EXECUTIVE FIELD GUIDE

DEFINE WHAT WOULD CHANGE YOUR MIND BEFORE YOU KNOW THE RESULT.

A reversal condition is the future evidence that would make you reconsider an SEO investment. Define it before results create sunk-cost pressure or post-hoc threshold changes.

SERPIFAI-PRECOMMIT-REVERSAL-1.1.0

TARGET	REVERSAL CONDITION
What you want to happen. Example: “Grow qualified organic pipeline.”	What would change the decision. Example: “Reassess if qualified demand stays below the approved minimum across two comparable reviews, with valid measurement and implementation.”

BAD	“Stop if SEO performs badly.” Vague. No fair window. No validity guard. No agreed consequence.
BETTER	“Reassess if qualified non-brand demand remains below the agreed minimum after two comparable reviews, provided tracking and implementation are valid.”

This is not a universal SEO threshold and not a post-investment verdict. It is a pre-approval governance rule.

THE SMALLEST COMPLETE METHOD

NINE MOVES, ONE GOVERNED RULE

Build the condition in plain language. Expert concepts sit underneath; the operator should not need specialist terminology to start.

	MOVE	PLAIN-LANGUAGE QUESTION	EXPERT CONCEPT
1	**THE INVESTMENT**	What are we approving?	Investment scope
2	**WHY IT SHOULD WORK**	Why should this create value?	Investment thesis
3	**WHAT MUST REMAIN TRUE**	Which belief is decision-critical?	Critical assumption
4	**WHAT WE WILL WATCH**	What observable signal tests it?	Evidence signal
5	**WHEN IT IS FAIR TO JUDGE**	When is the evidence interpretable?	Latency / fair window
6	**WHAT WOULD CHANGE OUR MIND**	What disconfirming evidence matters?	Reversal condition
7	**WHAT COULD MISLEAD US**	What false triggers must be ruled out?	Validity guards
8	**WHAT HAPPENS THEN**	What consequence is pre-committed?	Decision action
9	**WHO REVIEWS IT**	Who owns review and when?	Governance

DECISION RULE	A condition is incomplete if it has no observable evidence, no fair window, no false-trigger protection, no pre-committed consequence, or no review ownership.

FALSE-TRIGGER GUARDS

DO NOT CONFUSE BAD EVIDENCE WITH A FAILED THESIS

Before interpreting a bad result as strategy failure, check whether the evidence is valid enough to judge the thesis.

TOO EARLY INSUFFICIENT TIME	**WHAT TO DO** Do not reverse yet. Wait until the pre-agreed evidence window is complete. **PRE-APPROVAL DESIGN** Define the fair evidence window before approval.
MEASUREMENT INVALID MEASUREMENT FAILURE	**WHAT TO DO** Repair measurement first. Broken tracking or an unstable baseline cannot cleanly invalidate the thesis. **PRE-APPROVAL DESIGN** Record what must be true about tracking, attribution or baseline.
IMPLEMENTATION INCOMPLETE EXECUTION FAILURE	**WHAT TO DO** Finish or validate the agreed implementation before judging the strategy. **PRE-APPROVAL DESIGN** Record the minimum implementation required for a fair test.
EXTERNAL CONTEXT CHANGED THESIS REASSESSMENT	**WHAT TO DO** Reassess the assumption rather than automatically blaming execution. **PRE-APPROVAL DESIGN** Record the buyer, offer, market or search change that would reopen the thesis.
CONDITION ACTUALLY MET	Only after the fair window, measurement validity, implementation validity and external-context checks are satisfied should the organisation proceed to the pre-committed consequence.

GOOD VS BAD CONDITIONS

PRECISION WITHOUT INVENTED PERCENTAGES

A useful condition can be numeric, pattern-based, qualitative or constraint-based. The test is whether the evidence is observable, decision-linked and fair to interpret.

BAD TARGET	“Grow organic traffic 30%.” A success target. It does not say what evidence would change the decision.
BAD VAGUE CONDITION	“Stop if SEO performs badly.” No observable trigger, fair window or validity guard.
BAD VANITY-METRIC CONDITION	“Reverse if rankings fall.” Weak when the investment thesis is qualified demand and the ranking change is not tied to the commercial path.
VALID NEGATIVE RANKING CONDITION	“Reassess if priority terms rank below position 10 across two comparable reviews, after the full fair window and with valid measurement and implementation.” A negative ranking condition can be valid when ranking position is decision-linked to the approved thesis.
VALID COMMERCIAL CONDITION	“Pause expansion if qualified non-brand opportunities remain below the approved minimum across two comparable reviews, with valid tracking and full implementation.” Tests the commercial reason for investing and protects against false triggers.
VALID QUALITATIVE EVENT	“Reassess if repeated buyer evidence shows the search problem is no longer part of active vendor evaluation.” No fabricated percentage is required when the decision-critical assumption is qualitative.

CONDITION QUALITY CHECK

QUALITATIVE COACHING, NOT A SCORE

Use PASS, NEEDS ATTENTION or NOT YET TESTABLE. The purpose is to expose the next design problem, not manufacture a confidence percentage.

CHECK	QUESTION
DISCONFIRMING, NOT TARGET?	Does this describe evidence that weakens the reason for investing rather than a desired success state?
OBSERVABLE	Can two reviewers tell whether the evidence happened?
DECISION-LINKED	Would this evidence genuinely change the investment decision?
TIME-FAIR	Has enough time elapsed for the signal to be interpretable?
MEASUREMENT-VALID	Can the observation be trusted?
IMPLEMENTATION-VALID	Was the agreed implementation actually delivered?
SPECIFIC ENOUGH	Is the rule actionable rather than vague?
ACTION-LINKED	Is the consequence explicit?
GOVERNED	Are evidence source, owner and review point recorded for the approval handoff?

PASS	NEEDS ATTENTION	NOT YET TESTABLE

WRITABLE / PRINTABLE HANDOFF

APPROVAL CARD

Use this compact card when one condition needs to travel without the workbook. Use the workbook when one investment depends on several critical assumptions.

INVESTMENT	
WHY IT SHOULD WORK	
WHAT MUST REMAIN TRUE	
WHAT WE WILL WATCH	
FAIR EVIDENCE WINDOW	
EVIDENCE SOURCE	
WHAT WOULD CHANGE OUR MIND	
FALSE-TRIGGER GUARDS	
PRE-COMMITTED CONSEQUENCE	
REVIEW OWNER	
REVIEW DATE	

A completed card is not proof that the thesis failed. At review, apply the fair-window, measurement, implementation and external-context guards before acting.

AUTHORITY WITHOUT OVERCLAIMING

The source roles support the evaluation disciplines. SERPIFAI owns the SEO decision synthesis and does not claim that these sources provide universal SEO stop thresholds.

What this method does

Helps an organisation pre-commit to the evidence, timing, validity guards, consequence and review ownership that would change an SEO investment decision.

What it does not do

It does not provide a universal SEO threshold, certify causality, score confidence, replace post-investment monitoring or release the later live investment decision.

Source roles

Google Search Central — SEO Starter Guide — Search effects can take different amounts of time; timing must be interpreted rather than assumed. Source

Google Search Central — Core updates — Supports reassessment timing/context; does not define SERPIFAI thresholds. Source

UK Government — Magenta Book 2026 — Supports lifecycle evaluation and separating implementation/context from impact interpretation. Source

Government Project Delivery — Teal Book, benefits management — Supports explicit ownership, monitoring and review arrangements. Source

UK Government — Green Book 2026 — Broader investment-appraisal and management context; does not certify SERPIFAI or supply SEO stop criteria. Source

Product handoff chain

ARTICLE → learn the method · WEB BUILDER → create one condition fast · WORKBOOK → design the full condition set for one investment · FIELD GUIDE → carry the rule into the approval meeting · DOWNSTREAM REVIEW → apply the preserved rule later.

Version: SERPIFAI-PRECOMMIT-REVERSAL-1.1.0 · Evidence roles reviewed 2026-08-10 · SERPIFAI inference is explicitly separate from source claims.