



FOR WORKING CREATORS

# The Pitching Playbook

A repeatable system for landing higher-paying brand deals - built on data from thousands of real pitches.

This is not a guide to writing your first pitch email. It's an operator's manual for creators who already land deals and want to stop leaving money to chance: how to run outreach like a sales pipeline, price like a professional, negotiate confidently, and turn one-off collabs into recurring revenue.

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# Pipelines, not pitches

Most creators don't have a pitching problem. They have a system problem.

The pattern is familiar: a few deals close, the calendar fills up, outreach stops. Six weeks later the work is delivered, the inbox is quiet, and the scramble starts again. That feast-and-famine cycle isn't a talent issue - it's what happens when you treat brand deals as one-off events instead of the output of a pipeline.

Creators who earn business-level income from partnerships run three systems in parallel, every month, regardless of how busy they are:

## SYSTEM 1

### Cold outreach, at volume

Pitch hundreds of qualified brands per month - not a few dozen - using niche-specific templates with light personalization.

## SYSTEM 2

### Warm-lead follow-up

Every "not right now" goes into a tracked list with a re-contact date. Most revenue hides in deals that didn't close the first time.

## SYSTEM 3

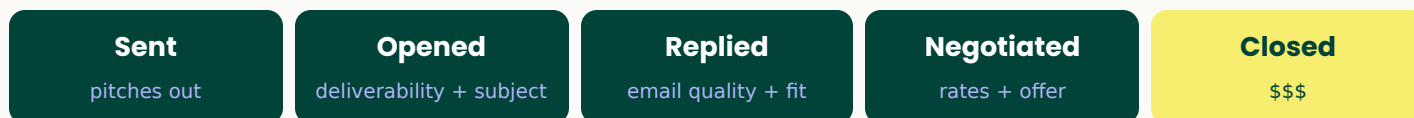
### Past-partner re-engagement

Brands that already paid you are your cheapest deals to close. Check in, re-pitch, and grow deal size on a schedule.

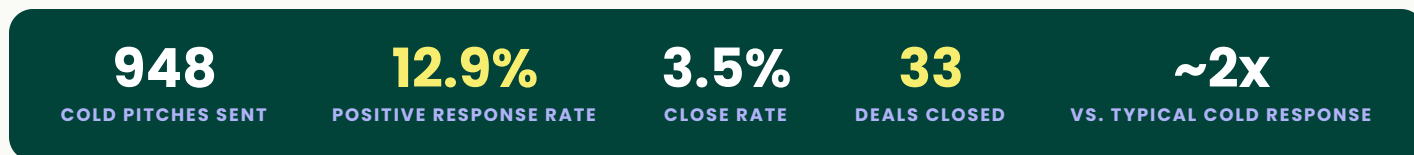
Underneath all three sits one loop, and it's the engine of this entire playbook: **pitch in volume → measure the results → iterate based on the data → pitch again.** You're not trying to write one perfect email. You're trying to build a process that gets a little better every hundred sends.

## Know your funnel

Every pitch you send moves through the same stages. The numbers at each stage tell you exactly what to fix (Section 09 shows you how to read them).



So you know what "good" looks like, here are real numbers. Bento's founder ran a four-month experiment: starting a creator account from scratch (28 followers), she pitched nearly a thousand brands cold and tracked every outcome.



Two things to take from this. First, even a well-tuned cold pitch closes around 3 in 100 - which is why volume isn't optional. Second, those 33 deals came from a process that was tested and refined in the first few hundred sends, then run consistently. **If your positive response rate is under 5%, the problem isn't the market - it's your template, your portfolio, or your targeting.** The rest of this playbook fixes all three.



# Your conversion assets

A great pitch gets the open. What happens next depends on what they find when they click through.

Before you scale volume, audit the assets every pitch points to. At volume, even small conversion leaks get expensive: a portfolio that loses 2 of every 10 interested brands costs you real deals every single month.

## Portfolio: built to convert, not to impress

Brands skim your portfolio with one question in mind: can this person make content that works for us? Lead with your strongest, most relevant work - quality over quantity - and make results visible. A piece that drove measurable outcomes (views, saves, click-through, conversions) belongs above prettier work that didn't.

## Case studies: your highest-leverage asset

A case study is a one-pager that walks a brand through a past partnership and its results. Nothing else you make is as persuasive, because it answers the brand's real question - "what's the return?" - with evidence instead of adjectives. For each strong past partnership, capture:

- **The setup:** who the brand was, what they wanted to achieve, and the angle you proposed.
- **The execution:** what you delivered (formats, volume, timeline) and any creative decisions that mattered.
- **The results:** before/after metrics - engagement, reach, traffic, sales where trackable. Show the numbers visually if you can.
- **The receipt:** a testimonial quote from your brand contact, or evidence the partnership continued. Repeat business is the strongest social proof there is.

### DO THIS TODAY

Email past partners and ask how your content performed on their end. Most creators never ask, so the data goes uncollected. A line like "Could you share how the videos performed? I'd love to feature our partnership in my portfolio" both fills your case study and warms the relationship for a re-pitch (Section 08).

## Media kit: the five-second skim test

Your media kit should answer a marketer's questions in the order they ask them:

- **Who you are.** A tight bio with your niche and what makes you distinct - this becomes your pitch USP (Section 04).
- **Who they reach through you.** Audience demographics: age, gender, location, interests, purchase intent if you have it.
- **Proof it works.** Engagement stats and 2-3 case-study highlights with real numbers.
- **What they can buy.** Services and packages: organic posts, UGC for ads, whitelisting, retainers (see Section 06 for pricing architecture).
- **How to say yes.** Contact details, clearly placed. Rates are optional here - many creators share them on request to keep negotiating room.

## Offer both sides of the business

If you have an audience, you can sell two distinct products: **influencer content** (posts to your audience - brands are renting your reach and trust) and **UGC** (content for the brand's own channels and ads - they're buying your production quality). Brands increasingly want both from one creator, and creators who package them together command bigger deals: the same video can run on your page for reach and in their ad account as creative. Make both offerings explicit in your kit, plus whitelisting as the bridge between them (Section 06 covers how to price it).



# Targeting & finding the decision-maker

The fastest way to double your response rate isn't a better email. It's a better list.

A brilliant pitch sent to the wrong brand - or the wrong inbox at the right brand - converts at zero. Before drafting anything, build a qualified list, niche by niche.

## Four signals a brand is worth pitching

SIGNAL	WHY IT MATTERS & HOW TO SPOT IT
<b>They're running paid ads</b>	Brands actively spending on TikTok or Meta ads need a constant supply of creative - they have budget and an immediate use for UGC. Check Meta's Ad Library and TikTok's Creative Center, or use a tool that filters for advertisers (Bento's "Runs Ads" filter does exactly this).
<b>They work with creators like you</b>	Look at who's partnering with creators at your size and in your niche. A brand already paying your peers has a process, a budget line, and proof they convert.
<b>They look like your past partners</b>	Your best predictor of a future client is a past one. List the traits your closed deals share - category, company size, price point, audience - and hunt for lookalikes.
<b>Your audience already buys them</b>	Check what your followers tag, ask about, and engage with. Pitching brands your audience demonstrably cares about gives you a genuinely differentiated line in the email.

## Find the human, not the inbox

Pitches to info@ and hello@ addresses compete with customer-service tickets and spam. Your pitch should land with the person who owns creator budgets:

1. Find the brand on LinkedIn and browse the team.
2. Look for titles like **influencer marketing manager, partnerships, social media manager, growth or content marketing**. At small brands, it's often the founder.
3. Use an email-finding tool (e.g. Hunter.io) to locate and verify their address - or use a platform that surfaces verified decision-maker contacts for you.

Smaller, agile brands often respond well to Instagram DMs; established brands almost always require email. When in doubt: email first, DM as a follow-up channel.

### BUILD PER-NICHE LISTS

Don't keep one giant list. Segment by category - skincare, fitness apps, home goods, pet - because in the next section you'll write a distinct template for each. A focused pitch to 200 skincare brands will outperform a generic pitch to 500 random ones, and the per-niche data you collect will tell you where your real market is.



# The 8-second pitch

A marketing manager fielding 100+ pitches a day gives yours about eight seconds. Structure decides what happens next.

Every pitch that converts contains the same three components. Audit any email you've written against them:

- **WIIFM - "what's in it for me."** Brands don't buy your story; they buy outcomes. Lead with what you'll do for them: "I'd love to help you get more out of your TikTok ad spend with creative built for your holiday push" beats "I've always loved your brand" every time.
- **USP - what makes you memorable.** One specific, concrete detail no other creator could claim: your editing style, your profession, your audience quirk, your dog who photobombs everything. It doesn't have to be strictly relevant - its job is to make you the one pitch they remember. Brands have hired creators months later purely because the intro stuck.
- **CTA - end with a question.** "Let me know if you're interested" invites silence. A direct question - ideally one that offers value - invites a reply, because people are wired to answer questions. Creators who swap a passive close for a question routinely see reply rates multiply.

## Anatomy of a pitch that gets replies

### Subject: 3 spring campaign concepts for Loomwell ①

Hi Maya,

I'm a home & decor creator with 48K on Instagram - and a former set designer, so my interiors content tends to stop the scroll. ②

I noticed Loomwell is running ads for the new linen line. My last campaign for a textile brand drove a 2.1x higher save rate than their account average, and I have three concepts I think would translate directly to your spring push. ③

I create both organic posts for my audience and UGC for ads, with whitelisting available. ④

Can I send over the three concepts this week? ⑤

- Jordan · @handle · portfolio link

- ① **Specific subject with the brand's name.** Generic subjects read as mass mail; named, concrete subjects read as relevant.
- ② **USP in line one.** An intro only this creator could write. Memorable beats impressive.
- ③ **WIIFM with evidence.** Shows you did homework (their ads), then backs it with a result, not enthusiasm.
- ④ **The full offer in one line.** Organic + UGC + whitelisting tells them every way they can deploy you.
- ⑤ **Question CTA.** Specific, low-effort to answer, and it offers them something rather than asking for something.

## Formatting rules that matter more than they should

Keep paragraphs to two sentences. Keep the whole email under ~120 words. Use white space generously. The goal is an email that can be fully absorbed in one skim on a phone - because that's exactly how it might be read.

## One template per niche

Here's where most creators get the personalization question wrong. You don't need a bespoke email per brand, and you can't afford one at volume - but a single generic template underperforms everywhere. The answer is the middle path: **one tailored template per brand category**, referencing that niche's context, your most relevant work, and the outcomes that category cares about - with one light personalized line per send (their product, their recent campaign). That keeps you at roughly two minutes per pitch while staying relevant enough to convert. Your skincare template should be unusable for a fitness brand; that's how you know it's specific enough.



# Volume, follow-ups & staying out of spam

The pitch gets the credit, but the operating rhythm - and the follow-up - does most of the earning.

## The 3-hour weekly operating system

Volume fails when it depends on motivation. Put it on a schedule instead. This weekly block reliably produces ~60 pitches in about three hours - the pace behind the 948-pitch experiment in Section 01:

TIME	ACTIVITY
30 min	Source and qualify new brands for your niche lists (Section 03 signals).
30 min	Update templates based on last week's data; prep the light personalization lines.
60 min	Send - about a minute per pitch.
60 min	Follow-ups: nudge unanswered pitches, respond to active threads, re-engage "later" brands whose check-in date arrived.

Notice that as much time is spent following up as pitching. That's deliberate: **in tracked campaigns, the majority of replies come from a follow-up, not the original pitch.**

## The follow-up cadence

- Follow-up 1, 3-5 business days later:** short, friendly, additive - a fresh angle or relevant result, never just "bumping this."
- Follow-up 2, about a week later:** lead with value - an idea for their current campaign, or a stat from similar work.
- After 2-3 attempts with no reply:** stop - but don't delete. Move the brand to a "reach out later" list with a date. Deals routinely close on re-approach months after the first pitch.

Track opens and let them route your effort: if a brand opened your email, follow up with extra personalization. If they never opened it, you may be in spam - which brings us to the part almost nobody teaches:

### DELIVERABILITY: PROTECT THE MACHINE

At volume, your email sender reputation is a business asset - lose it and everything you send, including invoices to current clients, lands in spam.

- **Send from an aged, complete email account** - months of real conversation history, plus a profile photo, phone number, and recovery email. Bare new accounts get flagged.
- **Stay under ~50 sends/day, fewer than 10/hour**, spread through the day. Bursts look like a bot.
- **Vary your emails.** Hundreds of identical messages trip spam filters; your per-niche templates and personalized lines help here too.
- **Reply to everything - even rejections.** Threads teach Gmail your mail is wanted (and keep the contact warm - Section 07).
- **Open rate below ~20%? Act now** - it means your emails are mostly landing in spam folders. Have a few friends mark you "Not Spam" and reply in-thread; refresh your template and subject lines.
- **If you get blocked, stop sending entirely** - cancel anything scheduled - and resolve it before resuming. Pushing through makes it permanent.

Spacing sends safely and auto-sequencing follow-ups is tedious by hand - it's one of the jobs Bento automates - but however you run it, this is the cadence to replicate.



# Pricing & negotiation

Brands' first offer is a test, not a verdict. Price architecture and a calm counter are worth thousands a year.

## Price in bundles, itemize the work

**Bundle:** brands testing ad creative want multiple assets and will buy more at a better per-video rate - "{\$X} per video or {\$Y} for three" closes more often, at higher totals, than a single-asset price. **Itemize what's included:** concepting, scripting, filming, editing, one revision round, a defined usage window (e.g. 30 days of ad usage). Itemizing makes your price legible - and everything outside it billable.

## The add-on stack

Your base rate covers content; everything below is a separate line item, collectively often worth more than the base:

ADD-ON	TYPICAL PRICING	NOTES
<b>Whitelisting</b>	+20-50% of base	Ads run from your handle, on their budget - bigger checks, longer deals, more reach. Time-limit rights (30-60 days); require ad approval. Upsell with one pitch line: "I also offer whitelisting so you can run ads through my account."
<b>Extended usage (90 days)</b>	+40%	Default to a 30-day window so extensions are paid.
<b>Usage in perpetuity</b>	+100%	Forever is expensive: they pay double.
<b>Category exclusivity</b>	+25-50%	Unavailability to competitors is lost revenue - priced.
<b>Rush delivery / raw footage</b>	flat fees	Premium products - price them, don't gift them.

## Negotiation: three rules

- 1. Never accept the first offer.** The first number is usually a "let's see if it sticks" rate; a counter 10-20% higher succeeds far more often than creators expect.
- 2. If the number is too low, change the scope.** If a brand won't move on a bare counter, they still might move on packaging: a bundle that lowers per-video cost while raising the total, trimmed deliverables, or paid add-ons:

### WHEN THE OFFER IS LOW

Thanks for sharing your budget! My rate for this scope is **{\$X}**, covering the full service through edit, one revision, and 30 days of ad usage. If **{their number}** is firm, I could do **{reduced scope}** at that price, or a three-video bundle at **{\$Y}** with a lower per-video cost. Would either work?

- 3. Tone keeps deals alive.** "That's too low" ends conversations; "thanks for sharing your budget - I'd love to land on a number that works for both of us" keeps them open. You can hold a firm number warmly.

## "What are your rates?" - two plays

**Play A - discover first (vague briefs):** "I work with partners in a few ways - single pieces, ad-usage bundles, retainers. What are you looking for? I'm happy to build some personalized bundle options." Their answer reveals scope and budget. **Play B - anchor immediately (clear briefs):** quote your single and bundle rates, fully itemized, ending with a question: "how does this fit with what you had in mind?"

**Contract checkpoints before you film:** scope, payment amount and timing, usage rights, exclusivity, ownership, termination - and propose alternatives for any clause you don't like.



# Closing, reply by reply

Replies are where deals are won – and where most creators improvise. Don't. Every reply type has a correct response.

A close usually follows the same arc: the brand replies asking for more → you make the value concrete → rates come up → you negotiate → you close. Sometimes that takes three days; sometimes months of patient check-ins (long closes are normal – some deals land almost a year after the first email). One rule governs the whole stage: **respond to every reply - within hours when you can, not days - including rejections**. Speed wins deals when brands compare creators, and active threads keep contacts warm and protect your sender reputation (Section 05).

WHEN THE BRAND SAYS...	YOUR MOVE
"Not a fit right now."	Reply graciously and briefly - thank them, leave the door open. A polite no today is a warm lead next quarter, and it costs you twenty seconds.
"We're closed for the quarter / reach out later."	Always ask when: "When do you think opportunities might open up? I'd love to set a reminder to check back in." Then actually set the reminder - these deals routinely close on the second approach with near-zero effort.
"You should talk to {colleague}."	Highest-intent reply you can get. Thank the referrer, then start a new thread to the new contact with the subject line "{Referrer} suggested I reach out" - borrowed credibility that dramatically lifts your odds. Personalize this one heavily.
"What are your rates?"	Prime time. Run Play A or Play B from Section 06 - warm, specific, itemized, and always ending in a question.
"What ideas do you have?"	Also prime time - they're inviting you to demonstrate value. Source ideas from three places: their best-performing recent posts ("I noticed your top posts are X, so..."), a competitor's hit you could recreate for them, or your own best-performing branded content ("this drove great results for a similar partner").
"We're unfamiliar with UGC / creators."	Educate in two sentences, then show proof: explain the model, link 1-2 examples of brands using your content, and ask whether it's something they'd consider adding to their strategy.
"Join our affiliate program."	If affiliate-only isn't your model, decline warmly and reframe: you work on a paid basis - would they consider that in future planning? Keep the contact; affiliate-first brands often graduate to paid creator budgets.

## When they ghost mid-conversation

Interest that goes quiet isn't dead - it's deprioritized. After you've sent rates or ideas, follow up at least twice. Rotate three angles rather than repeating yourself:

- **The light check-in:** short, warm, zero pressure - "wanted to make sure this didn't get buried; still excited to make something work."
- **The fresh idea:** reference something they just posted or launched and attach a concept to it. This reads as attention, not desperation.
- **The reason-why-now:** give the thread a real deadline - an upcoming trip, a seasonal moment that fits their product, a window in your calendar. Urgency works when it's genuine.



# Repeat deals & retainers

Chasing 100 new brands is the hard way to grow. Keeping the 5 that already said yes is the profitable one.

A brand that has paid you once has already cleared every hurdle that makes cold outreach hard: they know your work, they've onboarded you, they trust you'll deliver. Re-engaging them converts at a rate cold pitching can't touch - yet most creators go silent the moment the invoice clears. That silence is the single most expensive habit in the creator business.

## The retention sequence

**Right after delivery - ask about results.** A short message a few weeks post-campaign ("Would love to hear how the content performed - and if there's anything I'd tweak next time") does three jobs at once: it shows you care about their outcome rather than just your invoice, it harvests metrics for your case studies (Section 02), and it keeps the thread alive for the re-pitch.

**Add value before you ask.** When you re-approach, never open with "any new campaigns?" Open with something for *them*: "Saw your new launch - I have 2-3 concepts that would fit it" or fresh angles you've thought of since the last collab. Brands re-hire the creators who make their jobs easier.

**Re-pitch on a schedule, not a vibe.** Check in every few weeks while you're still fresh in memory - before they plan the next campaign without you, not after. Useful hooks: their product launches, seasonal moments, a slot opening in your content calendar, even a returning-partner rate to fill a slow month.

**Be the easiest creator they work with.** Reply fast, deliver early, take feedback gracefully. Marketing managers assign next quarter's budget to whoever made last quarter painless. Unglamorous; extremely lucrative.

## Two routes to a retainer

Retainers - recurring monthly deliverables - are what turn creator income from a rollercoaster into a salary. There are two ways in:

- **Earn it:** overdeliver on the first collab, check in regularly with fresh ideas, then propose formalizing: "Instead of one-off projects, would a monthly package make planning easier on your end?" Frame it around their convenience - predictable creative supply, no re-negotiation every campaign.
- **Pitch it upfront:** propose recurring scope from the start - e.g. five pieces a month for six months at a committed rate. Newer brands and local businesses without in-house content teams are especially receptive: you're not a campaign expense, you're their content department.

## Growing the deal size

Long-term partners shouldn't stay at year-one rates. Each time something material changes - your audience grows, your engagement climbs, your content demonstrably drives their results - surface it: share the numbers, propose expanded scope (more platforms, more formats, whitelisting if they're not using it yet), and renegotiate with the same warm, scope-first approach from Section 06. The brands that know your ROI firsthand are the easiest audience for a rate increase you will ever have.

### THE COMPOUNDING EFFECT

Run this section's system and the math changes shape: a creator closing 3 new deals a month who retains and grows even a third of them is, within a year, working from a base of recurring relationships - pitching less, earning more, and negotiating from the comfortable position of someone who doesn't need the deal.



# The iteration loop

Everything before this section is a hypothesis. Your data is the verdict.

Track four numbers for every pitch batch: sent, opened, replied, closed (plus revenue per deal). Reviewed monthly, they tell you exactly what to fix to improve your end results:

SYMPTOM	DIAGNOSIS & FIX
<b>Low open rate (&lt;20%)</b>	Deliverability or subject lines: run the spam-recovery steps in Section 05; rewrite subjects to be specific and brand-named.
<b>Opens, but few replies</b>	The email, the portfolio, or the targeting. Audit the pitch against WIIFM / USP / question-CTA (Section 04), make sure your portfolio converts the clicks you earn (Section 02), and check you're pitching brands with a real reason to buy (Section 03).
<b>Replies, but few closes</b>	The offer or the negotiation. Revisit bundles and anchoring (Section 06) and reply handling (Section 07). Are you losing at "what are your rates?" or after?
<b>Closes, but no repeats</b>	Retention, not acquisition. You win deals, then go silent - run the Section 08 sequence on every past partner this month.

## Test like you mean it

Change one thing at a time and give it a real sample - on the order of 100 sends per variant. (That's how the Section 01 template was found: three variants, ~100 sends each; the winner was still converting 700 emails later.) Subject lines, intro hooks, CTA phrasing, length: all testable. Small samples lie.

## Pipeline math: working backwards from a goal

Once you know your numbers, income is arithmetic. Say your data shows a 5% pitch-to-close rate and a \$900 average deal:

- **Goal:** \$5,400/month from new deals → 6 closes →  $6 \div 0.05 = 120$  pitches/month - about 30 a week, well within the 3-hour operating system from Section 05.
- **Two levers, not one:** you can also hit the goal at lower volume by raising close rate (templates, targeting) or deal size (bundles, add-ons, negotiation). The data shows which lever is cheapest for you.

That's the playbook in one habit: run the three systems, measure the funnel, fix the weakest stage, repeat. Two quarters of this and you stop asking "why won't brands reply?" and start asking "how much do I want to earn next quarter?" - a much better question.

### If you'd rather not run this by hand

Everything here can be done with a spreadsheet, a calendar, and discipline. Bento exists because most creators would rather spend that time creating: it finds verified decision-maker contacts at brands worth pitching, automates safely-spaced sends and follow-ups, highlights your top warm leads to follow up on, and tracks your whole funnel - opens, replies, past partners - so the iteration loop runs itself.

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