

Paid Advertising and the Assessment Engine

INTERNAL · what you can afford to advertise, and why the audits matter more than the cash they bring in

You are right on both counts: advertising is a real second stream, and assessments are the sensible way to fund it. But there is one number that decides everything about the advertising, and it is not the ad cost. It is what you are selling.

1. The number that decides whether ads work at all

You cannot profitably buy traffic for a £349 product unless the funnel is exceptional. Here is the arithmetic on real 2026 UK ad costs.

Platform	UK cost	Cost per lead*	Cost per SALE**	Against £349	Against £1,250 audit
Google Search	~£1.50–4 CPC, high intent	£10–40	£35–200	WORKS	WORKS WELL
Meta (Facebook/Instagram)	£1–3 CPC, £6.50–12 CPM	£20–40	£100–400	MARGINAL	WORKS
TikTok	£0.30–1.20 CPC, £4–8 CPM	£25–75 (poor quality)	£150–600	LOSES MONEY	RISKY
LinkedIn	£4–10 CPC, £20–35 CPM	£60–120	£240–800	LOSES MONEY	MARGINAL

* assumes 5–10% landing page conversion. ** assumes 15–25% of leads buy.

Read the last two columns. At £349 you can realistically only afford Google Search. At £1,250 for an audit, three of the four channels work. The product you advertise matters far more than the platform you advertise on.

So advertise the audit, not the pack

Sell the £1,250 audit in the ad, and offer the £349 pack to everyone who does not book one. That way the expensive click is paid for by the expensive product, and the cheap product mops up the rest. Selling the £349 pack directly through paid social is how people quietly lose money for six months.

And remember what a customer is actually worth

Journey	Value
Buys the £349 pack and nothing else	£349
Pack, then an audit a year later	£1,599
Audit, then packs for two more sectors	£1,948
Audit, packs, then annual subscription for three years	£2,500+
Audit, then training delivery for their operators	£3,000–6,000

If your average customer lifetime value is £700 rather than £349, you can afford roughly double the acquisition cost and Meta becomes comfortably profitable. Track this from the first sale — it is the number that unlocks paid advertising.

2. Platform by platform, honestly

Google Search — start here, it is the only obvious one

- Intent beats interruption. Somebody typing 'forklift training legal requirement' or 'HSE fine yard safety' at 11pm has a problem right now. Nobody on Facebook was looking for you.
- Your HSE prosecution pages are already built for exactly these searches, so the organic and paid reinforce each other.
- Start tiny. £10 a day on twenty exact-match terms tells you within a fortnight whether this works, for about £140.
- Best terms are the panicked ones: 'HSE improvement notice', 'do I need a banksman', 'silica dust regulations', 'forklift accident what to do', 'ISO 45001 audit preparation'.

Meta — good for local, and better than people expect for trades

- Cheap reach and, crucially, tradespeople and yard managers genuinely are on Facebook. B2B does not mean LinkedIn-only in these sectors.
- Target by geography first — a 30 mile radius of Derby — because that is where you can physically do audits.
- The creative that works is the prosecution facts, not stock photos of hard hats. 'A firm like yours was fined £240,000. Here is a free 3 minute check.'
- Send them to the self-check, not to a sales page. The score does the selling and you capture the lead either way.

LinkedIn — organic yes, paid almost certainly not

- At £4–10 a click you would spend £240–800 to sell a £349 product. That does not work.
- But LinkedIn ORGANIC is free and it is where the leveraged people are: brokers, trade body officers, ISO consultants, procurement managers at principal contractors.
- Post the prosecution cases there weekly. You are not selling to the feed, you are becoming the obvious person to call when somebody needs this.
- The only paid LinkedIn worth testing later is a tightly targeted campaign at safety managers in firms over 50 staff, selling the audit or a multi-site deal, not the pack.

TikTok — organic only, and it might genuinely work

- Paid TikTok for B2B is buying the cheapest and least relevant attention available. Do not do it for this.
- But ORGANIC is a different matter. Safety content performs unusually well: near-miss footage, 'this is why we do it this way', the wet cement burn, the five minutes on a breaker. It is visual, visceral and shareable.
- It costs nothing but time and it reaches apprentices and young workers, who go home and tell the boss.
- Treat it as brand-building and recruitment of attention, not as a direct sales channel.

3. What a sensible first ad budget looks like

Stage	Spend	On what	What you are buying
After first £1,000 of revenue	£10/day for 3 weeks (~£210)	Google Search only, 20 exact terms	Proof that anyone searches for this and converts
If cost per lead is under £40	£20/day (~£600/mo)	Google Search, widen terms	Predictable lead flow
Alongside that	£10/day (~£300/mo)	Meta, 30 miles of Derby, self-check as the offer	Local audit bookings
Only once LTV is known and above £600	Test LinkedIn at £20/day	Safety managers, 50+ staff, selling the audit	Larger clients and multi-site
Never	—	Paid TikTok for B2B, or paid social selling the £349 pack cold	—

Rule: never spend more in a month than the previous month's profit. That way advertising can never become a hole you are filling.

4. The assessment engine — worth far more than the day rate

You are right that audits fund the digital. But the cash is the least valuable thing they produce.

What an audit also gives you	Why it matters
A case study and a testimonial	Ads and landing pages do not convert without proof. You cannot buy this.
Photographs of real problems	The single best marketing asset you can have, and free. Blurred and anonymised, a photo of a genuinely dangerous yard sells better than any copy.
Evidence of which pack actually sells	Stop guessing which sector to push.
The real objections, in the client's words	Rewrite the sales copy using their language, not yours.
A warm upsell path	Audit leads to packs, to training delivery, to other sites, to the subscription.
Referrals inside a tight sector	These trades all know each other. One happy haulage yard is worth ten cold emails.
Proof the documents work in practice	You find out fast if a form is unusable on a wet Tuesday in a yard.

The assessment scenarios, ranked by urgency and price

Not all audits are equal. The trigger determines both how fast they buy and what they will pay.

Scenario	Urgency	Price guide	Notes
POST-INCIDENT review — something has happened	Extreme	£1,500–2,500	Highest willingness to pay of anything on this list. They are frightened and they need it yesterday. Be careful: if there is a live investigation, be clear you are not an expert witness.
HSE has been in touch — improvement or prohibition notice	Extreme	£1,500–2,500	There is a deadline with legal consequences. Price accordingly.
Stone or worktop fabricator, aware of the HSE campaign	Very high	£1,250–1,750	1,000+ inspections running. These people know their number is coming up.
Customer audit or ISO surveillance booked	High	£1,250–1,750	There is a date in the diary. That converts.
Tender or PQQ requires evidence they do not have	High	£1,250	Losing the tender costs more than the audit.
Insurance renewal approaching	Medium-high	£950–1,250	Tie it to the renewal date. Sell the renewal file.
New site, new machine or expansion	Medium	£950–1,250	Natural trigger, easy conversation.
Red score on the self-check	Medium	£750–1,250	Warm inbound. Your main volume source.
Routine annual review	Low	£750	Recurring, predictable, good for filling quiet weeks.

Multi-site rollout for a larger client	Varies	£3,000–15,000	The prize. One relationship, many sites, repeatable.
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The top four are where the money is, and all four are triggered by something happening TO the client rather than by your marketing. So your marketing job is simply to be the obvious person to call when it does — which is exactly what the content and the partnerships achieve.

5. How the two halves feed each other

Step	Assessments give you	Which lets you
1	Cash from the first few audits	Fund the sending stack and the first £210 of Google Ads
2	Case studies, photos and testimonials	Make the ads and landing pages actually convert
3	Knowledge of which sector bites	Point the ad spend at the right vertical
4	A real average lifetime value figure	Know what you can afford to pay for a customer
5	Referrals and repeat work	Reduce dependence on paid acquisition entirely
6	Proof the documents work in the field	Sell the DIY pack honestly, and build the subscription on evidence

The sequence is: audits pay for ads, ads bring more audits and pack sales, pack sales fund the subscription build, and the subscription is what eventually makes the business worth something without you in a van.

6. The honest risks

Risk	Reality	Control
Audits eat all your time and the digital never gets built	The classic trap. Day-rate work expands to fill the diary and feels productive.	Cap audits at two days a week. Protect the rest for building and for partnership conversations.
Ads spend money before the funnel converts	Very common. People buy traffic to a page that does not work.	Prove the self-check converts to enquiries organically BEFORE paying for a single click.
You become a one-man consultancy again	Which is the thing you explicitly said you did not want.	Every audit must end with the pack, the subscription or a licensee conversation. The audit is the entry point, not the product.
Post-incident work carries real exposure	Advising after an accident when there may be an investigation.	Be clear in writing what you are and are not doing. Do not stray into expert witness territory without proper cover. PI insurance before any of this.

That third row is the one to watch. The audits are the right way to start and the wrong way to finish.