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BEST
TIPS FOR
ADVENT
CALENDARS

LeadFamly

FOREWORD

This isn't just another ebook written for marketing purposes.
10 years ago, we were a small Danish agency that took on clients with web development and design projects. Each fall, we knew the rush was coming. As the leaves fell, our work days got longer. Our busiest time of year was the holidays because we built digital Advent Calendars.

After some years of this and with some extra free time in the slow summer season, we started building a platform that our customers could use themselves to build game campaigns.

We saw that marketers' jobs were only getting more challenging. It's harder to cut through the noise. But we also knew (from experience) that gamification makes brand interactions memorable. That it helps marketers get real business results immediately.

We really believe in the power of gamification — both how it connects brands with their customers and how crazy the engagement is. It's also just cool. It's fun to see some of the most well-known brands build marketing games on our platform.

Over the years, we have learned lessons the hard way. Last year, one of our new colleagues encouraged us to write this all down so we put pen to paper. But we'd be mistaken to not thank our Marketing colleagues too. We created this ebook so you don't have to do the same. Like any good read, we hope it's helpful, thoughtful, and inspiring.
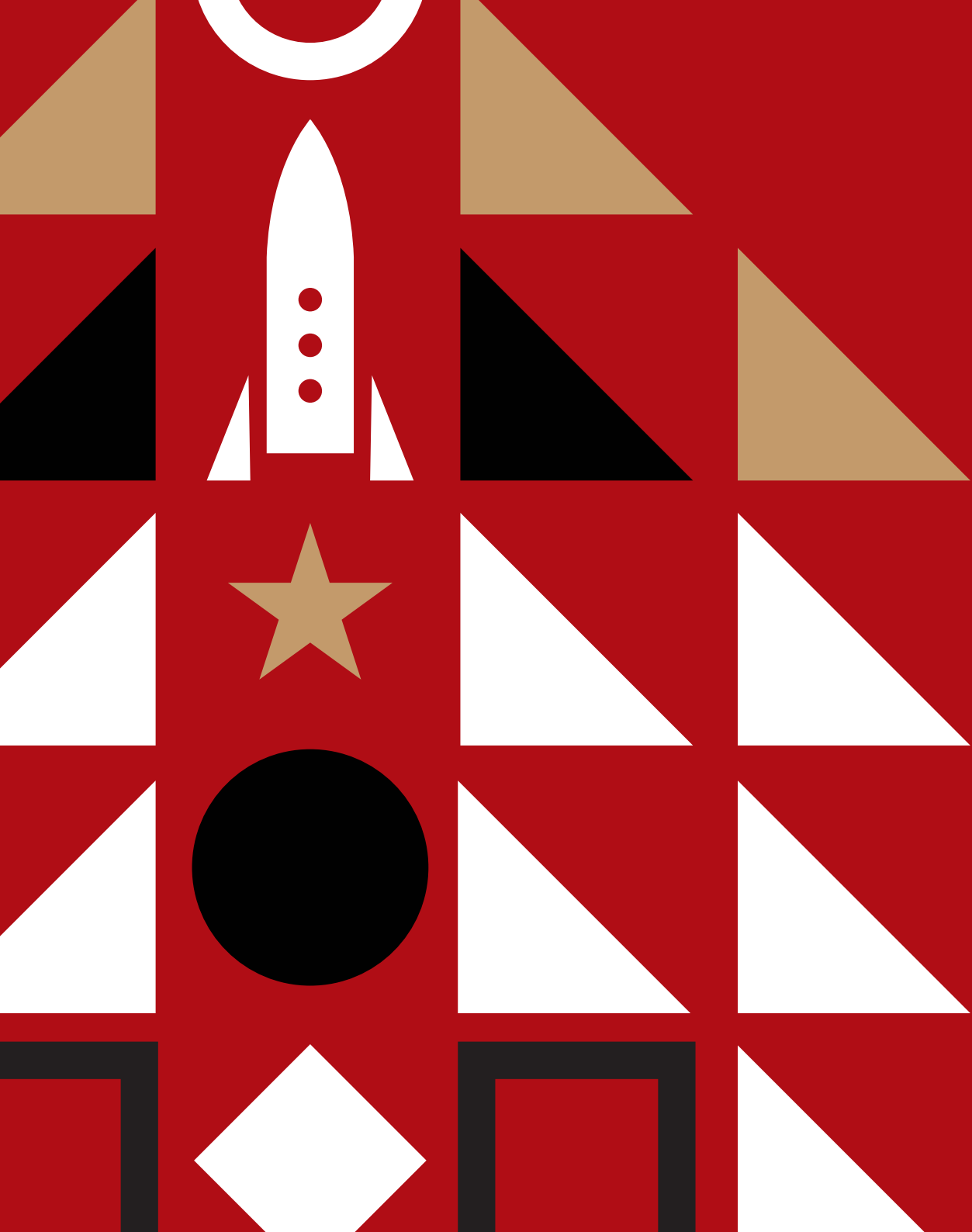
GAME ON!

Martin & Thomas

Thomas
CTO and Founder

Martin
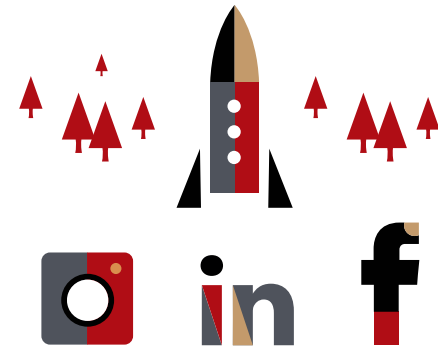*CEO and Co-founder*

Introduction

Ready to get started on your best Advent Calendar yet? In many countries— including Germany, the UK, the US, Denmark, and the other Nordic countries, children and adults alike receive an Advent Calendar each year. These can range from homemade gifts, to a store-bought chocolate Calendar, to even a daily LEGO minifigure Calendar.

At LeadFamly, we know how to build an eye-catching and engaging digital Advent Calendar. We've done this for the last 10 years, and a few years ago we created an easy-to-use platform that allows companies to have full control over their Advent Calendars. And we like to think we know what we're talking about: every second, a new user sees a game campaign built with LeadFamly.

This ebook will share our lessons, best tips, and some important things to remember to include in your digital Advent Calendar. Let's get started.

USE
SOCIAL MEDIA
AND
MARKETING
TO
AMPLIFY
YOUR
REACH

1. Consider a pre-launch campaign

More and more companies use a pre-launch campaign in mid-November as a prologue to the Advent Calendar.

It can be personalized for your industry or needs. Some customers use a pre-launch to gather new permissions while others engage with customers to understand their buying decisions for that year.

Be sure that you redirect your pre-launch campaign to the Advent Calendar when the campaign starts. If you don't do this, you risk losing participants converting from the pre-launch to the Advent Calendar.

2. Send daily reminder emails

In a busy world, brands need to remind their audience to pay attention and remember them. Last year, we found that the average participation rate for an Advent Calendar (daily & weekly) was 6.37 times throughout December.

Brands can expect four to six engagements when they don't send emails, but can look forward to 10 to 12 engagements when daily reminder emails are sent.

Considering this, it's worth it for brands to spend time creating an email workflow for their Calendar audience.

3. Collect more data with progressive registration fields

Remember that a participant in an Advent Calendar will return to the Calendar several times (especially if you send daily reminder emails!). If participants are asked to share their name and email repeated times, then it will become redundant. This is not a good user experience. Therefore, take advantage of this and ask other types of questions that can give you more information about your audience.

We have seen customers successfully add registration fields that ask for gender, the nearest store to them, their phone number, and even more personal questions about family size or how often they shop. Once users have visited your Advent Calendar a few times, then they will be more likely to provide more personal data.

4. Use your channels — social, website, newsletter — to spread the word

One way to get your audience excited is to drop hints about the Advent Calendar. Do this on social media, in a website pop-up, or through your newsletter.

We teach our clients to use social media to amplify their campaign. For example, an insurance client used social media to update their audience each day in December. One of their posts was "Yesterday, only 40% answered correctly so today we've made the question even harder!"

If you have ran an Advent Calendar before, then use the data from that to tease the upcoming fun. Gather social proof and share it with your audience.

LeadFamly

This will also help with getting others to join in. Did you know that 93% of consumers say online reviews now impact their purchasing decisions? While your Calendar is not a purchase, these findings show that it's important to share social proof because it is more likely to get others to act.

5. Set tracking pixels to gather more insights

Tracking pixels can help marketers follow a website visitor's progress and understand how the Advent Calendar is performing with the audience. Since your Calendar will get a lot of traffic and a good part of this will come from users who are not customers with you, use this opportunity to better understand them.

For example, January and February are popular months to have sales in the fitness industry. If a fitness company has placed a tracking pixel in their Advent Calendar, then they can retarget the Calendar participants once it's time to start advertising promotions.
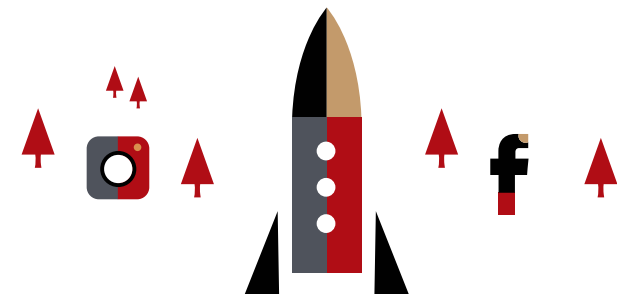
Lastly, we can recommend Facebook and Google pixels because they will give you new insights and an even stronger profile of users/visitors from the Calendar.

6. Create videos for your campaign

As consumers, we can agree that video is very engaging. As marketers, we also know that videos have more impact than many other traditional forms of marketing. In fact, Hubspot found that 87% of consumers say they wanted to see more video from brands in 2019. That's only gone up this year.

An example from a recent campaign was one of our clients who created a 'play' on 360° photos. They made a 360° photo to be used as a scavenger hunt on one day of the daily Advent Calendar. Players had to search the image and count the number of elves.

So, if video doesn't work for your brand or team, get creative. How can you think outside of the box?

PLAN

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7. Think about how much time you have, and then decide on a daily or weekly Advent Calendar

Don't underestimate the effort that it takes to build a daily Advent Calendar versus a weekly one.

After deciding on daily versus weekly, we recommend you gather the visuals for the first week. Then focus on the questions and answers, or the content for the specific game concepts.

What we don't recommend doing is gathering the 25 questions and answer options first. The holiday Calendar can and will evolve throughout the month of December. We've had several clients who end up changing themes, images, or using the analytics to change direction. As long as you are prepared with a rough idea and week one ready, then you can expect your Calendar to run smoothly.

If you don't have much time to commit to building an Advent Calendar, then we recommend taking the traditional route of just creating a weekly Calendar. This weekly Calendar can be just as engaging and effective because quality is the most important factor.

8. If this isn't your first Advent Calendar, then evolve your campaign

Congratulations if you've created an Advent Calendar campaign before! Make sure to use a new or updated idea this year so it's a fresh experience for your audience. This also gives you the chance to use last year's learnings to make this your best campaign yet.

9. Choose prizes based on what works for your customers and your business

This depends a lot on your industry and customer volume. What we have found to work well is a mix of small and medium prizes on most days with a larger main prize drawn at the end of the Advent Calendar. This larger prize can be a lucky draw from all of your participants from the previous 24 or 25 days.

We've found that surprisingly, a higher monetary value prize has a lower registration rate. That means that it's less about the prize and more about participating. For example, one of our clients created a lucky draw for a gift card worth £125 that attracted thousands of participants. At another time, the same client scheduled a giveaway for a £1,500 gift card in exchange for email addresses only. This yielded a much lower engagement and less interaction, which shows that the interaction and experience matter more than the prize.

10. Connect the game campaign to your website to maximize traffic

Let your website visitors know about your ongoing game campaign. This is different from directing your audience to your website to find answers. Gamification can result in a 100-150% increase in marketing metrics like website analytics and community activities.

Through either your website, a landing page, the countdown feature in the platform, or a pop-up, you can promote daily offers or other important messages to your audience. Last year, we saw many customers use the LeadFamly pop-up builder to promote their Advent Calendar, and they updated it daily. They found this to be a great way to give their audience a fresh experience each time they visited their website.
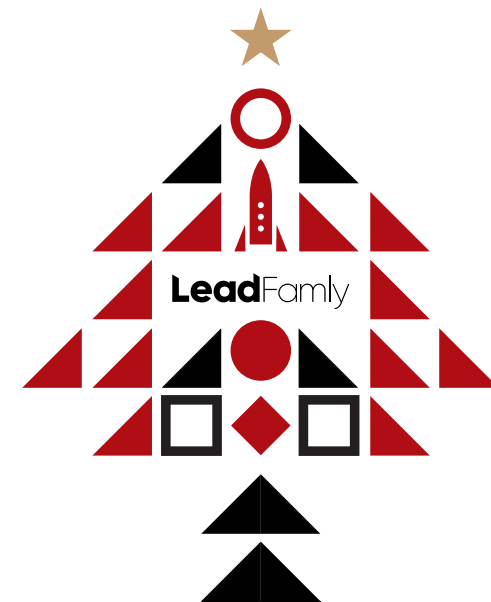
11. Pick the right game(s)

Spend time figuring out what the best game concept is for your brand. There are three main game types that the LeadFamly platform offers: effort, luck, and knowledge games. You may want to use the game concepts in just one type or the best solution might be a mix. The way to figure this out is to understand the purpose behind this campaign, then work backwards and decide the games that will get you there.

But if in doubt, the classic Advent Calendar is always there. It's an engagement homerun!

12. Make sure your campaign is mobile-friendly

You may even decide to build an Advent Calendar mobile-first. This year, Google started mobile-first indexing for all websites, which means that their bots crawl the mobile version of a website and not the desktop version. This means that mobile-friendly content is crucial.

DESIGN
THE
RIGHT
ADVENT
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24

13. Use your company's branding in your campaign: keep it consistent

Take the time to include your branding in your campaigns. It's important to have a consistent look so that your Calendar is a natural extension of your brand experience rather than looking disjointed. Use similar graphics, tone of voice, and typography.

14. Make the questions difficult

Many customers make daily questions too easy. We've seen examples where the questions are too basic, and their customers lose interest. From our analytics, we know that there is no drop-off when the daily questions are difficult.

So why not take advantage of the opportunity to teach your customers knowledge and insights about your business?

15. Use what you already have: your website is perfect to get your audience involved

When designing the questions, direct your audience to your website to find the answers. This does a few things:

– Gets your audience familiar with your website
– Gives them time to actively interact with your brand
– Drives traffic to your website

16. Use campaign responses or feedback for future content

The data and interactions that a company receives during an Advent Calendar is fantastic. In addition to the time participants spend with your brand, you can also design the questions and experience so that you can use the findings as feedback on your product, offering, or experience.

What you gather from the campaign can also be used for content ideas. For example, a retail client challenged their audience about their sustainability knowledge. They were surprised to see that only 40% knew about the retail company's sustainability efforts. This knowledge kickstarted a series of social media posts. This takes creative thinking, but it can help re-engage your audience once the Advent Calendar has finished.

17. Create high-quality content to win big

Now's the time to focus on sharing great content, so make sure it's quality over quantity. We looked through past years' Advent Calendar campaigns and were surprised to see that companies in unlikely industries such as electricity, insurance, banks, trade unions, and pension organizations had some of the top participation rates in December. We dove deeper and looked for a pattern. What we found surprised us.
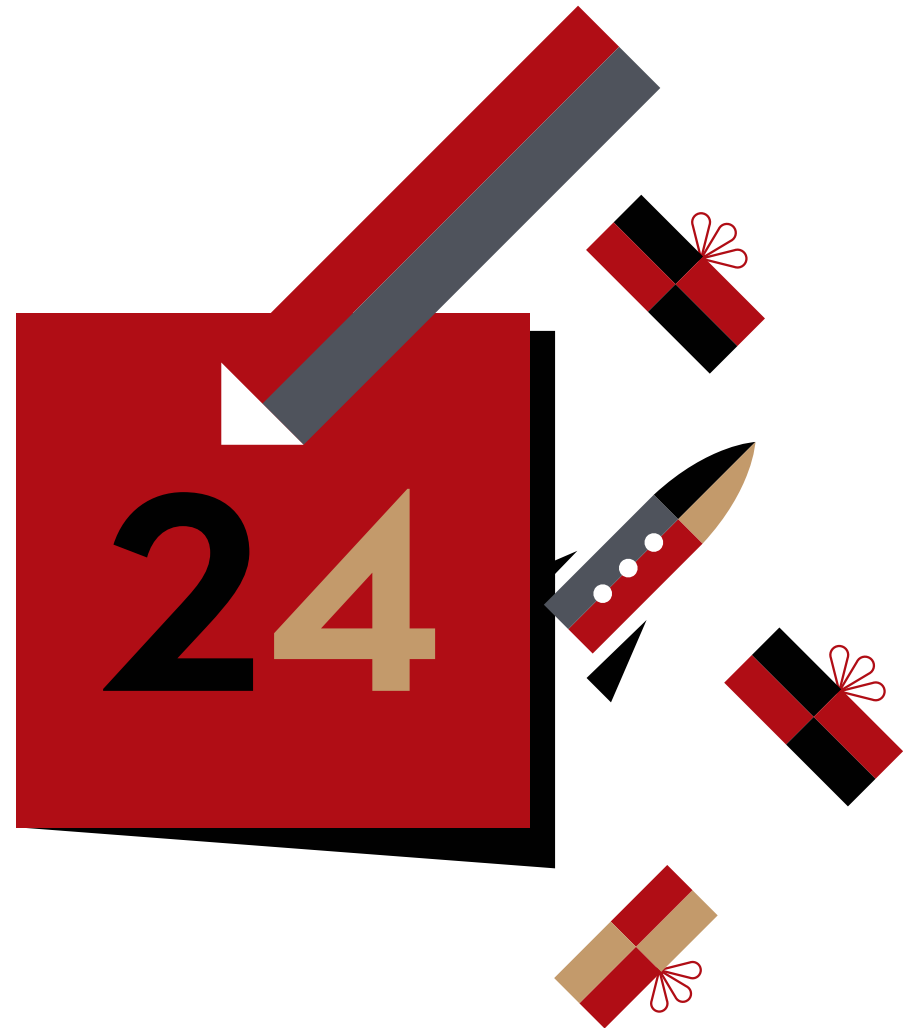
The common denominator was a sharp focus on content. So now we've become content evangelists, and we also practice what we preach.

18. **Remember to look at your branding holistically**

Keep a 'bird's eye' view of what you are trying to accomplish with this game campaign. That means choosing the right game concepts that fit with your brand, which could be impacted by your industry, business model, or by what your customers like.

Rather than make choices based on what your team thinks customers will like, take the time to research and discover what they will find engaging (a pre-launch campaign would be a great way to do this). Use these findings to adjust your positioning so that customers are excited to engage with your brand.

ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE TO WIN
BIG

19. Consider creating special rewards to keep engagement high

Thank your biggest supporters, Calendar returnees, or social media following with an extra incentive. Maybe it's a special reward or an additional voucher. It's not the size of the prize that matters— it's having that special access. Customize this based on what works best for your brand and your game campaign.

20. Use the first week to experiment and see what engages your customers best

If you have the time, we recommend spending the first few days testing different processes, gifts, or questions before finalizing weeks three and four of your Advent Calendar. For example, you can test whether you get the best daily conversion when users register before answering the questions or only after the questions have been answered. You can also test question difficulty, type of game, and other aspects of game flow to see what performs best.

21. Be creative!

If it's fun to build, then it'll be fun to play. Brainstorm new and fresh ideas, and test them out. Go into a room with a few colleagues and have a brainstorm session where anything can be discussed. Being creative also means understanding what your customers want and personalizing the Advent Calendar around that.

22. Show off the potential prizes

Like we said earlier, it's not the size or the value of the prize that matters but the experience the customer has. As humans, we are hardwired to want to compete. In addition, winning yields a feel-good rush of dopamine so 'teasing' what your audience could win may motivate them to keep returning.

So remember that it's not what the prize is, but that it exists that matters.

23. Make games that help your audience feel good rather than 'playing' on negative emotions

Gamification expert Yu-kai Chou explains that the emotions a person feels when they are engaging with a game or gamification can be caused by either <u>white hat or black hat triggers</u>. Here is how he differentiates them:

🚀

If something is engaging because it lets you express your creativity, makes you feel successful through skill mastery, and gives you a higher sense of meaning, it makes users feel very good and powerful. This is white hat gamification.

🚀

On the other hand, if you are always doing something because you don't know what will happen next, you are constantly in fear of losing something, or because there are things you can't have, even though you would still be extremely motivated to take the actions, it can often leave a bad taste in your mouth. This is black hat gamification.

We think many of you will agree: it's always a good idea to design an experience that makes your audience feel happy and motivated.

24. Make time to promote Advent Calendar winners and your community

Doing this makes for a more personal experience, and it creates a deeper connection between your audience and your brand. At the same time, it shows that it's actually possible to win. Consider showing them on the campaign page itself as well as in a social media post or your newsletter.

25. Follow up post-campaign with customers in the new year

Whether the goal of your Advent Calendar is to create a fun activity for your customers or a hardcore hunt for permissions, we recommend you do a follow up once you're back to work after the holidays.

It's an opportunity for show-and-tell where you can highlight some positive campaign figures, the large prize winner, and share the average number of Calendar participants.

It's also a chance to re-engage Advent Calendar participants with a new opportunity to win a prize in January. This can be quite interesting and effective, especially if you've found in previous years that people leave your permission list after the holiday campaign is over.

If nothing else, it never hurts to wish a

Happy New Year!

CONCLUSION

As we approach the holiday season, our biggest recommendation is to always think from the point of view of your customer. Tailor your Advent Calendar to their preferences. Offer prizes that they care about. Give them experiences they want. In return, you'll get an audience that engages with your brand multiple times over the course of a very busy shopping period.
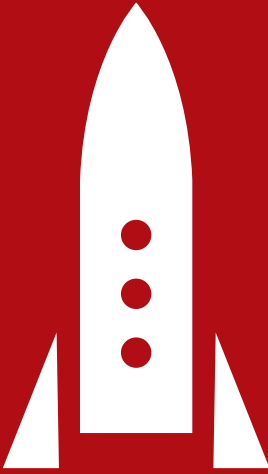
The average engagement for an Advent Calendar built in the LeadFamly platform last year was **50 seconds**.

Also, remember to consider the user experience throughout the entire month. If you choose to do an Advent Calendar, then offer a variety of games, giveaways, and glory. Keep it fresh, and you can be sure that your audience will keep returning.
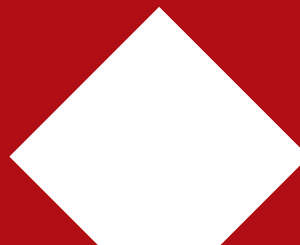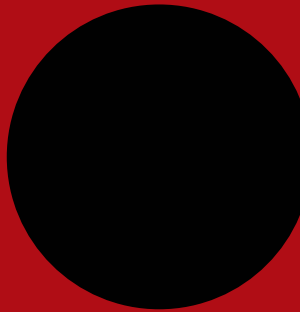
Gamification, and specifically the online Advent Calendar, allows brands to engage and activate their target audience over a longer period of time. It offers the unique opportunity to keep them engaged (compare this to the average attention span of a human is down to eight seconds), cut through the noise (on average, people are exposed to 4,000-10,000 ads per day), and be memorable (on average, brands have just **two seconds to catch attention**).

GAME ON!

Contact us if you want to talk about what might make sense for your campaign.

WANT TO
KNOW MORE

Visit the LeadFamly Library to understand more about marketing gamification or view an on-demand webinar.

Visit the library

Connect with a gamification expert to learn more about opportunities with gamification in marketing for your company.

Connect with an expert

Lastly, we love to chat. Drop us an email at hello@leadfamly.com to say hi, or if we can help answer a question. Or you can message us directly from the LeadFamly website.