Personalized Merchandising Readiness Checklist — One Page

Fora Soft Learn

The home screen is a recommendation, rebuilt per viewer to beat the ~60-90-second window before a browser gives up. Personalize four layers, balance relevance with diversity, respect position bias, choose artwork per viewer, and keep editors in charge of launches and rights. Optimize for watch time, never raw clicks. Netflix product surfaces move - confirm live before planning against them.

1 · THE FOUR LAYERS (build all per viewer)

- ☐ **Row selection** — which rows appear, from a large candidate pool. Not everyone gets the same rows.
- ☐ **Row ordering** — the top-to-bottom order; the most useful row goes near the top, where eyes land.
- ☐ **Within-row ranking** — the left-to-right order; the strongest title starts on the left.
- ☐ **Artwork** — the single image per title, chosen per viewer; same show, different face.

2 · PAGE GENERATION — RELEVANCE x DIVERSITY

- ☐ **Relevance** — every row should be one this viewer engages with; easy to over-optimize into clones.
- ☐ **Calibration** — reflect the proportions of tastes (70% romance / 30% action), don't bury minor interests.
- ☐ **Re-rank** — take the relevance-sorted list and reshuffle to restore calibrated diversity.
- ☐ **Mix logics** — Continue Watching, Top 10 (country-wide list, personalized position), Trending, Because You Watched.

3 · ARTWORK & ORDERING (the high-stakes details)

- ☐ **Candidate images** — produce many per title (moments, characters, moods) so there is something to choose from.
- ☐ **Contextual bandit** — pick per viewer/context; mostly exploit the best-known image, sometimes explore an untried one.
- ☐ **Spend on lesser-known titles** — a famous show is watched anyway; a hidden gem lives or dies by the image.
- ☐ **Correct for position bias** — never learn from raw clicks; a top slot gets clicks just for being on top.

4 · EDITORIAL CONTROL, METRICS & TRAPS

- ☐ **Editors set the rules** — eligible titles, mandatory rows, what to promote, what must never be adjacent.
- ☐ **Cover what models can't** — paid launches (cold start), brand/PR placement, licensing windows & territories.
- ☐ **Optimize for watch time** — did they start AND keep watching; clickbait artwork wins the tap, loses the trust.
- ☐ **Track the right metrics** — browse-abandonment (no-play sessions), watch-time lift, retention — not raw clicks.

THE ORDER OF OPERATIONS — PERSONALIZE FOUR LAYERS, CALIBRATE FOR RANGE, LEARN ONLINE, KEEP EDITORS IN THE LOOP

On a large catalog the home screen is the product: most viewing starts from what the system surfaces, not from search, so how you arrange the page decides how much gets watched - and you have only the roughly 60-to-90-second window before a browsing viewer gives up. Do it in order. First, personalize all four layers rather than one: which rows appear, the top-to-bottom order of rows, the left-to-right order of titles inside each row, and the single image each title wears - a generic page builds none of them per viewer. Second, in page generation balance relevance against diversity: ranking by relevance alone produces ten clones of the viewer's biggest taste, so calibrate the page to the proportions of their interests and use a re-ranking step to hold space for minor ones. Third, respect position bias - the top-left gets vastly more attention, so ordering is most of a row's value, and you must correct for position when learning from clicks or you build a rich-get-richer loop. Fourth, personalize artwork: give each title many candidate images and let a contextual bandit pick per viewer, exploiting the best-known image while occasionally exploring an untried one, learning continuously instead of waiting for a slow A/B test, and spend the effort on lesser-known titles where the image does the most work. Throughout, keep editors in charge of what a model cannot measure - paid launches before any data exists, brand- and PR-sensitive placement, and the licensing windows and territory rights that constrain what can appear at all - by letting editors define the candidate pool and rules and letting the algorithm personalize within them. Finally, optimize every layer for watch time and retention, never raw clicks, and track browse-abandonment as a retention lever. Netflix product surfaces and names change - re-verify before you plan against them.



GO DEEPER · THE 7-VOLUME HANDBOOK

Fora Soft Video Engineering Handbook

Seven volumes, 9,000+ pages: encoding, streaming, audio and AI for video products — from the pixel to production.

By Nikolay Sapunov, CEO at Fora Soft · Kindle & paperback on Amazon

Browse the handbook on Amazon →

This checklist covers the four personalization layers, relevance versus diversity, artwork choice and editorial control. Our seven-volume handbook covers the video stack under the home screen. Start with Volume 6 for AI models, search and thumbnails, then Volume 3 for players and QoE, and Volume 1 for encoding.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE

- AI models for ranking and search
- Player behaviour and watch-time telemetry
- Computer vision for artwork and thumbnails
- Encoding quality behind each title

THE FULL HANDBOOK · 7 VOLUMES · 9,000+ PAGES · ALL ON AMAZON

Vol. 1 · Video Encoding — pixels and color to H.264, HEVC, AV1, quality metrics and AI

Vol. 2 · Video Streaming I — network transport, contribution and ingest, HLS, MPEG-DASH, CMAF

Vol. 3 · Video Streaming II — ABR, CDNs, players, WebRTC, DRM and the economics of delivery

Vol. 4 · Audio for Video I — PCM, codecs, loudness, accessibility, real-time voice processing

Vol. 5 · Audio for Video II — jitter buffers, lip sync, Atmos, quality metrics, neural codecs

Vol. 6 · AI for Video I — models and inference, computer vision, speech, search, generative video

Vol. 7 · AI for Video II — real-time pipelines, agents, serving, cost, compliance, verticals

Home screen not turning browsing into watching?

We will personalize rows, ordering and artwork per viewer, add diversity rules, and measure the lift in watch time. 250+ video products shipped since 2005.

Book a 30-min call → **WhatsApp →** **Email us →**