

The *Partnership* Sniff Test.

Six areas of pressure-testing a paid partnership before you sign. Where it's access (clean) versus where it's endorsement (compromised) — and which one your audience will read.

A WORKSHEET BY MORIAH ALISE · DEAR GLORY · MAY 2026 · [READ THE ARTICLE →](#)

Sponsorship is *access*. Endorsement is *commitment*.

*They are not the same thing, and audiences read the difference in seconds. Sponsorship pays for distribution. Endorsement asks you to stake your name on the product. **Most bad partnerships happen because creators agreed to endorsement and got paid for sponsorship.** The audit below is how you find out which one is actually on the table.*

How to use this. Use this *before* you sign. Run it on the partnership currently in front of you — or the next one that lands in your inbox. If most of the boxes are checked, it's access. If most aren't, it's endorsement, and the price needs to reflect that — or the deal needs to die.

SECTION I · THE AUDIT

Six areas. *Pressure-test the deal.*

For each area: be honest, not optimistic. The audience will be honest in their read, so you might as well start there.

01 ORIGIN

How the conversation started. Origin reveals intent — both theirs and yours.

- They approached me because of who I already am, not who I'd become for them
- I would have written or made this content without payment
- There's no pre-existing transactional relationship that's quietly setting the terms
- I'm not pursuing this purely because cash flow is tight this month
- The brief came in clean — not via three intermediaries with conflicting versions

→ What is missing or uncertain here — and what's the first move to fix it?

02 BRIEF

What they're asking for vs. what you're willing to do. Specificity is non-negotiable.

- The deliverables are *specifically scoped* — medium, length, placement, count
- There's no “and one additional asset if needed” clause without separate compensation
- I know which channels the work will live on, for how long, and in what format
- I have a written copy of the brief, not a Zoom recap
- Approvals and turnaround timelines are realistic, not hostage-taking

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03 CONTROL

Where you keep editorial authority and where you yield. This is the line that defines access vs. endorsement.

- I retain final editorial authority on the language
- Required language is limited to disclosure + factual product claims I can verify
- The brand has notice, not veto, on my point of view
- I would not be embarrassed by anything in the script if it leaked tomorrow
- If they ask for a revision I disagree with, I have the right to refuse and exit

→ What is missing or uncertain here — and what's the first move to fix it?

04 DISCLOSURE

How the relationship is named. Disclosure protects both the audience and you — it's not just a regulatory checkbox.

- The partnership is disclosed *up front*, not in a footnote
- The disclosure language is in my voice, not boilerplate from their legal team
- I'm not burying the relationship in hashtags, end-cards, or descriptions
- I would name the partnership the same way to a friend in conversation
- I'm prepared to defend the partnership publicly if asked

→ What is missing or uncertain here — and what's the first move to fix it?

05 AUDIENCE

What your audience will smell, hear, and read. Their read is the only one that compounds (or burns) trust.

- My audience would not be surprised that I'm associated with this brand
- The product or organization aligns with what I've already said publicly
- I'd send this product / experience to a friend who didn't follow me
- I'm not relying on the brand's audience to validate the partnership to mine
- I would still publish this content if the brand asked me not to disclose

→ What is missing or uncertain here — and what's the first move to fix it?

06 EXIT

What walking away looks like. The deal you can't walk away from is the deal that owns you.

- I can exit this agreement cleanly if their behavior changes
- There is no clause that prevents me from naming a competitor positively
- I'm not signed to exclusivity I'd regret in six months
- If this partnership goes badly publicly, I can speak freely about why
- I'd take half the money before I'd take all of it and lose my voice

→ What is missing or uncertain here — and what's the first move to fix it?

Is this *access* or *endorsement*?

Look across the six areas. If most of the boxes are checked, it's access — clean, scalable, and trustworthy. If most aren't, you're being paid for sponsorship but asked for endorsement, and the deal is mispriced.

What endorsement *actually* costs.

Endorsement is not a higher rate. *It's a different product entirely. You're not just renting your audience — you're staking your name on the thing. The price for that, when it's worth doing at all, is a multiple of the sponsorship rate. If they're paying access prices for endorsement, they're not the right partner. Walk.*

YOUR VERDICT ON THIS DEAL

Based on the audit, this deal is best read as —

Three *moves*. Before you sign.

Three things you do before this signature lands. If you skip any of them, the partnership is starting on uneven ground.

Pre-signature moves are the small actions that protect both sides. Get the brief in writing. Get sample language reviewed. Talk to one person whose opinion you trust about the framing. Three.

1	PRE-SIGNATURE MOVE ONE	BY WHEN _____
_____ _____ _____		

2	PRE-SIGNATURE MOVE TWO	BY WHEN _____
_____ _____ _____		

3	PRE-SIGNATURE MOVE THREE	BY WHEN _____
_____ _____ _____		

CLOSE

Your audience can smell *endorsement* from across the room.

They can also tell the difference when the partnership is clean. The careers that compound on partnerships are built by creators who only do access — and who price endorsement so high that almost nobody pays it. Use this. Come back to it for every brief that lands.

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MAY 2026 · [DEARGLORY.COM](https://dearglory.com)