



IT REALLY ISN'T THAT DIFFICULT

by LOTD

If you want to sell tickets for your festival, you will have to use some form of marketing. Some festival organisers seem to be downright Masters of Marketing. Others not so much. A vast amount of knowledge is available - plenty of books and websites have been dedicated to the ground rules of marketing, enough to spend years studying the subject academically. But which basic skills do you really need to start promoting your festival? Actually, not that many. Some festivals manage to sell all their tickets simply by announcing their festival dates and a lineup. In case you're not among those lucky ones, there's some work to be done. You really don't need to finish a master's degree to sell those tickets though. A little creativity and some basic social media knowledge should be sufficient to get you on your way to a sold-out festival. →

MARKETING CHAMPS I

HOW FAKE NEWS BECAME REALITY

Our introduction campaign for Left of the Dial back in 2018 was rewarded with a Dutch Marketing Award. Much to our surprise, as no one in our team has actually studied marketing. We really thought those kinds of awards were meant for the marketers who are building brands like Nike or Apple. Jeeringly, we called ourselves The Dutch Champions of Festival Marketing 2018. Not to everybody's agreement though. Some people even called our kick off campaign cringeworthy. Oh well, haters gonna hate, and people who use the word cringeworthy shouldn't be taken too seriously anyway. We are still kind of pleased with our achievements, so with the risk of sounding like cringeworthy show-offs, we'll gladly share the story behind this campaign once more.

Early 2018, nobody knew a brand-new showcase festival would soon arise in Rotterdam. Behind the scenes, we were already diligently working to prepare for the first ever edition. Even though we knew it would be just a small capacity festival this time, we did have lofty ambitions. Within some 15 years, Left of the Dial was to become the biggest showcase festival in at least The Netherlands, preferably in the whole of Europe. We envisioned 1,200 bands performing at venues all over the city and tens of thousands of attendees traveling to Rotterdam from all across the globe.

MARKETING PLANS

Those big crowds were of later concern, first we had to concentrate on our festival debut. We figured we'd make it a two-day event with around 50 mostly unknown bands performing at 8 venues, and we were aiming to attract around 800 punters. That seemed pretty manageable, and we set to work in good spirits. Heaps of great bands around, and the festival production was off to a great start, so no problems there. The only slightly more complicated task left was to sell tickets, so we sat

down and came up with a marketing plan. (For all first-time festival organisers who feel a panic attack coming on by the thought alone of writing an elaborate magnum opus of a marketing plan: don't worry. Initially, Left of the Dial never actually put this plan on paper. It evolved along the way and was only written down afterwards, so we had something to submit for that marketing award thingy.)

We defined three key points:

1. We had to market a festival without headliners. We didn't have Coldplay or Foo Fighters to help pull the weight;
2. Our budget was very limited, so costly adverts were not an option;
3. The campaign had to appeal to music industry professionals as well.

And the latter was probably the most unusual part of our marketing strategy: in part, our target audience consisted of a very specific occupational group, namely people working in the music industry.

This should be linked to the blind ambition we mentioned before. If we ever were to get 1,200 bands to come to Rotterdam, we'd also be depending on the support of booking agencies. We'd need them to tell their bands to play Left of the Dial instead of any other random festival. And when it comes to festival marketing, those music professionals have pretty much seen it all. So, creativity-wise, we really needed to step it up.

TRUMP

Professional creativity usually works in a pretty straight forward way; things that occupy your mind, will show up in your work in one way or another.

At the time we were shaping the Left of the Dial marketing campaign – in 2018 – we were pretty much obsessed with Donald Trump.

Left of the Dial nominated for marketing award

ROTTERDAM – To the surprise of the organisers, the new international showcase festival Left of the Dial has been nominated for a prestigious marketing award, even before the first edition has taken place.

The jury was deeply impressed by the festival's fake news campaign, for which they even hired a renowned research agency. 'It has been a tantalizing campaign with which the exact target audience for the festival was reached. Every week, we've been looking forward to the new news being



More specifically, we were baffled by the way he created his own reality, and apparently got away with it.

From experience, we know how hard it is to generate free publicity in advance for a festival without headliners. Virtually no media outlet is willing to preview a brand-new festival no one has ever heard of yet. So, we had to find a way to bypass the existent media, in fact, we had to create a world in which Left of the Dial was of the utmost importance. This is how the fake news campaign was born.

CAMPAIGN BUDGET

250 stamps	€ 208
paper/envelopes	€ 40
Scotch tape	€ 12
1 cartridge	€ 39
Festival daily paper ad	€ 597
social media ads	€ 500

FAKE NEWS

It wasn't very complicated, we really only needed two things. First, we needed someone with decent writing skills, and secondly, we needed to make those written texts look like realistic newspaper or magazine pieces. Writing isn't much of an obstacle for us (hey, we even make magazines...) and we discovered some free templates to create realistic looking newspaper mock-ups. Not having to hire a graphic designer already saved us some money.

We started out with some general stories to broadly outline the festival. We printed these ourselves and made them look like proper newspaper clippings. We put these clippings up at other festivals and concerts, and we posted them on social media to make something of a name for ourselves. This apparently already created a bit of traction because when our pre-sale started, we quickly sold the first 100 tickets.

Then, it was time for a more personal approach.

We made personal newspaper clippings for those first 100 ticket buyers and for 150 of our music industry contacts, in which we announced that person's attendance to Left of the Dial. We printed them, got some envelopes, and snail mailed them out. After a couple of days, the exact thing we'd hoped for hap-

pened: collectively, people started sharing pictures of these fake newspaper clippings on their social media. Both the ticket buyers as well as our industry contacts were either proud to see their name in a "newspaper" or thought it was just a funny gesture, worthy of an Insta post. This immensely expanded our online reach in a short period of time, really helping the festival come to life.

TONE OF VOICE

From this moment on, everything we shared online was accompanied by newspaper clippings. It didn't matter if it was a lineup announcement, information about our priority passes, a newly added venue, or a Spotify-playlist, our fake newspaper reported on it all. At one point, we got so caught up in our fake news campaign that we wrote a prophetic piece announcing we got nominated for a marketing award, well before we even knew those kinds of awards actually existed.

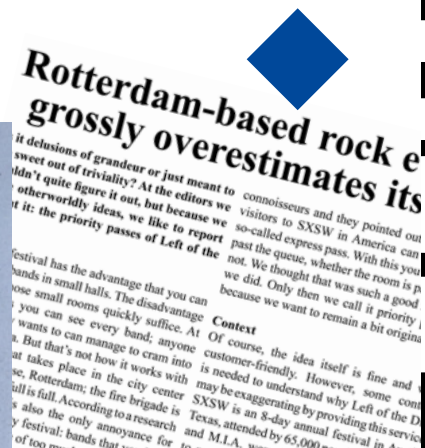
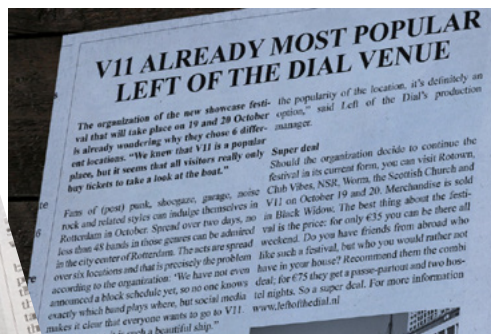
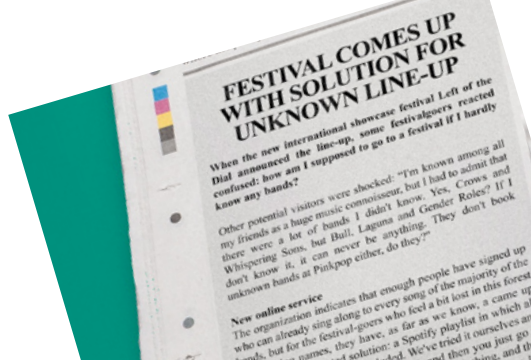
The response to the fake news clippings was overwhelmingly enthusiastic, and that can probably largely be attributed to the tone of voice. For all official Left of the Dial announcements, for instance on our social media, our tone was always kind and welcoming. This is still the way Left of the Dial likes to communicate with the outside world: if you

buy a ticket for Left of the Dial, you're an amazing person, and you're instantly part of our family. However, the fake news articles were deliberately in a condescending tone, to create an us-against-them feeling.

One of the most striking examples is the ad we ran in the daily newspaper of a big summer festival. Our ad was designed exactly in the design of this newspaper, like it was a regular editorial. Obviously, it contained some general info about our festival, but in short, the main message of the article was "Come on, who in their right mind would buy tickets for Left of the Dial, no one has ever heard of these bands!" We posted a picture of the newspaper on social media and our ticket buyers instantly started defending us: "These bands are cool! What does a big commercial summer festival know about properly good music?" Now, we would never make such a statement about commercial festivals, of course. But we definitely enjoy it when other people do.

The campaign was perceived as quite eye-catching, and it helped us to create a lot of traction without having to spend big sums of money. And more importantly, it turned out to be effective: the first edition of Left of the Dial was sold out. If you really wanted to, you could extensively analyse the deeper motives and reasoning behind our marketing efforts, but in the end, it really isn't that complicated; we were trying to sell tickets for something we're proud of. Essentially, all we had to do was come up with something that resonated with us. We were the target audience ourselves, because we love this festival.

In all fairness: it would've been really award-worthy if we'd just as easily sold a thousand defective vacuum cleaner bags. But no way we're THAT creative. →





MARKETING CHAMPS II

FINDING THE RIGHT TARGET AUDIENCE

Posting something on Instagram, doesn't necessarily mean you'll actually reach your followers. And if you'd want to engage a new audience, just one simple online post definitely wouldn't be the way to go. Social media, and their algorithms have a tight grip on our possibilities to reach people using purely our content. Meaning that if we don't pay for ads, chances are slim anybody will read our posts. Of course, marketers can still go around town putting up posters, or hand out flyers at concerts, but at the end of the day an effective social media post is usually less labour-intensive, and in some cases even less costly. Now and then, you'll be lucky enough to post something so likable, the algorithm will immediately make it appear on a vast amount of people's feeds. More likely however, is the scenario that your new lineup announcement will only be shown to your followers once you spend some money. To keep cheating us out of more cash, the rules and settings of social media campaigns are continuously being changed, so chances are that this info will be obsolete by the time the magazine goes to print. Obviously, there are other social media outlets besides Instagram and Facebook. We'll leave writing a manual for the perfect tweet on X, or a viral TikTok to someone else, all we can do is provide you with a basic course on Insta advertising.

STEP 1: SIGN UP FOR A FACEBOOK BUSINESS ACCOUNT

Both Instagram and Facebook have the option to directly turn a new post into an ad when you've just published it. This is an uncomplicated way to boost a message's reach, but it's definitely not the most thorough and beneficial method. Marketers will usually make use of the Adsmanager. Through this dedicated part of the Business environment of Meta (the umbrella company for Facebook, Insta and more), it's possible to create ads that are simultaneously visible on Facebook as well as Instagram. Or, if you prefer, only one of them.

At first glance, the Adsmanager can be a little intimidating, looking like an outdated spreadsheet full of numbers and buttons. But it's actually not particularly difficult to use and moreover very practical in use when monitoring your campaign's progress. To use the Adsmanager (previously called Power Editor, which is a way cooler name right?!), you'll need a Facebook business account. An unavoidable necessity really when using any of Meta's social media professionally. A Business account is free but it can take a getting little used to all its possibilities and frequent bugs.

STEP 2: THE CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE

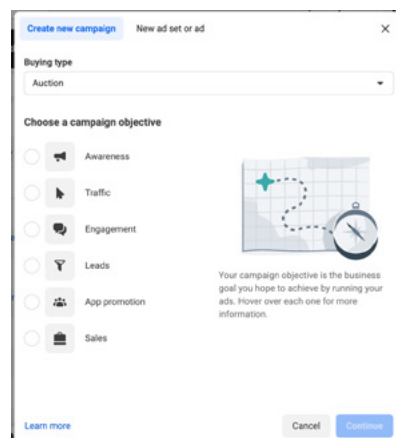
This is pretty boring
if you're not interested
in marketing



To create an ad, click the green "+ Create" button top left of the Adsmanager screen. A window pops up where you have to make your first decision: the objective of your campaign.

You can pick from the following objectives: awareness, traffic, engagement, leads, app promotion & sales. You'd choose awareness to reach as many people as possible, or engagement to have people engage with your post by watching, liking, commenting, et cetera. By picking sales, you can try to boost conversion, meaning actually selling those tickets! For this to work, your website will need to be setup properly though.

At the bottom of this screen, you can name your campaign, ad set and ad. It's vital to do so, as it helps being able to find your ads later on. When you're ready, press continue. This will take you into the next screen, which consists of three tabs in which you can fully set up your campaign.



STEP 3: THE IMPORTANT DATA

Tab 1: campaign

Let's start with the first and easiest tab. On this tab you won't have to enter anything new, as you've already done this in the previous screen. Easy peasy, right? In case you've changed your mind, this would be the place to change the campaign objective. Do note that when you change the campaign objective after you've already setup the rest of your campaign, you might lose the data you've submitted in the next two tabs.

The screenshot shows the Facebook Ads campaign setup interface. The top navigation bar includes tabs for 'Campaign', 'Ad', and 'Review'. The 'Campaign' tab is active, showing the 'Conversion' objective. Under 'Conversion location', 'On your ad' is selected. Under 'Engagement type', 'Video views' is selected. The 'Audience definition' section shows a broad audience selection with an estimated size of 11,700,000 - 13,700,000. The 'Performance may be affected' section provides information about privacy updates and ad performance.

Tab 2: ad set

Pay extra attention to the next tab, as this is where you enter some of the most important data: a specific goal and your budget.

At the top of the page, depending on your campaign objective, you can enter a more detailed goal for your ad. When you've picked engagement as your campaign objective, here you can choose in which way you want your audience to engage. For instance, you could choose to show the ad to people who are more likely to like or comment on the post. There are many more options here, and it's really up to you to decide which ones work best for your specific ad. Sometimes you'll want to get as many reactions on and ad as possible, other times you'll want to get people to start following your page. Unfortunately, there's no one specific setting that works for all ads, it's best to just try different options.

STEP 4: THE BUDGET

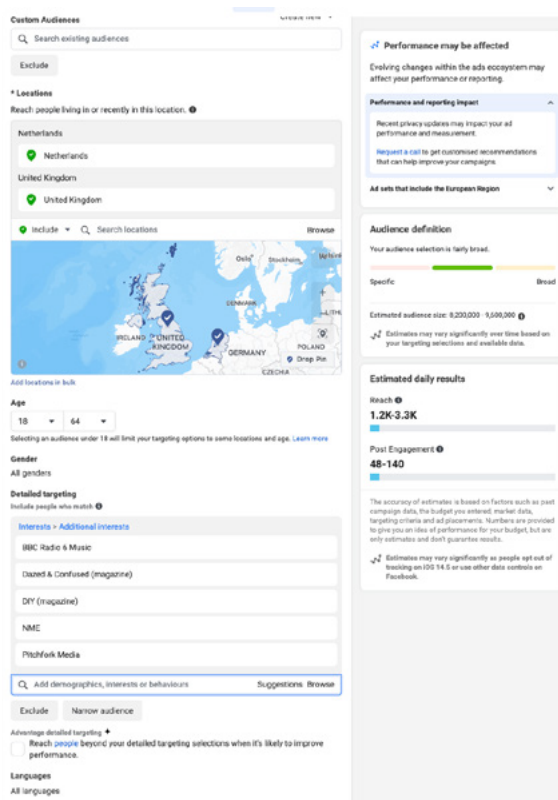
Still in tab 2, but a little further down, you'll set a budget for your ad. Here you can choose either a maximum budget per day, or for the full duration of the campaign. Which is best? Of course, whatever you choose here, is fully dependent on the available promo budget you have. But do keep in mind that ads are expensive. Experimenting with a tenner is certainly a possibility, but commonly spending a little more would be advised if you want to actually reach some people. This is also the place where you choose the duration of the ad set, which is obviously also connected to the amount you're willing to spend. A good rule of thumb here is that repetition can be effective, but showing your audience the same ad for months on end, is a recipe for annoyed comments. →

The screenshot shows the 'Budget & schedule' section of the Facebook Ads campaign setup. The 'Budget' section shows a 'Lifetime budget' of €50.00. The 'Schedule' section shows a start date of 23/6/2023 and an end date of 29/6/2023, both at 15:03 Amsterdam Time. There is a 'Show more options' link at the bottom.

STEP 5: THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Further along in tab 2 is where great marketers get to prove their worth. This is where you pick the actual audience your ad will be shown to. Indeed, this is what makes all the difference because it's obviously pretty useless to show your metal festival ad to your aunty Edith who's only listened to Cliff Richard for the past 50 years. You can enter basic demographics such as location, gender, and age, but more interestingly, you can enter interests of the audience that will see your ad.

When promoting your festival, you could for instance choose relevant bands and artists, similar festivals, or media that write about your kind of festival. With a bit of luck, you might just reach the exact music lover you're aiming for. There's also the option to target people that follow you on social media. That sounds quite absurd because theoretically they should already be seeing your posts. But in practice your posts will only reach a small percentage of your followers. So, if you want all your followers to see your posts, you're more or less being forced to spend some of your promo budget.



Custom Audiences

Search existing audiences

Exclude

* Leadlines

Reach: people living in or recently in this location

Netherlands
United Kingdom

Include

Search locations

Age

18 64

Selecting an audience under 18 will limit your targeting options to some locations and age. [Learn more](#)

Gender

All genders

Detailed targeting

Include people who match

Interests • Additional interests

BBC Radio 4 Music

Dazed & Confused (magazine)

DNV (magazine)

NME

Pitchfork Media

Q Add demographics, interests or behaviours

Suggestions Browse

Exclude Narrow audience

Advantage detailed targeting

Reach people beyond your detailed targeting selections when it's likely to improve performance.

Languages

All languages

Performance may be affected

Evolving changes within the ads ecosystem may affect your performance or reporting.

Performance and reporting impact

Recent privacy updates may impact your ad performance and measurement.

Request a call to get personalised recommendations that can help improve your campaign.

Ad sets that include the European Region

Audience definition

Your audience selection is fairly broad.

Specific Broad

Estimated audience size: 9,200,000 - 9,500,000

Estimates may vary significantly over time based on your targeting selections and available data.

Estimated daily results

Reach 1.2K-3.3K

Post Engagement 48-140

The accuracy of estimates is based on factors such as past campaign data, the budget you entered, market data, targeting criteria and ad placements. Numbers are provided to give you an idea of performance for your budget, but are only estimates and don't guarantee results.

Estimates may vary significantly as people opt out of tracking on iOS 14.5 or use other data controls on Facebook.

At the bottom of this tab, you can choose in what form your ad will be shown: stories, reels, timeline, search results, and so on. If you're not sure what to choose, you can opt for automatic placement which lets the algorithm decide where to show your ad. When you choose this automatic placement, make sure your ad material is uploaded in the right formats, so people don't see your images or videos weirdly cropped when it's the wrong format for the placement.

Placements

- ☒ **Feeds**
Get high visibility for your business with ads in feeds
 - ☒ Facebook Feed
 - ☒ Instagram feed
 - ☒ Instagram profile feed
 - ☒ Facebook Marketplace
 - ☒ Facebook video feeds
 - ☐ Facebook right column
 - ☒ Instagram Explore
 - ☒ Instagram Explore home
 - ☐ Messenger inbox
 - ☐ Facebook Business Explore
- ☒ **Stories and Reels**
Tell a rich, visual story with immersive, full-screen vertical ads
 - ☒ Instagram Stories
 - ☐ Facebook Stories
 - ☐ Messenger Stories
 - ☒ Instagram Reels
 - ☒ Facebook Reels
- ☒ **In-stream ads for videos and reels**
Reach people before, during or after they watch a video or reel
 - ☒ Facebook in-stream videos
 - ☐ Ads on Facebook Reels
- ☒ **Search results**
Get visibility for your business as people search
 - ☒ Facebook search results



Feeds

We recommend square (1:1) images and vertical (4:5) videos.

STEP 6: MAKE AN AD OR PICK A POST

Tab 3: ad

We're almost there, in this final step you'll choose the content of the ad that will be shown to the audience you've picked. There are two options: 1) you pick something you've already posted, or 2) you upload content especially made for this ad. It might be smart to pick already posted content, because the ad will boost your likes, which will look good on your profile. In case people look up your page, seeing those high numbers of likes might spark their interest in your apparently very popular festival. When you create the ad entirely in the Adsmanager, the post and its likes won't be visible on your profile, you do however have way more options to customise the ad.

You can easily use the same ad on Facebook and Instagram but do keep the difference between the two media in mind. To name an example: a message on Facebook that includes a link in the text, doesn't make sense on Instagram because you can't click on links. You'll have to adjust that by hand, and even when you pick something already posted, it's possible to customise the post to each different placement.

Ad creative
Select the media, text and destination for your ad. You can also customise your media and text for each placement. [Learn more](#)

Your Instagram ad will render Facebook mentions as regular text.

Facebook Post
Ticket update the Saturday...
839194240941920 - 22 Jun 2023

Change post + Create post

Enter Post ID

Advantage+ creative
Tailor your ad for the person viewing it by letting us automatically optimise your creative. This can help improve performance.

2/2

Standard enhancements...
Music

Facebook Feeds

Left of the Dial Rotterdam
Sponsored · VP

Ticket update the Saturday afternoon Bands on a Boat trip is now sold out. No need to panic, there are still tickets left for ...see more

ticket availability

General Admission	
3-day passe-partouts	€50
6-person group ticket	€250

Dine like a Star

Thursday	€17,50
Friday	€17,50
Saturday	€17,50

Bands on a Boat (incl. two drinks)

Friday 1pm	€19,50
Friday 3pm	€19,50
Saturday 1pm	€19,50

leftofthedial.nl
Left of the Dial - 19, 20 & 21 October 2023 ... [Learn more](#)

Call to action

Learn more
<https://leftofthedial.nl/>

Change Remove

To conclude, in tab 3, you can also add a clickable button (even on Insta!) with a CTA (call to action). Always make sure to do this as you'll want to make it as easy as possible for your audience to find more information, or even better, buy a ticket for your festival. 🎫

EXTRA TIPS

- Even if you're not British or American, set up Facebook (and with it the Adsmanager) in English. This way you'll be able to find way more tutorials or explanations when you need help with something you're working on.
- Turn off your adblocker for Facebook. When your adblocker's turned on you won't be able to work in the Adsmanager, but moreover you won't see your own ads running. Remember, seeing ads from other organisations can be very helpful in learning how to setup your own ads.
- Always keep an eye on ads you have running. Is an ad not getting as many likes as you'd hoped for, or are ticket sales not going up? Try making a new ad with different content, a different ad objective or a different target audience.
- The Adsmanager has a ridiculously large number of possibilities. When you've finally found a method that works for your ads, don't forget to keep experimenting with different kinds of ads as well.
- Next to your own music knowledge, you can also find the right artists to use for your targeting via Spotify's Fans also listen to or Last.fm's Similar Artists.
- Try to find the right balance between recognition and overexposure. Make sure people get to see your ad enough times to pique their interest, but don't get them irritated by showing the same thing over and over again.
- You really don't have to reinvent the wheel, check out how other festivals and promoters set up their ads and take notes!
- In the business manager you can send artists on your lineup a request to become advertiser of their pages. This way you can directly reach their followers with your ads. How convenient is that?!