



CREATOR COMPENSATION WHITEPAPER · SEPTEMBER 2026

Paying for What the Content Does

Performance-based pay is now the majority of creator deals. What each model rewards, who says yes to it, how to write the clause, and the attribution problem sitting underneath all of it.

Platform commission and settlement rules · contract anatomy · creator acceptance data ·
37 cited sources

For the people who write creator contracts and pay them

talentir.com

Performance pay became the majority of creator deals before the industry learned to measure performance.

53% of brand partnerships now tie some part of the fee to an outcome, against 23% two years ago.¹ This paper is about what that actually means in practice: which models are being used and at what rates, what each one does to creator behaviour, which creators accept them and which walk, how to write the terms so the deal survives contact with a refund, and why the measurement underneath is weaker than the contracts assume.

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HOW TO READ THE EVIDENCE

Every statistic carries a superscript pointing to the numbered source list. Confidence labels: **HIGH** is a large disclosed-method survey or a platform's own published rule, **MEDIUM** is a vendor benchmark with a stated but narrow method, **LOW** is an estimate with no disclosed method. Commission and settlement rules are quoted from platform documentation and change often, so they are dated where possible.

Ten findings on performance pay

The shift from paying for a deliverable to paying for a result is the biggest change in creator contracts in a decade. It is also happening faster than the measurement, the clause language and the payment rails underneath it.

01 Performance pay is the majority, but it is not commission-only.

53% of brand partnerships tie pay to an outcome, up from 23% two years earlier.¹ Almost all of that growth is hybrid: a guaranteed base plus commission or bonus. Pure commission remains a minority offer that most creators decline.

02 The flat fee broke because it is indifferent to the result.

A flat-fee deal pays an effective USD 3 CPM if the post lands and USD 30 if it flops, and the brand pays the same either way.² Performance pay is finance's answer to that, not marketing's.

03 Creator appetite for performance-only pay collapsed while brand appetite grew.

The share of creators open to affiliate-only compensation fell from 63% in 2024 to 26% in 2025.³ The two curves moved in opposite directions at the same time, which is why hybrids won.

04 Performance-only pay selects for the creators with the fewest options.

Creators earning under USD 15,000 a year are markedly more open to commission structures; established talent with representation resists them.^{4, 5} The filter is not for who converts best. It is for who can least afford to say no.

05 Commission rates cluster tighter than the marketing suggests.

Most brand-direct hybrids land at 10% to 15% on tracked sales.⁶ TikTok Shop's average US creator commission is 13.02% inside a technical range of 1% to 80%.^{7, 8} LTK averages about 16%, Amazon pays 1% to 20% by category.^{9, 10}

06 Every payment rule is an instruction to the creator, including the ones you did not write.

Pay per view and you buy hooks. Pay per sale and you buy discount codes. Pay per asset and you buy the minimum viable asset. The model is the brief you did not realise you were writing.

07 The measurement underneath is weaker than the contracts assume.

Roughly 70% of influencer-driven conversions happen outside the promo-code window, through later search, direct visits or offline word of mouth.¹¹ Last-click attribution is not a neutral referee in a deal where it decides someone's pay.

08 Four terms cause almost every dispute.

The attribution window, who can see the data, what happens on a refund, and when payment is triggered. Most performance contracts name the commission rate and leave all four vague.^{4, 12}

09 Performance pay makes creator income later and more volatile at the same time.

TikTok Shop commission typically arrives 15 days after delivery and can take 31.⁸ Affiliate programmes commonly settle 60 days after month end. Among mid-tier Amazon creators, Q4 income ran 2.7 times the Q1 baseline.¹³

10 The platforms that scaled performance pay are now buying their way out of the lag.

Amazon piloted accelerated payouts in 2026, cutting the wait from 60 days to 30 for creators earning more than USD 1,500 a month.¹³ That is a tell: the payment terms, not the commission rate, are what the model actually costs you.

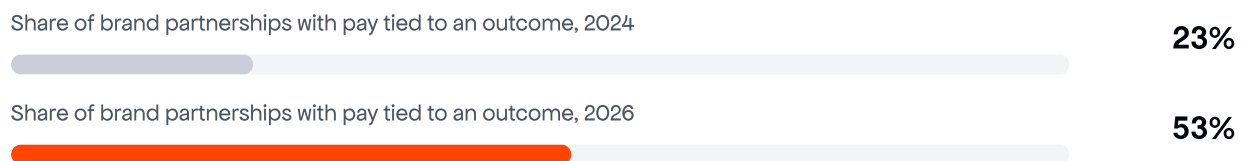
Performance pay is a good idea with a measurement problem and a cash-flow problem. Brands that fix the second one get to keep the creators who would otherwise decline the first.

Why the flat fee broke

Nobody set out to make creator contracts more complicated. The flat fee broke for a simple reason: it charges the same whether the content works or not, and the people approving the budget stopped accepting that.

The same price either way

A flat-fee creator deal is a fixed price for a deliverable. Its defining feature is that the outcome does not change the invoice. On a per-thousand-views basis, the same fee can work out at roughly USD 3 CPM when a post lands and USD 30 CPM when it does not.² For a brand team running three partnerships a year, that variance is absorbed. For a team running two hundred, it is the whole budget.



The Influencer Marketing Factory, 2026 Creator Economy Report. n = 1,000 US creators surveyed January 2026, plus a HypeAuditor analysis of 5 million accounts.¹ **HIGH**

Three things happened at once

The budget moved

Creator money is increasingly approved by performance teams out of paid-media lines, and paid media is bought on outcomes. The approval standard travelled with the budget.¹⁴

The tooling arrived

TikTok Shop, LTK, ShopMy, Amazon and creator-commerce apps made per-sale tracking a default rather than a project. What can be tracked gets priced.^{7, 9, 15}

The tail got long

Programmes went from a handful of partners to hundreds of small creators. At that width, paying a fixed fee for an unknown result stops being a rounding error and starts being a line item.¹⁶

What finance heard, and what creators heard

THE BRAND-SIDE CASE

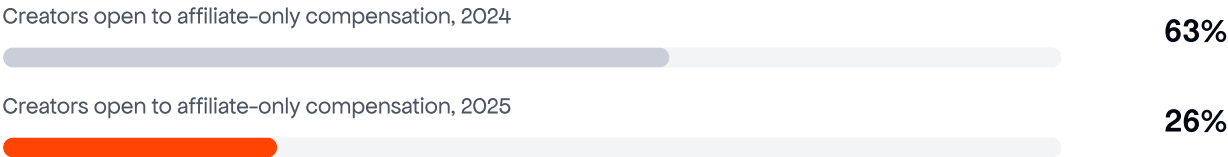
- Spend scales with result, so the downside is capped
- The creator is incentivised on the same number the team is measured on
- It survives a budget review, because it reads like media rather than sponsorship
- It lets you say yes to more creators, because each yes costs less if it fails

THE CREATOR-SIDE CASE AGAINST

- The creator controls the content, not the offer, the price, the landing page or the checkout
- Tracking they cannot audit decides what they are paid
- Income arrives later and varies more, against fixed costs
- A refund weeks later can reduce or erase the fee⁸

Which is why the two curves crossed

While brand adoption of performance pay more than doubled, creator willingness to accept performance-only terms went the other way: from 63% open to affiliate-only compensation in 2024 to 26% in 2025.³ More than one in five marketers report that creators would accept performance-based compensation only when it came with an upfront flat fee.⁴



Modash, influencer trends in contracts, negotiation and pricing.³

SO WHAT

The interesting number is not 53%. It is the gap between 53% of deals carrying performance terms and 26% of creators accepting performance alone. That gap is where the hybrid came from, and it is the shape almost every workable deal now takes: a floor the creator will sign, plus an upside the brand is happy to fund.

Five ways to pay for a result

The vocabulary is borrowed from media buying and the mechanics are not the same, because a creator is a supplier with an audience rather than an ad slot.

These are the five structures in use, with the rates the market is actually transacting at.

MODEL	WHAT IT PAYS ON	TRANSACTIONING RANGE
Flat fee	A deliverable. Still the base of most deals, but rarely the whole deal.	USD 150 to 500 per UGC asset; four figures and up for posted influencer content ¹⁷
Per view CPM	Views or impressions delivered, usually with a floor and a ceiling.	USD 15 to 80 CPM for integrations; USD 2 to 15 for most short-form niches ^{2, 18}
Per click CPC	Tracked clicks. Rare on its own, common as a bonus trigger.	USD 0.25 to 2.00 per click ¹⁹
Commission CPA	A tracked sale, sign-up or install, net of refunds.	5% to 30% of order value, clustering at 10% to 15% brand-direct ^{19, 6}
Hybrid	A guaranteed base plus commission, bonus tiers, or both.	Base plus 10% to 15%; bonus ladders unlock at volume milestones ^{6, 20}

A sixth structure, pure revenue share, exists for deeply embedded creators and long-term ambassadors but is rare enough that no reliable rate band could be found.²¹

MEDIUM

The names come from media buying, where the seller controls distribution. A creator does not. They control the content and nothing downstream of it, which is why every model in this table works better with a floor under it than it does on its own.

Where the commission money actually sits

13.02%

average US creator commission on TikTok Shop, inside a technical range of 1% to 80%

Hamster Garage, Dashboardly^{7, 8}

~16%

average commission across the LTK creator network; 10% to 30% on most brands

LTK⁹

10-30%

typical ShopMy range, before the platform's cut of the brand commission

Platform comparisons¹⁵

1-20%

Amazon Influencer, by category: about 20% on games, 1% to 4% on grocery

EchoTik¹⁰

The per-view model, and why it is growing fastest

Paying per view is the structure closest to how media is bought, and it is the one platforms built for UGC have converged on. TikTok's own Creator Rewards pays an observed USD 0.36 to 1.04 per 1,000 qualified views.²² Marketplaces that pay on verified views quote rates as low as USD 0.04 CPM.²³ In brand campaigns the common shape is a small per-asset base with a view ladder stacked on top: roughly USD 20 to 40 per post, plus a USD 3 to 5 CPM bonus scaling to one or two million views.¹⁷

What a creator earns on the same video under each model, illustrative

MODEL	VIDEO FLOPS	VIDEO LANDS	WHO CARRIES THE RISK
	5,000 VIEWS, 2 SALES	400,000 VIEWS, 240 SALES	
Flat fee, USD 250	250	250	The brand
Per view at USD 4 CPM	20	1,600	The creator
Commission at 13%, AOV 50	13	1,560	The creator, plus refund risk
Hybrid: 150 base + 8%	158	1,110	Shared

Illustrative arithmetic on a single asset, using the transacting rates in the table opposite. It is not a forecast. The point is the shape: flat is a horizontal line, performance is a hockey stick, and the hybrid is the only one where neither side is ruined by the wrong outcome.

Note what the flop column does to recruitment. At USD 13 for a video that took a day to make, a commission-only deal is not a low offer. It is a lottery ticket, and the creators who buy lottery tickets are not usually the ones you want making your ads.

What each model actually rewards

A payment rule is a brief. It tells the creator, far more clearly than the brief does, what the brand wants more of. Most disappointing outcomes in performance deals are the model working exactly as written.

MODEL	WHAT IT REWARDS	WHAT IT QUIETLY PRODUCES
Flat fee	Delivery to spec, on time	The minimum viable asset. No reason to push past what passes review
Per view	The first three seconds	Hook-led content optimised for retention, sometimes at the expense of the product being clear
Per click	The call to action	Curiosity gaps, "link in bio" framing, traffic that does not convert
Commission	Discountable, low-consideration products	Code-led content, price-anchored messaging, drift towards whatever converts fastest
Hybrid	Whatever the bonus is keyed to	Rational effort, if the base is liveable and the bonus reachable. Nothing, if not

The distortion nobody prices: category drift

Commission pays as a percentage of order value, so the same creator earns very differently depending on what they promote. Beauty and personal care commissions on TikTok Shop run 15% to 30% and up, against 1% to 4% on grocery and electronics elsewhere.^{7,10} A creator paid purely on commission has a standing reason to drift towards high-commission categories and high-ticket items, whatever suits their audience. That is not a creator problem. It is a portfolio problem the brand created.

THREE QUESTIONS THAT PREDICT THE DISTORTION

Can the creator affect it? If the metric depends on your landing page, price or stock more than on their content, you are paying them for your own performance.

Can they see it? A metric the creator cannot check is one they will assume is wrong the first time it disappoints them.

Can they game it cheaply? If worse content scores better on the metric, some share of your suppliers will find that out before you do.

Who says yes

The most important effect of a payment model is not what it does to the creators who accept it. It is which creators accept it at all. On this, the evidence is unusually consistent and unusually awkward.

Acceptance tracks bargaining power, not conversion

Creators earning under USD 15,000 a year are markedly more open to affiliate structures, commission splits and hybrid deals. Established creators with representation resist pure commission, and talent managers increasingly insist on a guaranteed floor inside any performance structure.^{4, 5} Top-tier talent's leverage comes from audience size and brand safety, neither of which they are willing to convert into a bet on someone else's checkout.

MORE LIKELY TO ACCEPT PERFORMANCE-ONLY

- Creators under roughly USD 15,000 a year in creator income⁴
- Nano and micro creators with high-converting, product-led audiences
- Creators already native to a commerce platform, where commission is the norm
- Creators with no representation to negotiate a floor

MORE LIKELY TO DECLINE

- Established talent with agents and a flat-rate benchmark to protect
- Creators in high-consideration categories where purchase happens weeks later
- Anyone with prior experience of a tracking dispute
- Creators whose audience sits outside the brand's checkout geography

A performance-only offer is a filter. It is just not a filter for who converts best.

It filters for who can least afford to decline. Those two groups overlap sometimes, and a programme built on the assumption that they always overlap will quietly degrade.

There is a second-order version of this worth watching. 67% of creators earn under USD 10,000 a year from creating, and 1% earn over USD 250,000.²⁴ A pay model that shifts risk onto the creator lands very differently on either side of that distribution, and a brand negotiating with the wide end of it is negotiating with people who have no buffer.

What acceptance actually costs you

The counter-argument is that a creator who declines a commission deal was never confident in their own conversion, so the filter is doing its job. That holds for a top-of-market creator with sales history. It does not hold for the rest, because declining is also what you do when the tracking is unauditably, the category is high-consideration, or you cannot carry sixty days of uncertain income. Those are three reasons to decline that have nothing to do with whether the content would have worked.

The structure that recruits well

The market answer is the hybrid, and it is worth being specific about why it recruits better than either pure model. A base covers the creator's production cost, so accepting is not a gamble on rent. The variable part is upside rather than survival, which is the only condition under which a creator will optimise for it rather than hedge against it. And a floor is what a manager can sign without setting a precedent that damages their other deals.⁵

Base

Covers production. Rule of thumb: at least the creator's normal flat rate for the asset, minus the share you are moving into upside. Cutting the base below production cost converts the deal into a commission-only deal with extra steps.

Upside

Reachable on a median outcome, not only on a viral one. A bonus tier that has never once paid out is not an incentive, it is a story your competitors tell about you.

Floor and ceiling

A floor protects the creator from your tracking. A ceiling protects your margin from an outlier. Naming both up front removes the two negotiations that otherwise happen after the fact.

SO WHAT

If you are putting a performance offer in front of creators, look at who accepts it rather than at the accept rate. If the acceptance skews entirely to the lowest-earning end of your list, the model is not selecting for conversion, it is selecting for need. Raise the base until the creators you actually want are in the yes column, then move the difference into a reachable bonus.

The attribution problem

Every performance deal outsources a pay decision to a measurement system. It is worth being honest about how good that system is, because the creator is being asked to accept its verdict without being able to check it.

What the tracking misses

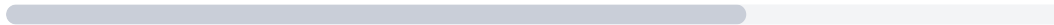
Roughly 70% of influencer-driven conversions happen outside the promo-code window: through later search, direct visits or offline word of mouth.¹¹ A promo code measures who used the code, not who saw the content, remembered the brand and bought three weeks later through a branded search. Under last-click that purchase is credited to search, and the creator who caused it is paid nothing.^{25, 26}

Conversions the promo code and last click can see



~30%

Conversions happening outside that window



~70%

eMarketer, 2025, as cited in creator attribution guides.¹¹

MEDIUM

Directional: the split varies enormously by category and purchase cycle.

And what the brand actually measures

74%

of brands say they now track influencer-driven sales directly

Archive²⁷

34%

higher measured ROI reported by brands using multi-touch attribution rather than last click alone

Compiled ROI research²⁸

15.8%

of all reported marketer challenges are measuring ROI and attribution complexity combined

Influencer Marketing Hub, 600+ marketers¹⁴

Read the second number carefully. Changing the attribution model moves measured ROI by about a third without anything happening in the real world. In a flat-fee deal that is an analytics debate. In a commission deal it is a pay cut or a pay rise, decided by a settings change the creator never sees.^{28, 4}

The window is the whole negotiation

An attribution window defines how long after a post a sale is still credited to the creator. Seven days is standard for social commerce; some brands push to 14 or 30 for higher-consideration purchases. For genuinely long cycles, practitioners report inspiration-to-purchase windows of 45 to 75 days domestically and 90 to 150 days internationally.⁴ Meanwhile most affiliate platforms ship with a 30-day cookie default that nobody reads at signing, and disputes about who gets credit almost always trace back to it.⁴

Attribution windows in use, by purchase type

PURCHASE TYPE	WINDOW IN USE	WHAT A SHORT WINDOW DOES
Impulse, social commerce	7 days	Works. Most of the effect is inside it
Considered consumer goods	14 to 30 days	Credits the code, misses the search
High-ticket or subscription	45 to 75 days	A 7-day window pays roughly nothing and looks like proof the creator failed
Travel and international	90 to 150 days	Any short window makes performance pay meaningless here

Compiled from practitioner reporting on creator attribution windows.⁴ **LOW** No disclosed-method survey of attribution windows in creator contracts was found. This paper marks that as a gap.

Three honest positions

Attribution overstates

Last-click and promo codes credit the creator who closed a customer someone else convinced, and ignore the one who did the convincing.

Incrementality understates

Holdout tests are the honest method, but they need scale, time and a control group, and they undercount short, fast, high-velocity wins.⁴

So use both, and say which

Pay on the tracked number because it is contractible. Judge the channel on incrementality. Never confuse the two in the same sentence to the creator.

SO WHAT

Decide, before you write the rate, whether your category can actually be measured inside a window a creator will accept. If it cannot, a commission deal is not a performance deal, it is a discount. Pay on something the creator can see and affect, name the window in days, and give them read access to the same dashboard you are paying from.

Writing the clause

Most performance contracts specify the commission rate and leave everything that causes disputes to the platform defaults. These are the eleven terms a performance deal needs, and the four that account for almost all of the arguments.

TERM	WHAT TO WRITE
Attribution window	The exact number of days, and from what event: post publication, first click, or first use. Do not inherit the platform's 30-day cookie default by silence ⁴
Data access	What the creator can see, where, and how often. You cannot ask someone to accept performance-linked pay and withhold the numbers it is calculated from ⁴
Refunds and clawbacks	Whether commission is calculated on gross or on revenue net of refunds, and whether a settled payment can ever be recalled. TikTok Shop's own formula is (revenue minus refunds) × rate ⁸
Payment trigger	The event that starts the clock: approval, publication, window close, or platform settlement. Then the number of days from that event ¹²
Base fee	The guaranteed amount, paid regardless of outcome, and when
Rate and tiers	The percentage or CPM, any bonus thresholds, and whether tiers are retroactive to the first unit
Floor and ceiling	A minimum total the creator receives, and a cap on total payout
Tracking method	Code, link, platform affiliate, or server-side. Who issues it, and what happens if it breaks ⁴
Dispute window	How long the creator has to flag an anomaly, commonly 30 days from campaign end, and a review period before final payment ¹⁹
Disclosure obligation	Commission-linked income is a material connection the creator must disclose. Require it explicitly and name the wording per market ²⁹
Usage and exclusivity	Unchanged by the pay model. Performance terms do not buy you rights

Terms in orange are the four that account for most disputes.^{4, 12, 30}

The clause most contracts are missing

CLAUSE · PERFORMANCE TERMS THAT SURVIVE A REFUND

Base. Brand pays [amount] within [10] business days of content approval, regardless of performance.

Variable. Brand pays [rate] of net revenue, defined as gross order value less refunds, returns and cancellations, on orders attributed to Creator within [30] days of first click, tracked via [method].

Visibility. Creator receives read access to the attribution dashboard for the duration of the campaign and [60] days after it ends.

Settlement. Variable amounts are calculated [15] days after the attribution window closes and paid within [10] business days of that calculation. Once paid, amounts are not recalled.

Floor. If total compensation falls below [amount], Brand pays the difference.

Dispute. Creator may flag an attribution anomaly within [30] days of campaign end. Brand responds within [10] business days with underlying data.

Disclosure. Creator discloses the commission relationship in every piece of content, using [required wording].

Seven short paragraphs. Every one of them exists because something went wrong without it: an inherited cookie window, a creator paid on a number they could not see, a clawback four weeks after settlement, or a payment triggered by a monthly accounts run rather than by the campaign.

SO WHAT

Write the window, the access, the refund rule and the payment trigger into every performance deal, even a small one. They cost four sentences and they remove the arguments that otherwise end the relationship. Then apply the same four terms across every creator in the programme, because inconsistency is what turns one dispute into a pattern.

The payment problem it creates

Performance pay does something to creator income that flat fees do not: it makes the amount uncertain and the arrival late, at the same time. That combination, not the rate, is what most creators are objecting to.

When the money arrives

MODEL	TYPICAL TIME TO MONEY	WHY
Flat fee	on approval, or net-30	One event, one amount, one invoice
Per view	after the measurement period	Views have to accrue before the amount exists
TikTok Shop commission	15 to 31 days after delivery	Released only after seller settlement; disputes and returns extend it ⁸
Affiliate networks	~60 days after month end	Monthly close, then a refund holdback period ¹³
Amazon Influencer	60 days, 30 in the 2026 pilot	Accelerated tier for creators over USD 1,500 a month ¹³

Platform rules as published in 2026 and subject to change.^{8, 13, 31}

HIGH

Add the attribution window to the settlement lag and the picture is stark. A creator who posts on the first of the month, on a 30-day window, on a platform settling 60 days after month close, is paid roughly four months later. The same work on a flat fee pays on approval.

And how much it varies

2.7×

Q4 income against the Q1 baseline among 847 mid-tier Amazon creators

Longitudinal income study¹³

zero

commission on a fully refunded order, recalculated on revenue net of refunds

TikTok Shop settlement rules⁸

85%

of freelancers have invoices paid late at least some of the time

Remote Contractor Report 2025³²

What that does to the programme

Creator-side consequences are well documented and they all point the same way. 70% of creators say invoicing and payment admin prevents them from creating full time, and 43% have quit a collaboration over administrative hassle alone.³³ 52% are paid from outside their home country, so the settlement lag is compounded by transfer time and FX.³⁴ And 58% of freelancers say they would accept a fee to be paid immediately rather than wait.³⁵

The clearest evidence that the lag is the real cost is that the largest operator of performance creator pay started selling its way out of it. Amazon's 2026 pilot cuts the wait from 60 days to 30 for creators earning more than USD 1,500 a month, with roughly 47,000 creators estimated to qualify.¹³ Faster payment was worth building as a retention feature.

The operational shape of a performance programme

WHAT FLAT-FEE PAYMENT OPERATIONS LOOK LIKE

- Fixed amounts, known in advance
- One payment per creator per campaign
- Invoice raised once, against a purchase order
- Monthly accounts run is adequate

WHAT PERFORMANCE PAYMENT OPERATIONS LOOK LIKE

- Variable amounts, known only after the window closes
- Recurring payments per creator, potentially monthly and indefinitely
- Amounts that can be adjusted by refunds before settlement
- Hundreds of small cross-border transfers on an irregular cadence

SO WHAT

Price the lag, not just the rate. Before you move a programme onto commission, work out when the creator is actually paid, in days from the work, and ask whether the creators you want will accept that. If the answer is no, the fix is not a higher percentage. It is paying earlier, which is a cash-flow decision rather than a budget one.



WHERE TALENTIR FITS

Performance pay is a promise to pay a variable amount, later. Talentir is the rail that makes that promise cheap to keep.

A brand or platform onboards once, then pays any number of creators a different amount each cycle, in the method and currency each one chose, with the invoice, tax paperwork and cross-border compliance handled underneath. Finance reconciles one counterparty rather than three hundred variable payables.

Built for variable, recurring, small payouts

180+ countries, 24+ currencies and 10 stablecoins, with FX at about 0.4% against the 2.1% typical of correspondent banking. That difference is what decides whether a USD 40 commission payment is worth sending at all.

Invoices and compliance, generated

Talentir is merchant of record, so sanctions screening, tax details and cross-border compliance sit with us. Every payout produces a compliant invoice and receipt for both sides, which matters more when there are twelve of them a year per creator.

Early Payouts closes the settlement gap

On any scheduled payout, the creator chooses: wait for the full amount on the pay date, or take it today for a small fee you set. It answers the one objection performance pay always raises, and 100% of that fee stays with you.^{36, 35}

Embedded, if you run the platform

viral.app pays creators on views generated and embeds Talentir through the API, so brands pay in-product and viral.app earns a share of every payout: 94 brands, 5,500+ payouts and \$1.4M+ in the first five months.³⁷

talentir.com

Choosing a model and making it work

Four questions decide which model fits, and one checklist keeps it out of dispute. The whole paper reduced to what a team can apply to the next contract it writes.

Which model fits

IF THIS IS TRUE	USE	BECAUSE
Purchase happens in days, on your own checkout, at a trackable price	Hybrid with commission	The window can be short enough for the creator to accept it
You are buying reach and the content lives on the creator's profile	Hybrid with a view bonus	Views are visible to both sides and nobody argues about them
You are buying assets to run in paid media	Flat fee per asset	Their content does not carry the distribution, so paying them on it is unfair in both directions
Purchase cycle is months, or offline, or in a market you cannot track	Flat fee	A commission deal here is a discount dressed as an incentive
A long-term ambassador, deeply embedded, with real influence on the product	Retainer plus performance	Only structure where a genuine revenue share makes sense ²¹

Setting the numbers

Start from their flat rate

Take the creator's normal fee for the deliverable. Decide what share of it moves into upside. Anything that leaves the base below their production cost is a commission-only deal wearing a disguise.

Size the bonus off the median

Model the bonus against a median outcome from your own past campaigns, not a best case. If it would not have paid out on half of last year's posts, it is not an incentive.

Benchmark the rate

10% to 15% brand-direct is the cluster; 13.02% is TikTok Shop's US average; LTK runs near 16%.^{6, 7, 9} A rate far outside that band needs a reason you can explain to the creator.

The performance-deal checklist

DO

- + A guaranteed base that covers the creator's production cost
- + The attribution window in days, and the event it runs from
- + Read access to the dashboard the payment is calculated from
- + Commission on revenue net of refunds, with no clawback after settlement
- + A payment trigger tied to the campaign, not a monthly accounts run
- + A floor, a ceiling and a 30-day dispute window with a named response time
- + An explicit disclosure obligation and the wording required per market

AVOID

- Inheriting the platform's default cookie window by saying nothing
- Commission-only offers to creators with no floor to fall back on
- Bonus tiers that would not have paid out on last year's median post
- Changing the attribution model mid-flight on a deal that pays from it

The four numbers to watch

ACCEPTANCE, BY CREATOR EARNING BAND

If acceptance concentrates in your lowest earners, the model is selecting for need, not conversion.⁴

DAYS FROM WORK TO MONEY

Attribution window plus settlement lag plus transfer time, end to end. That is the number the creator experiences.

SHARE OF PAYOUT THAT IS VARIABLE

If variable is rising while re-book rate falls, you shifted risk faster than creators will carry it.

DISPUTE RATE

Attribution queries per hundred payouts. A rising number is nearly always a window or data-access problem.

53% of deals carry performance terms. 26% of creators accept performance alone.

The whole discipline of performance-based creator pay lives in that gap.^{1,3} Brands that close it with a liveable base, a window creators accept, visible data and money that arrives early will get the creators who had a choice. The rest get the ones who did not.

Sources

All sources accessed in September 2026. Sample sizes are those disclosed by the publisher. Commission rates and settlement rules are quoted from platform documentation current in 2026 and change frequently. Where no dataset exists, this paper marks a gap rather than filling it with an estimate.

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