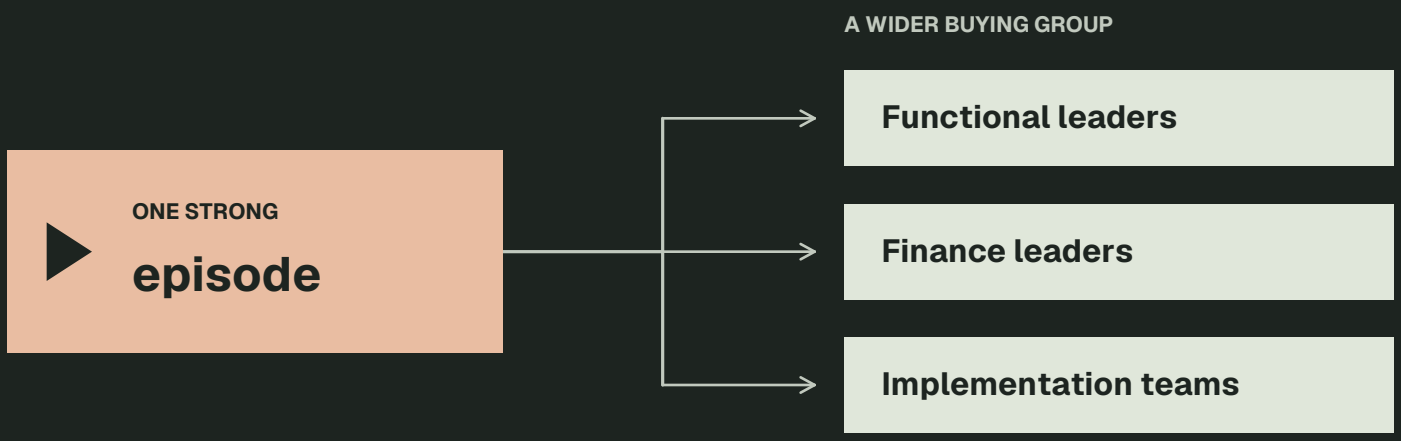
RESEARCH / ECONOMICS / DECISIONS

Paid podcast distribution.

The executive field guide

Give a strong episode a defined audience, then decide whether the campaign earned another investment.



GIVE THE EPISODE A DEFINED AUDIENCE.

58% of Americans 12+ consume podcasts monthly. [1]

71% of hidden buyers rate thought leadership above conventional marketing for showing value. [2]

For VPs of Marketing, CMOs and the teams behind B2B shows.

01 / THE EXECUTIVE BRIEF

A good episode deserves a plan to reach buyers.

You can publish a useful episode and still leave its audience to chance. Paid distribution gives you more control over who gets an invitation to listen. The question is how much to invest, and what would make you do it again.

Start with a conversation that helps someone make a business decision. Choose the people who need it, agree what the campaign should deliver, and set a cost you can defend. Then use the response to decide where the next dollar goes.

ONE CAMPAIGN, FOLLOWED THROUGH

Throughout this guide, we'll use an illustrative episode about a manufacturer's system rollout. We'll choose its audience, work through an $8,000 campaign and examine the results at review. The numbers are examples, not client results.

The distinction that matters is simple: a delivery commitment tells you what you're owed. The campaign review tells you whether you should buy again. You need both.

THE QUESTION TO KEEP IN VIEW

Did we reach the intended audience at an acceptable cost, and is the response strong enough to justify another campaign?

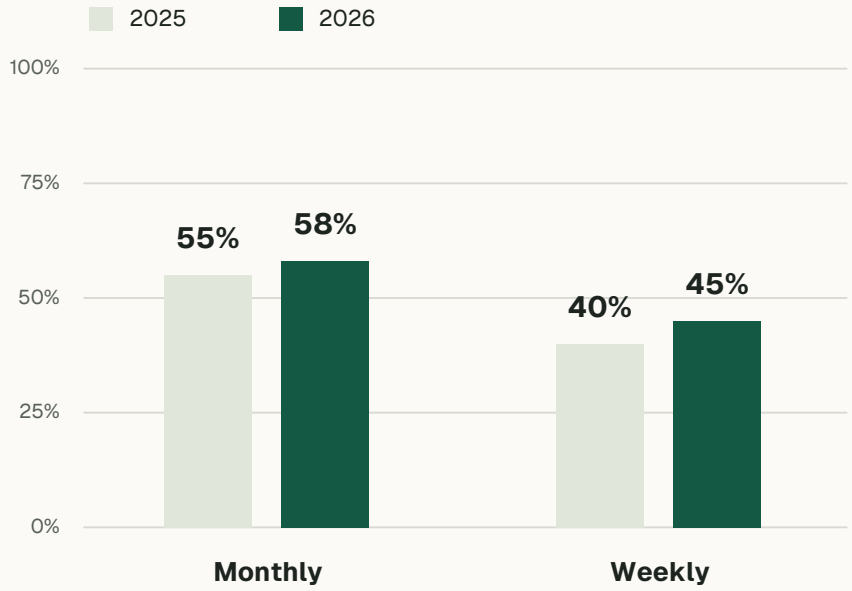
Follow the argument: choose the audience pp. 3-5 / agree the measurement and cost pp. 6-8 / judge the campaign pp. 9-11. Use the brief on p. 12 to put your own plan in writing.

02 / THE AUDIENCE OPPORTUNITY

Podcasting has an audience. Choose your part of it.

Start with the opportunity. Edison puts monthly podcast consumption at 58% of Americans aged 12+. That makes the medium worth considering. You still need to choose whom your campaign will reach. [1]

FIG. 01 / MONTHLY AND WEEKLY CONSUMPTION



68%

of Americans aged 35-54 consume podcasts monthly in 2026.

Age alone won't tell you whether these are your buyers.

FIG. 02 / 2026 MONTHLY CONSUMPTION BY AGE



Build that audience around the purchase your business helps people make. Include the people who influence the decision, then check fit through targeting, campaign reports and buyer conversations.

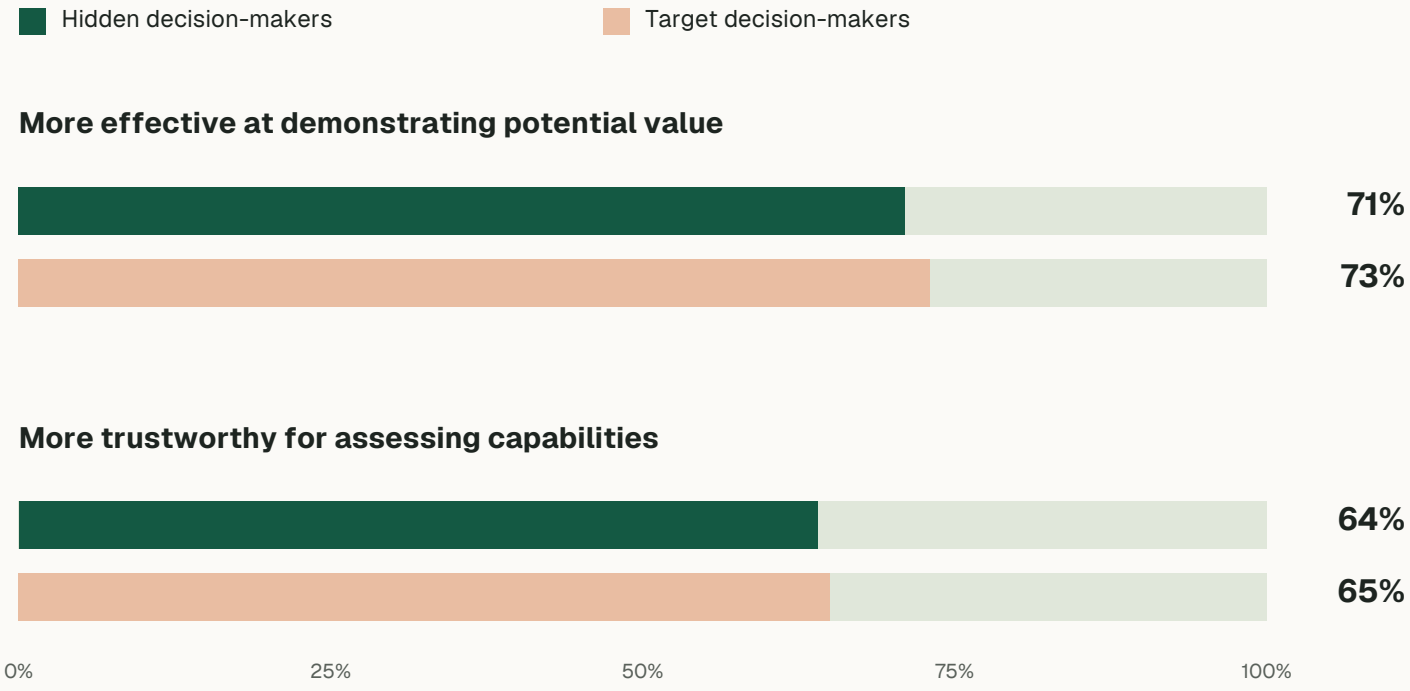
[1] Edison Research, The Infinite Dial 2026, PDF pp. 3, 35, 38-39. U.S. age 12+; 2026 n=2,050. Annual survey methods differ; see p. 14. Figures describe consumption, not paid-campaign effectiveness.

03 / THE BUYING-GROUP OPPORTUNITY

Reach the people who help your buyer say yes.

That audience can include people outside the product specialist's role. Edelman and LinkedIn call them hidden buyers. Their research suggests useful thought leadership deserves a place in how you reach this group. [2]

FIG. 03 / THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN VENDOR EVALUATION



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR EPISODE

A conversation about a difficult rollout could interest the operator, the budget owner and the people expected to implement it. Choose an episode with something useful for each of them. Then make that value clear in the ad.

The study covers attitudes toward thought leadership, not podcast campaign results. Use it to inform the audience brief; your campaign will need its own evidence.

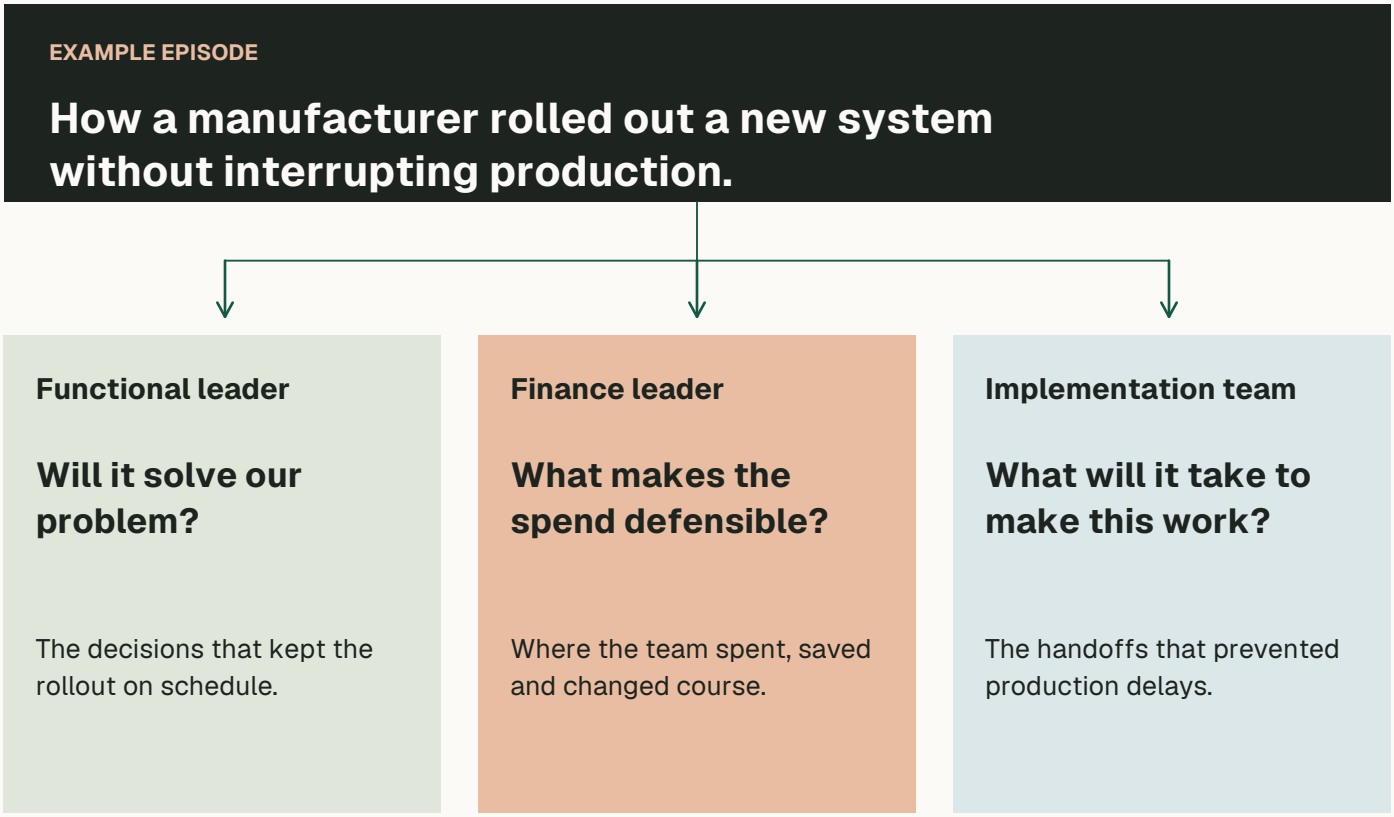
[2] Edelman-LinkedIn, 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Impact Report, PDF pp. 4-5 and 13. Total study n=1,934; U.S. decision-maker findings. Subgroup bases and question wording: see source.

04 / MAKE THE EPISODE USEFUL

Give each buyer a reason to hear the same episode.

Take an episode about a manufacturer's system rollout. The same interview could help several people assess a purchase. Keep the conversation intact and change the invitation to suit each audience.

FIG. 04 / ILLUSTRATIVE BUYING-GROUP MAP



TEST THE INVITATION

Within one audience, test two hooks the episode can support. Keep the episode and destination constant. Decide what success means before the ads run: a click, playback or an attributable download. To judge the test, you'll need to know what happened after the click.

Heard Of planning framework. The episode and messaging above are illustrative, not a client case study. Professional targeting options vary by platform and campaign eligibility. [4]

05 / THE MEASUREMENT ARCHITECTURE

Know what happened after the click.

An ad for the rollout episode may earn a click. The page may record playback, and the host may report a download. Each system sees a different part of the response. Keep those definitions clear when you assess performance.

FIG. 05 / SYSTEMS AND WHAT EACH CAN OBSERVE

01	**Ad platform** Spend, impressions, clicks; available professional audience breakdowns.	Intended and observed ad audience.
02	**Episode page / player** Sessions, defined playback events and outbound app clicks, where instrumented.	Observed on-page behavior.
03	**Podcast host / provider** Reported audio downloads under the provider's counting and filtering rules. [3]	Delivered audio; not a full listen.
04	**CRM / research** Consented inquiries, buyer feedback and separately designed lift studies.	Business signals; causality needs more.

AGREE WHICH DOWNLOADS COUNT

Set the attribution window, rules for joining records and duplicate filtering. Keep ad demographics with ad activity. A clear campaign download count gives you a usable basis for the cost calculation.

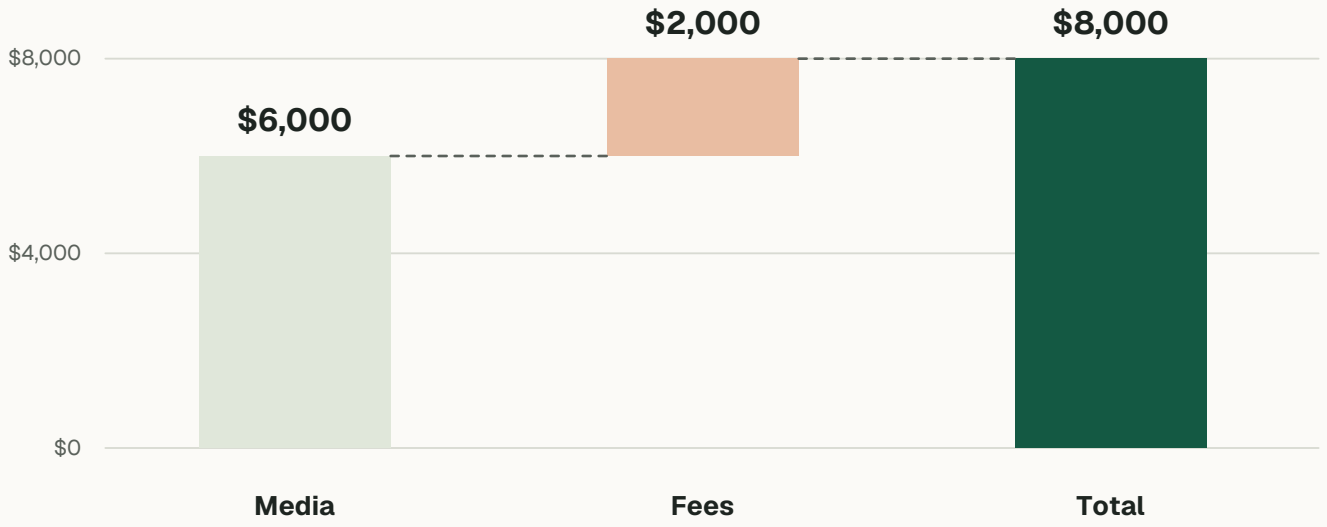
[3] IAB Tech Lab, Podcast Measurement Technical Guidelines. Schematic is a Heard Of reporting framework, not a user-level funnel. Heard Of does not claim IAB certification.

06 / THE ECONOMICS

The same campaign can look cheaper than it was.

Suppose the rollout campaign spends $6,000 on media and $2,000 on fees. The episode records 8,000 downloads, with 5,000 attributable to the campaign. The cost per download (CPD) depends on which figures you use.

FIG. 06 / ILLUSTRATIVE CAMPAIGN COST BUILD



Blended media ratio

$0.75

$6,000 / 8,000

Includes organic or unknown delivery.

Attributable media CPD

$1.20

$6,000 / 5,000

Uses campaign-attributable downloads.

Fully loaded CPD

$1.60

$8,000 / 5,000

Includes both media and scoped fees.

For this campaign, $1.60 is the figure to use when judging total cost against attributable delivery. Check both inputs when comparing proposals. Next, decide whether that price is acceptable for your audience.

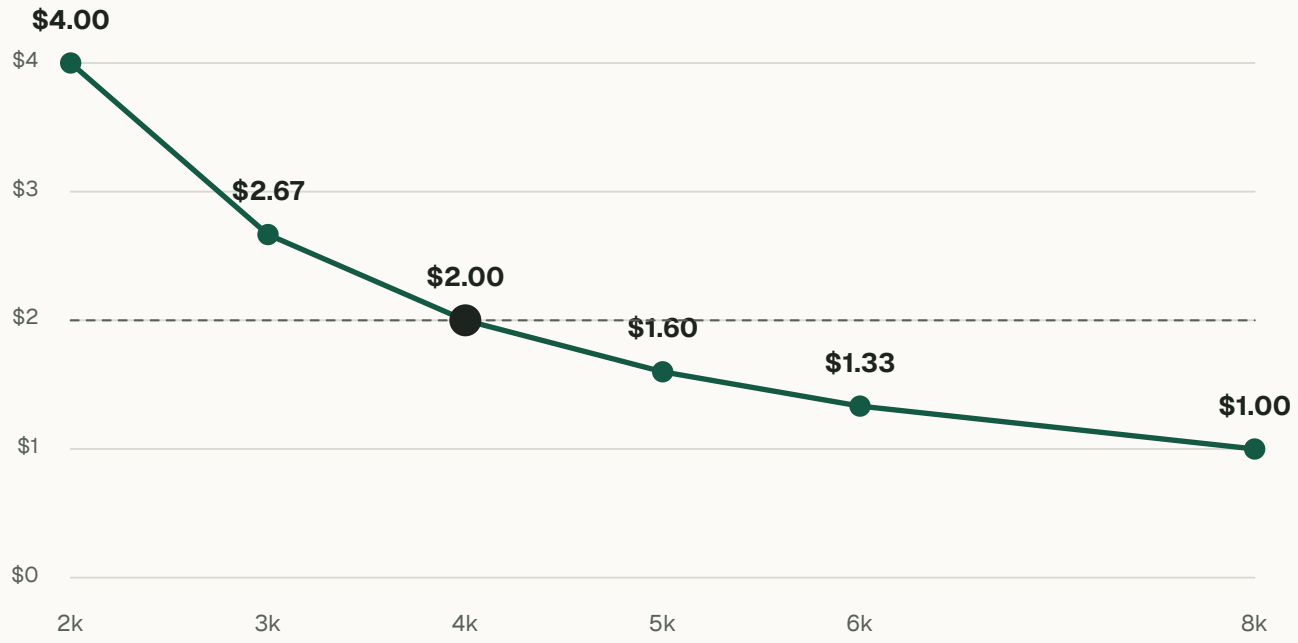
Illustrative arithmetic only. USD throughout; not Heard Of pricing, a performance benchmark or a client result. Attributable does not necessarily mean incremental. Zero attributable downloads means CPD is undefined.

07 / COST SENSITIVITY

Decide what you're willing to pay before you launch.

Return to the $8,000 plan. A $2.00 cost ceiling would require at least 4,000 attributable downloads. Choose your ceiling around audience relevance, other ways to reach buyers and what you need to learn.

FIG. 07 / CPD AT A FIXED $8,000 BUDGET



Attributable downloads over the same campaign window

ILLUSTRATIVE APPROVAL RULE

If your ceiling is $2.00 per attributable download, an $8,000 campaign needs at least **4,000 downloads**.

Minimum downloads = total budget / cost ceiling. A 6,000-download commitment would still require all 6,000; the 4,000 threshold only tests cost. Neither figure, on its own, establishes return on investment.

Illustrative sensitivity model. All-in budget is held constant; this is arithmetic, not a forecast of channel performance. Each scenario is independent. Values rounded to two decimals.

08 / THE PILOT DESIGN

Use the pilot to decide whether to invest again.

Our example now has an episode, an audience, an $8,000 budget and a $2.00 cost ceiling. Suppose the plan commits to 6,000 downloads. The pilot should also show whether the audience response warrants another campaign.

FIG. 08 / AN ILLUSTRATIVE FOUR-WEEK PILOT



WEEK 1

Define

Agree the audience, exclusions and counting rules. Record the baseline and cost ceiling.

WEEK 2

Launch

Approve the ads. Check the episode page, audio, app links and reporting before spending.

WEEK 3

Learn

Review traffic quality and where people drop off. Change one meaningful variable at a time.

WEEK 4

Decide

Reconcile costs and delivery. Review the response and choose what happens next.

Make the review useful before you launch.

- **Check the measurement.** Test it end to end so the report can support the claims you intend to make.
- **Write down the terms.** Agree the full cost, delivery commitment and attribution window before results arrive.
- **Name the decision owner.** Give them a review date and the authority to expand, revise or pause the next campaign.

Heard Of planning recommendation. Four weeks is an illustrative cadence, not a promised delivery window or a guarantee of statistical power. Flight length and sample requirements depend on the actual plan.

09 / THE EXECUTIVE SCORECARD

The cost is within your limit. Delivery is still short.

At review, the rollout campaign has spent $8,000 and delivered 5,000 attributable downloads. Its $1.60 CPD clears the $2.00 ceiling, but 1,000 downloads remain against the commitment. Both facts belong in the report.

FIG. 09 / ILLUSTRATIVE CAMPAIGN SNAPSHOT

Attributable reported downloads **5,000 / 6,000**



83% of agreed target 1,000 remaining

$8,000

ALL-IN COST

$6,000 media + $2,000 fees

$1.60

FULLY LOADED CPD

$8,000 / 5,000 attributable

6,000

DELIVERY COMMITMENT

Illustrative campaign target

Audience fit	Platform audience breakdowns + exclusions	Keep this evidence tied to ad activity.
Attention	Defined player events, if available	Record unavailable data as unknown.
Business response	Inquiries, feedback, qualified conversations	An inquiry during the campaign is not proof it caused one.

Next action: complete the 1,000 remaining downloads. Check audience fit and attention before buying more.

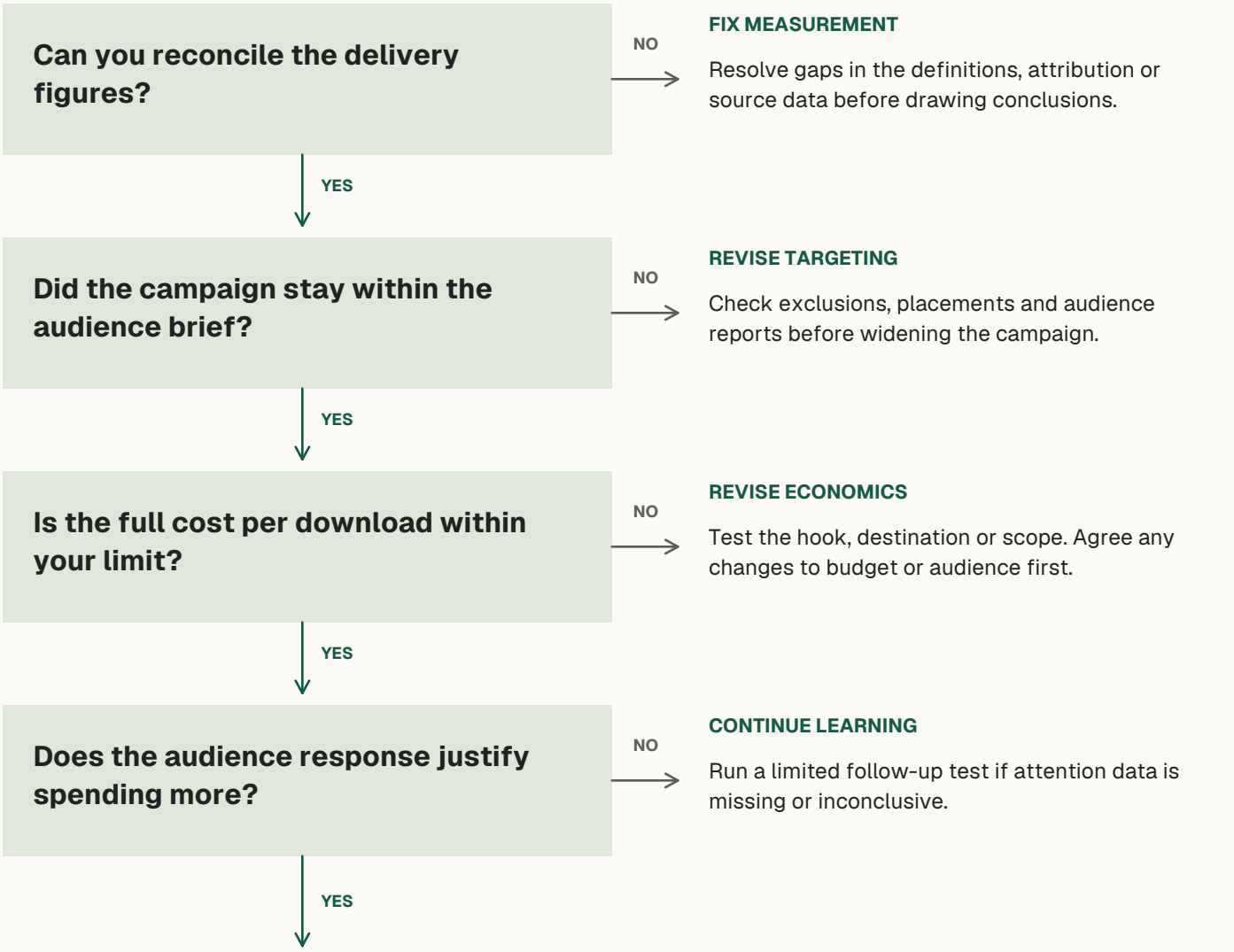
Illustrative report, not client performance. The delivery target is a separate contractual input, not a research benchmark. Campaign terms govern counting, timing and any make-good.

10 / THE NEXT-BUDGET DECISION

Decide what deserves the next investment.

The $1.60 cost gives you a reason to look further. Before expanding the rollout campaign, check who the ads reached and what people did next. Completing the existing delivery commitment remains a separate obligation.

FIG. 10 / A PRACTICAL DECISION TREE



Heard Of decision framework. This is a management aid, not an automated rule or a causal ROI model. Delivery obligations remain in force regardless of the decision to buy another campaign.

11 / YOUR ONE-PAGE INVESTMENT BRIEF

Write down what you're approving.

You can now turn the example into your own campaign brief. Write down the buyer problem, the terms and what would justify more spend. Bring this page to the budget conversation.

01 / THE BUSINESS QUESTION

What do we need to learn before we invest again?

02 / THE AUDIENCE AND EPISODE

Who needs this perspective, and which episode delivers it? Whom should we exclude?

03 / THE COMMITMENT

Download target, audience scope, counting source, attribution and delivery window.

04 / THE ECONOMICS

Media + scoped fees = total budget. CPD ceiling. Approval limit for changes.

05 / THE EVIDENCE

Delivery source, available attention signals and business-response measures.

06 / THE DECISION

What would make us expand, revise or pause? Who decides, and when?

Before approval: does everyone know what must be delivered and what the campaign should help us learn?

12 / WHERE HEARD OF FITS

We handle distribution. You keep making the show.

Heard Of helps you put that plan into practice. Our managed podcast growth platform serves B2B shows and their agencies. Keep your host and production team. We handle the distribution campaign.

THE DELIVERY COMMITMENT

If your campaign falls short, we keep delivering at no extra charge until the agreed download count is met.

We agree the plan.	Audience, episodes, budget, target and measurement.
We run the campaign.	Ads, listening page, campaign management and reporting.
You review the results.	Delivery against the commitment, with the costs clearly explained.

The guarantee covers the agreed download count. Completed listens, followers, leads and sales are separate outcomes. Your campaign agreement sets the scope, counting rules and delivery terms.

Build your download plan at heardof.co /

13 / SOURCES AND METHODS

Check the sources.

The audience and buyer charts use published research. The rollout campaign is a worked example: its budget and results are illustrative. Use the sources below to check the research and the notes to check the calculations.

[1] Edison Research / The Infinite Dial 2026

PDF pp. 3, 35, 38-39. January 2026 survey: 2,050 U.S. residents aged 12+, weighted to the population; online probability and non-probability samples. 2025 used telephone and online interviews (n=5,020). Both 2025-2026 measures include listening or watching; do not extend this comparison across earlier listening-only definitions.

[2] Edelman-LinkedIn / 2025 B2B Thought Leadership Impact Report

PDF pp. 4-5, 13. Study n=1,934; LinkedIn-member survey, March 17-April 3, 2025. Chart findings are labeled U.S. decision-makers. Percentages summarize different survey questions; they are not conversion rates or proof of podcast effectiveness. Subgroup sample sizes are not provided on the cited chart.

[3] IAB Tech Lab / Podcast Measurement Technical Guidelines

Source for server-log measurement and standardized download reporting. Verify the applicable provider, methodology and certification scope for a real campaign. Referencing guidance does not certify Heard Of.

[4] LinkedIn / Company targeting

Source for company-based ad targeting. Available controls, matching and minimum audience requirements depend on campaign configuration. Ad demographics are not a census of podcast listeners.

HOW TO READ THE ORIGINAL ANALYSIS

Figures 4-5 and 8-10 are Heard Of planning frameworks or illustrative layouts. Figures 6-7 use assumed inputs and exact arithmetic, not empirical campaign results. All dollar figures are USD. No client data or proprietary performance benchmarks are presented.

Public sources checked September 25, 2026. Figures are redrawn for this report. For source detail and survey wording, follow the linked references above.