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Creator Economy Collaboration

Megatrends research series | IAMT Business Intelligence Unit

April 2026

theiamt.org/biu

Contents

Methodology

This report is based on a hybrid research approach, combining primary qualitative research, quantitative analysis, and secondary desk-based research to ensure robust and well-rounded insights.

Primary research

Primary research consisted of 6 expert interviews with 7 senior stakeholders across a range of relevant organizations, including media technology vendors and end users from Europe and North America. These semi-structured interviews (30–60 minutes) were designed to capture in-depth perspectives on the topic of creator economy collaboration.

This was complemented by quantitative analysis of IAMT's MediaTech Industry Tracker. While not specifically designed for the purposes of this research, the survey provides valuable directional insights into media technology investment outlook and purchasing behavior and has been used to support and validate findings from the qualitative work.

Secondary Research

In addition, secondary research was conducted using a mix of industry associations, market research providers, creator economy platforms, investment sources, and company filings (full sources referenced throughout the report). This helped establish broader market context and enabled triangulation of insights across all inputs.

The research was conducted between February and March 2026 and examines how the creator economy is transforming the media landscape, outlining the opportunities this shift presents for MediaTech vendors to expand their customer base and inform business decisions related to product development, go-to-market strategies, and broader industry outlook.

Quotes may be shortened or combined for readability, without altering their original meaning. Ellipses (...) indicate where non-sequential statements have been combined or content has been omitted.

Introduction

The broadcast, media, and entertainment industry is undergoing a structural shift: MediaTech is no longer a vertical – it is becoming a horizontal capability layer encompassing video, audio, real-time data, and AI processing that adjacent markets now depend on. IAMT data shows that MediaTech vendors increasingly sell to non-media markets that use similar technology stacks, though requirements and buying behavior often diverge outside traditional media.

Alongside core parallel markets such as corporate, government, and education, the Creator Economy is rising in importance and increasingly converging with the broader M&E sector. What was once a separate ecosystem is evolving into a crucial engine for distribution, monetization, and audience growth. This convergence is bi-directional: as creators professionalize and adopt studio-like workflows, traditional media companies are adopting creator-style compact tools.

Even as the line between professional and consumer technology blurs, creators remain a distinct category with their own needs, mindsets, purchasing behavior, and – most importantly – their own audiences. Today's audiences – especially younger generations – not only consume content differently (with YouTube holding the largest share of TV viewing in the U.S. since February 2025 as evidence), but they also demand authenticity, and content creators deliver the trust and credibility they seek.

This research focuses on how MediaTech suppliers and media businesses are collaborating with the creator ecosystem, leveraging it both as a new revenue stream and as a source of audience trust.

People who five or ten years ago were influencers are now appearing on mainstream sports broadcasts as the fun analyst or the person who adds engagement with younger audiences... Availability of technology and ease of workflows built into products are helping amateur creators deliver more professional results.

Bryan Bogardus,
Associate Director, Market Intelligence at Shure

Sources: IAMT, Nielsen

Why the Creator Economy Matters

Why the creator economy matters to MediaTech vendors

Size of the creator economy

The explosive growth of the creator economy makes it a lucrative new revenue stream. Various sources estimate the global creator economy in the range of $180–250B, depending on methodology. Despite lower individual purchasing power, the size of the creator base represents significant cumulative value.

Democratization of MediaTech

Creators are increasingly adopting professional equipment as it becomes smaller, more affordable, and requires less technical knowledge.

Creator Stack Adoption

Media companies are adopting creator-style tools, primarily driven by financial pressure and the need for faster time-to-market, expanding the customer base for products originally designed for individual content creators.

Why the creator economy matters to media businesses

Audience trust

Declining trust in traditional media is leading to increased collaboration between broadcasters and content creators. By partnering, broadcasters and other media companies strengthen audience engagement and achieve cost efficiencies by producing high-quality content with fewer resources amid tightening budgets. Examples include ABC's Creator Program in Australia and BBC's Creator Lab. The World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) also launched a global program Future Audiences Initiative, which connects traditional newsrooms with independent creators. Streaming platforms are increasingly adopting creator partnerships as a strategic lever to build trust and win advertising budgets, with examples including YouTube's Creator Partnerships and Netflix's creator-led content.

Creator Economy Landscape

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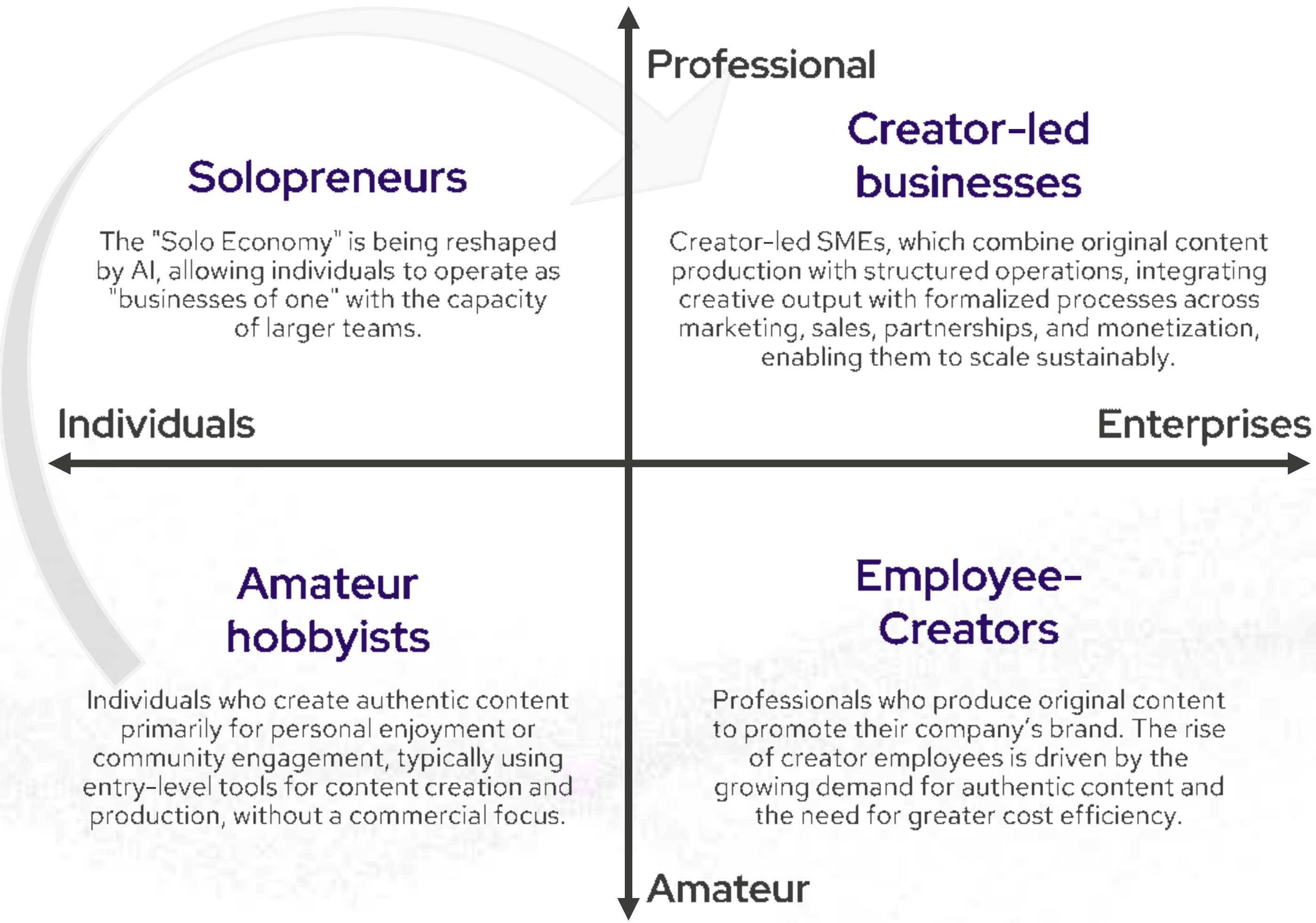
The creator economy is expanding rapidly, shaped by shifts in scale, professionalism, and technology adoption, with authenticity shaping the creator ecosystem.

To understand these dynamics, we segment creators into four groups along two dimensions – scale (X axes) and professionalism (Y axes). Each segment is growing at a distinct pace, and creators are progressively moving across segments – from amateurs to solopreneurs to creator-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – in the creator ecosystem as they professionalize their businesses. Demand for authentic content and the pursuit of greater cost efficiency are fueling the growth of the employee-creator segment.

AI is also giving rise to a new type of creators: AI-native personalities – virtual influencers and digital avatars – offering high engagement but intensifying concerns over authenticity.

While creator supply is growing due to the proliferation of AI tools, trust and human credibility will ultimately shape the creator landscape.



Creator Segmentation

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Amateur hobbyists

The amateur segment is expanding rapidly due to newcomers to the industry, primarily young enthusiasts using entry-level technology to produce authentic content. The number of YouTube channels has more than doubled over the last four years, rising from 51M in February 2022 (cited by IAMT in its MediaTech Intelligence Briefing: The Creator Economy) to 115M as of August 2025, according to GMI Research Statistics (cited in Awesome Creator Academy).

Solopreneurs

Solopreneurs have gained momentum with the rise of AI, which enables hobbyists to professionalize their operations. This segment relies on prosumer-grade technology and has clear commercial ambitions. In the Creator Economy briefing referenced above, IAMT cited an estimate that 5% of creators were working full-time globally in 2022. According to more recent data from Zedge, this share has grown to 45%–47%. As solopreneurs continue professionalizing their business operations, many transition into creator-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Creator-led businesses

The creator class remains highly stratified, with fully professionalized "360 enterprises" representing a still-emerging and relatively small segment. Although nearly half of creators now work full-time, only about 4% earn more than $100K annually, according to Zedge. Additional evidence from Schwarzwald Capital indicates that 73% of creators earn below $30K.

Employee-creators

The growing demand for authentic content and the need for greater cost efficiency is driving the rise of the employee-creators segment. Creator Economy Jobs data shows 93% quarter-over-quarter growth in talent-management job listings in Q3 2025 – roles dedicated to supporting, developing, and monetizing creators. There was also a notable 20% increase in creator-partnership roles, signaling a strategic shift toward professionalizing employee creators and branded content production.

AI-native personalities

The rise of AI has also enabled a new category of content creators: AI-native personalities that do not exist in real life (often referred to as virtual influencers). Demand for this creator type is driven largely by higher engagement rates, enabled by precise tailoring to audience needs. However, a counter-trend emphasizing authenticity is emerging. A major concern is the increasing difficulty of distinguishing real from synthetic content, creating an authenticity risk. IAMT's Business Intelligence Unit will examine the impact of this trend across the MediaTech supply chain in the forthcoming Audience Trust report, the third publication in the 2026 Megatrend series.

Sources: Awesome Creator Academy, Zedge, Schwarzwald Capital, Creator Economy Jobs

Key Drivers of Creator Economy Growth

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Audiences

Younger audiences are shifting away from traditional search engines and increasingly rely on social media platforms as their primary discovery surface, even for news. AI tools are going to push this shift further by changing how people source news. Pew Research Center data shows that 43% of U.S. adults aged 18–29 regularly get news on TikTok, compared with the national average of 20% - a share that has nearly doubled in three years. YouTube has also become the leading platform for TV viewing in the U.S. across all age groups since February 2025, surpassing Disney, Netflix, and NBC Universal. These trends demonstrate how individuals or small creator teams can build significant reach and influence.

Media Businesses

Advertising budgets are increasingly moving toward creator-led content due to higher audience trust and stronger engagement compared to traditional media. On platforms like TikTok, news and information are delivered through a personal, authentic lens that resonates more than brand-driven communications. Media organizations face budget pressure and must produce high-quality content with fewer resources, encouraging collaboration with creators and adoption of more flexible, cost-effective content models.

Technology

Democratization of MediaTech has made high-quality production far more affordable: hybrid cameras enable cinematic image creation without broadcast-grade gear, while AI tools are reshaping production, post-production, management, and monetization. Creators and small teams require streamlined, integrated workflows that reduce the need for additional crew—one operator should be able to capture, monitor, and stream. Increasing affordability, ease of use, and workflow simplicity are key drivers enabling creator-led growth.

Sources: Nielsen, Pew Research Center

Professionalization of Content Creators

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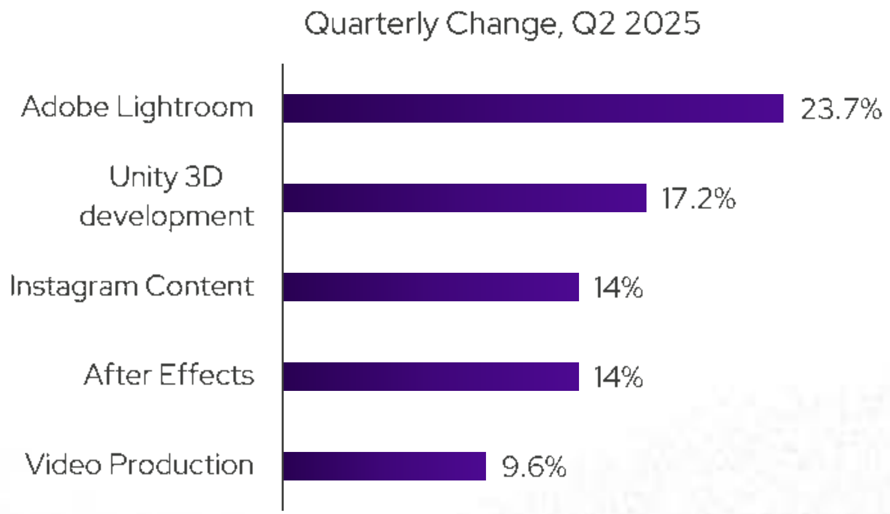
The creator economy is undergoing a structural transformation, evolving from a landscape dominated by individual hobbyists and "solopreneurs" into a sector defined by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Many content creators now act as media businesses or micro-brands, with their own IP and content distribution channels that AI systems index first. This is evidenced by data of a social media management and influencer marketing platform Later, which reports that 68% of creators now possess three or more years of experience. This experience translates into better understanding of audience engagement patterns and content formats that resonate. As the market matures, creators are increasingly adopting sophisticated business models, hiring specialized teams, and leveraging enterprise-grade infrastructure and broadcast-grade tools to ensure longevity and financial stability. Later also projects that full-time creators will see an average revenue increase of 78% in 2026, driven by advancements in monetization strategies enabled by emerging technology stacks.

As creators scale into SMEs, their operational needs quickly exceed the capabilities of simple front-end tools, driving demand for robust business systems similar to those used by traditional businesses. Major companies increasingly recognize creators as small businesses, resulting in a surge of specialized infrastructure. Recent data published by Freelancer, a global publicly listed digital platform focused on recruitment for the creator economy, highlights a rise in creator-economy job postings – particularly for tools/skills such as Adobe Lightroom, Unity 3D development, Instagram content creation, After Effects, and video production.

The Freelancer Fast 50 Global Jobs index



Based on more than 251,000 jobs posted to Freelancer between 1 April and 30 June 2025.

The professionalization of content creators presents an opportunity for MediaTech vendors who adapt to this emerging customer base by offering lower-cost, limited-functionality licensing tiers that meet the needs of creators scaling their businesses.

 Sources: Later, Freelancer

Creators Meet Traditional Media

The M&E industry is undergoing a structural transformation, with the boundaries between creator and broadcast ecosystems increasingly dissolving. This shift is bi-directional: while creators are adopting professional-grade tools, traditional media technology users are embracing compact, creator-style solutions – including lightweight hardware, cloud-based software, and intuitive digital production platforms. As a result, the convergence is redefining customer segments, reshaping product categories and go-to-market strategies, as well as creating new workflows. Both large media companies and small creators are increasingly using the same tools, with differences driven more by cost and scale than by functionality. However, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work for go-to-market strategies, which require targeted, segmented messaging that reflects various customer types and regional specifics.

“

The hybrid products are going to start being used more in higher end production… As the capability of these hybrid cameras grows, we may see more smaller form factor cameras being used on more high-end jobs as well, because it helps keep the production costs down.

”

Jack Adair,
Marketing Specialist at Canon

Convergence: Reducing the Quality Gap

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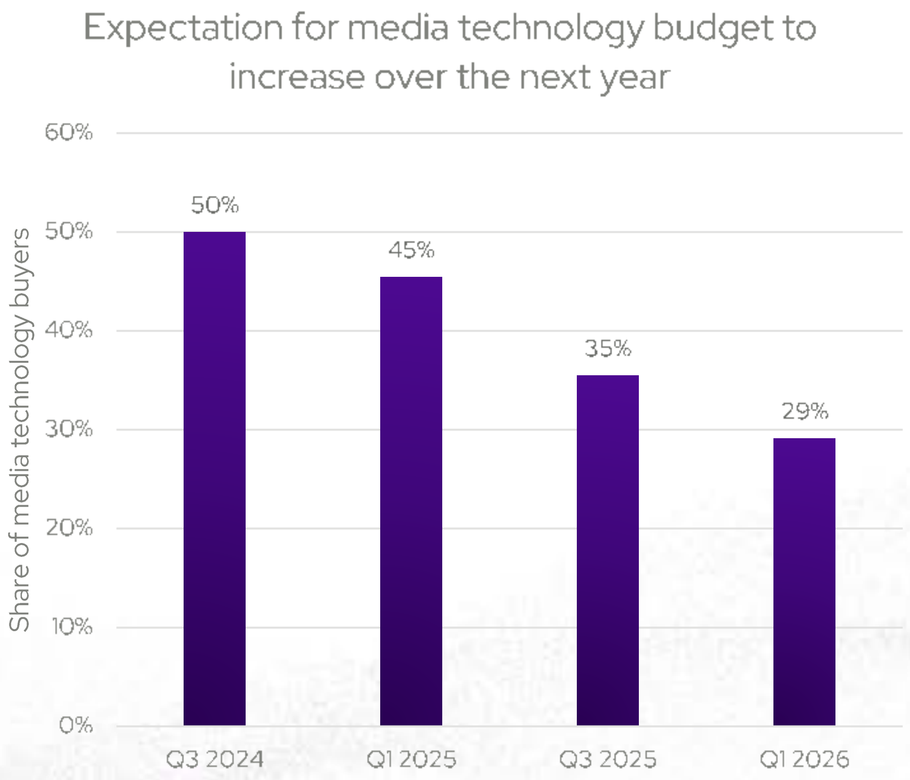
Upstream convergence

As business confidence softens and media technology budgets tighten, financial pressure is driving organizations toward more efficient, single operator models for content creation. The latest IAMT data shows that business confidence has declined for the third consecutive year, following the post-pandemic recovery. Similarly, the share of media technology buyers expecting their budgets to increase over the coming year has fallen over the last three waves of our bi-annual tracking survey. Macroeconomic headwinds, combined with rising labor costs are pushing media companies to prioritize cost efficiency and ROI, driving demand for integrated tools that can deliver production quality previously achieved by multiple on-set operators.

Downstream convergence

Technology democratization is lowering barriers to entry amid rising expectations for output. Creators are increasingly adopting pro-grade camera lenses and advanced connectivity solutions. Hybrid cameras and large-sensor devices are becoming more affordable, delivering cinematic quality in compact form factors. Full-frame cinema cameras such as the Sony FX3, Canon EOS C50, Panasonic Lumix S5 IIX, and Nikon ZR continue to gain traction due to the combination of small size, ease of use, and high-end production capabilities. The combination of lower purchasing power among creators and the rapid growth of the creator economy is prompting media technology vendors to adapt their products accordingly. Meanwhile, rapid AI adoption and growing smartphone capabilities are further narrowing the quality gap between creator-led and professional content. Smartphones are becoming production hubs that can deliver quality of content close to pro-grade production – even pro broadcast mobile journalists increasingly rely on phones. Having a phone as a production hub, with different tools embedded in a single device, allows creators to speed up their workflows.



Q. What do you predict will happen to your organization's media technology budget over the next year? (Media technology buyers)
Source: IAMT MediaTech Industry Tracker survey

Declining Trust in Traditional Media

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About 20% of US adults use social media platforms, such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube as their primary source of information, according to the International News Media Association. This rises to 38% in the age group 18-29, while only 8% of adults over 65 rely on social media as a source of news. Young audiences are turning to news on social media, as it is often delivered through a personal lens, prioritizing storytelling, authenticity, and niche expertise over traditional editorial standards.

In response, news organizations are adopting emerging business models – either collaborating with individual content creators to leverage niche expertise and expand audience reach or developing in-house creator talent to build personal brands with higher appeal to young audiences.

The changing habits of news consumption accelerate the emerging trend of provenance and authenticity. Our data shows that the share of respondents who mentioned provenance and authenticity among the most important trends in their organizations' technology roadmaps has risen from 5% in Q1 2025 to 10% in Q3 2025. This trend gains particular traction in North America, rising from 13% to 19% during 2025.

Subscription growth plateaued in 2025 as AI-driven search is replacing traditional news discovery. The Local Media Consortium's annual survey findings show a 383% year-over-year increase in those citing subscriptions as a top challenge, confirming the finding of the 2025 Medill survey, showing only 15% of consumers are willing to pay for news. News organizations are pivoting toward new cross-platform advertising and audience engagement strategies to drive revenue in 2026, including collaboration with individual creators.

> *We've seen a complete shift, and I think it's been a learning experience for all companies. [Young audiences] are looking for authentic things – something that is really inspiring them, that looks real, that is shared, appears like someone that looks like them, that has the same interest.*
>
> **Luna Calogne**
> Product Owner Pickx Acquisition, Proximus

Sources: International News Media Association (INMA), Local Media Consortium (LMC), Rise Women on Stage Conferencehosted EVS Broadcast Equipment (March 9,2026)

Drivers of Creator Economy Growth

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Trust

Advertising budgets are shifting from traditional media to creator-led content due to the high level of trust in influencers. At a MoffettNathanson Media Internet and Communications Conference in May 2025, John P. Nallen (Fox Corp) emphasized that Tubi now focuses on influencer-led originals to attract a younger generation of viewers that advertisers are eager to reach. Marketing studies also show that UGC and creator-led content achieve higher engagement rates than content produced by brands.

Budget reallocation

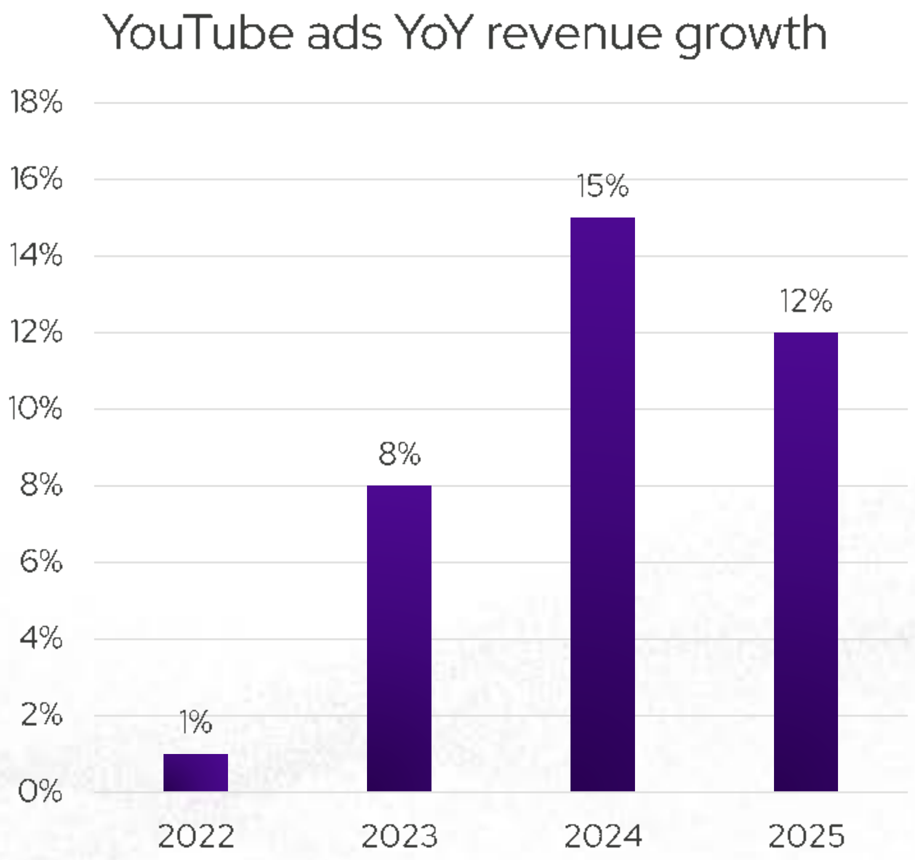
The growth of the creator economy is driven by budget reallocation rather than expansion, with the $37 billion creator economy ad spend funded by shifting resources from traditional media.

Reevaluation of traditional media efficiency

The divergence between rising advertising costs and cautious consumer spending has forced a reevaluation of traditional media efficiency. Data indicates that while U.S. creator economy ad spend was projected to reach $37 billion in 2025 – growing four times faster than the total media industry—this investment is being funded by reallocation rather than net budget expansion.

Creators as primary media channels

Brands are restructuring their budgets around creators as primary media channels, mainly due to higher credibility and relevance to the audience. Net Influencer estimated a 25% YoY growth of creator economy ad spend in the U.S., reaching $37B in 2025, and is projected to reach $43.9B in 2026.



Sources: MoffettNathanson Conference (May 2025), Net Influencer , Company Filings

Creator Content Distribution Strategies

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Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have become primary sources of information for young audiences amid declining trust in traditional media, leading to partnerships between creators and mainstream TV, including broadcasters, streaming platforms, and CTV services. Through these collaborations, media companies boost audience engagement, while creators expand their reach. Content distribution strategies for creators increasingly rely on direct streaming and CTV partnerships, alongside aggregator platforms that repackage social media content for TV formats. These approaches capitalize on the creator-led discovery shift, where authentic voices drive engagement on FAST and AVOD platforms.

Social Media Aggregation

Social media aggregation platforms source high-engagement clips from across social networks, lightly editing them and assembling into episodic, themed playlists designed for lean back viewing. Metadata optimization improves content discoverability and makes it more appealing to audiences. Throughout the process, creators keep full ownership of their work, while gaining access to distribution at CTV scale – a reach that would be difficult to build on their own.

Aggregator Partnerships

Emerging aggregator platforms are beginning to operate much like modern day production studios. They collaborate closely with creators, either commissioning new content or transforming existing YouTube and TikTok clips into cohesive, 20–30 minute episodic TV shows. By weaving individual short form moments into structured narratives, they create programming that feels native to the CTV environment while still preserving the creator's original voice and style, maintaining audience trust.

Direct Partnerships

Platforms like Tubi and Samsung TV Plus are increasingly shaping the micro drama ecosystem by securing exclusive agreements for new original productions as well as non-exclusive licenses for existing series. Direct-to-consumer micro-businesses emerge to capitalize on the growing popularity of micro-dramas. In this evolving model, creators function less like independent publishers and more like collaborators within a studio style system, contributing to streamlined production pipelines and consistent content output. A growing roster of microdrama native studios and platforms – including MicroCo, GammaTime, Crazy Maple Studio, Shorts by Luni, and the upcoming Black Forest Studio set to launch in 2026 – highlights how quickly this new entertainment infrastructure is taking shape.

Examples on the next slide

Creator Distribution Strategies: Cases

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Social Media Aggregation	Aggregator Partnerships	Direct Partnerships
In August 2025, FilmRise launched curated short-form (5-15 minutes) videos on Amazon Fire TV Channels, featuring more than 2,000 clips from 14 social media content creators. The ultra-short content format enables rapid deployment without heavy production, in contrast to a direct partnerships business model.	In January 2025, Sabio – an ad-tech CTV company – launched Creator Television, which by December reached over 65 million viewers globally. Beyond repurposing existing content from social media for AVOD and FAST channels, Creator TV commissions original programming and partners with third-party and indie content providers that act as “creator aggregators”. The company claims to have reached more than 65 million viewers worldwide by September 2025 across several platforms, including Comcast’s Xumo Play, Plex, Sling, and Amazon Fire TV.	In June 2025, Tubi launched its initiative “Tubi for Creators” to bring digital-first creators to Hollywood-style production and distribution on their FAST platform, providing funding opportunities, audience reach to over 100 million monthly users, and a pathway for episodic and original content. In August 2025, Tubi made a big creator push, securing deals that added 5,000 episodes from high-profile YouTubers and TikTokers, and by November 2025, this program has scaled to more than 100 creators and over 10,000 episodes of content, primarily delivered as on-demand videos in the dedicated “Tubi Creatorverse” hub. In July 2025, Samsung TV announced an exclusive partnership with Dhar Mann Studios, marking its first original content deal with a scripted creator to be delivered via a dedicated FAST channel, leveraging Dhar Mann’s 25 million YouTube audience in top of the existing 175+ million subscribers from a range of creators. Cineverse launched MicroCo in August 2025 as a joint venture with Banyan Ventures to produce serialized "micro-dramas"—1-3 minute episodes optimized for mobile bingeing. This AI-native studio and platform targets the booming short-form drama market, adapting social-style storytelling with Hollywood production values.

Evolving Needs of Content Creators

<table>
<tr><td>Speed</td><td>Short content cycles and trend-driven formats incentivize fast capture–edit–publish loops, supported by fast storage, low-latency delivery, and efficient tools.</td><td>Amateur hobbyists,
Solopreneurs,
Creator-led businesses</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ease of use</td><td>Technology democratization is enabling the growth of the creator economy, offering intuitive tools with simplified UI for creators who lack traditional AV/IT backgrounds.</td><td rowspan="3">Amateur hobbyists</td></tr>
<tr><td>Affordability</td><td>Technology affordability eliminates the barrier to entering the creator ecosystem for amateur hobbyists. MediaTech vendors are responding by designing “creator kits” under specific price points and offering and offering freemium pricing models.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mobility</td><td>Creators capture content everywhere, requiring the technology stack to be lightweight and connected to address the need for mobility.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Flexibility & Scalability</td><td>As they scale, creators require the same tools as major broadcasters, large media companies, and small production teams, enabling creators to grow without switching ecosystems.</td><td rowspan="3">Solopreneurs,
Creator-led businesses</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reliability</td><td>As creators grow, performance becomes a critical enabler of business scaling.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Interoperability</td><td>Seamless direct streaming to platforms becomes increasingly important, as creators prioritize integrated workflows and unified systems; APIs and integrations are enabling this trend.</td></tr>
</table>

The Need for Speed

Speed is a value-defining differentiator for creators

Workflow speed has become the creator economy's primary value driver, and the main factor affecting their media technology buying decisions. Creators are focusing on time-to-output, not maximum image quality or specs. The main bottleneck in their workflows is in ingestion, data transfer, and upload. Content creators are buying solutions that minimize the production cycle and streamline production workflows as opposed to adding complexity. This drives demand for mobile first capture, instant cloud ingest, AI assisted editing, automated versioning, and streamlined multi-platform publishing. Creators benefit from using templates, rules, and destination profiles to generate platform-specific outputs, rather than relying on manual customization.

Growing demand for integrated ecosystems

The need for speed is evolving into a demand for unified end-to-end workflows and integrated ecosystems, rather than isolated tools. Existing creation and production workflows are quite fragmented - creators are using multiple different tools, which is limiting their time-to-output.

MediaTech vendors who offer solutions that reduce time from ingest to edit to publish, win creator mindshare.

> *I have a pretty good workflow that is working for me, so I'm always trying everything out and then I'm thinking – will I be faster with that or not?*

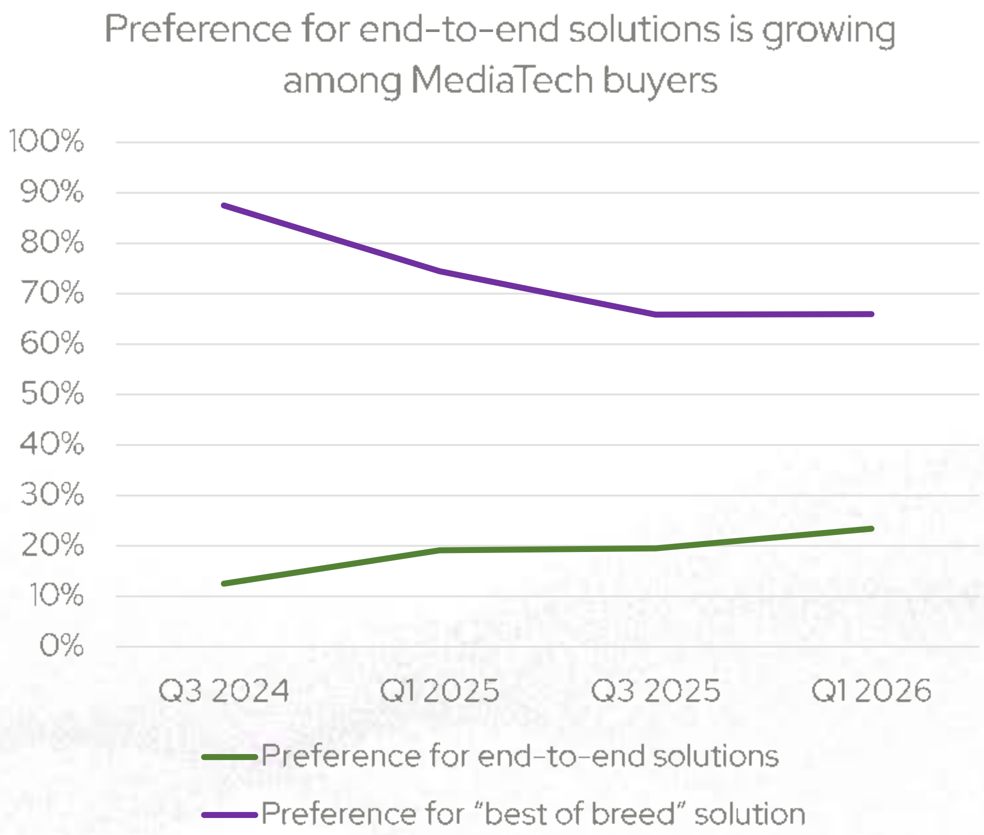
Max Prommenschenkel
Creator, maxmedia.berlin

Demand for Unified Workflows

Even among traditional media technology buyers, the preference for best of breed solutions is declining over time. Content creators, lacking technical expertise, are emphasizing the importance of unified integrated ecosystem. Vendors can address this need either by developing more integrated solutions or by partnering with other vendors to ensure seamless workflows within a unified ecosystem. Media technology vendors that offer solutions that combine various features into a single production workflow, win the customer.

> *From a business standpoint, customers will continue to require more ROI for what they purchase. They will always want to decrease the cost of ownership and production at every step. As an OEM, we need to provide more solutions in a single package.*

Derek Nickell,
Product Manager & Sales Engineer at Teradek



Source: IAMT MediaTech Industry Tracker

Go-to-Market Strategies

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Creators tend to adopt tools endorsed by trusted peers, prompting MediaTech vendors to design go-to-market strategies cantered around visible creator champions, structured education, and guided onboarding. A key need for creators is understanding the differences between technologies and the performance metrics that matter most. IAMT expert interviews highlighted that vendors are increasingly investing in educational blogs and video content to help creators make informed decisions. Research participants also emphasized the importance of delivering top-tier support—such as demos and hands-on guidance – even for smaller creators.

> *The thing that we have is the creator industry is very peer led – people buy on what they know other people are using, and what they see being used. So, the challenge we have is the education because there's so many different types of creators doing niches.*

Jack Adair,
Marketing Specialist at Canon

Tailored messaging

There's no one piece of messaging, you need to meet people when they're out. The main thing is to make sure you're speaking their language.

Paul Crognale,
Global Marketing Manager, Consumer Audio at Shure

One size doesn't fit all

Despite the convergence in technologies used to produce creator-led and traditional content, creators remain a fragmented set of segments that require differentiated messaging. Different creator types – such as podcasters, streamers, and production houses – require distinct communication, education, and platform strategies. Entry-level products call for messaging focused on price, while innovative products demand a more educational approach. Social media platform algorithms require brands to tailor content formats to maximize reach and engagement. Brands must maintain a presence across as many channels as possible, while ensuring content is customized for each platform. AI can further support this by testing messaging performance and optimizing content for different channels.

Peer-led discovery

I'm following some big creators and observing what they are using, then doing my research and buying the stuff I think will be good for me.

Max Prommenschenkel,
Creator, maxmedia.berlin

Social proof is a powerful go-to-market lever

Creators tend to rely on peer influence rather than technical specifications when choosing media technology. They follow peers, influencers, and celebrity creators to guide their buying decisions. Companies that recognize this behavior and embrace user-generated content (UGC) are gaining a strategic advantage in the creator ecosystem. For example, in January 2026, Shure launched its MV88 USB-C microphone for creators, using UGC as a core creative pillar worldwide for the first time. The campaign proved more cost-effective and resulted in locally produced content at global scale – created by creators, for creators.

We've identified three patterns of peer-led product discovery:

- Creators buy what celebrity creators use (aspirational influence)
- Creators buy what influencers promote (UGC endorsement)
- Creators buy what peers are using (word-of-mouth)

This reflects a broader trend around audience trust. The concept of audience trust shapes creators' purchasing behavior. Acknowledging that creator-led content is more credible than brand-driven messaging opens a strategic advantage for MediaTech vendors.

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Education

> “We address creators’ needs a lot through the education that we provide on our blog and our videos of helping people understand and describing that need, that story, the differences in technology.”

Mark Lewis
Chief Marketing Officer & Co-Founder at ProGrade Digital

Embracing technological knowledge gap

The peer-led discovery discussed above can be partly explained by creators’ lack of technical expertise. This limited technical knowledge affects how vendors must communicate, prompting them to simplify their language or allow creators to explain products in their own words. Podcasters may use microphones without understanding all available features, and videographers may purchase new cameras without realizing their existing equipment could already perform the required tasks. Some product categories – such as memory cards – are often perceived as commodities, with little understanding of how performance impacts production workflows. One example from this research involved a DSP feature that a creator described to peers simply as “cool processing,” reflecting a lack of technological understanding shared by both the creator and their audience. Education therefore emerges as an opportunity and a strategic differentiator for vendors that invest in it.

Emerging Opportunity in Immersive Tech

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Growing interest in immersive formats

Immersive formats, such as VR, AR, XR, and spatial audio, remain in the early stages of adoption among creators, yet there is an expectation of accelerating growth of prosumer immersive technology in the coming years. Creators are increasingly experimenting with immersive video and audio as a way to differentiate their content through unique, "inside the action" perspectives.

This momentum is being driven by two structural enablers:

- Growing audience demand for first person, participatory viewpoints rather than passive, third party observation.
- Rapid miniaturization and democratization of hardware, making immersive capture tools – wide angle lenses, compact cameras, wearable body mounted devices – lighter, more portable, easy-to-use, and more affordable.

Democratization of immersive technology

Where immersive content was once the exclusive domain of professional productions and sports leagues, the shift in accessibility now positions independent creators to enter this space. This creates a meaningful open niche for technology vendors. As creator workflows continue to professionalize, there is rising demand for more affordable, creator friendly wearable and POV capture solutions – products that deliver high quality immersive footage without the cost or complexity of pro-grade systems. Features such as AI assisted clip generation for streamlined cross platform distribution open additional product development opportunities. Immersive and spatial audio follow the same trajectory and is expected to see strong growth as creators seek new storytelling techniques and as hardware barriers fall.

Private 5G Transforming Creator Workflows

The rise of private 5G in content creation

Wireless connectivity is becoming foundational, not optional, for creator workflows. It meets creator's need for mobility, enabling them to create, produce, and stream from any location. Private 5G is starting to reshape how content is produced and distributed in the creator economy by delivering stable connection in congested RF environments such as stadiums, music festivals, etc. It also addresses one of creators' biggest pain points: speed, particularly faster upload performance, discussed earlier in this report.

5G connectivity facilitates the capture of immersive footage using drones and other mobile devices, enabling unique angles and new perspectives that drive viewer engagement and translates into better monetization across digital platforms.

Key adoption drivers

The democratization of connectivity tools is accelerating the adoption of wireless and private 5G, providing creators with greater mobility, faster and simpler setups, and increasingly affordable, higher-quality connections for flexible, on-the-go production.

Ongoing hardware miniaturization further strengthens wireless and mobile workflows. Smaller devices and lenses make untethered capture more feasible, empowering creators to work in unconventional locations and experiment with ultra-miniaturized, fully wireless setups.

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Featured Quotes

Bryan Bogardus, Associate Director, Market Intelligence at Shure

"People who five or ten years ago were influencers are now appearing on mainstream sports broadcasts as the fun analyst or the person who adds engagement with younger audiences… Availability of technology and ease of workflows built into products are helping amateur creators deliver more professional results." (page 4)

Jack Adair, Marketing Specialist at Canon

"The hybrid products are going to start being used more in higher end production… As the capability of these hybrid cameras grows, we may see more smaller form factor cameras being used on more high-end jobs as well, because it helps keep the production costs down." (page 10)

"The thing that we have is the creator industry is very peer led – people buy on what they know other people are using, and what they see being used. So, the challenge we have is the education because there's so many different types of creators doing niches." (page 19)

Luna Calogne, Product Owner Pickx Acquisition, Proximus

"We've seen a complete shift, and I think it's been a learning experience for all companies. Younger audiences are looking for authentic things – something that is really inspiring them, that looks real, that is shared, appears like someone that looks like them, that has the same interest." (page 12)

Max Prommenschenkel, Creator, maxmedia.berlin

"I have a pretty good workflow that is working for me, so I'm always trying everything out and then I'm thinking – will I be faster with that or not?" (page 17)

"I'm following some big creators and observing what they are using, then doing my research and buying the stuff I think will be good for me." (page 21)

Derek Nickell, Product Manager & Sales Engineer at Teradek

'"From a business standpoint, customers will continue to require more ROI for what they purchase. They will always want to decrease the cost of ownership and production at every step. As an OEM, we need to provide more solutions in a single package." (page 18)

Paul Crognale, Global Marketing Manager, Consumer Audio at Shure

"There's no one piece of messaging, you need to meet people when they're out. The main thing is to make sure you're speaking their language." (page 20)

Mark Lewis, Chief Marketing Officer & Co-Founder at ProGrade Digital

"We address creators' needs a lot through the education that we provide on our blog and our videos of helping people understand and describing that need, that story, the differences in technology." (page 22)

Note: Quotes are presented in the order they appear in the report and grouped by speaker.

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