
TikTok
The Creator Trust Standard
Working with creators on TikTok.

The most valuable thing a creator can give a brand is not reach. It is trust.

Creators now sit at the centre of how brands earn relevance, trust and cultural traction. What was once a test channel is now a core marketing discipline: budgets are bigger, campaigns involve more creators, and expectations are higher. Yet measurement has not kept pace. Most programmes still rely on traditional engagement metrics, which show that audiences interacted, but not whether they trusted the creator more, remembered the brand, or were moved to act.

That gap matters because creator influence works differently from traditional advertising. Trust is built over time, post by post, through a creator's ongoing relationship with their community. When a creator recommends a brand, audiences hear it as a trusted endorsement.

Trust is a critical part of the creator ecosystem, which is why maintaining it is so important to brands. A study of 2000 advertisers by CreatorIQ found that 73% of the highest-return creator marketing programs view suitability and brand safety as very or extremely important to their programs (versus 57% of brands who break even on their ROI). However, brands can only directly influence a portion of that trust. When a brand promotes itself, it is an ad, and consumers discount it accordingly.



For advertisers, success therefore depends on more than reach or engagement. It requires understanding where a brand genuinely fits within a creator's world, and how to build partnerships that feel credible, relevant and repeatable. Most creator programmes follow seven core steps, outlined in the framework below.

Suitability matters throughout: can this brand work safely and appropriately with this creator? Relevance is the strategic filter: does the brand belong in this creator's world, and will the partnership resonate with their audience?

This guide examines each of those seven steps from the advertiser's perspective, and shows how TikTok supports them through tools, data and policy.



1. **Plan**
2. **Select**
3. **Vet**
4. **Brief & Contact**
5. **Activate**
6. **Monitor & Enforce**
7. **Measure & Learn**

SUITABILITY decides who you can work with. Your values, your category codes, your risk appetite.

RELEVANCE decides whether you should. Whether the brand has a credible role in the creator's world.

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Authenticity drives results

Audiences trust creators more than they trust brands, measurably.

Research from CreatorIQ found that for the top 100 Fortune 500 brands, creators drove 33x the amount of posts about those brands than those brands did for themselves for the same time period.

Brands know the authentic power of creators, but they haven't arrived at consensus on how to measure a creator's impact. Engagement rate remains the traditional measure of creator success, and it is not enough.

Trust is what performs. The UK Advertising Association's audience numbers show:

62%

trust creators over celebrities

36%

say an creator post is the most likely thing to get them to try something new



The reason is simple: a creator recommends what they actually use, to an audience that already knows what they stand for.

Engagement rate doesn’t measure trust or affinity. Across 129.6 million engagements and 231 TikTok brand lift studies in eight markets, engagement rate showed no significant relationship with whether anyone remembered the brand (The Creator Effectiveness Playbook, 2026).

On the other side, despite brands indicating that they use engagement rate and other creator performance metrics when deciding whether to partner with a creator, follower count is still closely associated with creator pay. Engagement rate had no association with creator pay in a study of over 5000 creators by CreatorIQ and Influencers.club.

That’s because engagement rate does not inherently tell you what it means. A high engagement rate can mean people liked the joke, the trend or the argument in the comments. It does not tell you they trust the creator, and it does not tell you any of that trust reached the brand.



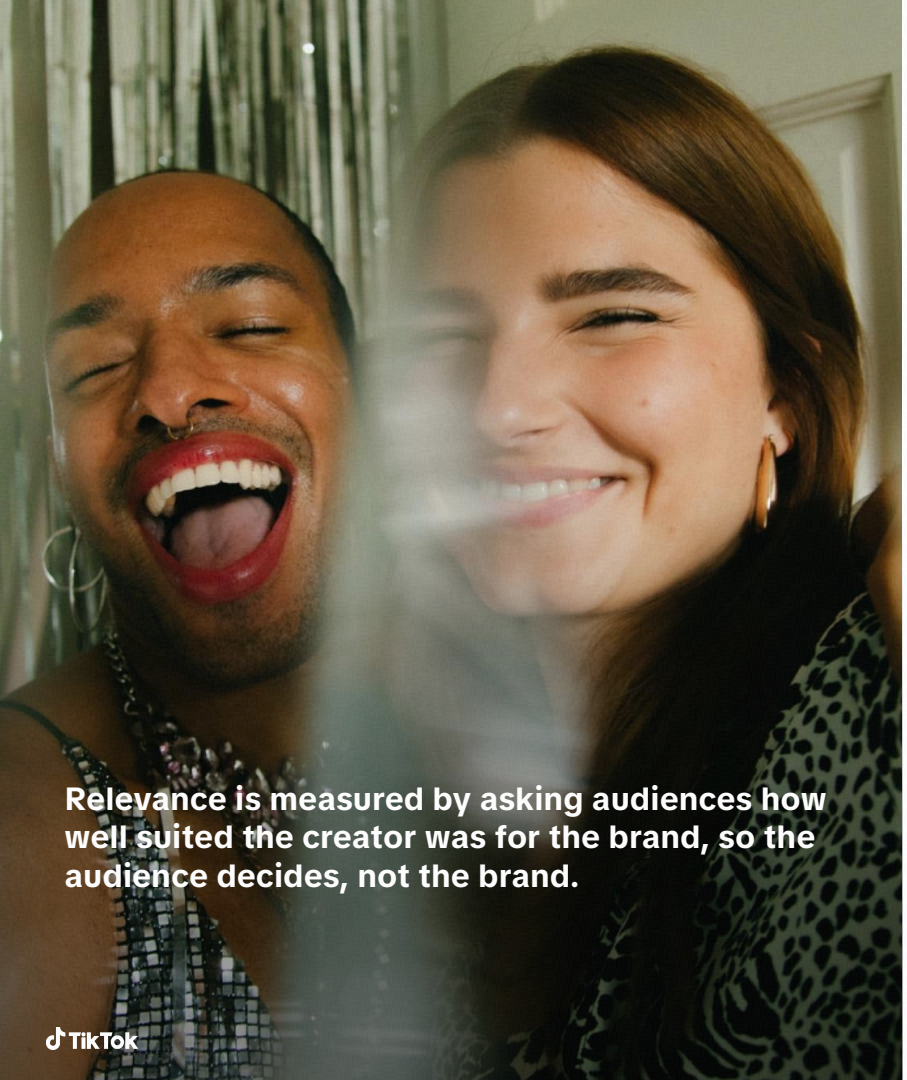
So what should brands measure instead?

Three things track whether trust reached the brand.

Brand memory, meaning modelled awareness and recall.

Emotional response and attention, which is where the creator's credibility shows up.

Relevance, scored by asking audiences how well suited the creator was for the brand.



Authenticity is derived from relevance

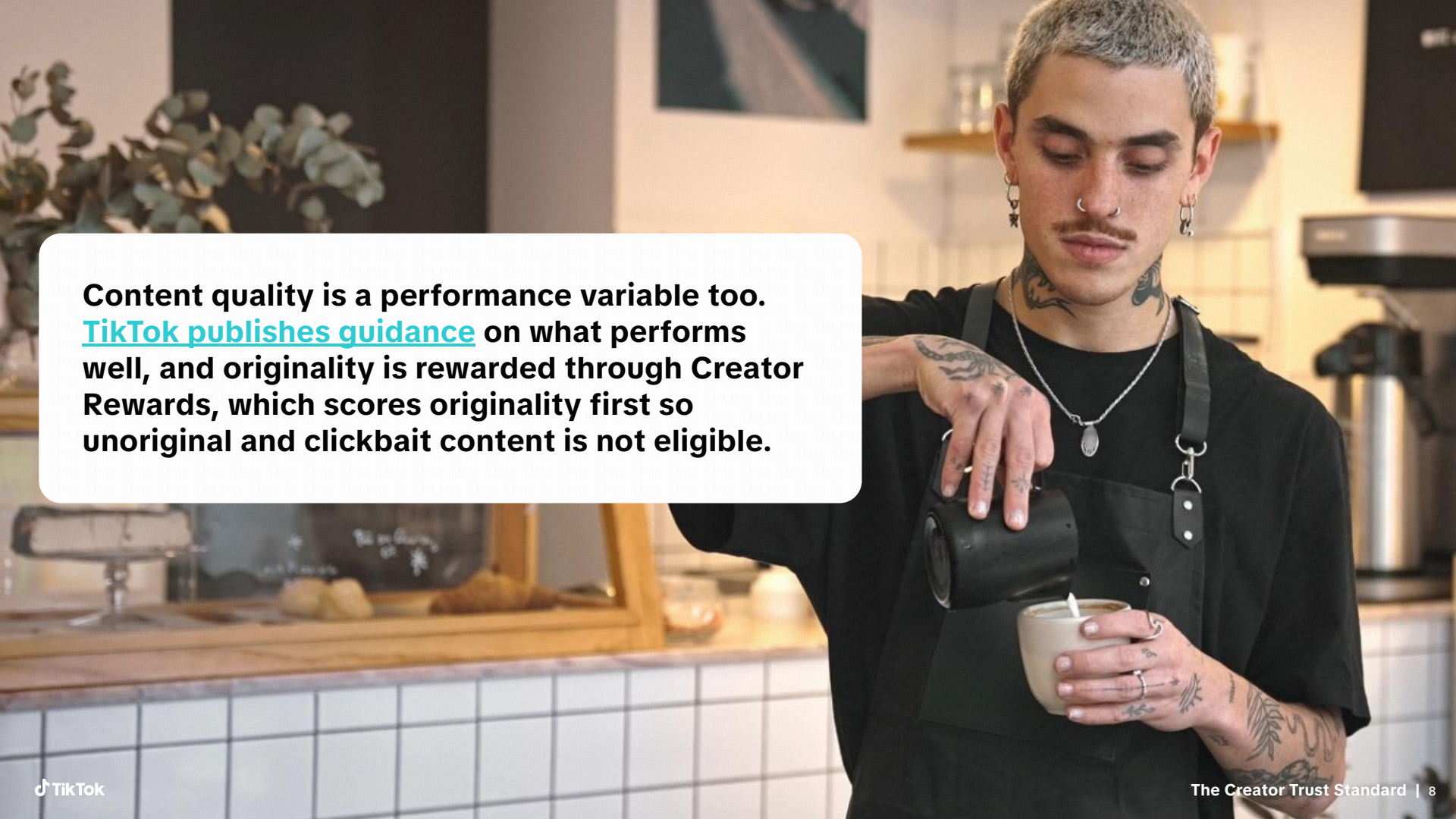
Authenticity depends on the pairing: how credibly the brand sits in the creator's world.

Relevance beats fame, and there is a large gap between them. **Across 239 creator ads tested with 35,850 TikTok users, ads with low relevance and low fame index at 100 on brand memory**. Renting fame lifts that to 110. Relevance alone reaches 135. Both together reach 189. The pattern repeats on emotion and attention:

Above-average relevance drives

58%

more emotion.



Content quality is a performance variable too. TikTok publishes guidance on what performs well, and originality is rewarded through Creator Rewards, which scores originality first so unoriginal and clickbait content is not eligible.

Suitability and relevance are different questions

SUITABILITY
Screens creators out.

Is this creator acceptable to us, aligned to our values, our category codes, industry compliance, and our risk appetite? If no, the creator is screened out.

RELEVANCE
Rank the creators who remain.

Does this brand have a credible role in this creator's world? It ranks rather than screens, and it is measured by asking audiences how well suited the creator was for the brand.

A creator can pass every suitability check and still have no credible connection to the brand. It is an expensive failure, and most processes never catch it because they are designed as screening instruments: vetting gates, audience guardrails, agency accountability, and audit. Very few rank for relevance.

One note: relevance never overrides the floor. A creator with perfect relevance who fails suitability is out regardless.

Suitability gets you to a shortlist.
Relevance decides which to choose from the shortlist.



The foundational guidelines

THE PLATFORM RULES THAT ALREADY APPLY



Gate 1.

Community Guidelines

They apply to everyone. Content that breaks the guidelines is removed.

Gate 2.

For You Eligibility

Being on TikTok is not the same as being recommended. Recommendation is held to a higher standard than presence. Most viewing on TikTok happens in the For You feed, where content is recommended to people who do not necessarily follow the creator. Content must meet a higher standard to be recommended there.

Gate 3.

Earning

Monetisation, branded content and LIVE are earned against eligibility criteria and the Creator Code of Conduct, and repeated violations can have severe consequences.

The foundational guidelines

THE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT SIT WITH THE BRAND

Disclose paid partnerships.

The Branded Content Policy sits with you: any content posted in a paid partnership must be disclosed.

Organic, boosted or paid: different rules apply.

Creator content can reach an audience as an organic post, a boosted post or a paid ad, and each carries its own policy requirements. Confirm which you are using before you brief.

Comply locally and to your DMC (Digital Marketing Code).

Local rules apply on top of platform rules, such as the ASA in the UK. Platform compliance is not market compliance.

AI and synthetic creators

- AI-generated creators and content are permitted, **as long as they comply with Community Guidelines and Shop policies.**
- Disclosure is required when content is fully AI-generated or materially altered by AI in a way that changes meaning, including synthetic faces, voices and digital humans.
- Minor edits such as colour correction or noise reduction do not require disclosure.

Creators can disclose this in-content or via the AI-generated content label, while TikTok automatically labels its own AI effects.





Whether you work with synthetic creators is your decision.

Some advertisers exclude them entirely.

If that is your position, state it clearly in briefs and contracts, and check indirect routes to brand promotion, such as reseller and affiliate authorisations on TikTok Shop.

If you do allow AI, a key consideration is claims. Do not use fabricated experts or doctors, show exaggerated or impossible results, misrepresent how a product looks or performs, or use any third-party likeness, voice or trademark without permission.

The advertiser creator lifecycle

Maximising creator performance by ensuring suitability and relevance throughout the planning process.



1 Plan

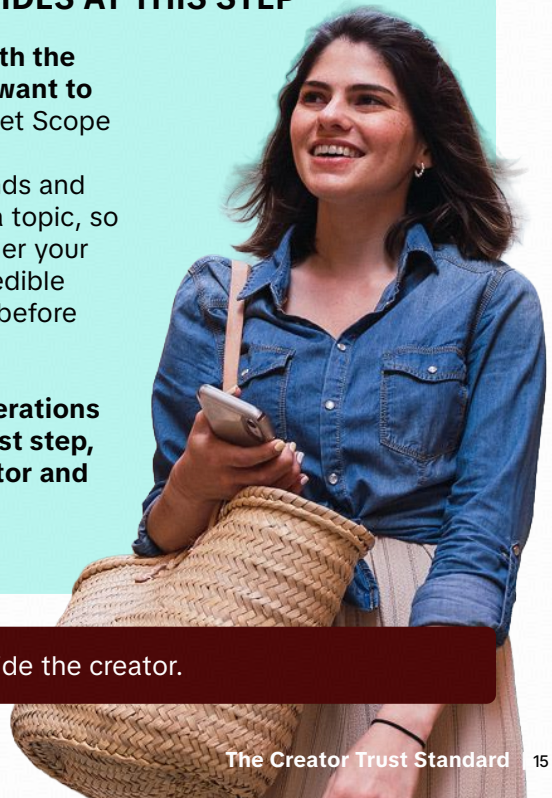
Set the objective, budget and the role creators will play

WHAT LEADING ADVERTISERS DO

- **Disciplined creator programmes are planned like media.** The objective, audience, budget and KPIs are set upfront, and creator and media are planned together.
- **Category rules, legal requirements and approval ownership are confirmed at this stage.**
- **The most advanced programmes benchmark their creator activity** against competitors before setting goals, and plan always-on calendars rather than one-off campaigns. They also test whether the brand belongs in the community it wants to reach.
- **A brand that shows up only because a community is trending,** with no real connection to its values or products, **reads as an opportunist**, and the creator takes the backlash first.

WHAT TIKTOK PROVIDES AT THIS STEP

- **Planning starts with the communities you want to reach.** TikTok Market Scope shows you the conversations, trends and sentiment around a topic, so you can test whether your campaign has a credible place in that topic before committing to it.
- **Suitability considerations apply from this first step, across every creator and every format.**



Key takeaway: Decide the creator's role and responsibility before you decide the creator.

2 Select

Choose the creators

WHAT LEADING ADVERTISERS DO

- **Mature advertisers select on relevance, not fame.** Follower count has become a weak signal; only 17% of consumers say it influences whether they engage with a creator (Sprout Social, 2026).
- **Selection criteria in leading advertiser toolkits are consistent:** brand values alignment, audience quality and local relevance, past performance, and risk tolerance. Audience data shows what reach numbers cannot: who the audience actually is, and whether they watch. A large following with low view counts is reach on paper, not in practice.
- **The most sophisticated selection starts a step earlier, defining the communities the brand needs to reach and choosing creators** for their credibility within them. The best-run programmes build a deliberate mix of creator tiers rather than buying one big name, and they record why each creator was chosen.

WHAT TIKTOK PROVIDES AT THIS STEP

- **Planning starts with the communities** you want to reach. TikTok Market Scope shows you the conversations, trends and sentiment around a topic, so you can test whether your campaign has a credible place in that topic before committing to it.
- **Suitability considerations apply from this first step,** across every creator and every format.
- **TikTok is launching new capabilities and entry points** for the Creator Marketing Agent in TikTok One to support you in the selection process and solve core creator marketing challenges:



- **Creator Recommendations 2.0** (launching Q3 2026): Features trend-based and industry benchmark suggestions.
- **Project Creation Support** (launching Q3 2026): Brings end-to-end project creation support to streamline execution and workflows.

3 Vet

Check the creators, in proportion to the risk

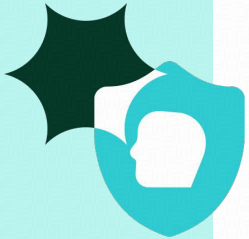
WHAT LEADING ADVERTISERS DO

→ Vetting at leading advertisers is a documented compliance process with four consistent checks:

1. **Identity:**
   The creator is who they say they are, and of verifiable age. If the creator is AI-generated, check it against your own policy on synthetic creators.
2. **Fraud:**
   No synthetic engagement or purchased followers.
3. **Authenticity:**
   The creator's stated character matches their track record.
4. **History:**
   Past content reviewed against the brand's standards.

WHAT TIKTOK PROVIDES AT THIS STEP

→ Every creator a brand considers already operates inside a moderated environment. Community Guidelines apply to all content before any partnership exists, and first-party audience and engagement data give brands verified inputs for their own checks rather than self-reported numbers.



→ Suitability tooling lets brands apply their standards consistently whether they are vetting one creator or one thousand.

→ Creator Vetting (launching in Q4 2026) on TikTok One will provide creator vetting capabilities designed to solve core marketing challenges.

4 Brief and contract

Agree the terms and the creative freedom

WHAT LEADING ADVERTISERS DO

- **The contract and the brief do different jobs.** The contract sets the floor: deliverables, claims, prohibited content, disclosure, usage rights, amplification permissions, approval turnarounds and exit terms, with sign-off captured and stored.
- **The brief sets the ceiling, and the evidence supports the case for creative freedom:** over-scripted content underperforms because audiences recognise it as an ad. Briefs that define the outcome and the boundaries, then leave the voice to the creator, produce content that drive better results. Brands choose creators because their audience trusts them. Dictate the words and the audience hears the brand, not the creator, and the relevance you selected for is gone.



4 Brief and contract

Agree the terms and the creative freedom

BEST PRACTICES FOR BRIEFING:

Ask for less. Content carrying one or two key messages outperforms content carrying more, so pick the one thing the audience should come away with and drop the rest.

Brief for entertainment rather than explanation: characters acting, a story unfolding, a recognisable place, people interacting, a pause or a hushed voice.

The most entertaining creator ads earn

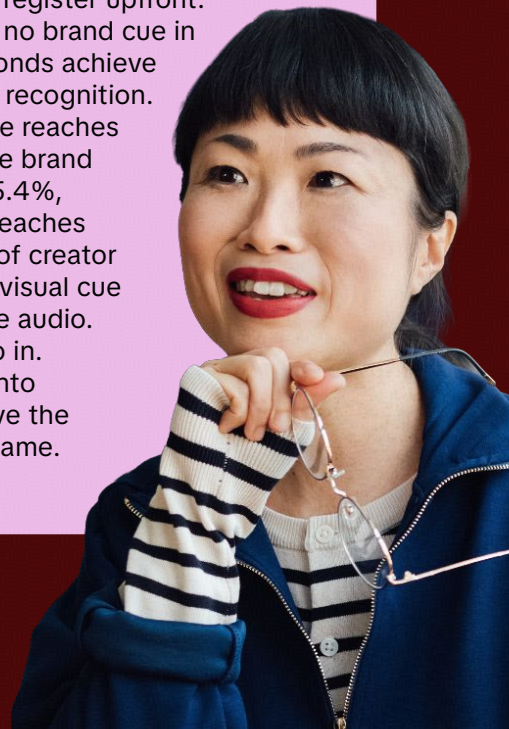
82% **more attention**

21% **more emotion than the least**

(The Creator Effectiveness Playbook, 2026).

Insist on one thing: the brand has to register upfront. Creator ads with no brand cue in the first two seconds achieve 7.5% early brand recognition. A visual cue alone reaches 25.7%, saying the brand name reaches 45.4%, and doing both reaches 53.1%. Yet 64% of creator ads use an early visual cue and only 18% use audio. Do not cut a logo in. Build the brand into the idea, and have the creator say the name.

The Creator Effectiveness Playbook, 2026



4 Brief and contract

Agree the terms and the creative freedom

WHAT TIKTOK PROVIDES AT THIS STEP

Three sources of friction damage creator relationships:

- Scattered briefs
- Slow contracting
- And late payment.

TikTok One consolidates briefing, contracting, deliverables and payment, so brands run many partnerships to one process and creators are paid on schedule.

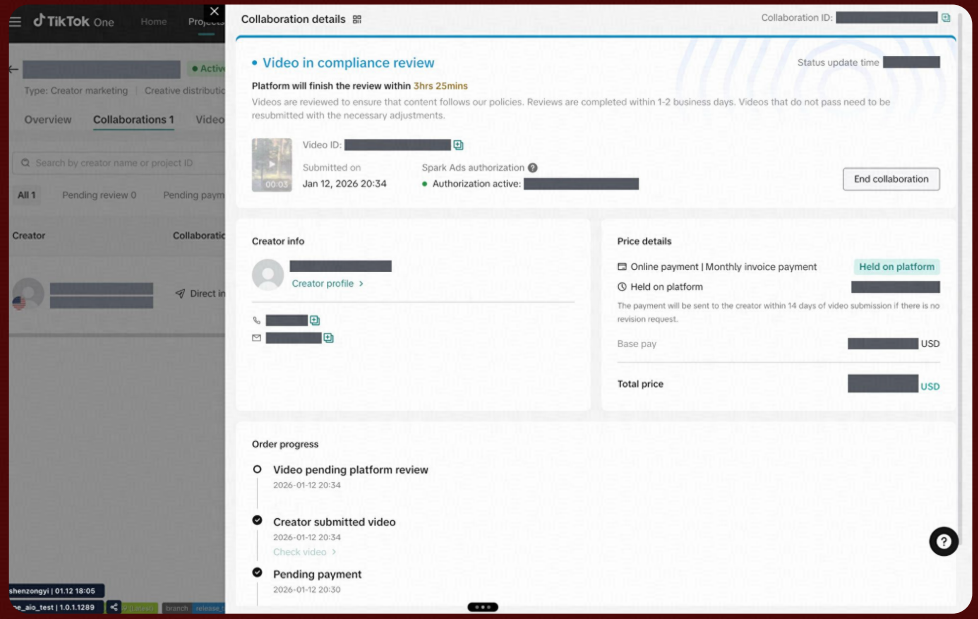


5 Activate

Approve, disclose and go live

WHAT LEADING ADVERTISERS DO

- **The creator knows their audience.** Brands approving the content usually do not. The more notes are given, the more diluted and less effective the content becomes.
- **Set the approval timeline** before the creator starts filming, and send feedback once from key stakeholders. Late changes mean reshoots and a missed moment.
- **Record sign-off a**gainst the owner named in the contract, and check the branded content disclosure is switched on.



WHAT TIKTOK PROVIDES AT THIS STEP

- **Disclosure is built into the posting flow.** Creators switch on the branded content setting when they post, and advertisers declare AI-generated material in Ads Manager.
- **For amplification,** Spark Ads promotes the creator's own post, so the paid version keeps the original voice and its disclosure.
- **Content Assurance on TikTok one conducts platform pre-reviews** which ensure compliance and prevent post-publishing issues. Maintain absolute quality control through mandatory review stages before the campaign goes live and the creator is paid.

6 Monitor and enforce

Track live content and act on problems

WHAT LEADING ADVERTISERS DO

- **The best creator programmes prepare for incidents** before they happen. Live content is tracked for compliance, non-compliant content is fixed or removed inside an agreed window, and unresolved issues are escalated and logged.
- **The preparation happens at contract:** SLAs and remedies agreed, an incident owner named, and a pause protocol set, including for external events the creator did not cause.
- **Comments need watching too:** many incidents start in audience reaction rather than creator conduct.

WHAT TIKTOK PROVIDES AT THIS STEP

- **TikTok moderates every piece of content against the Community Guidelines,** whether or not it is part of a campaign. Brands add their own controls on top: comment management on paid content, suitability filters, and dedicated reporting channels that route issues to the teams who enforce.
- **Incident handling beyond creator content,** including reputation, counterfeits and intellectual property, is covered in TikTok's brand protection guidance.
- **Track organic and paid performance in one unified dashboard on TikTok One**. Get clear insights to measure your entire creator marketing impact.

Key takeaway:

Prepare for incidents at contract: Set out what counts as non-compliance, who fixes it, by when, and what happens if it is not fixed.

7 Measure and learn

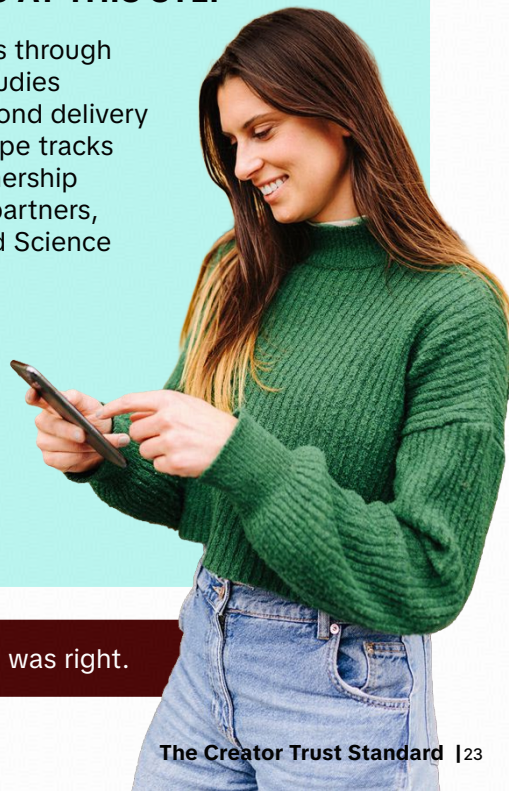
Judge the results and decide who to rebook

WHAT LEADING ADVERTISERS DO

- Measurement starts with the KPIs from Plan and the selection rationale from Select, alongside conversation and sentiment. Mature advertisers report incremental reach, brand outcomes and, where the category allows, attributed revenue.
- At Select you set out why this creator was relevant to the brand. Brand lift studies show whether the audience agreed. Ask them how well suited the creator was, and the result tells you whether to book that creator again.
- The findings feed the next cycle: repeat issues shape future eligibility, strong performers re-enter at Select, and the best relationships graduate to always-on.

WHAT TIKTOK PROVIDES AT THIS STEP

- Campaign reporting runs through TikTok One, brand lift studies measure movement beyond delivery metrics, and Market Scope tracks the conversation a partnership generated. Third-party partners, DoubleVerify, Integral Ad Science and Zefr, verify results independently.
- A brand reputation dashboard is scaling and available on request.



Key takeaway: A repeat partnership is the strongest evidence that the relevance was right.

The long view: Trust compounds over time

Relevance is proved over time, not per post

Trust compounds, and so do the returns.

The evidence points in the same direction: always-on creator programmes outperform campaign bursts, sales effects persist for weeks after activity ends, and creators deliver the highest total return of any channel when measured over years rather than flights *(see chart from WARC, 2026; Dentsu x TikTok, 2025; IPA Influencer Benchmarking, 2025).*

Audiences reward consistency too: followers are more likely to see a brand as trustworthy when they see the same creator and brand aligned repeatedly, because a partnership that persists reads as a choice, not a transaction.



The operating model follows.

Leading advertisers are moving from one-off collaborations to contracted year-long partnerships, always-on creator rosters, and a small number of creators elevated to genuine brand partners who shape ideas rather than deliver assets. For regulated categories the long relationship is not a preference but the risk model: Repeat engagement with a known, vetted creator carries less exposure than a rotating cast of new ones.

Every step in this framework gets cheaper and safer the second time:

- The vetting is a re-check
- The brief is a conversation, and the measurement has a baseline.

The case for repeating a creator is not familiarity, it is evidence.

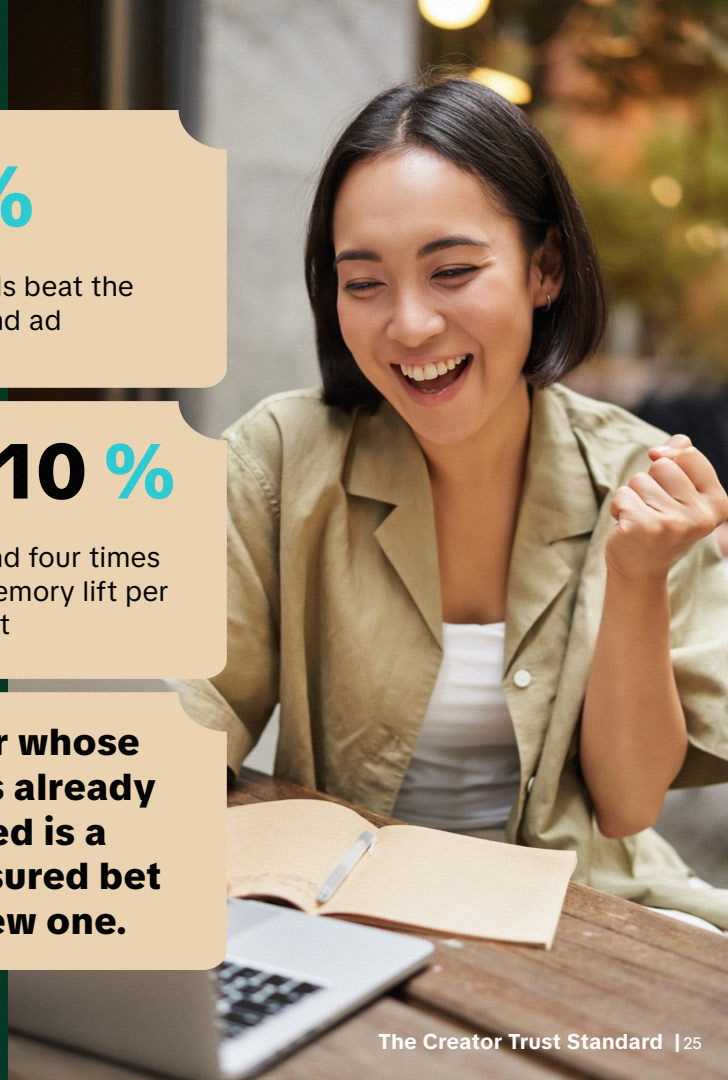
29%

of creator ads beat the average brand ad

Top 10%

deliver around four times the brand memory lift per ad of the rest

A creator whose work has already performed is a more assured bet than a new one.



TikTok is building for the same horizon.

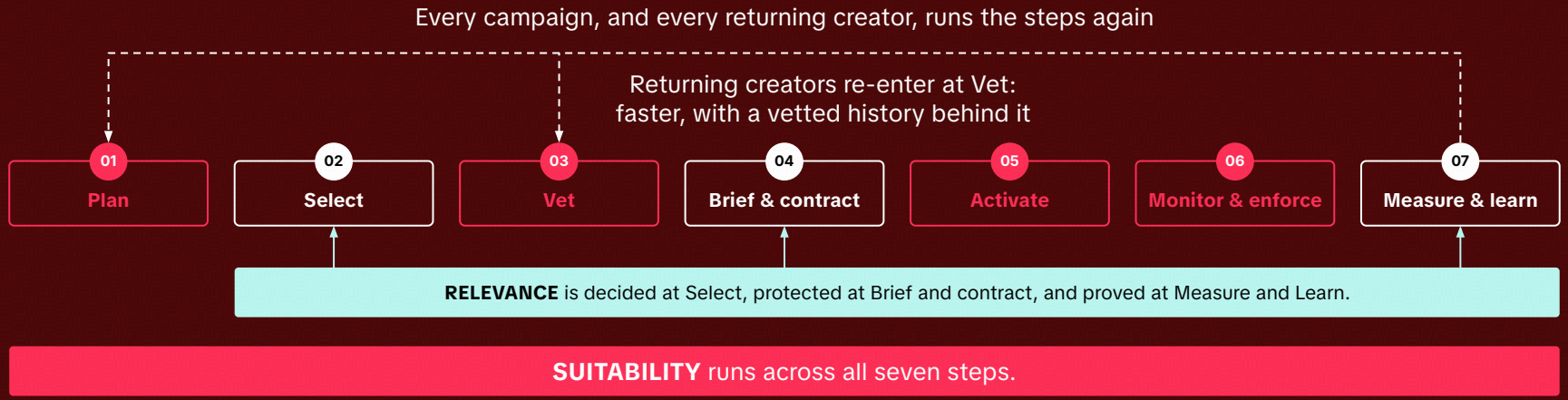
Creator Rewards pays for originality, so the platform's incentives point at the authenticity brands are buying.

Certification and training professionalise the creator side of the partnership. And TikTok One holds the relationship in one place, so tenure builds a record instead of a scattered email trail. The advertisers who will shape what creator marketing becomes are the ones treating creators as a channel in which to invest.



The long view: with best in class creator partnerships, the framework is continuous

Suitability is not a gate you pass once. Creators change, audiences change and rules change, so the process runs on a cycle, not a calendar.



The checks do not stop. Creators change, audiences change, rules change. Re-vet on a set cycle even for creators you know for suitability.

Each pass is faster. The second time through, vetting is a re-check, the brief starts from what already worked, and measurement has a baseline.

That is how authenticity compounds. Run enough campaigns with the right creator and the audience starts trusting the brand itself.

Key takeaways



01 **Decide the role of the creator first.**
Decide the creator's role before you decide the creator.
The role sets the standard, the risk profile and the measurement.

02 **Select on relevance.**
The reason you picked a creator is what you measure them against later.

03 **Vet to the appropriate risk level.**
Scale due diligence to exposure level.

04 **Brief the outcome, not the script.**
Set the goal and the boundaries and leave the voice to the creator.

05 **Prepare for incidents at contract.**
Agree the incident owner, the fix window and the pause protocol before launch.