



# Retail media guide

A commerce-led approach to  
catching product issues before  
they drain ad spend





## How product-driven optimization improves advertising performance without adding complexity

Large product catalogs can create complexity for retail media teams. Budget has to stay with the right products at the right time, and teams need to catch performance shifts quickly. That gets harder when the catalog itself keeps moving with price changes, inventory swings, and content updates, across multiple systems, schedules, and owners. Problems in the catalog can erode results long before campaign reporting reflects the impact, especially when pricing, availability, or core product attributes fall out of sync with what shoppers see.

By the time performance dips show up in reporting, spend has already moved. The earlier clues usually live with the products themselves, not the campaigns, and organic product data is often where those clues show up first.

Organic product data should shape paid budget decisions because the products behind the ads shape performance across the broader commerce strategy, not just media efficiency. The challenge is not that this data doesn't exist—it usually lives across feeds, provider accounts, product catalogs, and team workflows. But it rarely sits in the same place or reaches the same people at the same time as campaign reporting.

Campaign metrics often live in one view, while product feeds, search terms, catalog updates, pricing, availability, and content changes live somewhere else. In many organizations, different teams own those inputs or review them on different schedules. That separation makes it harder to spot when a product issue is behind a paid media problem, especially when performance is reviewed through a media-only lens.

When retail media teams can see product data alongside campaign performance, they get a clearer read on what deserves budget, what needs attention first, and what should wait until conditions improve. That is what product-driven optimization changes: it closes the gap between media reporting and product reality before spend keeps moving in the wrong direction.

Performance challenge	Why media-only views miss it	What a commerce lens helps uncover
Performance starts to slip	Product data and campaign data are reviewed separately	Review product conditions alongside media performance
Spend stays on the wrong SKUs	Pricing, inventory, and content updates live in different systems	Align budget decisions to product readiness
Teams react late during promotions	Product changes happen faster than reporting reflects them	Monitor feeds, search terms, and availability in the same workflow
ROAS looks steady but sales soften	Product issues do not appear clearly in campaign dashboards	Connect product signals to media decisions

Agency partners should work from the same product lens, with paid media decisions, feed quality, search-term patterns, pricing, availability, and content all shaping optimization. Accurate feeds strengthen the signals providers use to interpret the catalog and improve how products compete in the auction.

Retail media and paid search campaigns both require this kind of discipline. Pricing can shift conversion. Inventory can limit efficiency. Product content can strengthen or weaken the path from impression to sale.

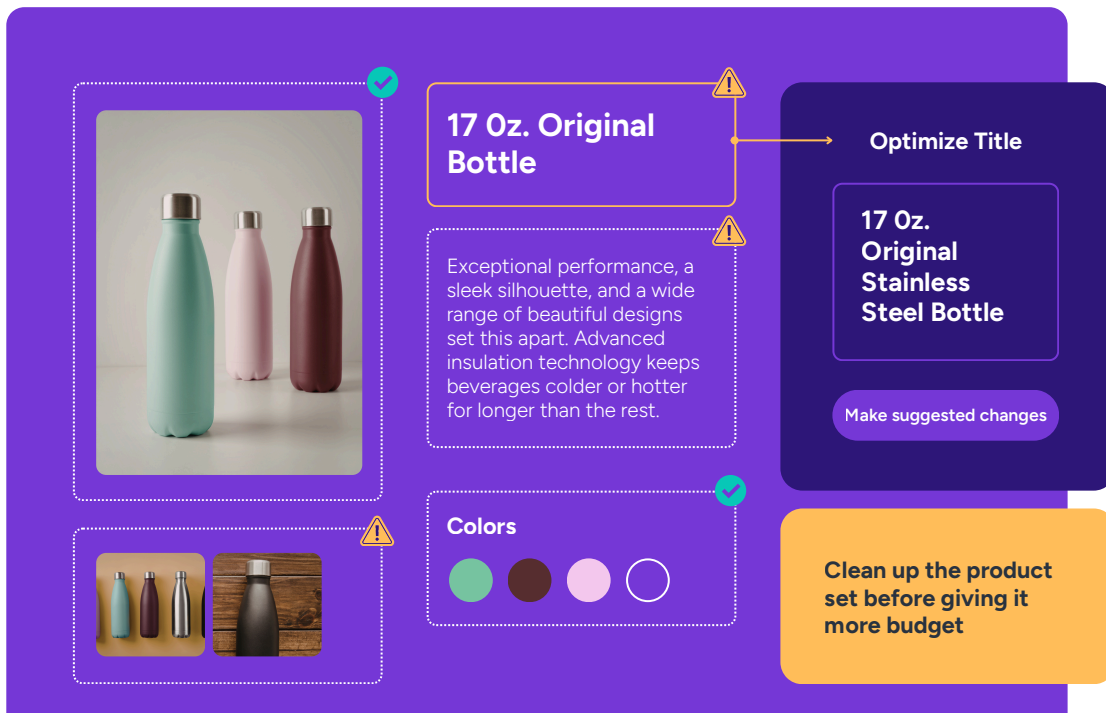
A campaign can look stable in the dashboard even while outdated titles, missing attributes, weak images, or stock changes are already dragging down results.

Large catalogs require clear product priorities, so teams can focus on the right products at the right time and meet shoppers where they are in the journey.

## Organic product conditions belong in daily decision making

Campaign settings and automation still carry weight, but they don't tell the full story. Organic product issues impact performance every day. A bid change will not fix a missing attribute, and more budget will not solve an image that no longer reflects what is actually in stock. The better starting point is the product behind the ad.

### When performance softens, the issue may be in the product data



Consider a drinkware brand whose stainless bottle line absorbs a large share of paid shopping spend. As performance starts to soften, the campaign settings might be the instinctual first place you look.

But the real impact is in the product data. The title is outdated, a key attribute is missing, and the lead image features a color that is no longer available. Search terms point to the same issue: the feed does not reflect the language shoppers' use. That product set needs cleanup before it gets more budget.

**This kind of review keeps teams from treating every performance dip as a media problem and helps them prioritize the organic product issues that deserve attention first.**

# Organic product data and overall catalog hygiene

Strategy for a regular review schedule

That review workflow should fit into how teams already analyze results.

## Daily reviews

Stay close to spend concentration and product readiness. Teams should check which items are absorbing budget, whether they can still convert, and whether organic product data still supports paid performance. Pricing changes, low inventory, active promotions, weaker product pages, and competitor shifts can alter performance fast. When a product no longer supports the spend behind it, budget should move to a stronger option.

## Weekly reviews

Look for patterns across product sets. Repeated content gaps, recurring inventory pressure, and shared pricing issues call for broader action than one-off campaign edits. Search term patterns can help teams refine titles, attributes, and feeds so the catalog stays closer to the language shoppers use. This is also the right time for testing, since one clean change produces a clearer read than several changes at once.

## Monthly review

Return to business priorities. Teams can reassess retailer focus, simplify campaign structures that slow execution, and confirm that reporting still answers the questions stakeholders are asking. It is also the right time to make sure organic product data, feed quality, and promotional priorities still reflect the broader plan.

That cadence reduces repetition and keeps product priority, media activity, and business goals in closer alignment.

## Performance reporting carries more weight with product context

Return on ad spend (ROAS), which shows revenue earned per dollar of ad spend, still has a role, but one efficiency number cannot carry the whole story. Teams also need to know which products absorbed the budget, what changed in price or availability, and which products the business wants to prioritize next. That context turns reporting into a planning tool rather than a backward glance.

Retail media adds more pressure to that context. Retailers differ in attribution, reporting windows, and ad formats. A single efficiency number can hide important differences across products and placements. Product-level data lets teams read performance with more precision and make stronger decisions after the report lands.



Stakeholders rarely stop at a headline metric. They want to know which products moved, what changed, and where budget should go next. Product context keeps that conversation tied to product priorities and business goals.

## More discovery channels raise the stakes for accurate product data

Shoppers now encounter products across more search and shopping experiences before purchase. According to Rithum and Industry Dive's [latest report](#) on how consumers are using AI to shop, more than 90% of AI-active shoppers use LLMs to research product information and compare products and prices, and 53% use them to decide where to buy. That raises the cost of weak product data, especially when 67% of shoppers say accurate pricing is what they most need AI to get right and 34% say the same about product availability. Complete, current product feeds carry those signals into the environments where products compete for visibility.

### Weak product information can drag performance down across the program.

Promotional periods bring those weaknesses into plain view. A product may qualify for more visibility, but a missing attribute, outdated image, or inventory shift can still undermine performance mid-event. During a sitewide sale, for example, a top-spending SKU may sell through faster than expected. Teams working from campaign performance alone often react late. Teams watching product conditions can spot the shift sooner, update feeds, reflect promotional changes quickly, and move budget to an in-stock alternative without breaking momentum.

## WHERE RITHUM SUPPORTS THE COMMERCE STRATEGY

Rithum brings organic product data, pricing, inventory, and performance signals into advertising decisions alongside campaign management at scale, helping marketers manage paid and organic performance with more product-level context inside each retailer environment. That includes feed-level inputs that help providers interpret products and respond to changes in price, inventory, and promotions.



That connection lets teams see product changes and advertising performance together, act across a broader set of products, and cut the manual work that grows with a large catalog.



Product-driven optimization does not add another planning layer or a new reporting ritual. It brings more structure to the complexity already built into modern retail media and digital marketing.



Teams using this approach keep spend, product visibility, and business priorities closer together across retailers and advertising programs.



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# Questions to ask before scaling a program



Which products absorb the most budget today?



Which search terms or feed gaps point to product details that need work?



Which products does the business want to prioritize next?



Which recurring issues impact those products?



Is your paid media team or agency partner considering organic product attributes as part of the same strategy and optimizing with the same product lens?



## What to do with the answers:

If the answers point to feed gaps, weak content, or outdated priorities, fix those first. Then decide where budget should move.