

The Signal

Monthly intelligence on Creator Risk, regulatory change, and brand safety incidents.
Issue 33 · August 2026



Edition date: 1 September 2026 · Coverage through 31 August 2026

August brought three different tests of creator governance. Callaway ended a partnership after approving an advertisement that prompted a backlash. Sony challenged music use across retailer and influencer accounts. Reporting on Meta's paid creator campaigns coincided with a proposed multistate settlement concerning teen safety.

Together, these stories ask a more precise question than whether content was approved: what did that approval actually cover?

IN THIS ISSUE

- 01 — Approved. And still wrong.
- 02 — The campaign ends. The obligations remain.
- 03 — Disclosure does not substantiate the claim.
- 04 — Regulatory Snapshot — four markets
- 05 — Cases to Watch

EDITOR'S NOTE

Creative approval, permission to distribute and evidence supporting a claim are separate decisions. Each has a scope, and each can require review when circumstances change. Governance becomes fragile when an organisation treats one completed check as assurance that the whole asset remains acceptable.

THE NUMBER

UP TO US\$17 BILLION

The California Attorney General's 26 August announcement describes payments of up to US\$17 billion to states over ten years under Meta's proposed multistate settlement. Court approval remained outstanding at the reporting cutoff.

Alongside the financial commitment, the agreement provides for changes to teen protections and independent oversight.

01 — APPROVED. AND STILL WRONG.

Callaway ended its relationship with Good Good Golf on 27 August after an advertisement depicted a man pushing a woman to the ground as she reached for a golf club. GOLF.com reported that chief executive Chip Brewer acknowledged the video had been approved and said that approval should never have happened. Callaway also committed US\$1 million to organisations addressing violence against women and announced changes to its content review process.

This was an advertisement the brand approved. That makes the quality of the approval decision part of the governance question, alongside the creator's conduct.

A long-standing relationship can help a brand understand a creator's style, audience and intentions. It cannot determine whether a particular advertisement is appropriate. Review must consider what the finished asset depicts, what it asks the audience to find entertaining and what the brand communicates by participating.

The public record does not establish precisely why Callaway's review failed. It does establish that the existence of approval was insufficient protection. An approval record can show who made a decision; the reasons recorded alongside it help establish whether the relevant judgement was actually exercised.

For brands, the useful response is to examine how reviewers reach decisions. "Consistent with the creator's usual content" and "consistent with the brand's commitments" are different assessments, even when both appear in the same review.

THE SIGNAL

The advertisement passed review. That makes the quality of the approval decision—not simply the creator's conduct—the governance question.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Review one recent creator advertisement and its approval record. Check whether the reasons for approval address the finished content and its implications for the brand, rather than relying on familiarity with the creator or campaign.

02 — THE CAMPAIGN ENDS. THE OBLIGATIONS REMAIN.

Sony Music filed a copyright complaint against Kroger and related defendants on 21 August. It alleges at least 392 unauthorised uses of recordings across retailer social accounts and accounts operated by influencers or other affiliated parties. These are allegations, not findings of infringement.

The complaint also alleges that the parties had previously obtained licences for some uses, that content remained available beyond a licensed period, and that further uses occurred after notice. Those allegations place the history of permissions and continued publication at the centre of the dispute.

A campaign can close administratively while its exposure continues. The agency may complete the job, the creator may retain the post and the brand may keep promoting the asset. None of those events establishes that the original permission still supports the current use.

The gap becomes harder to control when content moves between creator accounts, brand accounts, paid distribution and later campaigns. Permission for one use does not automatically answer questions about another, and a record that simply says “cleared” can conceal the limits that matter.

The useful question is therefore more specific than “Was the music cleared?” It is: “Does the documented permission cover how this asset is being used now—and who acts when it no longer does?”

THE SIGNAL

Rights review needs to follow the asset beyond initial publication. Continued availability, paid distribution and reuse can require a new decision after the campaign has closed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Prioritise live creator assets receiving paid distribution, carrying expired or undocumented permissions, or being reused beyond their original campaign. Confirm the current use is covered and assign an owner for renewal or removal.

03 — DISCLOSURE DOES NOT SUBSTANTIATE THE CLAIM.

On 18 August, the Tech Transparency Project reported that Meta was using paid influencers and other organisations to promote its approach to child safety in countries debating social-media restrictions. The organisation characterised the activity as part of Meta's opposition to those restrictions.

Rest of World's 31 August reporting added interviews with participating creators. It described a paid Teen Accounts reel in which Indian actor Hiten Tejwani told viewers that "Instagram is okay". Tejwani said he understood the campaign as informing parents. Another participant, Snehaalata Shah, described preparing a script that an agency subsequently amended.

These examples show why reviewing the overall reassurance offered by a message matters alongside checking its individual feature descriptions. They do not, by themselves, establish that either creator made a false claim or explicitly argued against legislation.

On 26 August, the attorneys general announced the proposed multistate settlement, and Meta issued its own statement. The agreement combines financial commitments with changes to teen protections and independent oversight. Meta denies the allegations in the litigation, and the settlement remained subject to court approval as August closed.

Three kinds of statement require separate scrutiny:

- A **feature description** explains what a product does.
- An **effectiveness claim** says the feature achieves a protective outcome.
- A **policy argument** says those protections justify a particular regulatory choice.

A creator can accurately describe a parental control without establishing that it prevents harm. A demonstration can explain a setting without proving that legislation is unnecessary. Broad reassurance can also leave an audience with a stronger conclusion than the supporting product description warrants.

Payment disclosure identifies the commercial relationship; it does not substantiate those conclusions. Equally, the settlement does not establish that every creator statement was false. Review must connect the actual claim to its supporting evidence, while implementation and independent assessment provide reasons to revisit that evidence.

THE SIGNAL

Implementation and independent oversight will create evidence against which future safety messaging can be tested. Creator briefs need a process for revisiting claims when that evidence changes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Classify safety-related creator claims as feature descriptions, effectiveness claims or policy arguments. Assign an evidence owner to approve the wording and identify what new finding or product change would trigger another review.

04 — REGULATORY SNAPSHOT

Four markets · August developments

Impact ratings reflect the implications for brand and creator governance.

MARKET	DEVELOPMENT	IMPACT
UNITED STATES	Meta’s proposed multistate settlement, announced 26 August, combines payments of up to US\$17 billion over ten years with changes to teen protections and independent oversight. It primarily binds Meta, but matters to brands commissioning safety-related messaging. Court approval remained outstanding.	MEDIUM
EUROPEAN UNION	Article 50 AI Act transparency obligations became applicable on 2 August. Duties differ between providers and deployers; brands using relevant AI-generated content need to identify the marking or disclosure requirements applicable to their role and content.	HIGH
FRANCE	Following Parliament’s July approval, the Constitutional Council struck down Article 1, containing the under-15 social-media ban, on 14 August. The remaining legislation was promulgated on 24 August. Promulgation did not reinstate the ban provision.	MEDIUM
AUSTRALIA	Roblox gave an enforceable undertaking to the eSafety Commissioner on 19 August concerning child-safety protections. The commitments primarily bind Roblox and provide a basis for assessing delivery; brands activating on the platform should distinguish promised controls from implemented protections.	MEDIUM

PLATFORM POLICY NOTE

Instagram’s 31 August labelling change makes “AI-generated profile” the designation for relevant synthetic accounts.

For brands commissioning virtual creators, a profile label and a campaign disclosure answer different questions. Account-level labelling identifies the synthetic persona; it does not settle whether an individual advertisement adequately explains the commercial relationship or substantiates its claims.

05 — CASES TO WATCH

CASE	WHAT TO WATCH
Sony / Kroger	The defendants’ response and subsequent court decisions concerning the alleged uses, licensing history and influencer activity.
Meta	Court approval of the proposed settlement, followed by implementation milestones and findings from independent oversight.
Roblox	Published enforcement or compliance information showing whether the undertaking’s commitments have been delivered.

SOURCES

STORY 01

[GOLF.com — Callaway severs ties with Good Good Golf, 27 August](#)

[CBS News — Good Good Golf advertisement backlash, updated 28 August](#)

STORY 02

[Sony Music v Kroger — public complaint filed 21 August](#)

[Music Business Worldwide — reporting on the complaint, 24 August](#)

STORY 03 AND THE NUMBER

[Tech Transparency Project / Campaign for Accountability — report announcement, 18 August](#)

[Rest of World — Meta's creator campaign, 31 August](#)

[California Attorney General — proposed settlement announcement, 26 August](#)

[Proposed consent judgment and settlement agreement](#)

[Meta — statement on its agreement with attorneys general, 26 August](#)

REGULATORY AND PLATFORM DEVELOPMENTS

[European Commission — AI transparency obligations](#)

[French Senate — legislative chronology](#)

[Légifrance — law promulgated 24 August, recording Article 1's constitutional exclusion](#)

[eSafety Commissioner — enforcement action and Roblox undertaking](#)

[Roblox — enforceable undertaking](#)

[Android Central — Instagram profile-label change, 31 August](#)

THE SIGNAL

What would make you reopen an approval—and who is responsible for noticing?

A change in distribution, an expiring permission or new evidence can alter the basis of an earlier decision. An approval record becomes more useful when it captures those limits and identifies who acts when they are reached.

ABOUT SIGNAL INTELLIGENCE

Signal Intelligence is an independent creator risk intelligence company. We provide monthly briefings tracking creator risk, regulatory change, and brand safety incidents. Our TRACE methodology and portfolio audit services are designed for brand-side marketing, legal, and compliance teams.

Request a creator portfolio audit at signalintelligence.consulting

This briefing draws on publicly available information through 31 August 2026. Allegations are attributed and distinguished from findings. It provides intelligence and analysis, not legal advice.

