

# How I doubled creator acceptance rate, %

...while learning how to be a great partner

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July, 2024

# 1 pager: MVP tradeoffs cost dearly, I fixed them

Situation: As lead PM, creator experience, I shipped the **BrandConnect MVP\*** on an aggressive timeline.

Resultant **tradeoffs resulted in a poor XP** for brands, creators, and stakeholders!



Actions: This required uncomfortable things!

- Led research, analysis & recommendations
- Prioritized & shipped quick wins
- OODA Loop: Observe, Orient, Decision, Action

Results:

- Doubled (**2X**) acceptance rate (150% of benchmark<sup>^</sup>)
- Increased response rate by 17pt (+5pt vs benchmark<sup>^</sup>)
- Forged xFN relationships; Launched in 5 countries

Lessons: Leadership in a crisis inspires confidence

- Empathy
- Don't wait for expertise, just do it
- Be prepared for conflict and address it gracefully

\*Design and ship an end-to-end automated marketplace to retire Famebit, acq. 2016

<sup>^</sup> benchmark: TikTok response/accept rates, 2022

# What we'll cover

Questions welcome!

01 – introducing Keith

02 – introducing the product

03 – the product challenge

04 – q&a

# 01 – introducing Keith

👋 Hi, I'm Keith

*One of my favorite things about being a PM is the launch email. That's because I get to relive the business or technical problem, what I learned when I confronted it, and most of all, thanking and elevating the people that made the launch happen.*

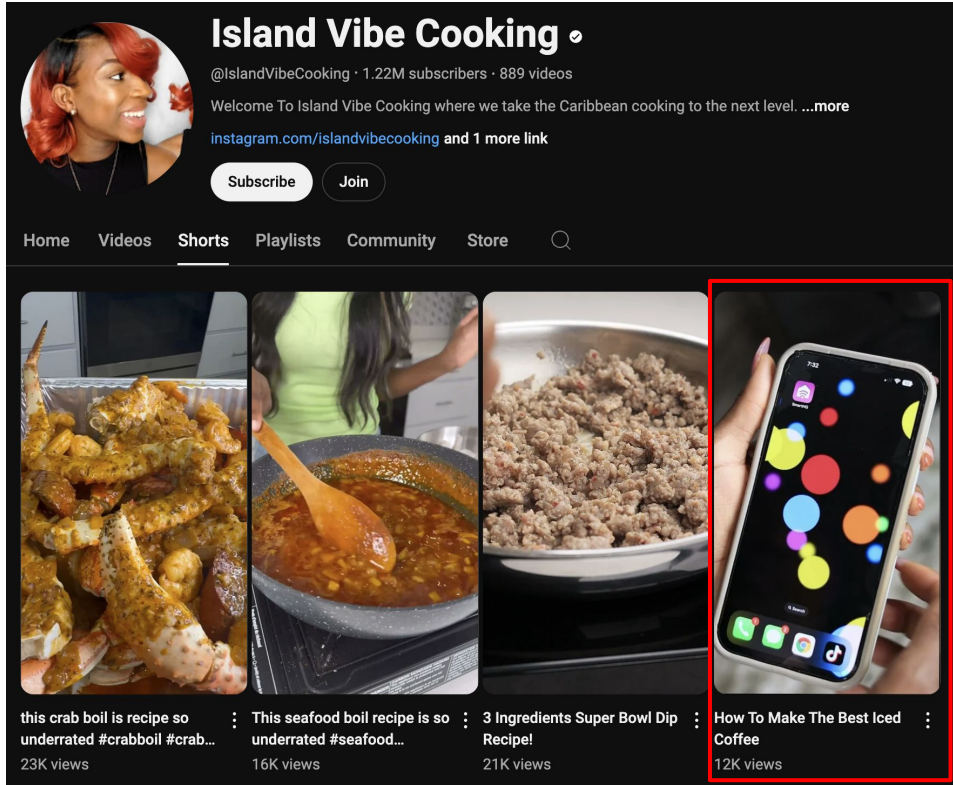
I like to PM these kinds of products

- 📊 OLAP / Data products
- 🤖 pubtech / adtech attribution
- 🤝 Marketplaces

I like to write about PM and flying airplanes.  
You can check out my writing [here](#)



# As marketplace PM, my first “dollar” is @IslandVibeCooking




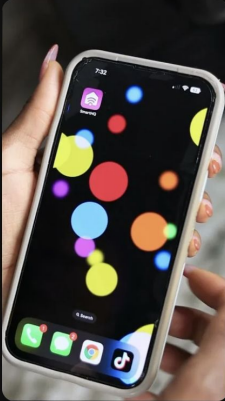


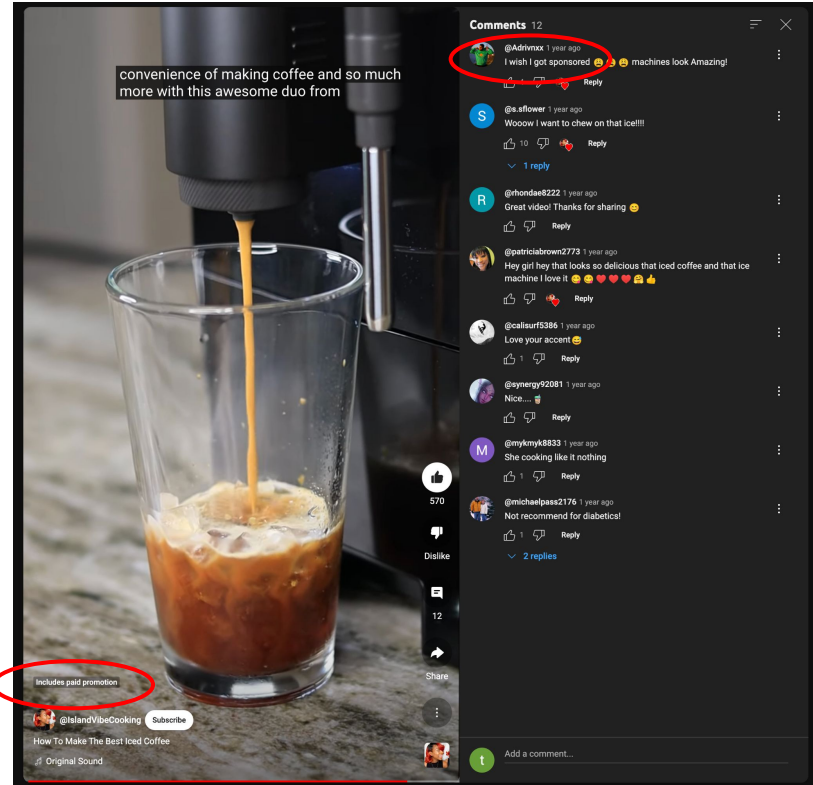
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Love your accent 🙌  
10 1 reply
- @synergy92081 1 year ago  
Nice... 🙌  
10 1 reply
- @mykmy48833 1 year ago  
She cooking like it nothing  
10 1 reply
- @michaelpas2176 1 year ago  
Not recommend for diabetics!  
10 1 reply

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@IslandVibeCooking Subscribe  
How To Make The Best Iced Coffee  
Original Sound

Add a comment...

## 02 – introducing the product

# BrandConnect is an influencer marketplace

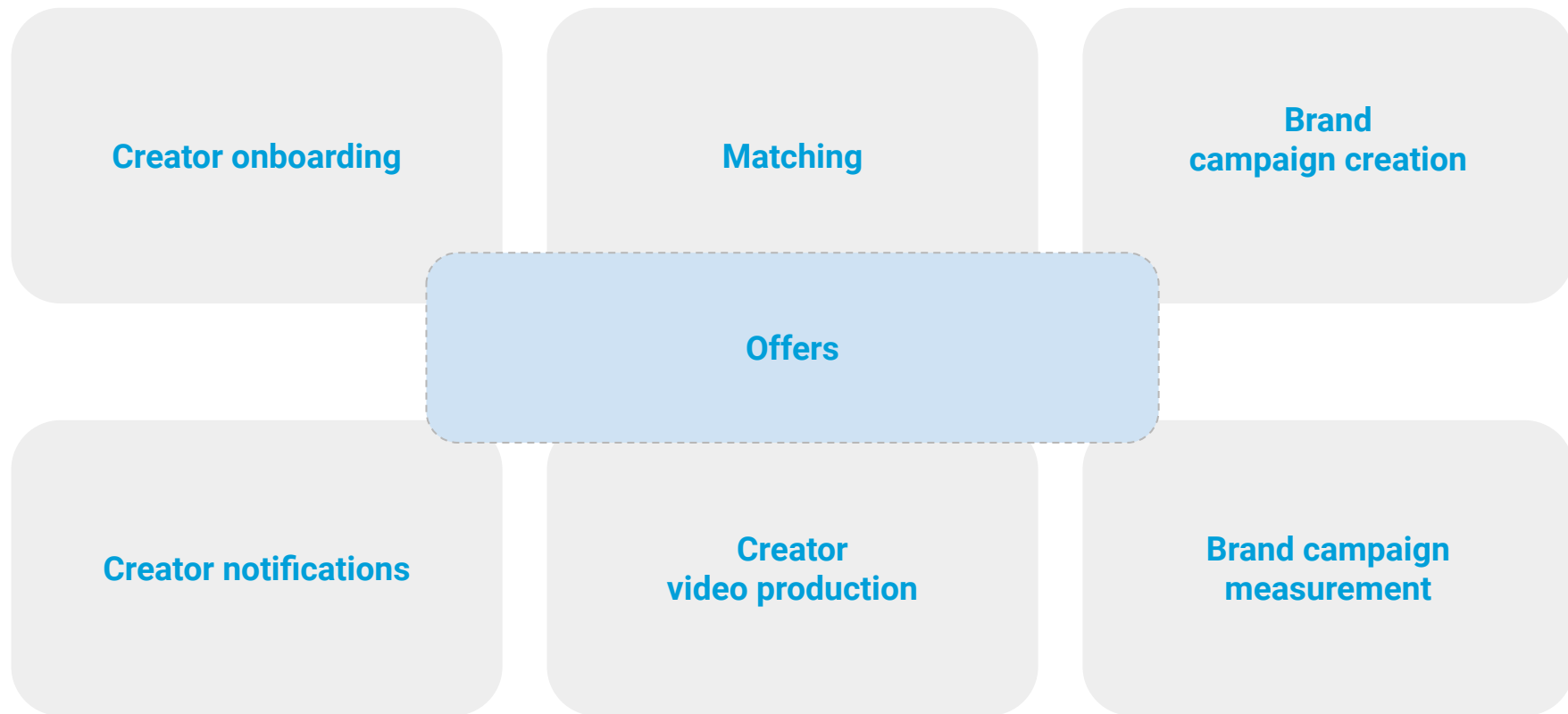
A self-service platform that connects creators for branded content campaigns. Brands use Google Ads to launch branded content campaigns and identify creators to work with.

For creators, the YouTube BrandConnect platform features:

- Earn money from branded content campaigns aligned with their preferences
- Self-service tools within YouTube Studio to manage campaigns
- A customizable Media Kit, with audience insights tailored to your channel, so you can pitch yourself to brands and secure deals.



## MVP: BrandConnect components relevant to this story



**What was the goal of MVP?**

**Launch end-to-end automated  
influencer marketplace**

...so that we can turn down the managed service

## 03 – the product challenge

# Situation



***“Please welcome Keith Reynolds, who will launch the Creator experience for the BrandConnect MVP...”***



# MVP tradeoffs exacerbated existing pain points

## Pain points

- **Brand:** Launch campaigns timely with measurement
- **Creator:** Receive & respond to relevant offers from brands I trust
- **xFN & Stakeholders:** Automate my GTM and support effort

..resulting in problems with the entire conversion funnel

The worst performing KPI was **Creator Response Rate** (CRR, %)



# Creators were not responding to Offers!

CRR Definition: Creator response rate = **responses** / **offers**

- What is a response? Creator click CTA in product (Accept, Discuss, Decline)
  - No mobile! MVP was desktop only
- How can creators view an offer?
  - Navigate via Studio > Earn > BrandConnect
  - Click CTA in offer email ('View offer')

Expectation: We were expecting 40-45%

Reality: CRR, % in the low 20s

# Which led to Questions!

..and some suggestions 🤖





# Actions



# Analyze: Debugging → Patterns → Form a hypothesis

Q: Is low CRR, % a bug?

Problem with the offer flow? Notifications? Something else?

- *It wasn't offer flow*; monitoring / no drops
- *It wasn't notifications*; they were sent, and opened!
  - Ruled out latency, 100% delivered within SLA
  - Email deliverability nominal; 0% opt-out, with *fantastic* open rate (87%)
  - CTR, % was great! (exceeded benchmark vs similar monetization campaigns)

*If low response rate is not a bug, what's going on?*

*I started a working group...*

*...but all the AIs were mine*

# Forming a hypothesis ..of several factors

## Is it the offer flow?

..what about matching? ..or campaign creation ?

## Is it notifications?

..we have a great open rate ..why are they not responding?

## Is it the offers themselves?

..we have an anecdote that a brand sent several “lowball” offers

# How did I test these educated guesses?

## Data!

### Logs, SQL, and look for correlation

- Data was easy: My PRDs specify logging, infra has great monitoring
- Analysis was fun! Instead of waiting for a data scientist, I dove in via SQL & statistics tools

I found correlation. Some obvious and others surprising:

Creator response rate (CRR, %) positively correlated to

- **Obvious:** Offer price
- **Sorta obvious:** Creator onboarded state
- **Interesting:** Strongest correlation to # of offers a brand made across a campaign

## People!

### I created a working group of leads from UXR

- Re-upped recommendations we previously deferred
- Goodwill: Rapid study with clickable prototypes

### ..Engineering

- Ruled out bugs, developed hypothesis
- RICE framework to prioritize fixes

### ..BizOps, GTM, Sales

- Reviewed onboarding, measurement pain points
- Elicited feedback and observations

### ..and **Creators** themselves

- Recorded sessions reacting to clickable prototypes

# I started to map the product's "holes"

## Creator onboarding

- Must sign Terms of Service (ToS) to view an offer

## Matching

- Not limited to who signed ToS

## Brand campaign creation

- Variable (CPV) model unclear on how budget will be spent

## Offers

- Variable (CPV) model creates uncertainty
- Can't respond from notification (vs in-product)
- Ineffective in-product CTAs ('Accept', 'Discuss', 'Decline')

## Creator notifications

- Email only
- passive copy, no price
- CTA is ('Review')

Insight: a non-response is a "No"

- Creators afraid 'Decline' will affect future deals

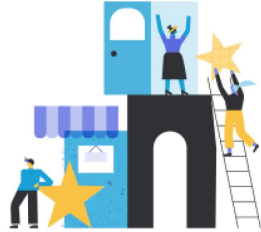
Conflict: Brands want to find any creator

- Creators who hadn't signed ToS can't respond in-product!

# Which I organized into a clear briefing

- Leads review: Presented findings & recommendations
  - Anchored discussion on “the map of product holes” slide
  - Recommendations
    1. Make it easier to respond, update CTAs
      - add CTAs to notifications (*I'm interested*, *Decline*)
      - add rejection survey + education moment
    2. Send better offers
      - Ditch CPV model, switch to fixed pricing
      - Put price in the notification
    3. Update matching algo
      - Prioritize active creators (a “no” is activity!)
      - Feed rejection reasons into model
    4. Educate sellers and GTM with product recommendations
- Updated roadmap / sprint planning & releases

# Results



# CRR increased 17pt, 2X acceptance rate

	Comparison period	Measurement period	Benchmark Estimates
Offers sent	██████	██████	
Creator Response Rate CRR, %	██	+17 pt v comparison period	25-40% TikTok <a href="#">source</a>
Creator Accept Rate, %	██	2X v comparison period	20% TikTok <a href="#">source</a>
Creator Reject Rate, %	6%	8%	
Creator Reject Reasons	N/A	33% Brand doesn't fit my channel 33% Price isn't right 23% Timing not right for me 13% Other (terms, product)	



# I established myself as a leader after this “fix it”

## Good crisis management...

- Acknowledge the issue
- Take responsibility
- Overcorrect

Methodical approach → everyone felt heard

Identify patterns, recommendations, prioritized changes helped us ship the right things

## ...produced execution rigor!

- Clarity
- Alignment
- Urgency

## I set a new tone:

- Sprints were very organized!
- *Smooth launches* adding 4 countries:  
IN, BR, ID, UK

## 04 – Q&A

# Appendix

# **Alternative Action/Results**

# Alternative actions & results: Prototyping

## How it was

The scope of the MVP was largely set when I arrived; it was up to me to spec it out.

It took a while to align on MVP scope, which left time only for a “big bang” monolithic release.

Resultant interrelated product issues that compounded into a low response rate could have been resolved earlier if I added validation cycles with UXR and other stakeholders.

## How it could have been

When I engaged with a different UXR lead for my rapid research, I was amazed to discover just how quickly we could mock up and demonstrate clickable prototypes with live users in a representative panel: 3 weeks from inception to results!

The next time I commit to launching a product with this level of complexity, I will validate with UXR using clickable prototypes to test competing ideas and release higher quality product.

# Alternative actions & results: Alignment with Ads

## How it was

Working with Ads as a sponsor was a bit of a “four-body problem,” meaning not only did I have to manage two ends of a marketplace and our intermediary application, but also negotiate with a demanding product area.

To wit, an Ads PM really wanted a messaging feature to be part of MVP. They were very persistent and firm. It got contentious!

When I focused on the low response rate, the Ads PM advocated heavily for this feature.

As leader of the working group, I rallied team members (and used a modified RICE framework with my tech lead) to launch some “quick wins” first and re-assess.

## How it could have been

While Ads was a new stakeholder in 2022, I think I would have anticipated this misalignment earlier, and put significant effort into joint OKRs for 2022 even if it meant re-doing OKRs.

The time spent on joint OKRs would have come in handy as prioritizing a desired feature potentially wouldn't have been as contentious if we had agreed ahead of time that messaging was a key enabler.