

# Leaflet Distribution The Complete Guide

*From an industry built on trust and too often let down by it -  
to a future where the work speaks for itself.*

---

***Michael Denton & Andrei Chejneanu***

Published by Marketize · 2026

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

# Why We Wrote This

---

*This book grew out of fourteen years of watching the same problems repeat. Bad deliveries. Unprovable results. Clients who had been burned and came in suspicious, and distributors who were honest but had no way to show it. We built Marketize because we believed there was a better way. This is the guide we wish had existed when we started.*

Between us, we have almost 6 decades of direct, ground-level experience in leaflet distribution - planning campaigns, managing distributors, dealing with the full spectrum of clients from the patient and methodical to the intensely difficult. We have seen what this industry looks like at its best and what it looks like when the incentives are structured in entirely the wrong direction.

This guide covers the whole picture: where the industry came from, why it developed some deeply entrenched bad habits, what technology can do to correct them, how to plan and carry out a campaign properly, and how Marketize was built to address the structural gaps that have persisted for too long. We have tried to write it plainly - without defensiveness about the industry's failures, and without overselling what any platform can fix. The problems are real. So are the solutions.

— Michael Denton & Andrei Chejneanu

## CHAPTER ONE

# How the Industry Used to Work

*And why that was a problem for everyone in it*

*Leaflet distribution is, in principle, one of the most direct forms of marketing that exists. You put something physical through someone's letterbox. They read it or they don't. There is no algorithm, no ad auction, no targeting parameter to misconfigure. The idea is simple. The execution, it turned out, was where the problems lived.*

## The Accountability Gap

The foundational problem with leaflet distribution - before any question of technology or platform design - is that there has historically been no mechanism to verify that the work was done. A business would pay for ten thousand leaflets to be delivered across a defined area. A distributor or distribution company would collect those leaflets, go out, and return. And the client would have no way whatsoever to know what actually happened.

Rather than being just a minor administrative gap, this is the structural condition that allowed an entire range of bad practices to take root and persist. When there is no verification, trust fills the space. And trust, in a commercial context, is a mechanism that fails predictably in the direction of whoever holds the information asymmetry - in this case, the person who actually went out with the leaflets.

***“When there is no verification, trust fills the space - and trust fails predictably in the direction of whoever holds the information.”***

## Discarding, Partial Delivery and GPS Manipulation

The most straightforward form of failure is also the most obvious: leaflets being discarded rather than delivered. A distributor picks up a bundle, walks a portion of the route, and deposits the rest in a bin, a skip, or a recycling point. The client sees no response, complains, is told the area is difficult, and either accepts it or moves on. This happens more than the industry acknowledges publicly, and it happens at every level - sole traders under pressure, teams managed by agencies, occasionally entire operations built around the practice.

Partial delivery is a softer version of the same failure. A distributor covers sixty percent of the agreed area, logs it as complete, and relies on the absence of hard evidence to go unchallenged. From the outside this is indistinguishable from a full delivery - the response rate is lower, but there are always explanations available for a low response rate - with some being more true than others.

When GPS tracking began to appear in the industry, some distributors and companies found ways to work around it. Walking partial routes with the tracker running, then moving the phone through the remaining area by vehicle. Running the tracker without carrying leaflets.

Using secondary devices to simulate route coverage while a different person did something else entirely. Spoofing GPS trackers. Technology, deployed in isolation without verification logic, does not solve the accountability problem - it just shifts where the manipulation occurs.

## Predatory Practices and Smoke-and-Mirrors Evidence

Some organisations in the leaflet distribution industry have been structured, deliberately or by drift, around a model that is designed to obscure poor delivery behind a layer of plausible documentation. This is worth describing plainly, because the people on the receiving end of it are often small business owners who spent money they could not easily afford on a campaign that did very little.

The pattern tends to look like this. A company quotes aggressively - often below the rate at which full, honest delivery is economically viable. They use professional language, provide printed materials, and may show a client "proof" in the form of a handful of photographs taken on the first day of delivery. Questions are deflected. Complaints are met with confident explanations about the difficulty of the area or the nature of the market. Some of these companies have cultivated a deliberately confrontational approach to disputes - presenting themselves as experts who cannot be questioned, using their volume of documentation to make a client feel that they simply do not understand the industry.

The effect on clients is real. Many walk away having spent money on a campaign that delivered a fraction of what was agreed, told themselves the medium doesn't work, and never run another leaflet campaign. The industry loses a customer it should have kept.

### A note on payment terms

Payment upfront was, and in many cases still is, the industry norm. A client would transfer the full campaign fee before delivery began, and then spend the following weeks chasing the company for confirmation that the work was done. Some would never receive it. Others would receive reports that were technically formatted but substantively empty. The payment structure itself removed the primary incentive the distributor had to complete the work fully.

## The Price Spiral and Its Consequences

There is a dynamic in this industry that we have both observed closely and that deserves to be named directly: many clients believe they know what leaflet distribution should cost, and that knowledge leads them to negotiate prices down to levels at which full, honest delivery is not economically viable.

This is not simply a matter of clients being unreasonable. The prices quoted by less scrupulous operators have created a market expectation. If a client has been quoted £20 per thousand by one company and £50 per thousand by another, they tend to assume the lower figure is closer to the real cost and that the higher quote reflects either greed or inefficiency. In reality, the lower figure is almost certainly the price at which corner cutting is being planned from the outset.

For a distributor working an eight-hour day in a standard residential area, a realistic delivery rate is somewhere between 600 and 1,000 letterboxes, depending on density, terrain, and property type. In highly dense urban areas with compact terraced streets, an exceptionally fit

and experienced distributor might reach 1,200 to 1,300 in a full day. In rural or semi-rural areas - where properties are spaced out and walking distances between letterboxes are significant - 300 to 600 is a more realistic figure, and the job must be priced accordingly.

At the rates implied by aggressively low quotes, either the distributor is being paid below any reasonable threshold for the work involved, or the delivery is not going to happen in full. Usually both. And a distributor being paid inadequately for a difficult day's work has an obvious incentive to find shortcuts.

***“If the price makes full delivery economically impossible, then full delivery was never the plan.”***

## How Even Honest Companies Get Drawn In

One of the more troubling patterns we have observed is the gradual drift of companies that started honestly. A distribution company starts out doing the job properly. They price fairly, deliver fully, and build a small book of satisfied clients. Then they come up against a competitor quoting half their rate. A client they have served well for a year asks them to match it. They explain why they cannot. The client leaves. This happens a second time, and a third.

At some point someone in the company suggests they could reduce their delivery percentage just slightly - not dramatically, just enough to make the economics work at the lower price. And the client would never know. It starts at the margins. A non-delivery rate that is reported slightly lower than the actual figure, because explaining the real one feels like a confrontation the company would rather avoid. Leftover leaflets that are not returned, because returning them invites questions. Over time, the gap between what the company delivers and what it charges for widens, and the habits that once felt like compromises become operational norms.

Understanding how honest operators end up in this position matters if the goal is to design a system that makes it unnecessary - one where fair pricing is sustainable and where the temptation to cut corners is removed by making it immediately visible.

## The Non-Delivery Problem and Client Unreasonableness

Across any delivery area, a proportion of letterboxes will be legitimately unreachable. No Junk Mail signs, gated properties, aggressive animals behind doors, addresses with no visible letterbox. The industry standard allowance for this is five to ten percent of total addresses in any given area. This is not an excuse - it is an acknowledged, documented feature of door-to-door distribution.

Many clients, however, receive this information badly. When a distributor or company returns unused leaflets and explains that some addresses were legitimately unreachable, but they walked the route and put in the effort to attempt delivery, a proportion of clients interpret this as an admission of failure or dishonesty. Distribution companies, knowing this from experience, often choose not to return the leaflets at all - because returning them opens a conversation they have learned is unlikely to end well. When the non-delivery log is built into the GPS record, timestamped, and visible in the completion report, the conversation about it is no longer adversarial.

## The National Account: What Happens When the Money Gets Big

There is a meeting that has stayed with us for a long time. Not because it was unusual - if anything, the opposite. It was unusual only in how openly the people across the table were willing to say what they were saying.

One of us was early in our career, ambitious, and going after the kind of work that felt like the next level - national campaigns, household names, the sort of volumes that would have taken us from a regional operation to something genuinely significant. Chasing those contracts meant a lot of meetings. Some of them were with potential clients. Others were with the large, established distribution companies that handled national volumes and might, in theory, take us on as a regional delivery partner.

One of those meetings took place in the offices of a company that was, by any conventional measure, successful. Well-staffed, professional-looking, operating at a national scale. They handled campaigns for the kind of clients whose marketing budgets most distribution companies never get near. We went into that meeting prepared to be assessed on our capacity, our reliability, our coverage. What we got instead was something that took a few minutes to fully process.

It turned out they were not testing our operational capability, but our attitude.

The conversation started normally enough - coverage areas, volumes we could handle, how we managed our distributor network. Then it shifted. Gradually, almost gently, they began to outline how they thought about national campaigns and what they expected from the regional partners they worked with. The framing was relaxed, matter-of-fact. As if they were describing something any reasonable person in the industry understood and accepted.

The substance of it was this:

- Their clients paid - at that time, roughly £15 to £25 per thousand leaflets, though it was made clear that the rate the client actually paid was somewhat higher and the difference stayed with them. At that price point, they explained, the client understood they were getting manageable volumes. The core of the distribution area would be done properly while the periphery was a different matter. Coverage in the peripheral zones would be considerably thinner - sometimes not done at all in any meaningful sense. But this was built into the model. And when a client raised a concern about response rates or queried coverage in a specific area, that area would be revisited - not because the original delivery had been inadequate, but because the complaint itself acted as the trigger for a second pass that should have been part of the first. The redistribution would focus on a very narrow area in and around the complainant.

They did not use any of the words we are using here. It was communicated entirely through implication, through the way they paused before certain phrases and watched our faces while they said them. The whole conversation had the quality of an initiation - an assessment of whether we understood what was being said and whether we were comfortable with it. They were not asking us directly to do anything but were trying to find out who we were. They got a very frosty reception from us, both Mike and I were somewhat lost for words as to how to best react to this situation.

We did not get the contract bar a couple of small campaigns for which we did not quote the prices they liked for economic viability issues. In retrospect, that was the correct outcome for everyone involved.

## What That Meeting Actually Described

Sit with what was being outlined in that room for a moment, because it is worth spelling out clearly.

A national brand - the kind with a marketing department, a campaign budget, and reporting structures, was paying for leaflet distribution across a defined area. A proportion of that area, by design and by prior agreement between parties the client had never met, was not going to be delivered at all. The outer edges of the campaign - the streets that are harder to reach, less densely packed, more time-consuming to cover, those were being written off before the first leaflet left the warehouse. When the client noticed and complained, those areas would be covered in response to the complaint, which would then be used as evidence that the company was responsive and thorough.

The complaint became the mechanism for doing the job that should have been done in the first place. And the second delivery was probably logged as a goodwill gesture.

This is not a rogue operation. This is, or was, a feature of how significant national campaigns were routinely structured by companies operating at the top of the industry's apparent hierarchy. The clients affected were not small businesses running their first campaign and unsure what to expect. These were national brands with sophisticated marketing teams. And they were still being routinely shortchanged - not by accident, not through operational failure, but through a deliberate approach that had been refined to the point where the people implementing it could explain it in a meeting with prospective partners without apparent discomfort.

The key to understanding why this was sustainable is the layers.

## Managing the Client: A Phrase With Two Very Different Meanings

There is a phrase that circulates in this industry so freely that most people who use it have stopped noticing what it actually means:

- Managing the client.

Every distribution company does it, every agency does it, we do it. It is, in the abstract, a legitimate and necessary part of running any service business - setting reasonable expectations, communicating proactively, helping someone understand a result that may not have landed the way they hoped. None of that is or should be cynical, most of it is just good practice.

But in that meeting, the phrase came up in a context that made its meaning very clear. And it was not the meaning described above.

What they were describing, when they talked about managing the client, was not the management of expectations around an honestly delivered campaign. It was the management of a client's capacity to notice, question, and object to a campaign that had been

delivered to a standard considerably below what they had paid for. The techniques were specific and practiced. The kind of thing you develop from things other than thinking carefully about client relationships but from years of fielding complaints about something you knew was going to generate complaints.

The first technique was information density:

- Reports that contained a great deal of data - maps, handwritten logs, timestamps, aggregate figures, coverage summaries - presented in a format that implied rigour without necessarily delivering it.
- A coverage map that showed the agreed area in full, with colour coding that suggested comprehensive delivery, without any mechanism for the client to verify what percentage of the households in that area had actually received a leaflet.

The volume of information substituted for the quality of it. A client looking at a twelve-page completion report with GPS maps, photographic evidence, and delivery statistics has, understandably, a different reaction than one looking at a single paragraph saying the job was done. The report communicates competence but it does not communicate honesty.

The second technique was the management of the complaint itself. When a client raised a concern - a specific area where they had heard from someone that leaflets had not arrived, a postcode that had produced no response at all, a street that a member of their own team had driven down and noticed looked untouched - the response was never defensive. Defensiveness invites escalation. Instead, the complaint was received with the confidence of a company that had already anticipated it, already had an answer prepared, and was genuinely unsurprised by the concern being raised:

- Of course some areas are more challenging than others. Of course density varies across a campaign zone.
- Of course there are legitimate factors that explain a lower response rate in certain postcodes.

All of these things are also true of honestly delivered campaigns, which is part of what makes them so effective as deflections.

The third technique was the goodwill gesture. When the deflection was insufficient - when the client was persistent, or had specific evidence they were not prepared to let go of - the company would arrange for the area in question to be covered again. Not as an admission that anything had gone wrong. As a demonstration of their commitment to the client relationship. This additional delivery was positioned as something generous that was beyond the scope of the original agreement, a mark of the kind of partnership they valued. What it actually was, in many cases, was the original delivery finally happening, albeit highly localised and framed as a favour.

We are describing this not to be gratuitously critical of a company that we have deliberately chosen not to name, but because the techniques are so widely replicated that they deserve to be described precisely. If you have worked with a national distribution company and found yourself on the receiving end of a confident explanation of why your results were what they were, a detailed report that somehow did not quite answer the specific question you were asking, and an offer to revisit a particular area as a gesture of goodwill - you may be recognising something now that was not entirely clear at the time.

---

## The Difference Between Managing Expectations and Managing Perception

There is a version of client management that we practise and believe in entirely. It sounds like this: the campaign covers this defined area, which contains approximately this many deliverable addresses. A proportion of those - typically between five and ten percent, and higher in areas with a known density of No Junk Mail signs - will be legitimately unreachable. The GPS record will show you everything that was done and everything that was recorded as undone. If there is a gap between what you expected and what the data shows, we will look at it with you. If that gap is on us, we will address it.

That is a conversation about reality. It involves things that are verifiable, commitments that are specific, and an outcome that the client can assess independently. It occasionally involves delivering news that the client does not want to hear. A particular area has a higher concentration of No Junk Mail signs than average. The density of a specific postcode sector is lower than the letterbox count implied, because a large proportion of the addresses are flats accessed through a communal entrance with a single letterbox. These are real constraints and communicating them honestly is the only basis on which a client can make sensible decisions about future campaigns.

The version of client management described in that meeting was a conversation about something different. It was not about helping a client understand reality, but about shaping what they believed (or wanted) reality to be, so that the gap between what they had paid for and what they had received remained invisible or, when it became visible, remained unactionable.

The distinction sounds philosophical but it has entirely concrete consequences. A client who has been given an accurate picture of their campaign - including its limitations - can improve the next one. They can adjust their area, refine their targeting, change their timing, reconsider their design. The information, however unwelcome in the moment, is useful. A client who has been managed in the other sense has none of this. They have a plausible but inaccurate picture of what happened, which means any decisions they make on the basis of it are decisions built on a false foundation. If they run another campaign, they run it with the same expectations, the same area, the same brief - and the same quiet shortfall that they still have no way to see.

This is the part that never gets discussed when the industry talks about accountability and trust. The harm is not just the money spent on a campaign that was not fully delivered. It is the compounding of that harm through every subsequent decision the client makes on the basis of what they were told rather than what actually happened. An honest completion report, even a disappointing one, is an asset. A convincing but inaccurate one is a liability that neither party can see until something forces the conversation into the open.

---

## What Clients Mistake for Reassurance

One of the things we observed, across a number of years dealing with clients who had previously worked with larger national operators, was a particular kind of exhaustion. Not anger, exactly. More a resigned familiarity with a certain type of exchange that they had learned to accept as normal.

They had learned, through experience, that when you raise a concern with your distribution company, you receive an explanation. The explanation is always plausible. It always contains

some true elements - there genuinely are areas that are harder to deliver in, there genuinely are factors that affect response rates, there genuinely is a legitimate non-delivery allowance. The explanation is never quite responsive to the specific thing you asked, but it is delivered with such authority, and accompanied by such a weight of documentation, that questioning it feels like questioning expertise you do not have.

Several of these clients told us, in so many words, that they had stopped raising concerns because the conversations were unsatisfying without being resolvable. They were not convinced by the explanations. But they had no alternative evidence to put against them, so the conversations always ended in the same place - the client absorbing an explanation they did not fully believe, and the relationship continuing on the unspoken understanding that this was simply how things worked.

That is what happens when the client management function has fully replaced the delivery function. The campaign exists, at that point, primarily as a relationship to be maintained rather than a service to be provided. And maintaining the relationship:

- keeping the client contracted,
- keeping the invoices going out

becomes the actual product, while the delivery of leaflets becomes the pretext for it.

We are not describing every large operator. There are national distribution companies that take their obligations seriously and deliver campaigns to a standard they would be comfortable with a client verifying directly. But the model described to us in that meeting was not the model of an aberrant company. It was the model of a company that had identified, correctly, that the combination of intermediary opacity and practiced client management created a space in which a very substantial business could be built. And it had built one.

The reason we have described this in such detail is not to settle old scores. It is because understanding it precisely is what allows you to recognise it, whether you are a client trying to assess the honesty of a campaign you have just run, a distributor being recruited into a network that you are now seeing slightly differently, or someone new to this industry trying to understand why its reputation has become what it has. The techniques are not mysterious. They are replicable, they are widespread, and once you know what to look for, they are not particularly difficult to identify.

The antidote to all of them is the same: direct access to primary data, without any intermediary standing between the client and the record of what actually happened. That is it. It is not complicated, it just required someone to actually build it.

---

## The Intermediary Problem

National campaigns in leaflet distribution rarely involve a direct relationship between the brand running the campaign and the person who eventually walks the streets. There is almost always a chain. A national distribution company holds the client relationship and manages the contract. That company then sub-contracts regional coverage to regional agencies. Those regional agencies may in turn sub-contract specific areas to local operators or individual distributors. By the time a leaflet reaches the person who will actually post it

through a letterbox, it has passed through three, four, sometimes five separate commercial relationships - each of which has extracted a margin and passed on a reduced budget to the next party down the chain.

At each stage, the instructions about coverage, standards, and reporting become slightly more diluted. The national company gives the regional agency a brief. The regional agency gives the local operator a brief. The local operator gives the distributor a round. At the distributor end, the budget available for the work is a fraction of what the original client paid, the instructions are a summary of a summary, and any accountability mechanism that existed at the top of the chain is essentially invisible at the bottom of it.

The evidence that comes back up through this structure follows the same path in reverse, and it degrades in a similar way. A GPS record from a distributor gets passed to a local operator. The local operator compiles a report for the regional agency. The regional agency puts together a completion document for the national company. The national company produces a campaign summary for the client. At each step, something is added:

- a professional format,
- a confident summary,
- a map that covers the agreed area - and something is lost,

which is the direct connection between what actually happened on the ground and what the document says happened.

By the time the summary reaches the client's marketing desk, it bears a plausible relationship to reality but not necessarily a close one.

The company in that meeting had refined this into something almost elegant. The core area gets done - enough to produce a measurable response, enough that the campaign is not a visible failure. In the process, peripheral areas are sacrificed - saving delivery cost that stays with someone in the chain. If complaints come in about specific streets or postcodes, those areas get covered - which is then documented as attentive client service. The whole thing holds together as long as the client does not ask questions that cannot be answered from behind a polished report. Most clients do not ask those questions, because they do not know what questions to ask.

---

## Why National Brands Are Particularly Exposed

You might assume that larger clients are better protected. More sophisticated buyers, larger teams, presumably more demanding about what they are paying for. In practice, the opposite tends to be true.

A small business owner running a local leaflet campaign for the first time has a direct personal stake in whether it works. They know the area. They may well know people who live in it. They notice quickly if nothing comes back. They are also, typically, dealing directly with the company or individual who carried out the delivery - there is no chain to hide behind.

A national brand's leaflet campaign is usually managed by someone in a marketing or operations team who is simultaneously running multiple projects. The campaign is one line item in a broader activity plan. The reporting they receive comes through the agency or intermediary they contracted. They are measuring overall response rates against projections, and they do not have the local knowledge to query why a particular postcode

underperformed. If the campaign generates some response - even well below what full delivery would have produced - it may simply be filed as a moderate success or a medium-performing channel, and the decision about whether to repeat it is made on the basis of incomplete data.

The companies that have built their business model around the structure described in that meeting understand this perfectly. They know that a large client with an intermediary relationship and aggregate reporting is far harder to disappoint visibly than a local business owner who expected their village to receive a leaflet and noticed that their own street did not. The scale of the campaign is its protection - not for the client, but for the company delivering it.

There is also the matter of what happens when a complaint does come in. A national distribution company handling a client's concerns has every advantage in the conversation. They have the data - or rather, they have the reports they have generated from the data, which is not quite the same thing. They have the professional relationship. They have the implicit authority of being the people who understand how distribution works and the client being someone who does not. A complaint about coverage in peripheral areas can be met with a detailed explanation of how delivery density varies across campaign zones, how the agreed specification accounts for this, and how the company's ongoing commitment to the account is demonstrated by their willingness to address the specific concern. It all sounds reasonable as it is meant to.

---

## What This Costs, in Real Terms

It is worth trying to put a concrete shape on what this means for the campaigns affected, because it is easy for the conversation to stay abstract.

Consider a national brand running a campaign across thirty regional areas simultaneously. Each area covers, say, 50,000 households. Total campaign volume: 1.5 million leaflets. Assuming a model where the peripheral thirty percent of each area is routinely under-delivered - not done at all in some zones, done at forty or fifty percent of specification in others - the actual delivery is somewhere in the region of one million to 1.1 million leaflets out of the 1.5 million paid for.

That is between 400,000 and 500,000 households that paid marketing was never going to reach. Across a campaign at that scale, the print cost for those leaflets has already been spent. The distribution cost, or most of it, has also been paid. The only thing not spent is the actual delivery time and effort for those peripheral areas, which is where the margin sits in the model described to us in that meeting.

The response data the client receives is real - drawn from the households that were actually reached. But it is indexed to the wrong denominator. The client believes they are measuring response against 1.5 million households. They are actually measuring it against a significantly smaller number. Their cost-per-response calculation is wrong. Their assessment of which areas performed and which didn't is wrong. And the decisions they make about future campaigns are built on a foundation that has been quietly tilted.

Rather than this being a hypothetical, it is the kind of thing that was being described to us, by implication, in a comfortable office by people who appeared to have been doing it long enough to find it unremarkable. And we encountered this with not just one company but multiple national level companies.

## The Bespoke Corporate Service: Why We Built It

When we built Marketize, the core platform was designed to address the accountability problems that affect campaigns of all sizes - the local business owner as much as the national brand. But the conversation in that office, and others like it across those early years, stayed with us. Because the problems at the national level are not just the same problems scaled up. They are structurally different, and they require a different response.

The ordinary Marketize model - client posts campaign, distributors submit proposals, client selects, GPS and escrow handle accountability - addresses most of what goes wrong at the local and regional level. But national campaigns have a specific problem that a marketplace model alone does not fully resolve: the intermediary chain. A national brand posting on Marketize and contracting a regional distributor directly would be a significant improvement over the traditional model. It removes several layers of intermediary, which is meaningful. But a large company running campaigns across multiple regions simultaneously does not want to manage thirty separate distributor relationships. That is precisely what they were trying to avoid when they went to a national distribution company in the first place.

So we built something for them that did not yet exist anywhere in the industry: a managed corporate service that handles national and large regional campaigns end-to-end, with the full transparency infrastructure of Marketize underneath it, but with the operational management handled by us.

The way it works is straightforward in principle, if not always in execution. A corporate client provides their campaign requirements - the areas they want covered, the volumes, the timeline, the distribution type, any specific requirements around demographics or delivery approach. From that point, Marketize takes over.

Our team, with our collective decades of experience, handles the regional planning, the distributor selection and briefing, the coordination of collection points, and the scheduling. The client does not manage the relationships. They do not receive a chain of reports compiled by intermediaries who each had their own reasons to present the data in a particular light. They receive the completion reports directly - GPS data, non-delivery logs, geotagged photos - generated by the distributors who actually did the work and visible through the same platform dashboard that any Marketize campaign uses.

The intermediary layers are not just reduced but are completely eliminated.

---

## What Full Transparency Actually Means at Scale

The accountability problem in national campaigns is not simply that things go wrong. Things go wrong in every campaign at every scale - a proportion of letterboxes are unreachable, routes have to be adjusted, distributors have difficult days. The problem is that when things go wrong in a multi-intermediary chain, no version of what actually happened reliably reaches the client. The reporting that arrives has passed through too many hands with too many interests before it gets there.

When every distributor working on a Marketize corporate campaign is generating their GPS record through our app, that data comes directly into the campaign dashboard. The marketing manager for a national brand can look at the coverage map for Manchester and

the coverage map for Bristol in the same view. They can see which streets were covered on which day, what the recorded non-delivery rate was, and whether the pace of movement through each area was consistent with what the letterbox density of that area would predict. They can see it without asking anyone to explain it to them, and without any intermediary having had the opportunity to compile it into a summary that tells a more convenient story.

This changes the conversation about peripheral areas entirely. Because if a peripheral area was not covered - legitimately, because of access issues, because of weather, because a distributor had an emergency - that is in the record. And the client can see it is in the record. The conversation about it is between the client and the data, not between the client and a company that has every incentive to frame what happened in the way most favourable to itself.

It also changes something more important in the long run: it changes what peripheral areas mean. In the model described to us in that early meeting, the periphery was a budget item that could be quietly removed. In a fully transparent campaign, there is no periphery that can be sacrificed without the client knowing. Every street is either in the GPS record or it isn't. Every non-delivery is logged or it isn't. The geography of what was done and what was not done is simply visible. Which means the decision about what gets covered is no longer made unilaterally by the distribution company. It belongs to the client, informed by real data.

---

## The Briefing Structure and Why It Matters

One of the persistent failures of the intermediary chain is that information degrades as it passes down through it. A client brief that is clear and specific at the top becomes a summary at the regional level, a set of basic instructions at the local level, and a handful of verbal directions at the distributor level. By the time the person walking the street has been briefed, they may know the area they are supposed to cover and approximately how many leaflets they are carrying. The nuance - the specific demographics the client wanted to target, the streets that were priority versus secondary, the timing requirements, the handling instructions for the leaflets themselves - has usually not survived the journey.

In the Marketize corporate service, the brief goes from the client to our team once, and then from our team to each regional distributor directly, in full. We do not pass it along a chain and rely on each link to pass it on accurately. The briefing is standardised across all regions so that the distributor in Leeds is operating under the same specific instructions as the distributor in Southampton, not a regional adaptation of those instructions that may or may not reflect what the client originally asked for.

This sounds like an administrative point. It is in actual fact a significant operational one:

- Campaigns where the brief is consistent across regions produce consistent results.
- Campaigns where the brief has been compressed, adapted, or partially lost by the time it reaches the delivery level produce inconsistent results

and that inconsistency then becomes very difficult to explain to the client, because the obvious question is why Manchester performed so differently from Bristol when the campaign was supposed to be the same in both places.

## The Question of Scale and What It Reveals

There is something that working at a national scale reveals about this industry that local and regional campaigns tend to obscure. At a local level, the problems we have described in this book - discarding, partial delivery, price pressure, the drift of honest operators - are serious but they are bounded. A local business owner running a 10,000-leaflet campaign has lost a few hundred pounds if it goes badly. That is not nothing, but it is survivable. The harm is direct and personal and the feedback loop, however painful, is relatively short.

At national scale, the same structural failures multiply across dozens of regions, hundreds of thousands of households, and campaign budgets that run into six figures. The harm is harder to see precisely because it is spread across so many areas - a few percentage points of shortfall here, a peripheral zone skipped there, a response rate that is lower than it should have been but not low enough to trigger a formal complaint. Nobody sees the full picture because nobody has the full picture:

- The national company does not have it.
- The regional agencies do not have it.
- The client certainly does not have it.

The meeting we described at the start of this chapter was, in its way, an education. Not in distribution - we had been learning that for years. In the commercial logic of an industry that had concluded, somewhere along the way, that large clients could absorb a level of dishonesty that small clients could not, and had organised itself accordingly.

We do not believe that is inevitable. We believe it is a function of opacity - of the fact that in the absence of real, direct, verifiable information, the party with the most control over the information is also the party with the most scope to shape how it is presented. Remove the opacity and the logic changes. The peripheral area that was always going to be done later, or done minimally, or not done at all, has to be discussed with the client in advance. The difference between what was agreed and what was delivered has to be visible in the data. The evidence cannot be assembled after the fact by the same party whose conduct it is supposed to demonstrate.

That is what we have taken the career risk to build. It is why we built it. And that meeting, with those people in that office, is part of the reason it took us as long as it did - because for a while, we were not sure there was enough or any of the industry left that wanted things to be different.

Fortunately there was and there is. And it turns out that when you give honest distributors a platform that makes their honesty demonstrable, and you give serious clients a service that puts the evidence directly in their hands without any intermediary touching it on the way, the conversation about what leaflet distribution is capable of starts to sound quite different.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Technology and Why It Hasn't Fixed Things - Yet

---

*The tools existed. The will to integrate them properly didn't.*

*GPS tracking became available to the industry years ago. Smartphones made it cheap. Yet the accountability problems described in Chapter One did not disappear. Understanding why requires looking at how technology tends to get adopted in industries that are resistant to change.*

## The Tools That Existed

By the time Marketize began development in earnest, the component technologies needed to transform leaflet distribution accountability were all available and affordable. GPS route tracking via smartphone. Geotagged photography. Escrow-like payment processing. Demographic data mapping at postcode level. Letterbox counting tools using address database APIs. None of these required invention. They required integration - and a platform context that gave them meaning together.

What existed in the industry was a disjointed set of partial implementations. A company might use a GPS tracker but have no mechanism for clients to verify the data. Another might take photographs but store them in a folder that was never reviewed. Payment systems remained largely upfront or after completion and trust-based. The technologies were present, but they were deployed in ways that preserved the accountability gap rather than closing it.

## Why Disjointed Deployment Leaves the Door Open

A GPS route map, in isolation, proves only that a device travelled a certain path. It does not confirm leaflets were carried. It does not confirm they were posted through letterboxes rather than discarded at the end of the route. And a GPS route that can be manipulated - by vehicle, by leaving the device running with someone else, by walking the route without leaflets - provides the appearance of verification without its substance or by location spoofing which has become more accessible and easier to deploy than ever before.

For any single technology to function as genuine accountability, it needs to be embedded in a system that makes manipulation detectable. GPS data becomes meaningful when it is cross-referenced against the letterbox count for the area covered, the time elapsed, the pace of movement, and the non-delivery log. When those data points are generated together within the same platform and compared against historical data from other distributors who have covered the same streets, inconsistencies become visible.

**What integrated verification looks like in practice**

When a distributor completes a campaign on Marketize, the completion report contains the full GPS route, timestamped from first to last letterbox. Non-deliveries are logged in real time using a dedicated button - at the address, not retrospectively. Geo-tagged photos appear as pins on the map at the precise coordinates where they were taken. The pace of movement across the route is visible and can be compared against the letterbox density for that area. All of this is generated automatically and is available to the client without any intermediary.

**What a Properly Integrated Platform Changes**

The practical effect of integration is this: it shifts the default. Instead of delivery being assumed and non-delivery requiring proof, delivery is evidenced and anomalies are visible. A distributor who does the job properly has a GPS record, a photo log, and a non-delivery log that are consistent with each other and with the known characteristics of the area.

This matters for clients because it removes the need to take anyone's word for anything. It matters for honest distributors and agencies because it gives them something they have never had before: objective, portable evidence of their professionalism. And it matters for the industry because it changes the competitive dynamic - when cutting corners is detectable, the incentive to price honestly is restored.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Campaign Planning

---

*For clients: what to decide, what to expect, and how to read the results*

*A leaflet campaign that is well planned tends to outperform one that isn't by a significant margin - not because planning produces magic, but because it eliminates the most common sources of wasted spend. This chapter covers the decisions worth making before you post a campaign, and what to do with the results when it's done.*

## Choosing Your Area and Distribution Type

The single most important decision in campaign planning is where you deliver. The instinct for most clients is to choose the area closest to their business, which is often not the same as choosing the area where their most likely customers live. A trades company - plumber, electrician, builder - wants residential streets with high owner-occupancy. A restaurant or takeaway cares more about density than demographics. A professional services firm may need to look at employment and income data to identify the postcode sectors worth targeting.

The letterbox counting tool during campaign setup allows you to draw a polygon, drop a radius, or select postcode sectors individually, and returns an estimated count of deliverable addresses for your chosen area. Demographic filtering tools allow you to layer household type, tenure, age range, and other indicators over your area selection.

### Distribution type

Solus distribution - your leaflet delivered alone - produces the strongest response rates and is the right choice when your offer is compelling and your budget allows. Shared distribution, where your leaflet is delivered alongside those of up to three non-competing businesses, reduces the cost per household and is a sensible starting point for first campaigns or area tests. Hand-to-hand distribution, carried out in high-footfall public locations - high streets, outside transport hubs, busy public areas - suits campaigns aimed at pedestrian traffic and requires different planning entirely.

For consultation campaigns - planning applications, civic communications, public notices - the requirements are stricter. Every possible effort must be made to reach every address. Undeliverable addresses must be logged in detail and may require follow-up by post.

## Leaflet Design: The Variable That Determines Whether Any of This Matters

There is a conversation we have had many times with clients who concluded that leaflet distribution does not work. In a meaningful proportion of those conversations, the real issue was not the distribution. The leaflet itself was the problem. A well-distributed, poorly designed leaflet is money spent delivering something nobody acted on. And yet design - not

just aesthetically, but functionally - is the aspect of campaign planning that gets the least attention.

This is worth dwelling on, because the design of your leaflet is arguably the single largest variable in determining whether a resident who picks it up off the doormat does anything about it. The distribution gets it there. The design determines what happens next.

## The basics that are still routinely missed

It sounds almost too obvious to state, but we have encountered - more than once - clients who ran a campaign and received no response, only to realise when pressed that the leaflet did not include their phone number. Or their website. Or any way whatsoever for a recipient to contact them. The leaflet was delivered. It was read. And then the person who read it had no way to act on it, so they didn't.

Before any conversation about design strategy, a leaflet needs four non-negotiable elements: a clear statement of what you do, a reason to get in touch now rather than later, your contact details in a format that is easy to read and impossible to miss, and a call to action. Every one of these needs to be on the leaflet. None of them can be assumed.

## Calls to action: the design element that does the most work

A call to action is not just a line of text that says "contact us." It is a visual and verbal prompt that creates a specific, time-sensitive reason to act. The most effective calls to action in leaflet design tend to share a few characteristics: they are immediate ("call today", "call now", "book this week"), they offer something tangible ("10% off your first order", "free quote", "mention this leaflet"), and they stand out visually from the rest of the design.

The visual component matters as much as the words. A call to action buried in the same font and colour as the surrounding copy is not a call to action - it is just more text. The devices that work include ribbon banners across a corner or edge of the leaflet, circular stamps or stickers that appear to have been physically applied, bold contrasting colour blocks, and discount codes presented as coupons with a dashed border. These are conventions that recipients recognise immediately. A ribbon that says "CALL TODAY — 20% OFF" in the top corner of a leaflet does more conversion work than three paragraphs of well-written copy.

### Examples of effective calls to action

"Call today and mention this leaflet for 10% off your first booking."

"Use code LEAF25 online for a free upgrade on your first order."

"Scan the QR code to see our full menu and order direct — free delivery this week only."

"Call now for a free, no-obligation quote. We cover your area every week."

Each of these does three things: gives the recipient a specific action, attaches a reason to do it now, and makes clear they will not lose anything by getting in touch.

## Contact details: make them unmissable

Your phone number, website, and any other primary contact method should be the easiest thing to read on the entire leaflet. Large font. High contrast. Placed where the eye naturally lands - typically near the bottom of the design or adjacent to the call to action. If a recipient has to search for how to contact you, they will not bother. The moment of intent passes quickly. Your contact details need to be there when it does.

If you are using a QR code - which increasingly makes sense, particularly when linked to a tracked campaign URL - place it prominently and include a one-line instruction next to it. Many recipients, particularly older demographics, still do not instinctively know to scan a QR code without being told. "Scan to see our full range" or "Scan to book online" removes the uncertainty.

### **The minimalist approach: curiosity as a conversion mechanism**

There is an alternative design philosophy that runs entirely counter to the instinct to include everything, and when it is executed well, it can produce a stronger response rate than a conventional leaflet - particularly for businesses targeting a premium or younger audience.

The idea is deliberate simplicity taken to an extreme: a card-weight leaflet, clean white or single-colour stock, carrying almost nothing. A logo. A QR code. A single line — a name, a web address, a phone number, or sometimes just a cryptic phrase. No explanation. No offer. No list of services.

The mechanism is curiosity. A recipient who picks up a beautifully printed, almost entirely blank card from a thick, quality stock has a different reaction to one who receives a busy A5 covered in offers and images. They want to know what it is. That desire to resolve the uncertainty is itself a conversion driver - it pulls them toward the QR code or the website in a way that a conventional design rarely does. Rather than responding to an offer, they are responding to a question they want answered.

*“A leaflet that makes someone curious enough to scan the code has already done more than one that gives them everything and asks nothing of them.”*

This approach works best for businesses where the brand itself has something to say - creative agencies, boutique services, restaurants with a strong aesthetic, luxury trades. It works less well where the offer is the point: a pizza restaurant, a local handyman service, a discount cleaning company. The message and the medium need to match.

### **Design and distribution as a single decision**

The design of your leaflet and the physical format you print it on are not separate decisions. A minimalist, curiosity-driven concept needs card-weight stock to work - on 90 GSM paper it looks like a mistake rather than a statement. A busy, offer-heavy design may carry better on a lighter stock where the volume of information is the point and the tactile feel is secondary. The format, weight, design approach, and call to action all need to be considered together.

Leaflet design is debatably responsible for a larger share of the conversion decision than any other single element of the campaign. Distribution gets the leaflet to the doormat. The design determines whether anything happens after that. Both deserve serious attention - and the mistake of treating the design as a quick task to be handled the day before print is one that typically shows up in the response rate.

Build enough lead time into your campaign. For standard campaigns, three to five days between posting and your preferred start date is reasonable. Large volume campaigns, or campaigns with tight delivery windows, benefit from earlier posting - distributors need time to plan routes, arrange leaflet collection, and confirm their availability.

## Volume, Timing and Realistic Expectations

For a first campaign in a new area, 5,000 leaflets is a practical minimum for generating response data you can actually use. 10,000 gives you a more reliable read and is the threshold worth considering if you are planning to repeat the campaign. Fewer than 5,000 in a standard residential area can produce results that are too thin to interpret meaningfully.

Build enough lead time into your campaign. For standard campaigns, three to five days between posting and your preferred start date is reasonable. Large volume campaigns, or campaigns with tight delivery windows, benefit from earlier posting - distributors need time to plan routes, arrange leaflet collection, and confirm their availability.

### Setting realistic expectations

Leaflet distribution is not an immediate-response medium for most business types. Response rates vary significantly by sector, by the quality of the creative, by the offer, and by how many times the same area has received the same leaflet. The most consistently effective approach is repetition to the same area over time - typically monthly or every two months. Each successive drop builds familiarity. Response rates tend to improve with repeated exposure rather than peaking on a single delivery.

## The Two-Tier GPS Tracking System

Marketize provides two GPS visibility settings. Full live tracking - where the route is visible to both the client and the distribution manager in real time - is available. But there is also a setting where tracking is visible to the manager during the campaign and becomes visible to the client only upon completion of either the full campaign or the day's delivery.

The reason for this option is straightforward, and it comes from experience. The situation on the ground can change quickly. A distributor might encounter an emergency. A route might need to be adjusted because of access issues or conditions that were not visible when the campaign was planned. If a client is watching a live map and sees a gap or a pause, they may call immediately and interpret an entirely normal occurrence as a sign that something has gone wrong. This kind of reactive pressure can make an already demanding day significantly harder. Thus two tiers have been created which allow the distributor to price in the higher tier preparation and logistical requirement for real time live-tracking vs immediately upon completion GPS tracking.

## Reading the Completion Report

When delivery is finished, a completion report is generated automatically. It contains a zoomable map with the full GPS route map, start and finish timestamps, street-level coverage confirmation, the distributor's non-delivery log, and any geo-tagged photos taken during the round.

Review the report against your target area. The non-delivery log will show addresses flagged as undeliverable and the reason recorded for each. A proportion of these is expected in any campaign - five to ten percent is normal across most areas (and even higher in notoriously "no junk mail" areas i.e. Fulham). If you are satisfied, payment can be released by your or automatically at the end of the review window. If you have a specific concern - a meaningful gap in coverage not explained by the non-delivery log - discuss with the distributor via chat

and ask them to clarify it. If you are unsatisfied with the answers or outcome provided by the distributor, you can raise a dispute before the window closes.

## **Measuring Response and Planning the Next Campaign**

If you included a QR code generated through the platform, your campaign dashboard will show scan data - total scans, timing, and approximate location, device used, etc. If you used a unique discount code or a dedicated phone number, track those responses separately. Compare response rates between areas if you have run more than one campaign. The creative and the offer matter as much as the targeting.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Carrying Out the Delivery

---

*For distributors: how to do the job properly, every time*

*Distribution done well is physically demanding, methodical work. It requires preparation, a specific technique at the letterbox, honest record-keeping, and a phone that stays charged. This chapter covers all of it - not just as a set of rules imposed from outside, but as the practices that protect you, your earnings, and your reputation.*

## Setting Up: Before You Leave

Before any shift, three things need to be in order. Your phone should be fully charged - carrying a portable power bank is not optional if your device's battery does not reliably last a full day. Location services must be enabled, and the Marketize app must be open and tracking before you post the first leaflet. The GPS route is the record of your work and the basis on which payment releases. A gap in the record because the tracker was started late or the phone ran out of charge is your problem to explain, not the platform's to assume away.

Count or weigh your leaflet bundles before you set off to confirm the volume matches what was agreed. Plan your route the evening before where possible. Bring sufficient water and food. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather. A rain cape is not optional in the UK. Start in the morning and finish before dark.

## Walking Your Route Efficiently

Stay on one side of the road and work through your planned stretch before crossing. A stretch is not necessarily a single road - depending on how your route is laid out, you may turn left several times in succession, continuing on the same side across multiple roads before crossing once at the natural end of that stretch. The goal is simple: cover as much ground as possible on one side before committing to a crossing. Fewer crossings means a faster and more efficient day.

## Letterbox Technique

Always use both hands at the letterbox - one to hold the flap open, one to feed the leaflet through. Never insert your hand or fingers through to the other side of the letterbox. This is not a precaution reserved for properties with dog warning signs. It is a firm rule, without exceptions, in order to avoid getting injured.

The leaflet must be fully inserted so that it falls over on the other side. A leaflet left hanging out of a letterbox is a security risk - a visible signal to anyone passing that a property may not have been checked that day or lies empty for longer periods. Beyond the safety issue, it tells the client their material was not delivered properly.

Where a letterbox is stiff or narrow, bend the leaflet gently (without creasing) along its length before posting. This increases rigidity and eases insertion without creasing the leaflet. A creased leaflet looks like rubbish before it is even read, and it directly reduces the client's response rate.

### **Multi-occupancy properties**

For a standard single-occupancy household, post one leaflet. For multi-occupancy properties sharing a single letterbox - indicated by multiple doorbells or multiple names on the door - post two, or three at most. Do not attempt to post one leaflet per flat through a shared letterbox where there are more than three flats.

## **Recording Non-Deliveries Honestly**

Use the dedicated recording button in the app to log any address where delivery was not possible. Do this at the time, at the address - not retrospectively at the end of the shift. Legitimate reasons include a clearly displayed No Junk Mail sign, an aggressive or audible animal behind the door or gate, a confrontational resident, genuine no access, or an approach that presents a real safety concern.

Record only what is genuine. The platform monitors non-delivery rates across areas and cross-references them against historical data from other distributors who have served the same streets. Accurate records protect you while inflated ones do not. The threshold for recording a non-delivery should be: would another reasonable distributor, shown this property, agree that delivery was not possible?

## **Completing a Campaign and Receiving Payment**

When your full route is delivered, mark the campaign as complete in the app. The GPS data, non-delivery log, and any photos taken during the round are compiled into the completion report automatically. If the client is happy, they can release the payment straight away, additionally, if no dispute is raised within the review window, payment is automatically released to your connected payout account.

If leaflets remain undelivered at the end of a legitimate campaign, return them as per the arrangement with the client or agency. Do not discard them. Do not post multiple leaflets through letterboxes to reduce your remaining count. Both are detectable through the platform's data and will result in financial and reputational loss for you.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Print: Formats, Weights and What Actually Works

*The physical leaflet is part of your campaign. It deserves the same attention as the distribution.*

*Clients often spend significant time and money on campaign planning and distribution, then treat the print decision as an afterthought. The physical leaflet is the thing that lands on the doormat and either earns ten seconds of attention or goes directly to recycling.*

## Paper Weight and How It Affects Perception

Paper weight is measured in grams per square metre - GSM. Standard office printing paper is 80 to 90 GSM: thin, slightly translucent, and lightweight in the hand. At this weight, a leaflet signals - consciously or not - that it is cheap. That is not always wrong: for high-volume campaigns where cost per thousand matters most, 90 - 130 GSM stock keeps print costs down. But the recipient's first impression is formed before they have read a word.

As weight increases, the perception shifts. 130 GSM has a noticeably more substantial feel - it does not flop, it holds its shape, and it implies that whoever sent it thought the effort was worth making. This is the sweet spot for most campaigns, particularly for businesses entering the market for the first time.

300 to 400 GSM moves into card territory. At 300 GSM, an A5 piece has a satisfying rigidity. At 400 GSM, it approaches cardboard. For premium products and services - luxury trades, high-end hospitality, boutique retail - this weight communicates something useful about the brand before the message is read.

### A note on A4 at high GSM

A4 at 300 GSM does not behave the same way as A5 at 300 GSM. The larger format means the piece lacks the rigidity the weight implies - it bends and flops in a way that undermines the premium effect you are paying for. If you need cardboard-like consistency at A4 size, 400 GSM is the minimum that actually works - and even then, the format is niche. In most cases, A5 at 300 GSM achieves more with less.

## Sizes: From Business Card to A2

### A6 and below

Small formats work well for appointment reminders, simple offers, and vouchers. They fit easily through letterboxes and carry a low print cost. The trade-off is limited space for information - they work best when the message is genuinely simple.

### A5

The industry standard for most campaigns. Large enough to carry a clear offer, a visual, and contact information without forcing the reader to work. A5 at 130 GSM is the practical and most value for money starting point for most new clients. A5 at 300 to 400 GSM is the gold standard for premium brands.

### A4

Gives more space for complex offers, multiple services, or detailed information - generally folded. More expensive to print and marginally more difficult to post through some letterboxes. Works well for service menus, property listings, or campaigns where the amount of information genuinely requires the space.

### A3 and A2

Rarely used for residential letterbox campaigns. Practical for point-of-sale display or hand-to-hand distribution at events. Not recommended for standard door drop campaigns.

### Custom accordion and menu formats

Primarily used by takeaways and restaurants. These are typically custom-designed for maximum information density - full menus, pricing, ordering information - folded to a manageable size. They have their own postal and handling considerations.

## The Practical Recommendation

For most clients - particularly those running their first campaign or testing a new area - A5 at approximately 130 GSM is where to start. If you want to signal something premium, move the weight up before you move the size up. A5 at 300 GSM will outperform A4 at 130 GSM for most premium brand purposes, and it is easier to deliver.

One final note: heavier stock and larger formats affect the weight of a distributor's bag, and that weight accumulates over a full day. Very bulky or heavy formats increase the physical demand of the delivery and generally has to be factored in the pricing - more often than not, you will be quoted extra for higher GSM and size items. If you are asking a distributor to carry significantly heavier stock than standard, the delivery rate per day will be lower and the cost generally reflects that.

## VAT on Printed Leaflets: What You Need to Know

Printing leaflets carries a VAT consideration that is worth understanding before you place your print order, because the liability is not always what clients expect - and it can affect your budget.

**The good news first.** Standard advertising leaflets are zero-rated for VAT purposes under UK law. Schedule 8, Group 3 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 lists "books, booklets, brochures, pamphlets and leaflets" as zero-rated items, and HMRC's published guidance confirms that advertising leaflets are zero-rated. This means a printer should not be charging you VAT on a standard A5 or A4 leaflet run - and if they are, it is worth querying.

**When VAT does become payable.** The zero rating is not unconditional. HMRC's guidance sets out specific circumstances under which a leaflet loses its zero-rated status and becomes subject to standard-rate VAT at 20%.

The key triggers are:

- **Items designed to obtain a discount.** HMRC regards an item as failing to qualify as a zero-rated leaflet if its main function is to obtain a discount on goods or services. A leaflet that is primarily a coupon - where the physical piece exists to be redeemed rather than read - is standard-rated. This is a nuanced but important distinction: a leaflet that *contains* a discount code or offer remains zero-rated, but one that is a coupon (designed to be detached and exchanged) tips into standard-rated territory.
- **Items designed for completion or return.** Items which might otherwise be considered to be leaflets, brochures and pamphlets may not be zero-rated if they are primarily intended for completion or detachment. HMRC does apply a practical tolerance: items are not primarily intended for completion or detachment if 25% or less of their total area consists of areas which are blank and available for completion, or parts to be detached and returned. Keep your response elements - tear-off strips, reply slips, completion boxes - below that threshold and the zero rating holds.
- **Items printed on laminated paper.** HMRC considers that items printed on laminated paper are designed to be kept and therefore not leaflets, which shifts them into the standard-rated category. If you are ordering a laminated finish for a premium feel, factor standard-rate VAT into your print budget.
- **Items designed to be kept for a specific purpose.** The zero rating applies to material of an ephemeral nature - intended to be read and discarded, or to accompany a product or service. If the item's main function were designed to be kept or used for a specific purpose in its own right, rather than as ancillary to another supply, it would not be a leaflet. A calendar, an admission ticket, or a reference card that someone would hold onto and use repeatedly would be standard-rated.

- **Stiff card.** Items printed on stiff paper and card are not automatically excluded from the definition of leaflets - but HMRC does regard the use of stiff paper and card as an indicator that the items have a function which would exclude them. This is relevant if you are considering the premium minimalist approach discussed earlier in this chapter: a thick, card-weight piece with only a QR code and a name may well be standard-rated, because HMRC would likely regard it as designed to be kept rather than read and discarded. Budget accordingly.

**The practical upshot.** For most standard leaflet campaigns - an A5 at 130 GSM carrying your offer, contact details, and a call to action - zero rating applies and your printer should not be adding VAT. Where your design includes significant redemption elements, a laminated finish, or card-weight stock, check with your printer and, if in doubt, your accountant before finalising the order.

The full HMRC guidance is published at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zero-rating-books-and-printed-matter-for-vat-notice-70110>

***This summary is provided for general information only and does not constitute tax advice. Your specific circumstances may differ. Consult a qualified accountant or tax adviser if you are uncertain about the VAT treatment of your print order.***

## CHAPTER SIX

# Marketize

---

*How it was built, what it does, and where it is going*

*The idea that became Marketize was first sketched out approximately fourteen years before the platform launched. The problems it was designed to solve were already clearly visible then. The reason it took fourteen years is straightforward: we were not confident the industry was ready to adopt it.*

## The Idea That Waited Fourteen Years

The leaflet distribution industry in the UK had by the early 2010s developed a deep cynicism about accountability mechanisms. Distributors who had been falsely accused of non-delivery were wary of any system that increased client oversight. Companies that had quietly built their margins around the accountability gap had no interest in closing it. And clients who had been burned multiple times had often concluded that the medium simply did not work, rather than that the delivery had failed.

Launching a platform into that environment required a critical mass of distributors willing to operate transparently - including agencies and established companies that would need to be comfortable with their GPS routes, their non-delivery logs, and their completion reports being visible to clients. That felt, for a long time, like a harder sell than it was worth attempting.

What changed was the accumulation of evidence that the alternative - allowing the industry to continue as it was - was causing measurable harm. Not just to individual clients who had lost campaign budgets. To the medium itself. Leaflet distribution is a genuinely effective form of local marketing when it is executed properly. The poor practice of a significant portion of the industry was suppressing the results of the honest operators, making it impossible for clients to distinguish between them.

***“The poor practice of a significant portion of the industry was suppressing the results of the honest operators - making it impossible for clients to tell the difference.”***

## How the Platform Works

Marketize operates as a marketplace connecting clients who need leaflets distributed with verified distributors and agencies covering their area. A client posts a campaign with their delivery area, volume, distribution type, and timeline. Verified distributors submit proposals. The client reviews them - profiles, reviews from previous campaigns, proposed pricing and approach - and accepts the one that best fits their requirements.

Payment is processed through Stripe and held in an escrow-like account. Delivery begins. The GPS record, photo log, and non-delivery log are generated in real time. On completion, a

report is generated and the client has a review window. If satisfied, funds release at the click of a button or automatically at the end of the review window. If not, a dispute process can be started by the client - reviewed by Marketize as a neutral third party, with the outcome determined by what the evidence shows.

For agencies managing multiple clients and distributor teams, the platform provides CRM tools, campaign dashboards, scheduling, and multi-distributor campaign allocation — where each distributor's GPS record feeds into a unified completion report. The agency can share a report link directly with their client without requiring the client to have a Marketize account.

## The Road Ahead

Marketize was designed to be scalable - not just in the UK, but in any country with a leaflet distribution industry and a smartphone-equipped distribution workforce. The structural problems the platform addresses are not unique to Britain. They are present in any market where a distributor leaves with a client's marketing material and returns with only their word that the job was done.

The ambition is not to replace leaflet distribution agencies or independent distributors. It is to give the honest ones a platform that makes their honesty visible and competitively meaningful - and to give clients a way to run campaigns with the confidence that their investment is protected. When the distribution is verified and the pricing is fair, the medium works. We built Marketize because we believe that.

---

Marketize is available at [marketize.biz](https://marketize.biz). Clients can post campaigns, distributors and agencies can register and begin accepting work, and the full suite of planning and tracking tools is accessible from the campaign dashboard.

## REFERENCE

# Quick Reference Guides

## Delivery Capacity by Area Type

Area Type	Typical Daily Capacity	Notes
High-density urban (terraced)	800 – 1,000	Exceptional: up to 1,300 in optimal conditions
Standard suburban	600 – 800	Mix of semi-detached and detached
Low-density suburban / village	400 – 600	More walking between properties
Rural / dispersed	200 – 400	Significant road distance between letterboxes; requires separate pricing

## Print Format Quick Reference

Format	Weight Range	Best For	Notes
A6	90 – 130 GSM	Vouchers, simple offers	Low cost, limited space
A5	90 – 400 GSM	Most campaigns	Industry standard. 130 GSM recommended for most; 300–400 GSM for premium
A4	90 – 400 GSM	Detailed offers, menus	400 GSM needed for cardboard-like rigidity at this size
A3 / A2	—	POS display, events	Not recommended for door drop
Custom accordion	—	Takeaway menus	Discuss with printer and distributor before ordering

## Distribution Type Comparison

Type	Delivered With	Relative Cost	Best Use Case
Solus	Your leaflet only	Highest	Strong offer, brand-focused, repeat campaigns
Shared	Up to 3 non-competing	Lower	First campaigns, area testing, budget-conscious
Hand-to-hand	N/A — direct handout	Varies	High-footfall public areas; events
Consultation	Your document only	Premium	Planning applications, civic communications

---

## Leaflet Distribution: The Complete Guide

*First published 2026 by Marketize · marketize.biz*

**Authors:** Michael Denton & Andrei Chejneanu

*This guide reflects the authors' direct experience in the leaflet distribution industry and the operational design of the Marketize platform. Industry statistics, delivery capacity figures, and pricing references are indicative and based on accumulated field experience. They should be treated as planning guides rather than guaranteed benchmarks. Results vary by area, campaign type, creative quality, and market conditions. Nothing in this guide constitutes a guaranteed outcome.*

© 2026 Marketize. All rights reserved.