



Beyond Affiliate: Building Sustainable Creator Partnerships

What creators want out of brand collaborations—
and how to maximize their impact.

Creators aren't happy with affiliate-only partnerships.

That's great news for brands.

- Four out of every 10 creators who participate in affiliate marketing programs say they lack additional opportunities to partner with the brand.
- Less than 25% are satisfied with their earnings from affiliate programs.
- Three quarters don't receive product education or other key elements of support.

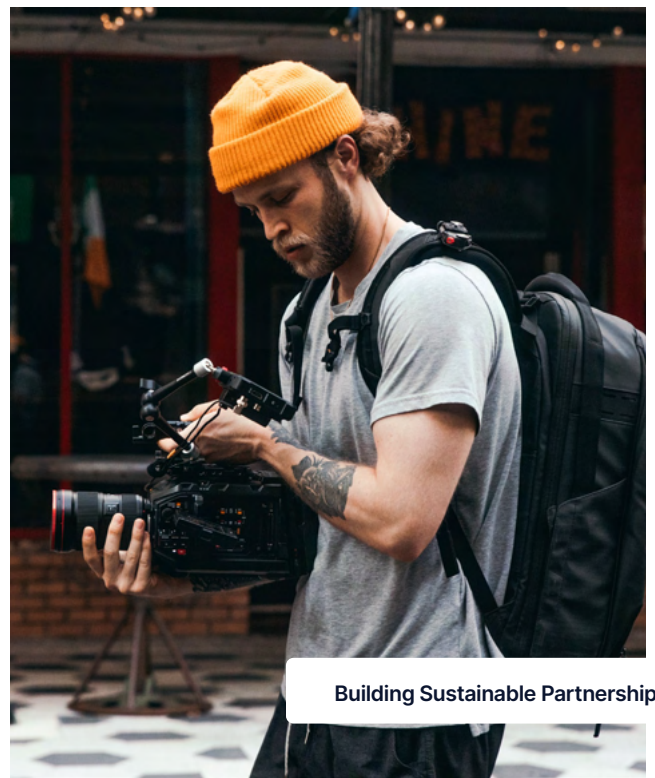
In short, creators are frustrated by the transactional nature of engagements.

Why is this good news? Because the long-term, sustainable partnerships these creators covet are just as beneficial to brands.

How often a creator posts about a brand over time is the most significant leading indicator of Earned Media Value, CreatorIQ's proprietary metric for quantifying the value of social media content. The more often a creator posts about a brand—and the longer they do it—the more value they generate.

Maximizing the potential of creator-led marketing requires brands to go beyond transactional engagements and build enduring, cooperative partnerships.

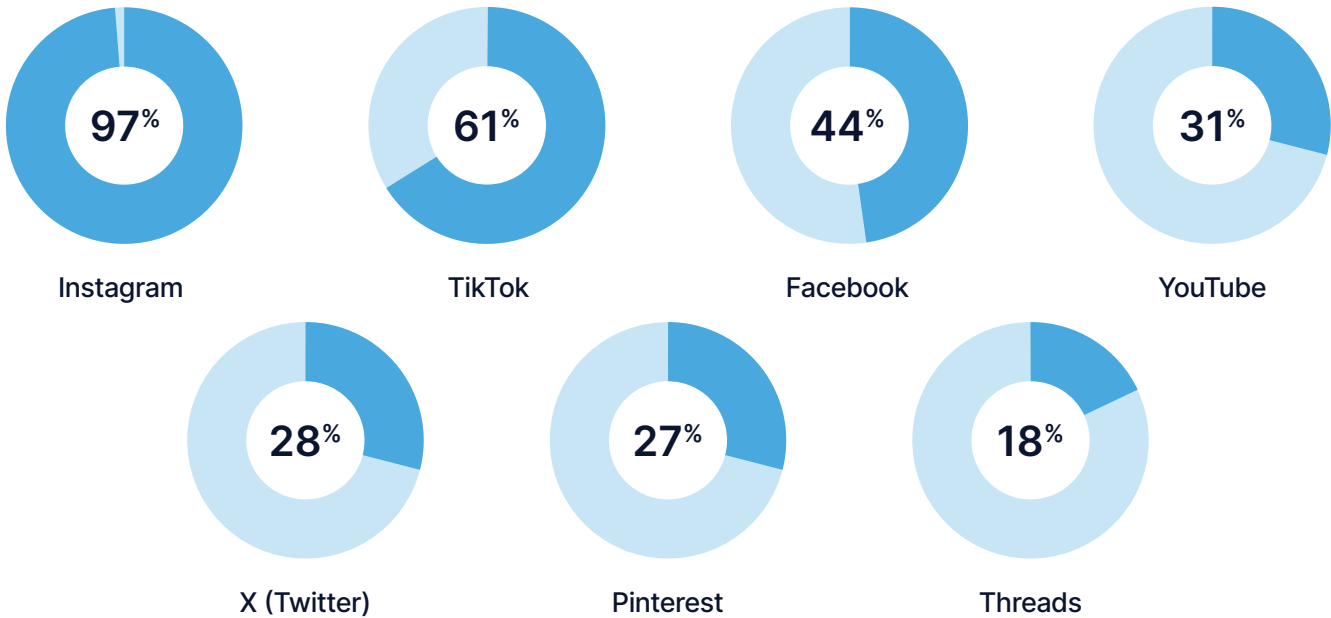
How can marketers accomplish this? In collaboration with leading market research firm Ipsos, CreatorIQ surveyed more than 125 creators to uncover their motivations and identify four key strategies for cultivating mutually beneficial relationships.



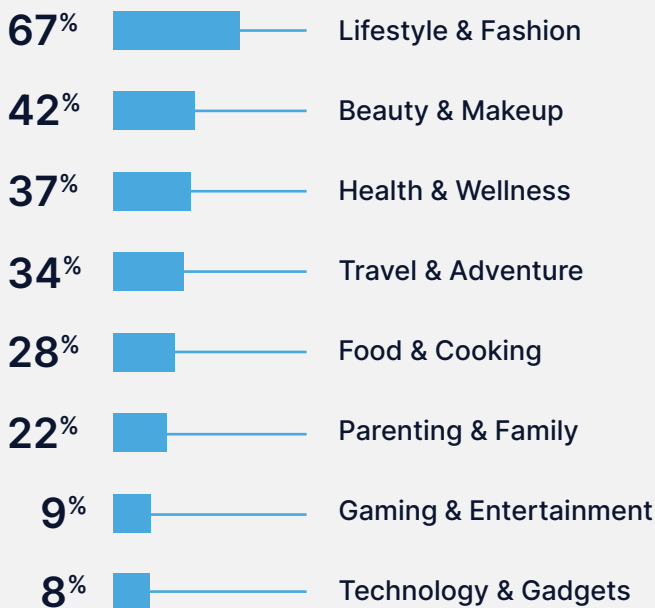
Creators Snapshot

CreatorIQ and Ipsos surveyed creators who participate in affiliate marketing programs. Let's get to know them better:

Most Used Social Platforms

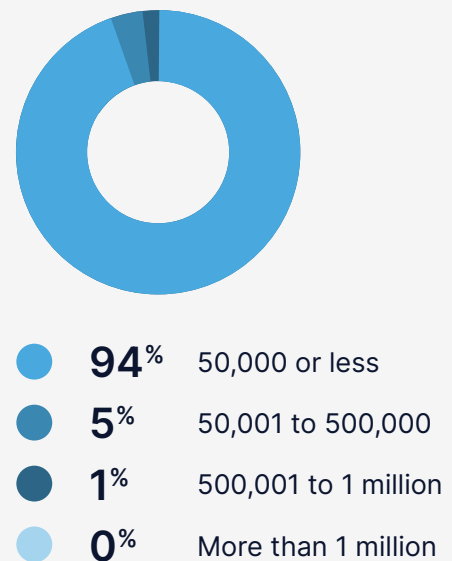


Most Common Posting Topics



Follower Counts

On the creator's primary channel





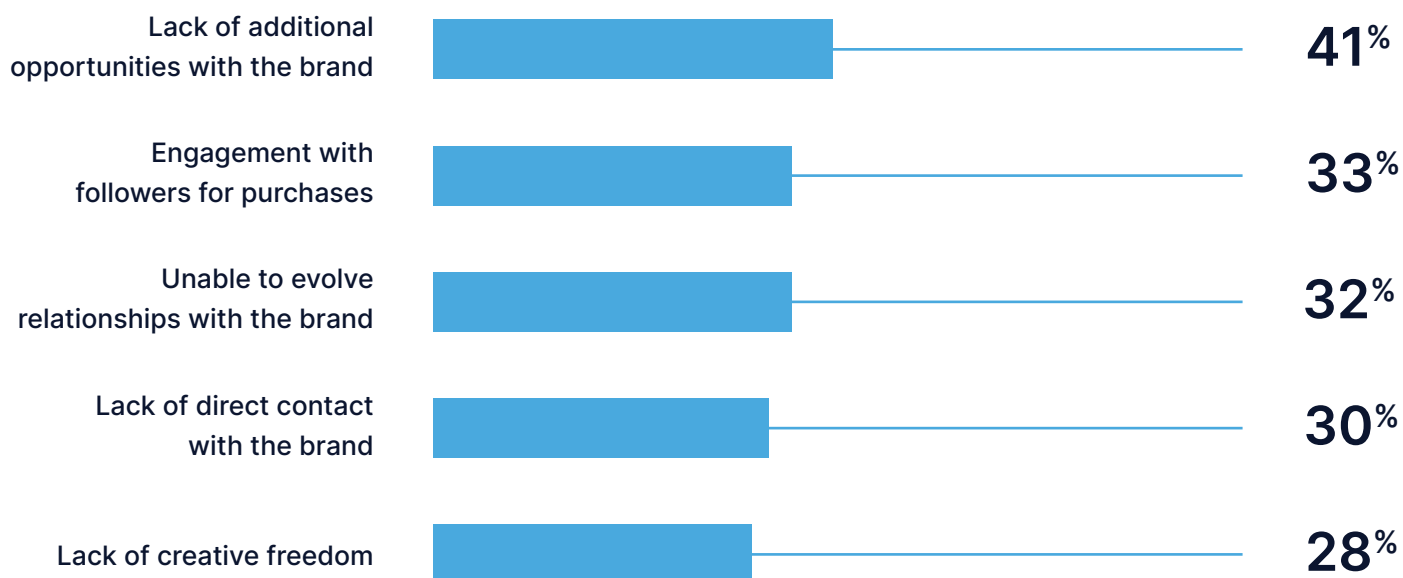
Creators Want Long-Term Relationships

The single most common challenge faced by affiliate creators? A lack of additional opportunities with the brand. Not far behind is an inability to evolve the brand relationship.

One-and-done opportunities reduce creators' ability to build trust with their audiences, which negatively impacts purchases. Authenticity is paramount to these creators—posting a couple of affiliate links and moving on comes across as disingenuous.

Creators Struggle to Expand Brand Partnerships

Most common challenges faced by affiliate creators



Creators Want Long-Term Relationships

When we asked creators about the most important factors in their selection of a brand's affiliate program, they prioritized product quality, product affinity, and brand reputation over commission rates and earning potential.

That bears repeating: **product quality and brand alignment are more important to creators than earning potential.**

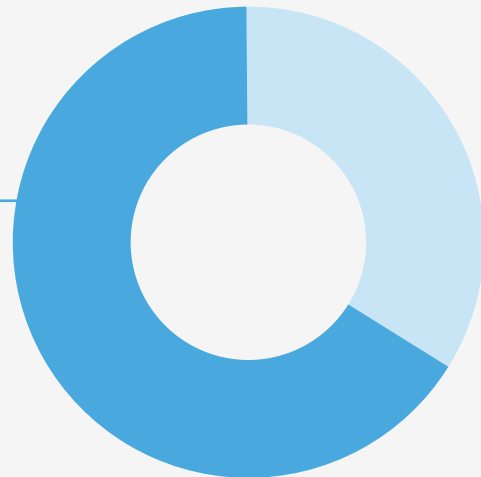
Creators Prioritize Product Quality and Brand Alignment

Most important factors in working with a brand



63%

of creators say the potential for other partnership model opportunities is an important factor in selecting an affiliate program.



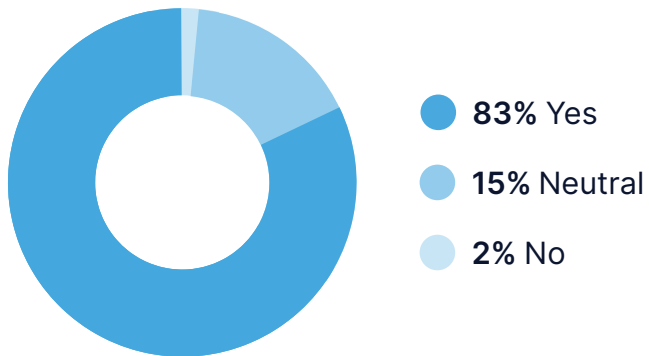
This makes perfect sense when you think about it from a creator's perspective. The ability to maintain authenticity and trust among their followers is more important to their long-term financial success than a short-term payday.

Creators Want Long-Term Relationships

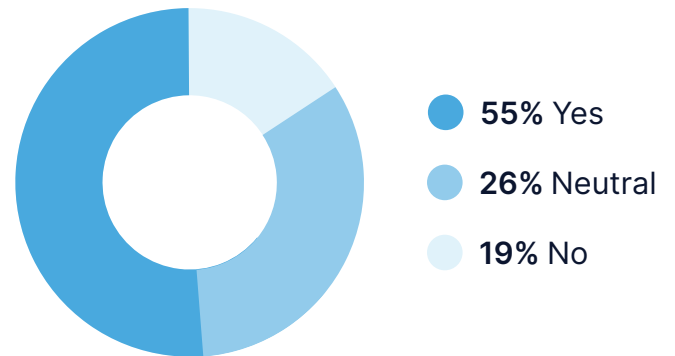
For creators, working with brands and products they already use and believe in makes it much easier to generate genuine, engaging content.

Creators are Satisfied With Follower Engagement

My followers trust my recommendations



My followers engage with my content



Transactional Relationships Limit Earning Potential

On average, one third of a creator's annual income comes from their work as a creator—the same amount financial experts generally advise should be spent on rent or mortgage. This isn't just a side hustle: most creators have a real financial stake in their work.

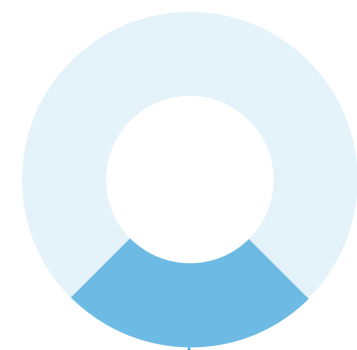
34%

of the average affiliate creator's income comes from their work as a creator



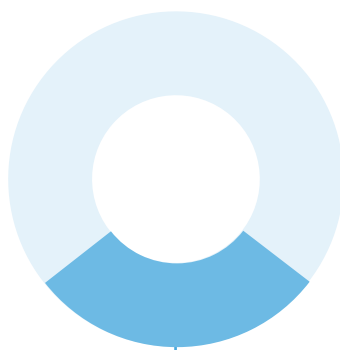
It's notable, therefore, that **less than one quarter of creators are happy with the money they take home from affiliate programs.**

Creators Aren't Satisfied With Affiliate Income



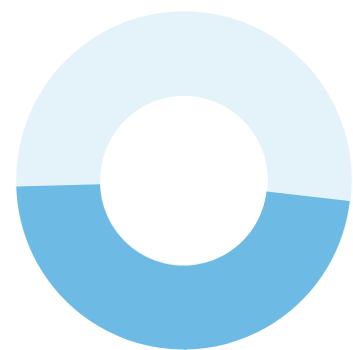
24%

Satisfied



30%

Neutral



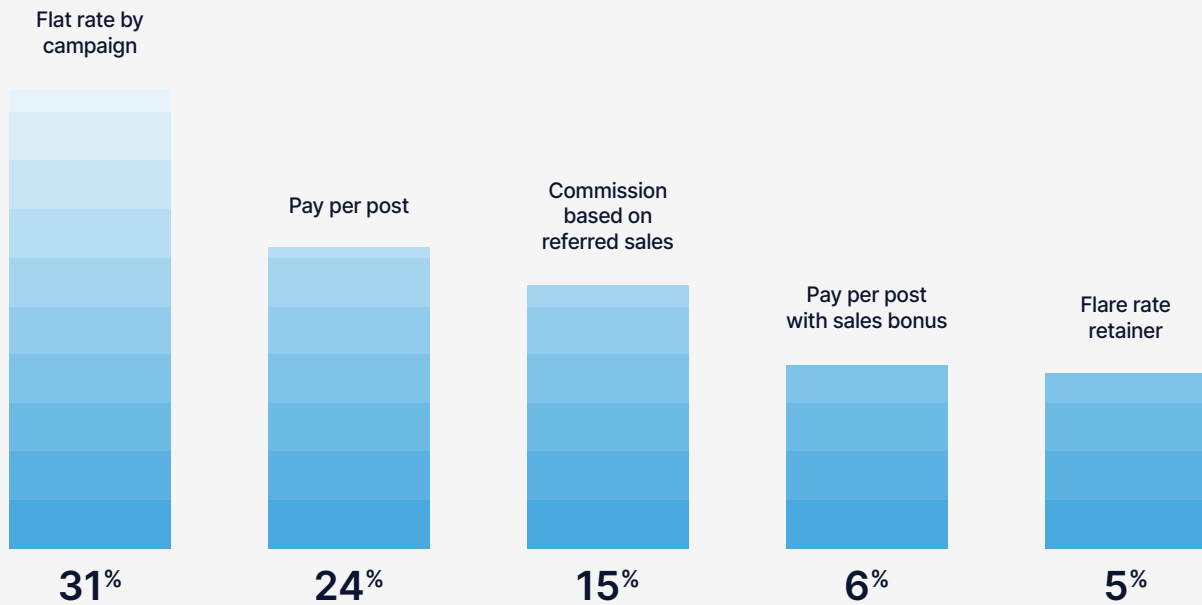
47%

Dissatisfied

Unsurprisingly, creators prefer flat-rate compensation by campaign or post, with just 15% of their average income coming from referred sales commissions.

Creators Prefer Flat-Rate Compensation

Average percent of creator income by type



Let's Review What We've Learned

- Short-term, commission-based engagements aren't appealing to creators. They're perceived as transactional and degrade the creator's authenticity among their audience.
- On the other hand, sustained partnerships that tap into a creator's existing affinity for a product foster that sense of authenticity, and make viewers more likely to trust the creator's recommendations.
- That means better outcomes for the brand and better earnings for the creator—a true win-win.

Creators Do **Their Homework**

Creators are savvy enough to know that selling out for the wrong brand or product will cost them in the long run. Here are the factors they assess before partnering with a brand:



Product and Brand Alignment

Creators ensure that the brand's values align with their own, and that the products or services are ones they genuinely like and use.



Brand Credibility and Reputation

Creators look for positive feedback and independent reviews about the brand and their products to ensure that they're partnering with a reputable company.



Financial Opportunity

Creators check the financial benefits of the partnership, such as the commission rate, or whether a flat fee is involved.



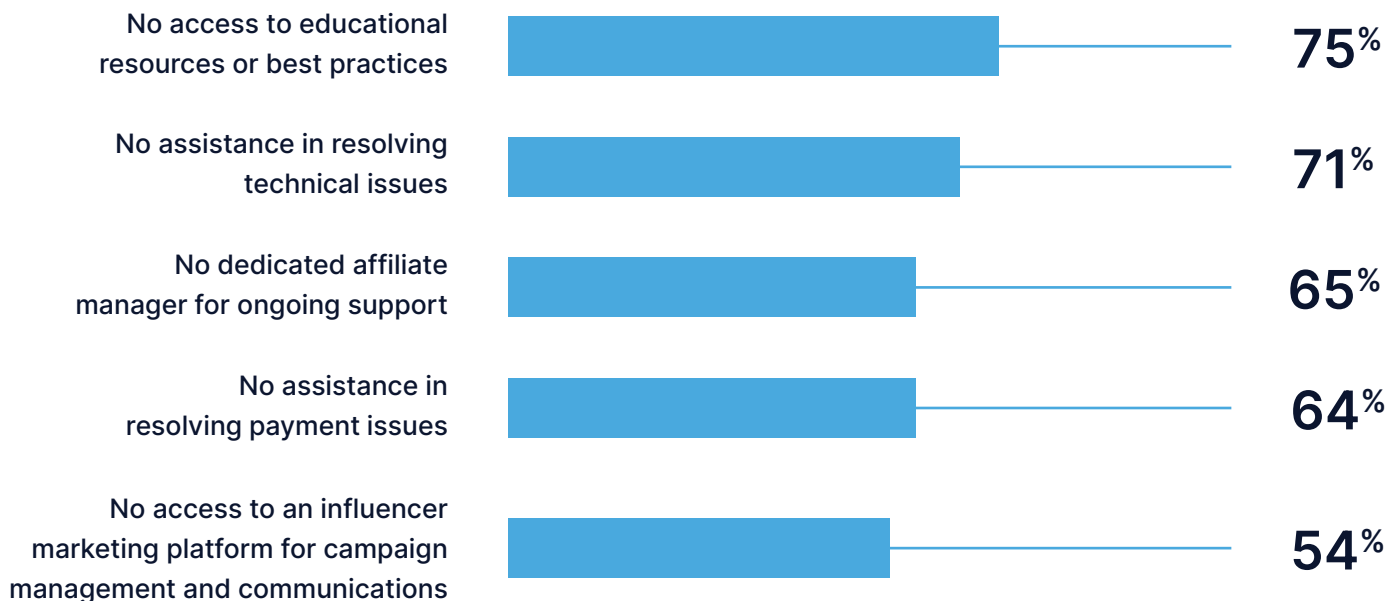


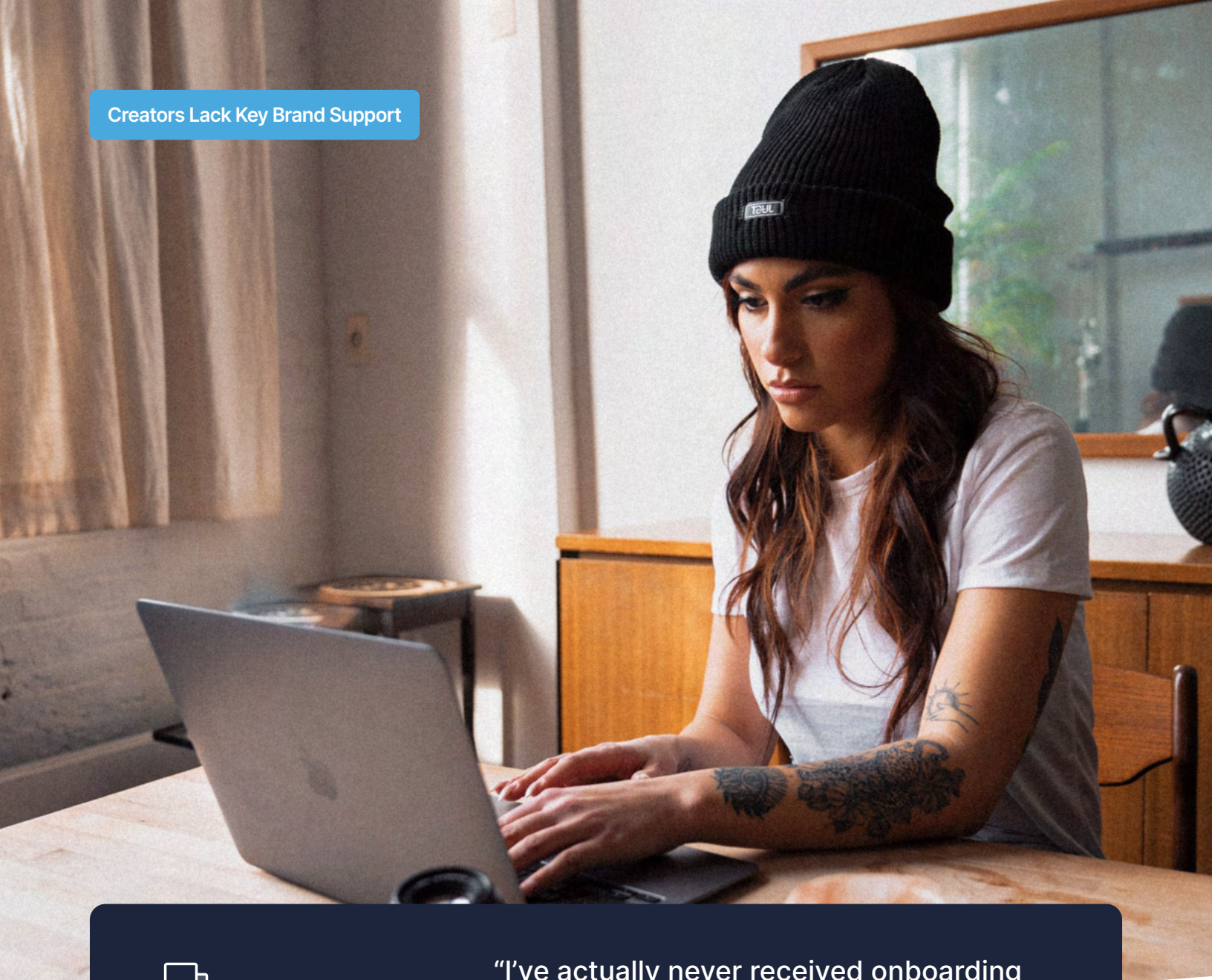
Creators Lack Key Brand Support

Think about the support you provide your sales team: product education, best practices training, consistent communication, and dedicated assistance with technical and payment issues.

Yet creators, who are also tasked with representing a brand and promoting its products to consumers, rarely receive any of this.

Support Provided by Affiliate Programs





Creator Quotes

“I’ve actually never received onboarding before. It’s usually ‘Sign up, log in, and figure it out yourself.’”

“I would love to have an ongoing representation of a brand where I have a recurring payment happening. Once a month, so things don’t get stale or not have time to sink in.”

We’re not suggesting that creators should receive the same logistical and financial investment as your sales team. But empowering creators to promote your products does require some level of meaningful support.

42%

of creators list support and communication as an important factor in partnering with a brand



The more creators know about your product and how to promote it, the more effective they'll be as partners. Better communication and dedicated technical support builds loyalty among creators, and makes them more likely to stick with your brand.

Happy, effective creators mean more productive creator marketing programs.



4 Keys to Sustainable Creator Partnerships

Let's put this data to use, shall we? Here's how to implement the findings of this report to improve your creator marketing program.

1

Partner with Creators Who Use and Like Your Products

The best affiliate creators are those who are already purchasing and using your brand's products, and posting about them organically. There's authentic brand affinity and alignment on values, style, and audience.

2

Enable Direct Relationships

Creators want to work directly with your brand. Allow them to communicate with a dedicated representative of your brand, and offer technical and payment support.

3

Provide Product Training and Support

Your creators are your sellers—treat them as such. Give them access to resources and content that will help them be successful in their role, such as product education, best practices training, and advance info about upcoming product drops and sales promotions.

4

Provide Opportunities Beyond Affiliate

If a creator is successful in driving direct revenue through affiliate links, that's a strong indication that they can contribute in other meaningful ways. Offer these creators additional partnership opportunities and unlock their full potential.



Managing Creators at Scale Requires the Right Platform.

When you're working with hundreds or even thousands of creators, it can be a challenge to identify existing brand advocates, maintain consistent communication, and offer meaningful support.

CreatorIQ empowers your organization to scale creator-led marketing at every stage and drive impact, growth, and ROI.

Discover the perfect creators:

Uncover creators who organically post about your brand, and use real earned media insights to evaluate each creator's authenticity, loyalty, and potential.

Manage your creator community:

Create an exceptional partnership experience with creator-facing communication tools and destinations that guide them through onboarding and activations.

Monitor and syndicate content:

Efficiently review and approve planned content, then bring all of your creator content into a single library.

Prove the value of creators:

Demonstrate ROI in reports with a complete view of campaign performance, using customized KPIs and the metrics that matter most.

Ready to build better creator partnerships?

[Learn More About the CreatorIQ Solution](#)