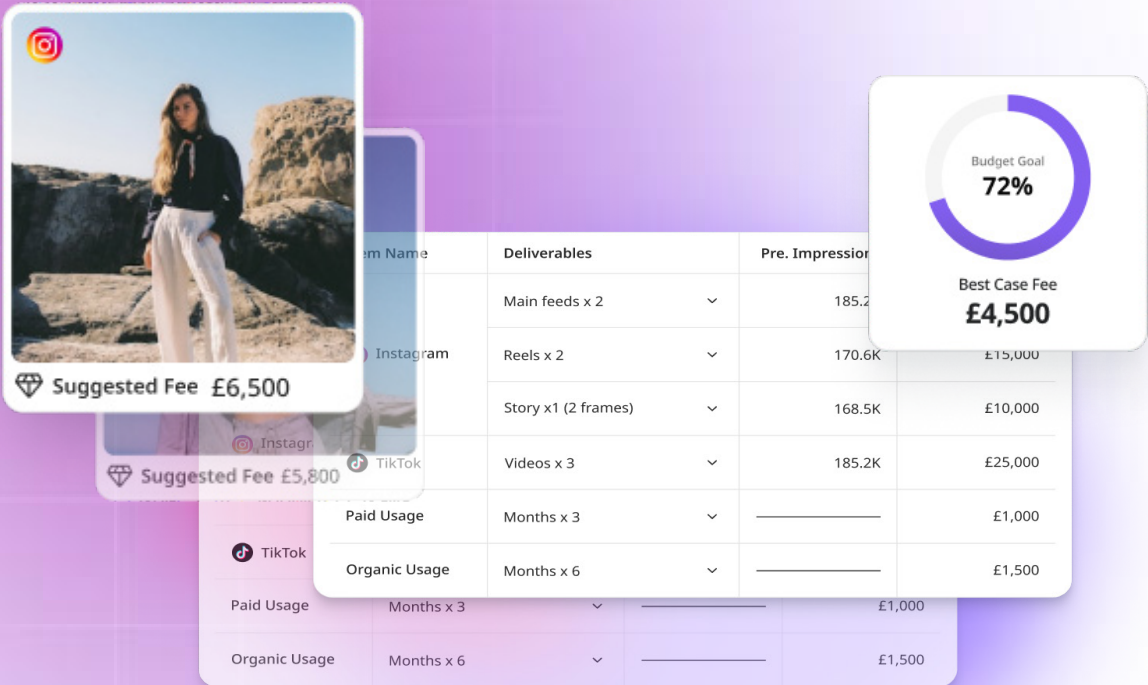




Research Report 2026

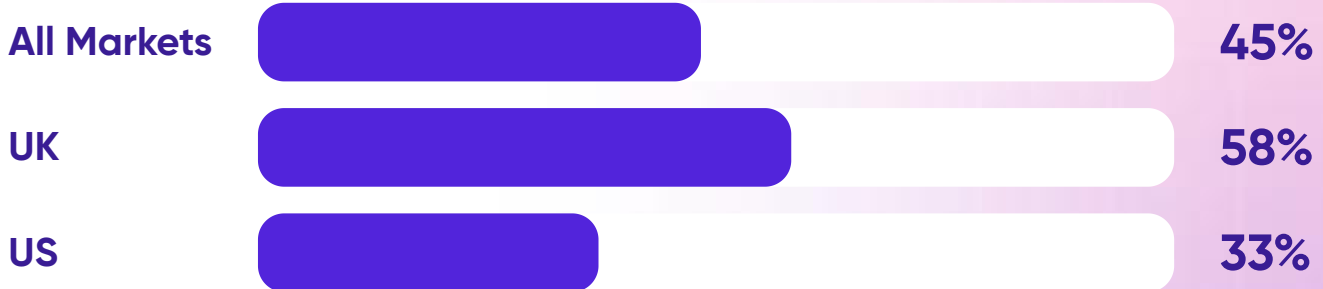
Priced on Guesswork: The State of Creator Investment

Creator marketing has become a core channel for global brands, and investment has climbed year on year. But as spend has grown, so has complexity: brands now work with hundreds of creators at once, across brand, performance, PR and regional teams, in multiple markets and currencies.

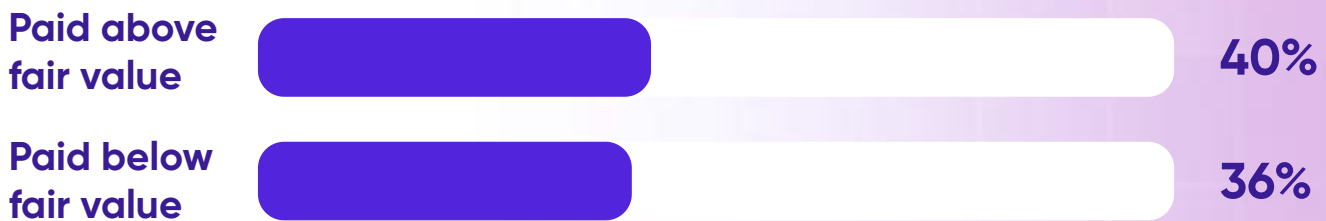
A survey of 1,000 marketing and procurement decision-makers across the US and UK reveals a channel that has outgrown the systems built to price and govern it.

Nearly half of brands have mispriced a creator partnership

Have you ever mispriced a creator partnership, paying more or less than fair market value? (% yes)



If yes, how?



Source: Companion / Censuswide, survey of 1,000 marketing & procurement decision-makers, US & UK, 2026.

Mispricing runs in both directions, and it is most acute in the UK, where **58% of decision-makers** admit their organization has paid more, or less, than fair market value.

The issue is not that creators cost too much. It's that few teams have a reliable reference point for what a partnership is worth before they negotiate.

The confidence gap

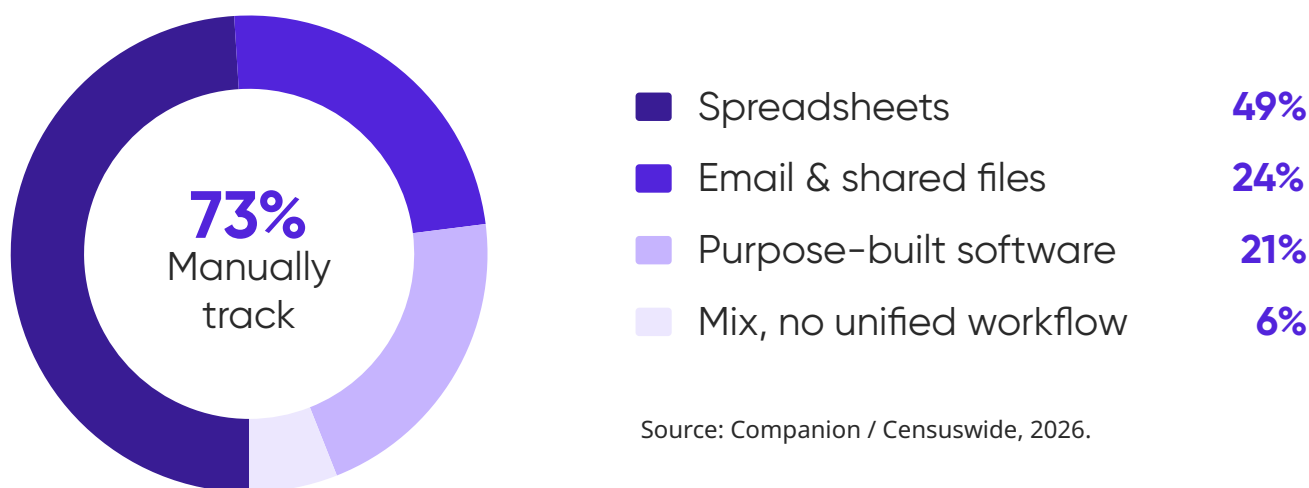
Frequent mispricing and the lack of a reliable reference point are quietly eroding confidence across the industry.

Only **44% of decision-makers** retain full confidence in their organization's ability to negotiate fair market rates - meaning the majority are committing real budget to partnerships they're unsure they've priced correctly.

That uncertainty doesn't stay contained. It compounds with the operational and strategic challenges that follow: manual tracking, siloed teams, and no shared view of what's been paid.

Most creator spend is still tracked on spreadsheets and emails

Primary method for monitoring creator budgets, pricing and deal terms (% of respondents)



There is no standardized method across the industry.

Nearly **three-quarters (73%)** manage creator finances manually, on spreadsheets and in email, and only **one in five** use purpose-built software. As spend scales across teams and markets, cost history is lost and no one holds a single, comparable view of what has been paid.

Budgeting and pricing concerns are near-universal

Biggest operational and strategic concerns when budgeting and pricing creators (% selecting)



Source: Companion / Censuswide, 2026.

Almost every **decision-maker (99.7%)** reported at least one concern. Establishing fair, competitive pricing sits near the top, cited by 56%, alongside the challenge of managing budgets across teams and markets.

What it means

For brands: No single, comparable view of what they have paid. Cost history disappears when people move on, every negotiation starts from scratch, and spend is hard to govern across markets.

For creators: No consistent record of what fair looks like. Rates can swing from one team to the next, leaving emerging and niche talent especially exposed to being underpaid.

Why it's happening

Creator marketing is one of the most complex channels in the industry. No two creators are alike, every partnership carries dozens of variables, and brands now work with hundreds of creators at once, across teams, markets and currencies.

That complexity - not any failing of creators or brands - is why a shared sense of fair value has been so hard to establish, and why spend has become so hard to govern.

Multi-team and multi-market silos

Creators now touch brand, performance, PR and regional teams at the same time. Without a single source of truth across departments and markets, brands end up paying wildly different rates for the exact same talent - with no way to see it happening. As investment grows, these silos turn small inconsistencies into significant, repeated overspend.

Most teams also navigate this without specialist support. Four in five **(81%)** negotiate creator fees in-house rather than through a specialist agency, and one in five **(21%)** manage them across siloed internal teams.

60%

very confident in the rates their
external agency partners secure

40%

very confident in the rates their
own internal teams secure

Source: Companion / Censuswide, 2026.

Without specialist expertise, confidence drops sharply. Brands are far more assured in the rates an agency partner secures than in those set by their own teams - a gap that widens as programmes scale across markets.

INTRODUCING

Creator Investment Intelligence

Companion's answer is **Creator Investment Intelligence** - the creator economy's first comprehensive creator pricing tool designed to establish fair market value and bring spend governance natively in one platform.

All informed by:

\$173M

dollars worth of
verified creator deals

180,000

verified creator deals

50+

regions worldwide

Creator Investment Intelligence gives brands and creators a shared, data-backed view of what a partnership is worth, and a single place to track it

It includes two new features:

Benchmark Algorithm

Provides a 'Suggested Fee' based on intelligence from thousands of verified creator deals, which flexibly adapts to factor in a range of variables that accurately reflect true partnership value - from platform and deliverables to usage rights, exclusivity, region, and performance.

Budget Tracker

Centralizes creator spend in a single dashboard with greater visibility across teams, markets, and campaigns - helping you track negotiations, compare investments, and plan future budgets with confidence.

[Discover Creator Investment Intelligence](#)

Research Methodology: The research was commissioned by Billion Dollar Boy and conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 1000 (Aged 18+) Procurement professionals and marketing directors at brands (not marketing agencies) that work with content creators across the UK and USA. The data was collected between 10.07.2026 - 16.07.2026. Censuswide is a member of the Market Research Society (MRS) and the British Polling Council (BPC), and a signatory of the Global Data Quality Pledge. Censuswide adheres to the MRS Code of Conduct and ESOMAR principles.