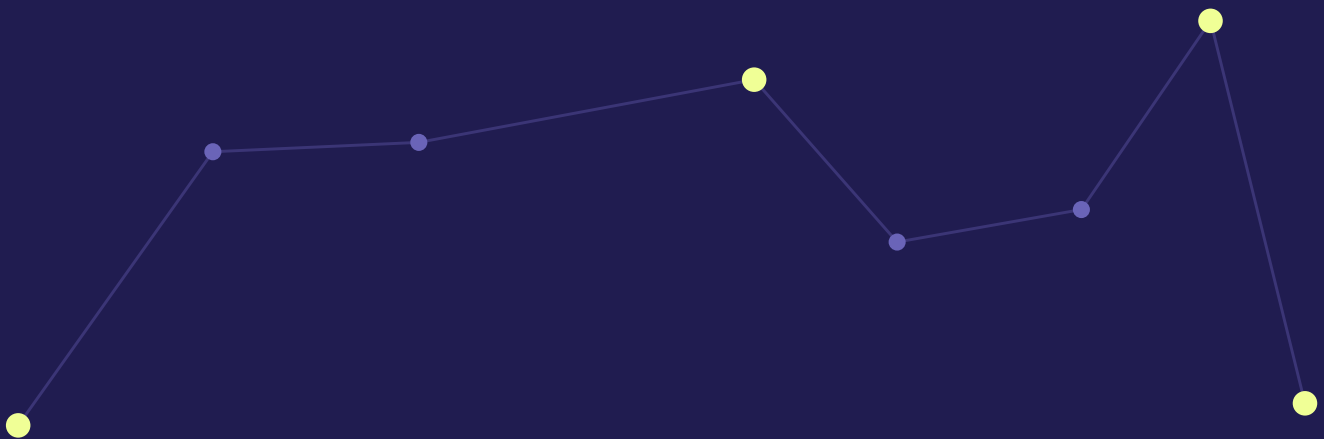


Campaigns Need Branches, Not Calendars

Designing campaigns for a world that refuses to follow the plan



ARTEFACT91

Campaign Intelligence + Strategic Communications

artefact91.com

ARTEFACT91 BRIEFING 08

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Designing campaigns for a world that refuses to follow the plan

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HOW TO READ IT

A briefing, not a report: the executive brief carries the argument, the numbered sections carry the evidence and the method, and every external figure is attributed to its source.

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Executive Brief

Most campaign plans assume continuity. A message is approved, a calendar is built, assets are produced, media is placed and performance is reviewed against the plan.

The environment does not behave that way.

Audience response changes. Competitors respond. A stakeholder coalition forms. A creator reframes the issue. A news event absorbs attention. A policy decision changes the stakes. An executive comment creates a new narrative. The campaign calendar remains intact while the strategic environment has moved.

Artefact91 treats a campaign as a decision system with branches: observable conditions are connected to pre-considered choices about message, messenger, channel, resource allocation and timing.

SECTION 01

The Calendar Is Not the Strategy

A calendar answers: what are we publishing next?

A campaign strategy should answer:

- What behaviour are we trying to change?
- Among whom?
- What currently prevents that behaviour?
- What evidence would tell us the barrier is changing?
- What could disrupt the strategy?
- What would make us change course?
- Which decisions can be pre-authorized?

This changes planning from scheduled production to adaptive execution.

SECTION 02

The Artefact91 Adaptive Campaign Architecture

Every major campaign should contain five layers.

OBJECTIVE — Define the institutional or behavioural outcome, not simply reach.

AUDIENCE — Identify priority audiences by behaviour, influence and decision relevance.

HYPOTHESIS — State why the proposed intervention should change behaviour.

SCENARIOS — Model plausible alternative trajectories.

TRIGGERS — Define the evidence that causes the campaign to branch.

Then pre-design response options.

Expected Trajectory

Signals behave roughly as anticipated. Continue, learn and optimize.

Resistance Trajectory

Priority audiences encounter the campaign but reject, reinterpret or organize against it. Reassess barrier, evidence, messenger and proposition.

Disruption Trajectory

An external event changes attention, risk or meaning. Decide whether to pause, redirect, accelerate or reposition.

SECTION 03

A Campaign Branch Is a Decision Rule

Examples:

IF awareness increases but intended behaviour does not, investigate the behavioural barrier before increasing media spend.

IF opposition framing becomes dominant among a priority audience, test whether rebuttal, reframing or non-amplification is most appropriate.

IF an external event changes the meaning of the campaign, reassess relevance before publishing scheduled creative.

IF one messenger generates reach but low credibility, shift authority rather than simply increasing frequency.

IF earned attention materially outperforms paid attention among decision-makers, reallocate resources.

Decision rules reduce the time between signal and adaptation.

SECTION 04

Measure the Decision Chain

AMEC's Barcelona Principles 4.0 reinforce the need to move beyond outputs alone toward outcomes and impact related to organizations and stakeholder audiences.

Artefact91 uses:

OUTPUT — What did we produce?

REACH — Who encountered it?

RECEPTION — How was it understood?

RESPONSE — What did people do?

DECISION EFFECT — Did stakeholder behaviour alter the institution's strategic position?

ADAPTATION — What should change next?

A campaign can produce excellent engagement while failing at the decision effect.

SECTION 05

Build an Opposition and Response Model

For contested campaigns, model response without assuming every critic is an “opponent.”

Map:

- likely supporters;
- persuadable or movable audiences;
- institutional gatekeepers;
- credible critics;
- organized opposition;
- amplifiers;
- low-interest audiences capable of sudden mobilization.

Ask what each actor could plausibly do—not just what they currently say.

SECTION 06

The Weekly Campaign Decision Room

A useful weekly review is short and consequential:

What changed?

Which assumptions still hold?

Which priority audience moved?

What new risk emerged?

What evidence is missing?

Which branch are we approaching?

What decision is required this week?

What should stop?

This is different from a content status meeting.

SECTION 07

Pre-Mortem the Campaign

Before launch, assume the campaign failed.

Ask:

- Which assumption was wrong?
- What did the audience hear that we did not intend?
- What external event changed the context?
- What did a competitor or critic exploit?
- Which metric gave us false confidence?
- Where did approval processes prevent adaptation?
- Which resource should have been moved sooner?

Convert the answers into indicators and branch conditions.

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Artefact91 Point of View

Campaign strategy should not be a prediction that everything will go according to plan. It should be an architecture for making better decisions when it does not.

ARTEFACT91 WORKING MODEL

PLAN → SENSE → INTERPRET → BRANCH → ACT → LEARN

The calendar still matters. It simply stops pretending to be the strategy.

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Questions for Leaders

What would make us change this campaign?

Who is authorized to make that decision?

Which metric could look good while the strategy is failing?

What is our resistance trajectory?

What are we prepared to stop?

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Sources & Research Base

AMEC (2025), Barcelona Principles V4.0 — stakeholder-focused, outcome- and impact-oriented communication measurement.

Artefact91 analysis drawing on scenario planning, adaptive strategy and decision-intelligence principles.