SERPIFAI COMPETITIVE DECISION TOOLKIT · FIELD GUIDE

How to Conduct the Evidence Audit

Govern the exact relationship between a claim and its evidence: ownership, source-role competence, provenance, evidence state, quality controls, limits and permitted wording.

> **Beginner metaphor:** checking evidence is like checking labels, expiry dates and seals before cooking the decision. A full cupboard does not mean every ingredient belongs in this recipe.

V1.0.1 · 21 August 2026 · Educational field guide · Fictional examples clearly labelled

FAST ACTION

Audit one material claim in three minutes

1. Write the exact claim before opening a source list.
2. Attach the source and preserve the observed passage or data.
3. Name the source role.
4. Record **SOURCE ROLE FIT**: YES, NO or UNCLEAR - is that role competent for the exact permitted wording?
5. Classify the evidence state.
6. Test the remaining seven quality controls and the governance boundaries.
7. Rewrite the claim to the strongest wording the evidence actually supports.

Decision rule: no material word enters the decision brief unless another reviewer can trace it to the registered claim, attributable evidence record and visible rule that permits that wording.

The canonical Evidence Audit Record

Identity

Evidence ID · Decision ID · Claim ID · candidate/subject · criterion/decision use

Claim properties

Exact claim · MATERIAL/SUPPORTING · exact permitted wording

Provenance and evidence

Source reference · source role · dates · observed basis · evidence state

Eight quality controls

Source-role fit · attribution · currency · directness · context fit · independence · corroboration · conflict

Governance boundaries

Source-role-fit rationale · known limitation · collection/use boundary

Governance

Reviewer · reopen trigger · audit outcome · next action

Source role and source-role fit

A source role is not a universal quality ranking. It tells you what kind of wording the record may be competent to support.

Source role	Good for	Does not prove by itself	Fit rule
FIRST-PARTY PUBLISHED	Published offer, pricing, policy and customer claims.	Independent prevalence or leadership.	YES only for wording bounded to what is published.
BUYER / SALES EVIDENCE	Observed buyer alternatives, objections and conversations.	Population-wide preference.	YES for bounded sampled observations when context is preserved.
INDEPENDENT THIRD PARTY	External observations or benchmarks where method/scope fit.	Truth merely because the publisher is external.	Judge method and scope, not prestige.
MODELLED / ESTIMATED	Directional estimates with visible method limitations.	Observed buyer, revenue or exact company fact.	YES only for appropriately modelled/estimated wording.
DISCOVERY / INDEX	Finding entities/pages and observing indexed visibility.	Commercial substitution or leadership.	YES for bounded index/ discovery facts; NO for unsupported commercial conclusions.
INTERNAL OBSERVATION	First-hand internal sales, implementation or win/loss records.	External generalizability.	YES when sample/context support the exact wording.
SPECIALIST / AUTHORITY	Technical, legal, security, financial or regulatory requirements within competence.	Commercial conclusions outside the specialist domain.	YES only inside the relevant specialist domain and scope.
DECISION RECORD	Prior decisions, assumptions and change history.	Current market fact.	YES for historical governance facts, not current market claims.

Fail-closed role-fit states: `NO → HOLD / EXCLUDE`. `UNCLEAR → REPAIR / NARROW`. `YES` allows the remaining controls to be tested.

Evidence state is not confidence

OBSERVED

The recorded source directly contains the fact, event, statement or measurement within scope.

INFERRED

The conclusion requires reasoning beyond the observation. Keep it labelled and bounded.

ASSUMED

The claim is used without sufficient observation. A material assumption cannot silently become fact.

CONTRADICTORY

Material evidence supports competing versions. Preserve the conflict.

UNRESOLVED

Available evidence does not yet support a defensible conclusion.

The exact eight quality controls

Control	Controlled state / question	Fail closed when
Source-role fit	YES / NO / UNCLEAR - is the role competent for the exact permitted wording?	NO or unresolved competence.
Attribution	TRACEABLE / NOT TRACEABLE	A material record cannot be traced.
Currency	CURRENT ENOUGH / STALE / UNCLEAR	A material condition may have changed.
Directness	DIRECT / INDIRECT	Indirect evidence is presented as direct observation.
Context fit	IN SCOPE / PARTIAL / OUT OF SCOPE	Evidence is silently generalized beyond the Decision Contract.
Independence	INDEPENDENT / DERIVATIVE / UNCLEAR	Derivative repetition is counted as corroboration.
Corroboration	PRESENT / ABSENT / NOT REQUIRED	A consequential inference lacks genuinely separate support.
Conflict	NONE KNOWN / MATERIAL CONFLICT	Material contradiction is hidden or presented as settled.

Claim property: materiality

MATERIAL or SUPPORTING determines audit depth; it is not a source-quality score.

Governance boundaries

Known limitation is required free text. Collection/use boundary is ACCEPTABLE, UNCLEAR or PROHIBITED.

The four governed outcomes

DECISION-USABLE

The exact Claim ownership is valid, SOURCE ROLE FIT is YES, and the record is attributable, current enough, direct, in scope, sufficiently independent and conflict-free.

BOUNDED INFERENCE

Reasoning is required, but the inference remains attributable, in scope, ethically usable and sufficiently supported for its materiality.

REPAIR / NARROW

Fix ownership, role fit, provenance, scope, currency, independence, corroboration or wording before material use.

HOLD / EXCLUDE

Keep the record out when role fit is NO, provenance is missing, a material assumption is unsupported, conflict is unresolved, or collection/use is prohibited.

Relational integrity: evidence belongs to one exact registered claim

An Evidence ID may not borrow a valid Claim ID while carrying a different subject or wording. Before any usable outcome, the evidence record must match the registered Claim across:

- Decision ID
- Claim ID
- Candidate / subject
- Criterion / decision use
- Materiality
- Exact claim

Mismatch → REPAIR / NARROW.

Rewrite the claim until wording matches the evidence

Overclaim: “Competitor A is winning enterprise buyers.”

Audited records: sampled search visibility; competitor-authored customer examples; a modelled activity estimate; three recent sampled sales mentions.

Permitted wording: “Competitor A is visible in enterprise discovery and has appeared in several recent sales conversations; the current evidence does not establish enterprise market leadership.”

Principle: a narrower but more defensible claim is not a failed audit. It is the product.

Conflicts cannot join unrelated evidence

1. Create a Conflict ID under one Decision ID, Claim ID and subject.
2. Both Evidence IDs must belong to that same Decision + Claim + subject.
3. Classify the conflict as FACT, SCOPE, TIME, METHOD, DEFINITION or INTERPRETATION.
4. State whether it is material and what evidence would resolve it.
5. Keep the conflict visible until the governed resolution condition is met.

Dependency warning: five URLs can still be one source. Derivative repetition is not independent corroboration.

Frozen handoff: snapshot values must not move with the source

The Excel HANDOFF stores frozen values separately from current source formulas. At freeze time, the reviewer copies the current governed values as values-only into the frozen snapshot column and records a Snapshot ID and date.

Frozen snapshot

Static values that represent what was approved for handoff.

Current source

Live formulas retrieving the current Evidence Record.

Integrity

Each canonical field compares frozen vs current. Any change becomes DRIFTED.

Share state

READY TO SHARE only when all fields still match and the frozen outcome is DECISION-USABLE or BOUNDED INFERENCE.

Why this matters: a live mirrored view cannot prove what was previously frozen. V1.0.1 detects post-handoff source drift instead of silently updating both sides.

Team audit protocol

1. **Decision owner:** sets materiality.
2. **Claim owner:** registers exact subject, decision use, materiality and claim wording.
3. **Researcher:** preserves provenance and observed basis.
4. **Reviewer:** judges SOURCE ROLE FIT against the visible role table and records the rationale.
5. **Conflict owner:** links only evidence owned by the same governed claim.
6. **Handoff owner:** freezes values and protects the change log.

Portable handoff object

Identity: Evidence ID + Decision ID + Claim ID + subject + decision use.

Claim properties: exact claim + materiality + permitted wording.

Provenance/evidence: source + role + dates + observed basis + evidence state.

Eight controls: role fit + attribution + currency + directness + context + independence + corroboration + conflict.

Boundaries: role-fit rationale + known limitation + collection/use boundary.

Governance: reviewer + reopen trigger + audit outcome + next action.

Ten mistakes to avoid

Claim-ID borrowing

An evidence record uses another claim's ID while changing subject or wording.

Cross-object conflict

A conflict joins evidence owned by different decisions or claims.

Live mirror called a snapshot

Both handoff columns update from the same source, so drift is invisible.

Role confusion

A role is named but nobody records whether it fits the exact permitted wording.

Source multiplication

Derivative copies are counted as independent corroboration.

Freshness by accessibility

A live URL is assumed current.

Inference collapse

Analyst reasoning is rewritten as observation.

Scope transfer

Another buyer/geography/tier/time period is silently generalized.

Assumption laundering

An unsupported assumption becomes a finding after repetition.

No expiry

No trigger exists for refresh or reopening.

Research base and methodological limits

Source	Role in the method	Limit
UK PHIA Common Analytical Standards	Auditable, referenced analysis; contradictory evidence; source quality, age/currency and audit trail.	Not represented as governing private competitor analysis.
GovS 010: Analysis	Proportionate uncertainty management and visible decision implications.	Does not define SERPIFAI controlled states.
UK framework for assessment of third-party evidence	Provenance, methods, uncertainty, bias, omissions and dissent.	Transferable evidence-quality principles only.
CEBMa	Critical appraisal and multiple evidence sources.	Evidence informs; it does not mechanically dictate business action.
SCIP	Lawful, honest and transparent intelligence collection.	Not legal advice or endorsement.

Method limit: these sources support evidence-quality principles. They do not certify the proprietary SERPIFAI Evidence Audit and do not prove client or commercial outcomes.

Visible FAQs remain in the web article for users and answer engines; FAQPage rich-result markup is intentionally omitted in V1.0.1 because Google Search no longer displays the FAQ rich-result feature.