

IAB EXPERIENCE CENTER

TRUSTED CREATOR BRAND DEAL INITIATIVE

THE CREATOR ECONOMY'S NEXT CHAPTER

Seven opportunity areas for building core infrastructure to fuel further growth in the Creator Economy

IAB Creator Economy Research

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The Creator Economy's Infrastructure Gap

Creator marketing has largely won the argument about whether it belongs in the marketing plan. Creator media budgets have grown from $13.9 billion in 2021 to an expected $44 billion this year: more than tripling in five years, and growing nearly four times faster than the media industry overall.

Earlier this year, IAB partnered with FrontRow Insights to interview and survey leaders across the creator economy, from brands, agencies, and platforms to talent managers, measurement providers and publishers, to identify where shared standards would do most to help that investment to keep growing.

The question is no longer *whether* to invest. It is whether the systems that govern how creator work is measured, contracted, paid and reported can keep pace with the money flowing through them. Today, they cannot.

Based on our research, this report sets out seven opportunity areas the industry feels it needs to be addressed to advance the creator economy::

1. **Fix measurement at its foundation,** starting with a common definition of a view.
2. **Model contract clauses** around usage, exclusivity and safelisting.
3. **Highlight extended payment issues** with creators**.**
4. **Equip senior leaders and finance** with a playbook for evaluating creator investment.
5. To maximize creator investment and impact, **define optimal brand operating models**.
6. Once measurement frameworks exist**, make performance data easier to share.**
7. Led by the buyers who fund the market, **support fee disclosure as the default**.

The aim is to help create better infrastructure around Creators: common definitions, model contractual terms, and clear expectations that give buyers, sellers and measurement partners a shared foundation on which to compete and innovate.

The industry is ready to act. More than half of respondents (57%) would actively help develop IAB standards, and a further quarter (25%) would consider it.

These findings are qualitative and directional, but the conclusion is clear: the creator economy has proven its demand, the next phase will be creating the infrastructure needed to foster further growth and

innovation. This work is becoming the IAB Trusted Creator Brand Deal Initiative, and the work begins this quarter.

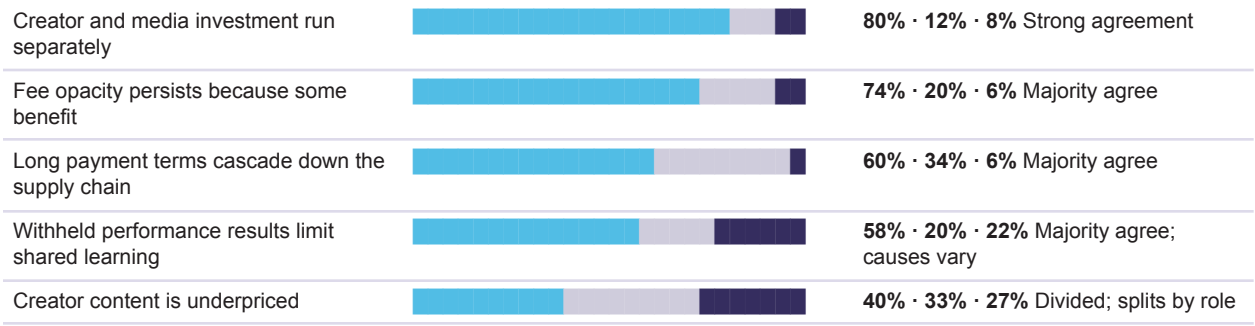
James Douglas
IAB

The seven opportunity areas at a glance

#	What the research found	Industry Opportunities to Act
1	Measurement is the problem beneath the others (67%), and a common view definition is the top-ranked fix (66%).	**Fix measurement at its foundation: define a view first, then continue to help standardize reporting.**
2	Contracting is the top cause of troubled deals (39%); usage rights the top friction clause (61%).	**Support industry consideration of model contract clauses for usage rights, safelisting and exclusivity.**
3	60% say long payment terms cause cascading harm; only 6% disagree.	**Highlight long payment terms for creators.**
4	94% report conflict with senior leadership; budget allocation is hit hardest (90%).	**Close the leadership gap with a playbook for evaluating creator investment.**
5	80% say media and creator buyers work apart: the strongest agreement in the study.	**Integrate the operating model so brands and agencies can maximize creator impact.**
6	58% say withheld results block shared learning, but lack of access and weak data are cited almost as often as unwillingness.	**Once measurement frameworks exist, make performance data comparable, accessible and safe to share.**
7	74% say opacity persists because someone profits; brand and creator agency estimates of what reaches creators do not overlap.	**Make fee disclosure more standard, led by the buyers who fund the market.**

Exhibit 1: Four of five rated survey themes drew majority agreement; creator pricing divides the industry

% of respondents rating each research theme on a 1–5 scale: agree (4–5) neutral (3) disagree (1–2)



Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

About this research. 53 industry leaders across all stakeholder groups took part, fielded July to September 2026. The sample leans toward high-volume intermediaries, and brands are the smallest group, so stakeholder-group percentages rest on small bases. Read all figures as directional.

Respondents by group: creator marketing agencies (n=10), platforms (n=10), holding companies and media agencies (n=9), talent management (n=6), measurement and analytics providers (n=6), brands (n=5), affiliate networks and publishers (n=2), and other self-described roles (n=5).

OPPORTUNITY AREA 1 OF 7 · SUPPORT INDUSTRY STANDARDIZATION OF CREATOR MEASUREMENT BY DEFINING WHAT IS A VIEW

Measurement is the fault line beneath the creator economy; the first fix is agreeing what counts as a view

Asked what is not working, **two-thirds of respondents (67%) named measurement and attribution**. Measurement also sits inside problems that look like something else. Two sides who disagree on creator pricing both agree they cannot judge whether creators are paid fairly because nobody agrees what creator content is worth. One in eight respondents traced budget fights with leadership to measurement gaps, and a similar share said organizations withhold results because the numbers behind them are not solid enough to publish.

Measurement providers, who see the problem most closely, were unanimous (100%, n=6) in choosing a common definition of a view as a top priority. This survey insight validates collaborative industry discussions with the Media Ratings Council (MRC) and others, who have spotlighted the need to refresh existing Social and Digital measurement standards to address this foundational creator marketing gap.

Respondents are clear about where to start. Given 11 possible standards, **two-thirds (66%) chose a common definition of a view and exposure metrics across platforms**, the most-chosen item and one of only two selected by every stakeholder group in the research study. Each platform counts a view differently, and a shared reporting format, cross-channel planning and any comparison with video or television all depend on counting it the same way.

"Verified watch time, impressions, and reach per piece of content, defined the same way across Twitch, YouTube, and TikTok."

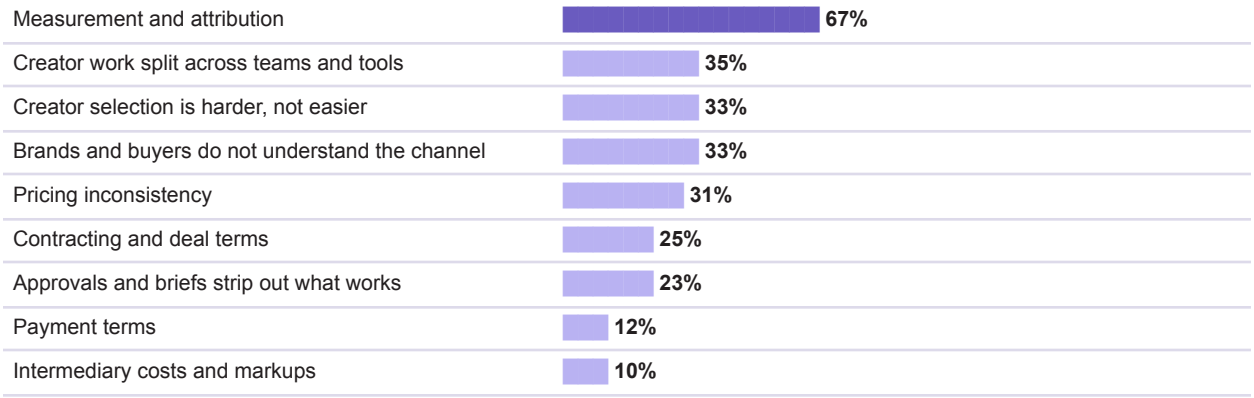
— CREATOR MARKETING AGENCY

"Align definitions of metrics across platforms so creator performance attribution can be compared by platform and rolled up in an MTA or MMM properly."

— MEASUREMENT PROVIDER

Exhibit 2: Measurement is named as a problem nearly twice as often as anything else

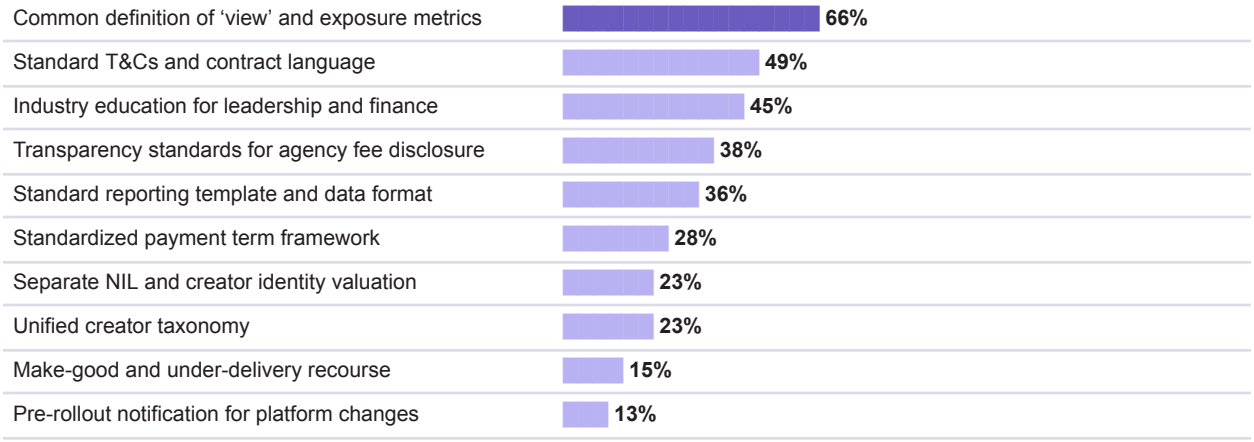
What is not working in creator marketing today: % of respondents naming each theme



Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Exhibit 3: A common view definition is the most-requested standard

Standards respondents said would most benefit them: % choosing each (up to five choices)



Excludes a standardized measurement currency (chosen by 60%), which this report leaves to the market to develop.

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Exhibit 4: Those who produce the reporting trust it; every group wants a common view definition

% of each stakeholder group

Stakeholder group	Very confident in own metrics	Chose a common view definition as a priority
Brand	**0%** (n=0 of 5)	**60%** (n=3 of 5)
Holding company / media agency	**33%** (n=3 of 9)	**67%** (n=6 of 9)
Creator marketing agency	**56%** (n=5 of 9)	**60%** (n=6 of 10)
Platform	**67%** (n=6 of 9)	**50%** (n=5 of 10)
Talent management	**0%** (n=0 of 6)	**50%** (n=3 of 6)
Measurement provider	**33%** (n=2 of 6)	**100%** (n=6 of 6)

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are

directional.

Why the creator industry must move now on measurement standards

Numbers that are not defined or recorded the same way cannot be compared across any industry. The commercial stakes are direct: finance teams cannot approve what they cannot compare.

Next steps for the IAB to help address measurement standards in the Creator Economy

1. First, define a view. Working alongside MRC and engaged industry bodies, IAB will convene platforms and measurement providers to publish cross-platform definitions of view, impression, reach and watch time, and secure 1-2 platform commitments in year one.

2. Publish a standard platform reporting template and data format built on those definitions. Once an engaged industry group defines the view standard, work with platforms and buyers to standardize the expected industry reporting template for creator exposure data.

3. Encourage brands and agencies to connect standardized exposure measurement to business outcomes. As part of this measurement effort, encourage organizations to pilot longer attribution windows, incrementality testing and retail and commerce data links, leaving measurement partners free to build competing approaches on the common definitions.

OPPORTUNITY AREA 2 OF 7 · CREATE MODEL CONTRACT CLAUSES CREATOR CONTRACTING T&Cs

Contracting is where deals break, and starting with a clearer Creator terms will remove significant friction

Among respondents who described a creator deal that ran into serious friction in the past year, **the largest share (39%) named contracting and negotiation as the cause**, more than any other factor. One holding company respondent described a pharmaceutical creator program in which **terms took nearly two years to settle**. Talent managers described contracting twice on every deal, once with the buyer and once with the creator, and master agreements that take months to negotiate before a new client arrives with a new long form.

The friction is concentrated in a few clauses. **Usage rights were named by 61% of respondents**, including every brand and two-thirds of holding companies (n=6 of 9), **followed by exclusivity** (48%), legal review (43%) **and safelisting or paid amplification rights** (35%). Legal review weighs most heavily on talent managers (67%, n=4 of 6), one of whom pointed to a growing in-house legal team as the direct cost. Nearly half of those who described their process (48%) said the core of the contract (deliverables, disclosure, approvals, payment schedule) is already settled, with rate, usage, exclusivity and terms argued on every deal.

As a priority it was chosen by two-thirds of holding companies and talent managers (67% each, n=6 of 9 and n=4 of 6) and 60% of creator marketing agencies (n=6 of 10). Given the complexity of creator partnerships, the immediate goal of this opportunity is to help the industry identify common ground on model contract clauses for usage rights, safelisting, and exclusivity through this research.

> *"We do have MSAs with repeat buyers so luckily that helps, but a cut-through or rider for the industry … would be a game changer."*
>
> **— TALENT MANAGEMENT**

Exhibit 5: Rights, not money, drive contract friction

Where contracting creates the most friction: % of respondents selecting each clause



Safelisting / paid amplification rights	**35%**
Deliverables and revision rounds	**33%**
Payment terms	**28%**
Content ownership	**24%**
Creator rights	**17%**
NIL and creator identity value	**13%**

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Exhibit 6: The parties in the deal want standard terms; those outside it do not prioritize them

% of each stakeholder group choosing standard T&Cs and contract language as a priority

Holding company / media agency	**67%** (n=6 of 9)
Talent management	**67%** (n=4 of 6)
Creator marketing agency	**60%** (n=6 of 10)
Brand	**40%** (n=2 of 5)
Platform	**40%** (n=4 of 10)
Measurement provider	**0%** (n=0 of 6)

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Why the industry should begin considering model contact clauses with creators

Because the core of the contract is largely settled, a model contract clause is a much smaller job than a full template. The cost of waiting is visible in legal backlogs, growing legal teams and cost, and campaigns that miss their moment.

Next step for the industry to begin addressing legal delays and issues with creators

1. Identify common ground. The role of IAB to create standard or model Creator T&Cs is unlikely, noting the bulk of Creator contract details are settled by individual entities. The immediate goal is for the industry to consider development of model clauses as an industry for usage rights, safelisting, and exclusivity.

OPPORTUNITY AREA 3 OF 7 · CONSIDER BENEFITS OF PROMPT PAYMENT FOR CREATOR ACTIVATIONS

Long payment terms create friction and may make the smallest players finance the largest

Three in five respondents (60%) said that longer payment terms cause cascading harm across the creator ecosystem; only 6% disagreed. Creator agencies described being paid slowly by clients while paying creators promptly anyway, absorbing both the cash float and the relationship damage. An entertainment studio said it was “forced to act as a bank.” Platform and brand respondents said the harm falls hardest on the smallest creators, who lack the float or the legal support to chase payment.

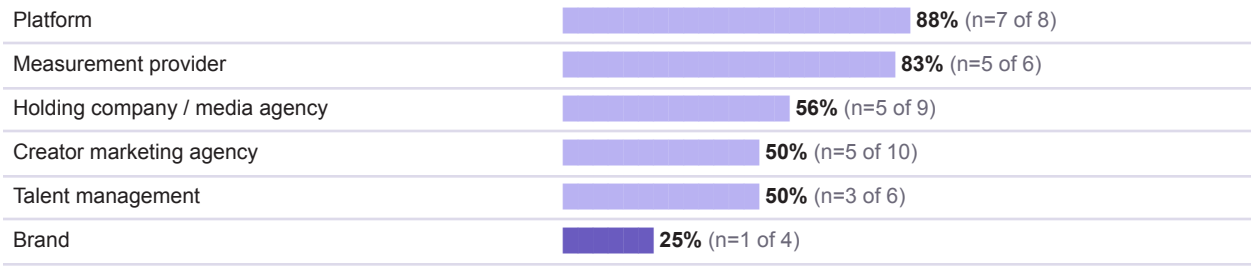
The view on this issue depends on where a company sits. Those who carry the float agree most strongly: 88% of platforms (n=7 of 8) and 83% of measurement providers (n=5 of 6), against half of creator marketing agencies (50%, n=5 of 10) and talent managers (50%, n=3 of 6). Only a quarter of brands agree (25%, n=1 of 4), and brand and holding company respondents were split between those who see harm and those who do not.

The consequences are already visible. **A platform respondent (n=8 of 8) said some creators now ask not to be matched with brands known for paying slowly, which removes good creators from the pool**. Several respondents described payment failures that cascaded, including a brand bankruptcy that left an agency unable to pay creators on unrelated campaigns, after which the agency itself also failed.

> *“Employees are not asked to wait a month to a quarter to be paid. Stop asking creators to.”*
>
> — TALENT MANAGEMENT

Exhibit 7: Almost everyone but brands sees the issues

% of each stakeholder group agreeing that longer terms cause cascading harm



Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Why longer payment terms with creators is an issue

The risk to inaction is systemic, not just reputational: when the smallest players finance the largest players' cash flow, a single insolvency can ripple through an entire supply chain. The talent pool is already voting with its feet.

Next steps to consider the issue of prompt payment in individual negotiations

1. Firms may wish to individually consider the benefits that prompt payment potentially brings.

2. Firms may wish to individually explore early-payment options for small creators. Platforms, agencies and emerging fintech partners may wish to individually consider whether it makes sense to offer invoice financing or early pay.

OPPORTUNITY AREA 4 OF 7 · CREATE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PLAYBOOK FOR CREATOR MARKETING

Senior leadership is judging a new channel with old frameworks, and creator marketing budgets are paying the price

Most respondents (94%) said decisions made by senior leadership conflict with what day-to-day creator practitioners recommend at least sometimes. More than half (57%) said it happens frequently, 6% said rarely, and nobody said never.

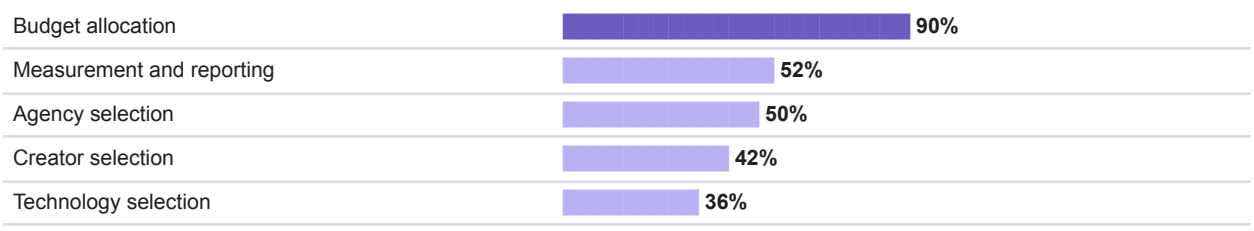
Budget allocation is where the conflict lands: 90% named it, including every brand, creator agency, talent manager and measurement provider. Asked why, respondents most often said **senior leaders do not understand the channel**. Roughly one in eight described leaders applying frameworks built for traditional media, such as TV-style budgeting and last-click attribution. The same theme appears elsewhere: a third of respondents named brands and buyers not understanding the channel as something that is not working, and a quarter of troubled deals traced back to a brand applying commercial-production processes or briefing as though it were buying media.

The pressure is felt most acutely by the agencies executing the work. Seven in ten creator marketing agencies (70%, n=7 of 10) report frequent conflict, as do two-thirds of talent managers and measurement providers (67%, n=4 of 6 each), compared with 40% of brands (n=2 of 5). The same agencies are the strongest advocates for education: 70% (n=7 of 10) chose industry education for leadership and finance as a standardization priority, against 45% of respondents overall and 22% of holding companies (n=2 of 9). Around one in five respondents asked the IAB directly to educate the market.

> *"When client leadership judges creator spend on last-click attribution models built for paid media, the channel gets budget-capped regardless of actual performance."*
>
> — CREATOR MARKETING AGENCY

Exhibit 8: Budget allocation is where leadership conflict lands

Areas most affected by conflict between senior leadership and practitioners: % of respondents selecting each



Pricing and compensation	**32%**

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Exhibit 9: Creator marketing agencies feel the conflict most, and ask hardest for education

% of each stakeholder group

Stakeholder group	Report frequent conflict with leadership	Chose leadership and finance education as a priority
Brand	**40%** (n=2 of 5)	**40%** (n=2 of 5)
Holding company / media agency	**50%** (n=4 of 8)	**22%** (n=2 of 9)
Creator marketing agency	**70%** (n=7 of 10)	**70%** (n=7 of 10)
Platform	**44%** (n=4 of 9)	**40%** (n=4 of 10)
Talent management	**67%** (n=4 of 6)	**33%** (n=2 of 6)
Measurement provider	**67%** (n=4 of 6)	**67%** (n=4 of 6)

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

94%
report conflict at least sometimes

57%
say it happens frequently

0%
say it never happens

Why the creator industry has to fix the creator knowledge gap with senior leadership

When creator spend is judged on traditional models built for paid media, the channel is potentially budget-capped regardless of performance due to a lack of confidence or insight. Every planning cycle that passes without a shared evaluation framework locks in another year of misallocated budget.

Next steps for the creator industry to help bring senior leadership along on the journey

1. Help the industry publish a CFO and CMO playbook for evaluating creator investment. Explain in plain business language how creator partnerships differ from a media buy, which metrics answer which questions, and how to read creator contribution in a marketing mix model.

2. Help industry move beyond last-click as the sole test for creator budgets. The industry should agree an evaluation approach that helps drive better planning cycles, including brand lift, incrementality or mix modeling where available.

3. Encourage linkage and reporting of business outcomes, not platform metrics, to client leadership. Agencies should separate creative and platform performance from business performance, a distinction respondents said leaders routinely confuse.

OPPORTUNITY AREA 5 OF 7 · DEFINE OPTIMAL OPERATING MODEL FOR BRANDS TO MAXIMIZE CREATOR MARKETING

Brand and Agency teams are organized against their own creator investments; the strongest agreement in the study says fix organizational structures

Four in five respondents (80%) agreed that media buyers and creator buyers sit on different teams and operate independently, often preventing brands from realizing the full value of creator campaigns.

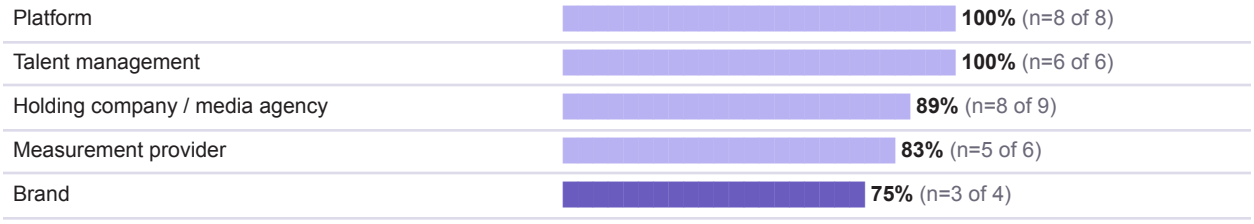
Respondents described creator work fragmented across social, media, PR, ecommerce, affiliate and CRM teams, each with its own budget, technology and targets, so a single creator can end up running across several disconnected programs inside one brand. A third of respondents (35%) named this fragmentation as a priority issue to be solved, the second most common theme after measurement.

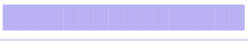
The encouraging signal is that the bridge is already being built. A quarter of respondents (25%), including 44% of holding companies (n=4 of 9), named paid amplification of creator content (partnership ads, Spark Ads, allowlisting and boosting) as something that is working. The teams remain apart, but the practice that joins them has proven its value. Meanwhile a social commerce respondent warned that creator, affiliate, retail media and ecommerce now chase the same business outcomes while still being managed, measured and funded separately.

> *"Consumers don't experience brands in silos, but many organizations still manage creator investments that way."*
>
> — SOCIAL COMMERCE

Exhibit 10: Agreement holds across nearly every stakeholder group

% of each stakeholder group agreeing that media and creator buyers operate independently



Creator marketing agency		**60%** (n=6 of 10)

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Why brands and agencies need to consider consolidating creator strategies and deployment

Consumers do not experience brands in silos, yet many organizations still manage creator investment that way. When a piece of organic creator content performs, there is rarely a mechanism or a budget to amplify it quickly, and by the time separate teams align, the moment has passed. As creator, commerce and retail media converge, the cost of this fragmentation grows with every dollar added to the channel.

Next steps for brands and agencies to consider to continue maturing creator capabilities and sophistication

1. Support industry efforts to align creator investment within brands. Give brand leadership visibility across every team that commissions creator work, and a shared set of KPIs even where budgets remain separate.

2. Enable the organic-to-paid fast lane across the industry. Pre-agree amplification and allowlisting rights in every creator contract (see Opportunity Area 2), propose performance triggers for boosting, with standing paid budgets to act on it within days, not quarters.

3. Support the publication of a reference operating model. Document how leading brands structure creator ownership, budgets and measurement, so others can adopt it without starting from scratch.

OPPORTUNITY AREA 6 OF 7 · ENABLE PERFORMANCE DATA SHARING THROUGH COMMON MEASUREMENT KPIs

Performance insights shared across the industry will not move by mandate; it will move when it is comparable, accessible and safe to share

Close to three in five respondents (58%) agreed that brands and agencies are often unwilling to share performance results, and that this is a key blocker to shared learning and transparency; 22% disagreed. The research framed this as a paradox: everyone wants comparable performance data, yet few share it. The reasons respondents gave suggest the paradox is only partly about willingness.

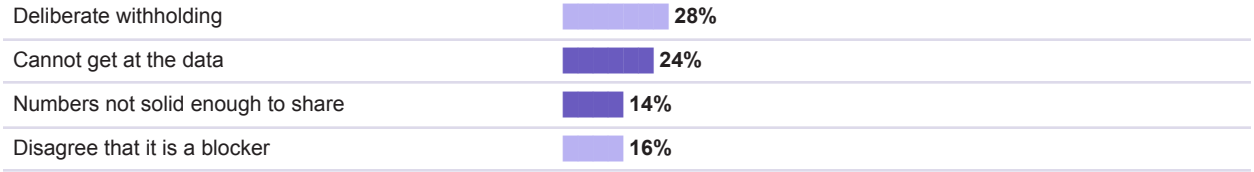
The most common explanation (28% of respondents) was **deliberate withholding**: brands guarding first-party data, refusing case studies, and declining to share KPI results because a strong result invites a higher price next time. But nearly a quarter (24%) said the problem is **access**: platforms limit exports, holding company policy blocks the flow, and the people running campaigns often cannot see the results themselves. A further 14% said the numbers are **not solid enough to share**, and organizations stay protective of results they cannot stand behind. Access and data quality are cited almost as often as unwillingness.

The groups divide in their responses in the survey predictably. Every platform respondent agreed that results are withheld, as did two-thirds of talent managers (67%, n=4 of 6); only one in five creator marketing agencies (20%, n=2 of 10) agreed. Creators, as the research noted, hold neither the performance data nor the outcome data.

> *"If I know the creator generated a 5x ROAS, I'll ask for more money next time around. Or at least that's what the brands think will happen."*
>
> **— TALENT MANAGEMENT**

Exhibit 11: Access and data quality rival unwillingness as the reason data does not move

Why performance data does not move: % of respondents citing each reason (open-ended, coded)

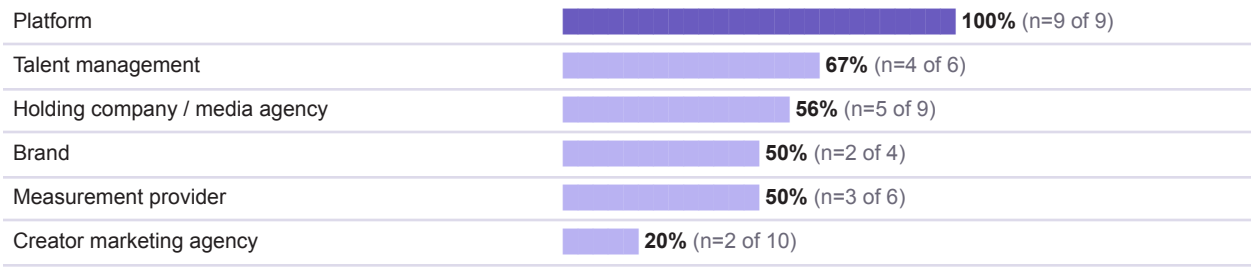


Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are

directional.

Exhibit 12: Platforms see withholding everywhere; creator agencies rarely do

% of each stakeholder group agreeing that brands and agencies withhold results



Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Why the creator industry must continue to evolve to advance performance impact and showcase of creator efforts

Shared performance data is what turns the other opportunity areas into actionable insights the whole market can use; without it, the leadership case lacks evidence and every program starts from scratch. Comparative benchmarks will emerge from the market itself, through measurement partners, platforms and agencies, once the underlying data is consistent and accessible.

Next steps in enabling better sharing and transparency of creator performance in the industry

1. As IAB helps industry evolve measurement standards, urge reporting to spotlight and use common definitions. Data captured under Opportunity Area 1 is data organizations can stand behind, which addresses the respondents who withhold weak numbers.

2. Encourage opening of platform data to advertisers and their agents. Continue to drive sharing first-party metrics available through APIs and exports to engaged Agencies / Creators / Agents to help improve visibility and end product.

3. Consider designing the feedback loop into the deal. Consider adding a results-sharing clause to standard contracts so creators and their representatives see the outcomes of their own work.

OPPORTUNITY AREA 7 OF 7 · PROMOTE GREATER TRANSPARENCY THROUGH FEE DISCLOSURE BASED ON COMMON MEASUREMENT STANDARDS

Fee opacity persists because someone profits from it; disclosure must be led by those who pay

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (74%) agreed that the lack of transparency around fees, markups and intermediary costs persists partly because some parts of the industry benefit from it. Asked who benefits, no respondent named their own organization.

The clearest evidence is in respondents' estimates of the share of campaign investment that actually reaches creators. Every creator marketing agency estimated more than half; every brand estimated half or less, and 60% of brands (n=3 of 5) put it under 30%. Not one respondent on either side landed in the other side's range. More than a third of all respondents (36%) said they have no visibility at all, including 80% of platforms (n=8 of 10) and more than half of holding companies (56%, n=5 of 9).

Appetite for disclosure splits along the money. A fee disclosure standard was chosen by 80% of brands (n=4 of 5) and two-thirds of holding companies and talent managers (67%, n=6 of 9 and n=4 of 6), but by only 10% of creator marketing agencies (n= 1 of 10), the group whose fees it would expose. Respondents rated overall ecosystem transparency at a median of 5 out of 10, with holding companies lowest (4.0) and creator agencies highest (6.0). Notably, the transparency respondents value most is about how results are calculated: measurement methodology (65%) and performance reporting (58%) rank well above agency fees (31%), which is why disclosure works best on top of common measurement standards.

> *"Agencies are not incentivized to provide visibility into creator deals."*
>
> — MEASUREMENT PROVIDER

Exhibit 13: Brand and creator agency estimates of what reaches creators do not overlap

Estimated share of total campaign spend that reaches creators after all fees: % of each group

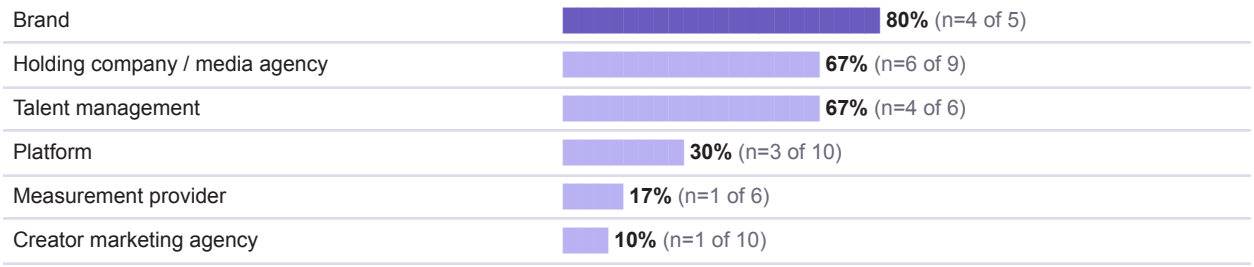
Share reaching creators	Brands	Creator marketing agencies
Less than 30%	**60%** (n=3 of 5)	**0%** (n=0 of 10)
30–50%	**40%** (n=2 of 5)	**0%** (n=0 of 10)
51–70%	**0%** (n=0 of 5)	**50%** (n=5 of 10)
71–90%	**0%** (n=0 of 5)	**50%** (n=5 of 10)

The gap may reflect margin, different definitions of campaign spend, or both; a common line-item standard would show which.

Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Exhibit 14: The buyers want disclosure; the sellers do not

% of each stakeholder group choosing agency fee disclosure standards as a priority



Source: IAB Creator Economy Research (FrontRow Insights), September 2026. Percentages of respondents answering each question; results are directional.

Why the creator industry will benefit from better pricing transparency and disclosure

Pricing transparency and disclosure will face active resistance, not just technical or measurement barriers but also competitive marketplace realities. Brands, who are the most motivated on this point and hold the purchasing power, must lead to influence to unlock more trust and transparency in the Creator Economy.

Approach to helping the industry shift to a more transparent fee and disclosure model

1. Work within the industry to support fee disclosure standards. Define a standard line-item breakdown for every creator campaign: creator fee, management commission, agency fee, paid media and measurement costs.

2. Re-use procurement to help make disclosure the default in the Creator Economy. Brands should require disclosed arrangements in RFPs and master service agreements, as many already do for traditional media.

3. Turn transparency into a differentiator. Agencies that disclose early can compete on trust rather than margin; with every holding company respondent agreeing that opacity serves someone, the first movers will be noticed.

Moving at speed: a phased agenda

The creator economy has grown up faster than the infrastructure around it. Respondents are not asking for a new product, they are asking for definitions, education, a neutral convener and useful model contract clauses to help remove friction, and they are volunteering to help build them.

The window to act is open now, while demand is strong and the coalition is willing. If the industry waits, the same friction points will be locked into larger budgets, making them even harder to fix. As this research uncovered many opportunity areas for the industry to address, IAB is prioritizing focus on Measurement standards – specifically addressing Opportunity Area 1, ‘What is a View’ – for our 2027 roadmap. We encourage the wider creator ecosystem to get involved and engage with our boards, committees, and working groups to help shape the outputs.

Our success will be measured by a simple, powerful shift: when industry leaders are surveyed in the future on issues preventing the Creator Economy from scaling, the obstacles at the top of their list must look completely different than they do today. By anchoring our industry in rigorous measurement, more efficient contracting, robust education, and radical transparency, we aren't just solving today's problems—we are building the baseline for a creator economy that scales and continues to innovate.