

# Five Things We Learned in 2025

## Marketers face parallel pressures

Specialist audiences are flooded with content; distribution teams need clearer attribution; and brand equity often moves slowly. Traffic referral promises a bridge between awareness and measurable action, yet the quality of referred traffic is inconsistent.

**IQ Engage addresses this gap**, with segments shaped by what professionals are actively watching.



## Five lessons based on real engagement across thousands of referral touchpoints

### 1. Targeting behavior delivers the best traffic

When content matches what professionals are interested in, they're far more likely to engage.

- The strongest CTRs (4%+) aligned to clear behavioral segments, whereas generic themes delivered closer to 1%.
- Aligned campaigns showed predictable CTR performance compared with the wider variance seen in generic messaging.
- When viewers are already exploring a topic, referral feels like progress and naturally supports their research journey.

 **Takeaway:** Start with behavioral intent, it sets the ceiling for performance.

### 2. 'Always-on' programs produce the best results

Consistent promotion delivers better results than occasional big pushes.

- Long-running programs maintained steady traffic and CTRs at or above the median.
- Stop-start activation slowed discovery and reduced campaign momentum.
- Sustained presence and consistent messaging created compounding impact through returning traffic.

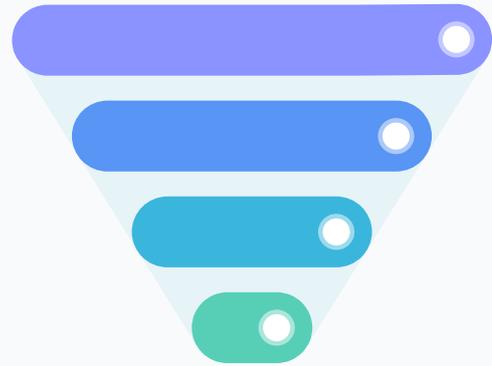
 **Takeaway:** Momentum matters - consistency compounds attention and conversions.

### 3. Learning content outperforms

Positioning content as a way to learn keeps advisors watching for longer.

- Audience- and theme-led messaging consistently delivered above-average CTRs, often above 2%.
- Product-first messaging underperformed when introduced too early in the journey.
- Referrals that continue the educational narrative sustain research momentum and lead to deeper engagement.

♀ **Takeaway:** Education is the engine, lead with value before product.



### 4. Split testing lowers costs

Small improvements, tested and refined over time, lead to big gains.

- Variant testing frequently doubled CTR while targeting the same audience segment.
- With behavioral targeting fixed, performance differences come down to creative variables.
- CTR gaps between 1% and 3% created meaningful cost differences when scaled to thousands of clicks.

♀ **Takeaway:** Momentum matters - consistency compounds attention and conversions.



### 5. Laser-targeting beats the shotgun

Smart targeting helps reach the right firms and grow influence where it matters most.

- Firm-level targeting reliably achieved upper mid-range CTRs and higher click volume.
- Combining behavioural alignment with firm relevance maximised both context and intent.
- Targeting large networks delivered stronger volume and more consistent results than product-driven bursts.

♀ **Takeaway:** Double-align your targeting, intent + distribution priority unlocks scale.

## Implications for future campaigns

The behavioral layer behind IQ Engage has shifted the focus for referral programs in 2025. The data across dozens of campaigns points to three conclusions:

-  **Behavioral targeting is the foundation of efficiency.** First, treat behavioral targeting as the base layer. Quality is driven by matching content to demonstrated interest, not generic personas.
-  **Invest in consistency.** Always-on programs build recognition, deliver stable performance and create compounding value that short bursts cannot match.
-  **Experimentation is essential.** Structured testing should be built into every campaign cycle. Creative and message differences materially affect referral quality even when targeting remains constant.

Referral should never interrupt the audience's journey, just advance it. These results provide the evidence, the opportunity now is to embed these lessons in 2026, where behavioral understanding becomes the core principle for how brands are earning and sustaining attention.