Tracking creator deals, invoices and usage windows without losing money

The four things creators forget about a deal, and the one table that stops a good month turning into an unpaid one.

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Most creators do not lose money because they are underpaid. They lose it because a deal was agreed in a DM, delivered in good faith, and then never invoiced, or invoiced after the usage window had already expired and the brand had no reason to renew.

Four details decide whether a deal is worth what you think it is. Three of them are invisible at the moment you agree the fee.

The four details

1. The fee is not the deal. The fee is one line. The other three lines are scope, term and exclusivity, and each one has a price.

2. The usage window expires, and that is where the money is. A brand paying for a video often wants to run it as paid media. That is a different licence from posting it once on your channel. If the agreement does not name a window and a channel list, the brand can reasonably assume perpetual, all-channel rights, and you have given away the most valuable part for free.

3. Exclusivity blocks future income. A category exclusivity clause means you cannot work with a competitor for the stated period. That should cost more, because it removes options you would otherwise have. Agreeing it casually is the most expensive habit in the job.

4. Deliverables have dates and revision limits. One round of revisions is normal. Unlimited revisions is an open-ended job with a fixed fee.

The table

One row per deal. Not a document, not a folder of PDFs. A table you can sort.

FIELD	WHY IT EXISTS
Brand and the human you actually talk to	The contact leaves. The deal should survive them
Fee, and what it includes	The number plus the scope in one place
Deliverables with due dates	Each one separately, so a partial delivery is visible
Post date and live link	Proof of delivery. Without it, payment arguments are memory
Usage window and channels	The clause that decides renewal money

Exclusivity, category and end date	Blocks future deals until it expires
Invoice sent date, amount, paid date	Cash, tracked separately from delivery

Seven rows of detail. It takes two minutes per deal, and it is the difference between knowing what you are owed and hoping.

The rules that make it hold

Invoice on delivery, not on goodwill. The moment the content is live, the invoice goes out. Waiting for the brand to ask is the single most common cause of a 60-day payment becoming a 120-day one.

Never agree a usage window verbally. If it is not written, it does not exist, and the version that exists will be the one most favourable to whoever has the bigger legal budget.

Track exclusivity as a calendar block, not a note. If it is not on a calendar you look at, you will accept a competing deal and then have to unwind it.

Price the licence separately from the content. "Video, one month organic" and "video, six months paid and organic, all channels" are different products. Sending one rate for both means you are charging the cheap one every time.

What to automate, and what not to

Automate: the reminder that a deliverable is due, the reminder that an invoice is unpaid at 30 and 60 days, and the alert that a usage window is expiring in 30 days. Those three reminders are the whole system, and every one of them is a date you already have.

Do not automate: the rate, the negotiation, or the relationship. A template that negotiates for you produces worse deals than a short awkward conversation.

How to tell it is working

- You can name every deal currently live, what is owed on it and when it expires.
- No invoice is older than your stated terms without a follow-up having been sent.
- You know which brands have renewals coming up, before they do.
- You have declined at least one exclusivity request because you could see what it cost.

> *The work is not the content. The work is remembering four dates per deal, and remembering is a system, not a personality trait.*