Between a paid click and a returning purchase, dozens of decisions are made – increasing the advertising budget changes exactly one of them.

This playbook focuses on the others. It introduces a metric called Value per Click (VPC) and shows how to increase it through three levers: generate the right demand, turn the visit into a purchase, and turn the purchase into a relationship.

1 *Why now: The gap between spend and results*

Cost per Click (CPC) is rising, while the Conversion Rate remains where it was. Every euro of revenue is more expensive to acquire than in the previous year – even though nothing has changed about the product or the target audience. More competitors, expanded advertising space, changing algorithms, and Retail Media as a growing category of advertising placements are all contributing to this.

The usual responses – more budget and more discounts – only work in the short term and make the starting position worse. A higher budget increases dependence on paid reach, while higher discounts reduce the contribution margin and train customers to wait for the next promotion. The result: the revenue curve looks healthy while the margin declines.

Where the budget is actually lost

The loss is spread across four areas that are easy to overlook individually:

- The click that was never a good fit: The search intent only matches the offer on the surface; neither the use case nor the price range is right. In the analysis, this appears as a weak landing page.
- The lost search: A customer has genuine purchase intent, but cannot find the product. The most common endpoint is cart abandonment, which studies consistently put at around 70 percent.

- The forgotten customer: Someone who has purchased three times sees the same homepage as a first-time visitor – and is shown an ad for the product that was delivered last week in retargeting.
- Budget spent on people who would have bought anyway: Existing customers included in acquisition audiences, retargeting aimed at people who have already reached checkout: These expenditures may produce a clean conversion, but no additional revenue.

All four cases have one thing in common: The money for the contact has already been spent. What is missing is not reach. This leads to the question that this playbook answers: How can the same click generate more conversion, more margin, and more repeat purchases?

2 *The efficiency loop*

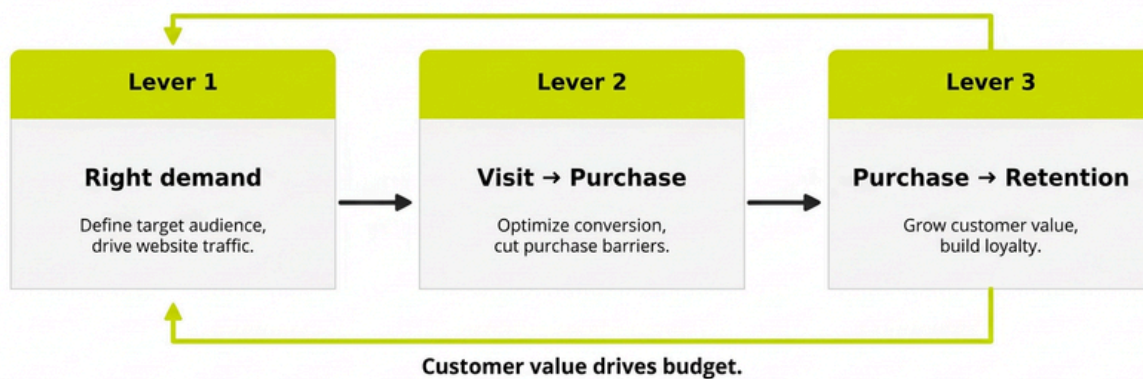
CPC, Return on Advertising Spend (ROAS), and Cost per Order (CPO) measure the success of a campaign, not the value of a customer relationship. A ROAS of 4 says nothing about whether it comes from a one-time discounted order or a first purchase followed by three more. Value per Click (VPC) combines both:

VPC = (Conversion Rate × Contribution Margin per Order × Repeat-Purchase Factor) ÷ Cost per Click

The value of the formula does not lie in its precision, but in putting four variables side by side that are usually owned by different teams – and that can cancel each other out. A discount campaign increases the Conversion Rate and reduces the contribution margin. Optimizing only one factor simply shifts the problem.

Why it is a loop, not a funnel

A funnel suggests that the work starts at the front and ends at the back. In practice, the reverse direction is more valuable: The behavior of existing customers shows which categories generate repeat purchases and which customer groups return several times their acquisition costs. These insights guide media buying – and come from the area that the funnel places at the end.



3 **Lever 1: Generate the right demand**

Before anyone clicks, it is already largely determined how valuable that visit can become. This is the most uncomfortable insight in this playbook because it shifts responsibility to areas that are not assigned to marketing.

Make the offer market-ready

Search engines, marketplaces, and shopping platforms decide which offers to display based on structured product information. Missing attributes or an unclear variant structure do not result in an error message, but in silent exclusion – the product does not appear where it should, or it appears for searches it does not match. Both cost money: one through lost demand, the other through paid clicks without purchase intent.

A good listing answers three questions before the click: Is the product relevant? Does it meet my requirements? Why this offer and not the one next to it? Answering these questions in the search result means losing some clicks – specifically the ones that would not have resulted in a purchase anyway. In the click statistics, this looks like a deterioration, but in the VPC calculation it is an improvement.

Choose the right channels

Alongside established marketplaces, whose reach and category strength vary significantly ([overview](#)), two types of channels have been added: [social commerce platforms](#), where demand is generated rather than searched for, and conversational channels such as [ChatGPT](#), where an assistant system comes between the customer and the offer. Both require the same thing: [channel-specific product data](#) from one data source, without maintaining a separate inventory for each channel. The temptation is to join every new channel simply because it is new. The efficiency question is different: Which channel reaches demand that fits the assortment, margin, and ability to deliver?

Identify the right target audience

The offer is not the only factor that determines the quality of demand. The choice of people who see it matters too. The following points are therefore important:

- **Value prediction beats reach logic:** Most assortments show a clear imbalance: A small share of customers contributes a large share of the contribution margin. If the characteristics of this group can be described – entry category, first basket value, channel source, behavior during the first week – this description can be fed back into the audience definition for acquisition.
- **Anonymous visitors are not unknowns:** A customer data profile does not only emerge when someone signs up. Behavioral signals from the first session – pages viewed, time spent, source, device type – can be combined into a profile before identification has taken place and later connected to the sign-up. For demand steering, this means that even the first anonymous visit already provides information about the type of demand a channel generates.
- **Exclusion is an efficiency lever:** Anyone who has just made a purchase should be excluded from retargeting for a defined period. An existing customer who visits regularly should not be included in every acquisition campaign. Anyone who has opted out should be excluded everywhere. This logic must sit in the customer profile, where all channels are visible – not in the individual campaign.

What Lever 1 does for VPC: A better fit between the offer and search intent increases the Conversion Rate. Better audience selection lowers the effective cost per relevant click. Both effects can be measured relatively quickly.

Practical asset: The Listing Readiness Check

Before putting additional budget into a channel or category: Are your data and listings ready to turn visibility into qualified demand?

Run the check!

#	Checkpoint	Ready when ...	✓
1	Mandatory attributes	100% of the attributes required by the channel have been completed for the item.	☐
2	Categorization	The assignment matches the channel taxonomy, not the internal structure.	☐
3	Variant logic	Sizes, colors, and bundles are recognizable as variants rather than individual items.	☐
4	Title structure	The title contains the brand, product type, and the key distinguishing feature.	☐
5	Image quality	The first image meets the channel requirements, and at least one usage image is available.	☐
6	Purchase arguments	The three most frequently asked pre-purchase questions in the category are answered in the description.	☐
7	Price positioning	The item's position within the competitive environment is known and has been deliberately chosen.	☐
8	Margin	The contribution margin after channel fees and the return rate is known for each item.	☐
9	Availability	Inventory data is synchronized at least once a day.	☐
10	Delivery promise	The delivery time is stated and met in practice.	☐

3 **Lever 2: Turn the visit into a purchase**

The click has been paid for. From this point on, every further improvement is margin-positive – it requires effort, but no additional media budget. This makes the lever economically attractive and also explains why many organizations overlook it: It has no dedicated cost center through which its contribution can be measured.

The customer profile as a foundation

Relevance requires context. If you only know a person as a session number, you can offer them only the average experience. If you know that they bought a product from the same category three weeks ago, you can do something more useful.

The prerequisite is a profile that combines signals from the web, app, order system, and email and remains stable across sessions and devices. The difficult part is not storing the data but assigning it correctly: An anonymous mobile session, a known email address, and a customer account may or may not belong to the same person. Without this resolution, every system sees three people where there is one – and treats a long-standing customer on Tuesday like a stranger.

The same traffic, different experiences

The guiding principle of this lever: **People who arrive through different routes with different intentions should not see the same thing.**

The channel reveals intent before the page has loaded. Someone arriving through a shopping ad is comparing a specific product and needs the price, availability, and delivery time immediately. Someone arriving through a category ad is browsing and needs filters and bestsellers. Someone arriving through social had no need one minute ago and needs a reason to stay.

This does not mean building a separate landing page for every audience – that would be impossible to maintain. There is still one page. The task is to define the few places that can vary: typically the headline, the first product block, the recommendation bar, and a notification banner. The layout and structure do not change.

Technically, this requires two things in addition to the profile described in the previous section: a script on the page, embedded once like an analytics tag, that reports behavior and can fill the variable elements before the page becomes visible – and a decision logic that asks, when the page is loaded: this person, this page, what should be shown? The answer is delivered in milliseconds; the visitor notices nothing.

At first, this decision is based on rules maintained by a team. But rules quickly reach their limits because intent changes during the visit: Someone who was browsing this morning and has now viewed the same product three times is no longer a discovery visit. Chapter 6 discusses how this decision can gradually be handed over to models.

Four decisions are made during every visit – consciously or as a default: Where does the visit begin, what does the search show, what is recommended, and what is communicated? No system provides the right answer for each type of visitor. That is the work that comes before the technology – and the purpose of the following asset.

Practical asset: The Intent Matrix

The matrix helps make these four decisions consciously for the most important visitor types.

Customer context	Entry point	Search	Recommendation	On-site messaging
First visit, discovery	Category entry point with guidance	Broad results, filters visible	Category bestseller	Trust signals: returns, shipping, reviews
First visit, product-specific	Directly to the advertised product	Pre-filled with the search term	Alternatives and accessories	Availability and delivery time
Returning visitor, no purchase	Recently viewed products	Search history taken into account	Additions to the previous selection	Decision support: comparison, advice
Existing customer	Shortened path, preferred categories	Weighted according to known preferences	Replenishment, accessories, additions	No new-customer offer

Search is not a side issue

One detail that regularly takes a back seat to layout and color questions in conversion discussions: People who use the internal search convert significantly above average – they already know what they want. That is why every failed search is a direct loss of revenue, and it affects the most purchase-ready group in the shop.

The check is simple and rarely carried out: Export and review the 100 most common search terms that return no results. These are either products missing from the assortment or – more often – products that are available but listed under a different name.

What Lever 2 does for VPC: The Conversion Rate and contribution margin increase: Visits continue where they would otherwise end, while suitable add-ons and accessories increase the order value.

5 Lever 3: Turn the purchase into a relationship

The acquisition costs for the first purchase have already been incurred. Whether that investment pays off is determined in the months that follow. If a customer places three orders, the original acquisition costs are spread across all three purchases – without any additional media budget being spent.

This lever therefore has the greatest effect mathematically – and the slowest. That is why, in quarterly planning, it regularly takes a back seat to short-term measures.

Campaign or journey

The difference lies in the trigger. A campaign starts with a date: The newsletter goes out on Thursday to a previously selected list. A journey starts with an event: signed up, abandoned cart, no purchase for sixty days. Timing and content are determined by behavior, and the further course by the response.

Both have their place – seasons and new products need a calendar. After the first purchase, however, the event-driven element carries the larger share, and this is exactly what is missing in most setups. The change is less a technology switch than a different way of working: away from the editorial calendar and towards a manageable number of well-built automations that run continuously.

Omnichannel means sequence, not sum

The most common mistake when expanding to multiple channels is sending the same message in parallel through every available route. This increases contact frequency, not impact, and reliably leads to unsubscribes.

A sequence with conditions makes sense: start with the channel that causes the least disruption, then – only if there is no response – move to the next. Email, then push after 24 hours if the email is not opened, then WhatsApp or SMS if there is still no response and consent is available. Anyone who responds at stage one never sees stages two and three. This logic – one message continuing across channels rather than being repeated – is the real difference between omnichannel and multiple sending.

The sequence does not have to be the same for everyone: The next channel to use and how long to wait can be derived for each profile from its previous response behavior.

This includes a rule that is technically more demanding than it sounds: suppression across all channels. Anyone who receives a win-back email must not receive a promotional SMS on the same day. This logic must sit in the profile, not in the individual channel system – otherwise each channel enforces its own rules and the channels work against each other.



Practical asset: Five journeys to start with

Anyone starting with journeys should not begin with twenty. These five cover most of the effect that can be achieved in the short term.

#	Trigger	Content	Primary channel	KPI
1	Sign-up without a purchase	Orientation, overview of the product range, building trust	Email	First-purchase rate within 30 days
2	Product viewed, no cart addition	Reminder plus decision support, no discounting	Email / web push	Return rate
3	Cart abandonment, low value	Simple reminder, no incentive	Email	Recovery rate
4	Cart abandonment, high value	Reminder with service information; incentive only after a second non-response	Email, then push notification	Recovered contribution margin
5	After purchase, days 3 to 30	Usage, care, and suitable accessories	Email	Second-purchase rate

The feedback loop

The most important return from this lever is not the additional revenue, but the knowledge. After a few months of operation, it becomes possible to answer which first-purchase categories lead to repeat purchases, which customer groups generate several times their acquisition costs over two years, which discount level actually triggers a decision, and at what contact frequency unsubscribes increase.

Each of these answers is an instruction for managing Lever 1. This closes the loop.

What Lever 3 does for VPC: It has a major impact on the repeat-purchase factor.

6 *The relevance of predictive and agentic AI*

Predictive AI turns the triggers from Chapter 5 into probabilities: a model learns from many past cases how current behavior is likely to continue. This results in metrics such as purchase probability, churn risk, and expected customer value.

The value lies not in the number itself, but in the decision that follows – and **often that decision is to do nothing**. A purchase probability of 80% means a discount would likely be wasted. High churn risk combined with low expected value means an elaborate win-back effort is unlikely to pay off.

Building on this, AI-driven decisioning takes the next step. It **combines predictions with goals and constraints to select the best next action in each situation** – for example, showing a recommendation, changing product ranking, triggering a journey, offering an incentive, or deliberately taking no action. The key point: this decision is made continuously, not just once when a campaign is set up.

Agentic AI extends the idea of a “next best action” into a coordinated sequence.

The system can plan multiple steps, observe the response, and adjust the next move within defined guardrails – for instance, adapting the onsite experience, selecting the most relevant content, and initiating a follow-up journey.

Those guardrails are the business logic. The critical success factor is less “more intelligence” and more clearly defined boundaries:

- **Hard limits** must never be crossed (e.g., consent status, maximum discount, minimum margin, contact frequency).
- **Softer preferences** may be overridden with justification (e.g., preferred channel, time of day, format).

For predictive and agentic systems to make reliable decisions, they need strong signals: clean product data, clear goal definitions, and hard guardrails in the business logic. And that brings us back to the playbook's starting point: it's not bigger budgets that matter most, but what comes out of each customer touchpoint.

Conclusion

The starting observation of this playbook was that more budget no longer reliably produces more revenue. The answer is not a new channel strategy, but a shift in attention: away from how many people are reached and towards what each contact produces.

This shift is uncomfortable because it crosses organizational responsibilities. But Value per Click can only be increased if all areas keep the same number in view.

The good news: Most of the effect does not come from new technology, but from care at points that were previously treated as side issues. A complete product data set, a working search, an exclusion list in retargeting, and three active journeys together have a greater effect than the next one-percent budget increase – and they continue to work when Cost per Click rises again next year.



Contact

Book an appointment

info@channelpilot.com

+49 40 468 988 90

Book an appointment

Channel Pilot Solutions

With Channel Pilot Pro, the German software company Channel Pilot Solutions provides a central platform for marketplace integrations, feed management, and dynamic pricing. The tool helps retailers, manufacturers, brands, and agencies prepare and distribute product data for each channel and optimize prices using rule-based strategies. This enables automated product distribution across 2,500+ sales channels and 180+ marketplaces.



INSIDER ONE

Insider One is the leading Agentic Customer Engagement Platform, enabling brands to deliver autonomous, end-to-end customer engagement and AI-driven growth. It is the only platform that natively combines a Customer Data Platform (CDP), journey orchestration across the broadest set of channels, purpose-built AI agents, and advanced personalization. Trusted by 2,000+ customers — including Samsung, L'Oréal, Unilever, and Allianz — and recognized as a leader by Gartner, Forrester, IDC, and G2.