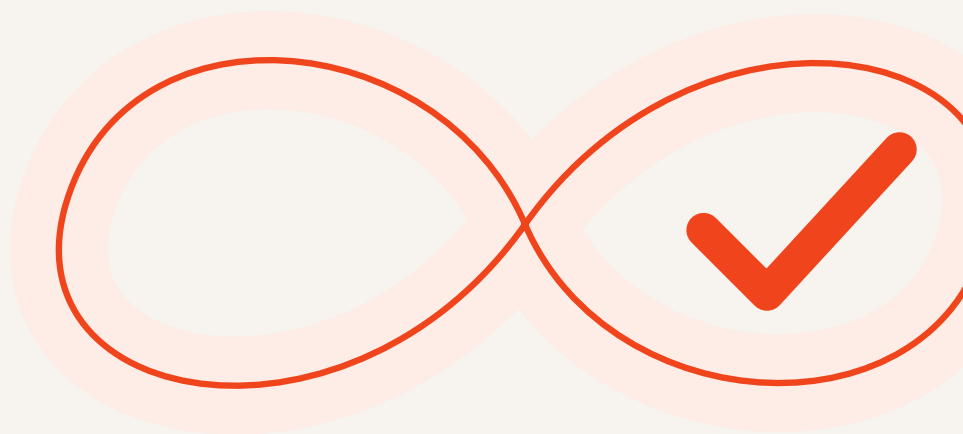


THE BRAND GUIDE TO CREATOR TRIALS IN INDIA, 2026

How to get honest feedback and content you own from
real creators



INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- 01** What a creator trial is
- 02** Six ways to run one
- 03** Picking creators

- 04** Writing a brief
- 05** Staying inside the rules
- 06** What creators charge

FREE GUIDE FOR BRANDS

- 07** Planning your first campaign
- 08** Launch checklist
- 09** How Trialloop helps

01 THE BASICS

WHAT A CREATOR TRIAL IS (AND IS NOT)

A creator trial is simple. You give a creator something real. They use it in their real life. Then they send back two things: honest feedback, and content you can reuse.

1

You give

A product, a visit, a slot, online access, an event invite, or cash.



2

They try it

For real, in their own routine, for the time you agreed.



3

They send back

Honest feedback, plus Reels or Shorts, photos and video you can reuse.

A TRIAL IS

- ✓ A real test of your product by a real person
- ✓ Honest feedback, the good and the bad
- ✓ Content that shows your product in real use
- ✓ A post that is clearly labelled, like "Ad" or "Collaboration"
- ✓ Reuse rights you agree in writing before it starts

A TRIAL IS NOT

- ✗ Buying reviews
- ✗ Asking for five stars or "only positive" posts
- ✗ A script the creator reads out as their own opinion
- ✗ Free product in exchange for a review on Amazon or any marketplace
- ✗ A hidden ad with no label

WHY IT BEATS RANDOM SEEDING

Random seeding means sending free product to a long list of creators and hoping some of them post. There is no brief, no promise, and no feedback. One 2026 pricing guide estimates that 10% to 30% of seeded shipments never become posts.⁹ Another says plainly that not every creator who receives a product will publish anything.¹¹

Random seeding

- ◇ You pick creators from a list, often by follower count
- ◇ You send first and hope later
- ◇ You only hear back if they liked it
- ◇ Content rights are unclear

A creator trial

- You pick creators by fit, city, language and track record
- The creator says yes to a clear brief before you send anything
- You get feedback even when they did not love it
- Reuse rights are agreed up front

Bad feedback is still useful. A creator who tells you the cap leaks has just told you what your customers would have said in public.

02 FORMATS

SIX WAYS TO RUN A TRIAL

Pick the one that matches what you sell. You can also mix them, for example a cafe visit plus a small cash fee.



A PRODUCT

SHIPPED OR ORDERED ONLINE

WHAT YOU GIVE

Your product. Either you ship it, or the creator orders it from your online store and you pay them back.

FITS WHEN

You sell something people use at home: skincare, food, clothes, gadgets, home goods.

EXAMPLE

A block-print label in Jaipur sends one kurta set each to 15 creators, who wear it to work for a week.



A PLACE

A VISIT

WHAT YOU GIVE

A free visit, meal, stay or experience at your location.

FITS WHEN

People have to come to you: cafes, restaurants, hotels, stores, studios.

EXAMPLE

A new cafe in Bengaluru invites food creators for a weekday lunch for two, on days it is usually quiet.



A SLOT

AN APPOINTMENT

WHAT YOU GIVE

A booked appointment, session or class.

FITS WHEN

Your service runs on bookings: salons, spas, gyms, dance or yoga classes.

EXAMPLE

A salon in Pune fills slow weekday afternoons by booking creators for a hair spa.



ONLINE ACCESS

APP, COURSE, SUBSCRIPTION

WHAT YOU GIVE

Free access to your app, course or subscription for a set time.

FITS WHEN

Your product lives on a screen: apps, online courses, software, streaming.

EXAMPLE

A language-learning app gives creators a month of premium to learn basic Tamil and share how far they got.



AN EVENT INVITE

LAUNCH NIGHT, OPEN HOUSE

WHAT YOU GIVE

A place on the guest list. You set the date, venue and guest list, and check creators in at the door.

FITS WHEN

You have a launch night, store opening, open house, tasting or pop-up.

EXAMPLE

A home decor store in Lucknow puts 20 creators on the list for its opening night and checks names at the door.



NOTHING BUT CASH

A FEE ONLY

WHAT YOU GIVE

A fee, with nothing to hand over.

FITS WHEN

The creator already owns or uses your product, or there is nothing physical to give.

EXAMPLE

A furniture brand pays creators who already own its sofa to show it in their own homes.

Examples are made up to show how each format works. They are not Trialloop clients.

03 PICKING CREATORS

PICKING THE RIGHT CREATORS

Follower count is the first number everyone looks at. It is also the easiest to fake, and the least useful on its own.

NANO 1K to 10K	MICRO 10K to 100K	MID-TIER 100K to 500K	MACRO 500K to 2M	MEGA 2M and up
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Follower bands as used by upGrowth's 2026 pricing guide.⁹ K means thousand, M means million. Other guides draw the lines a little differently.

WHY FOLLOWER COUNT MISLEADS

- Followers can be bought. Views and real comments are harder to fake.
- One old viral video can bring followers who no longer watch.
- The audience may live in another city, or another country.
- Check views too.** Compare the average views of the last 6 Reels with the follower count. If views are far below followers every time, the audience is not watching.

Look at the last 6 posts

- ✓ Views are steady, not one hit and five flops
- ✓ Comments are real: sentences and questions, not only emojis
- ✓ They reply to their audience
- ✓ Brand posts are labelled and are not every post
- ✓ Quality fits you: light, sound, how they talk
- ✓ Nothing clashes with your brand or values

ENGAGEMENT RATE

(likes + comments) ÷ followers × 100

Example: 8,000 followers. The last 6 posts average 420 likes and 30 comments. $(420 + 30) ÷ 8,000 × 100 = 5.6\%$.

upGrowth's 2026 estimates of typical engagement: nano 6% to 12%, micro 3% to 7% on Instagram, mid-tier 1.5% to 4%, macro 0.8% to 2.5%.⁹ A rough guide, not a pass mark.

CITY AND LANGUAGE FIT

If you sell in Kochi, a Kochi creator with a small following often helps more than a Delhi creator with a big one. Check where their audience is and what language they speak on camera. upGrowth estimates regional-language YouTube channels cost 40% to 60% less than Hindi or English ones.⁹

NANO OR MICRO?

Nano creators cost less, often barter plus a small fee, and usually get higher engagement, but you need more of them. Micro creators reach more people in a niche and cost more, with fewer to manage. For a first trial, nano creators in one city keep costs low and make it easier to see what works.

CHECK THE TRACK RECORD

The best sign of a reliable creator: do they finish what they agree to? On Trialloop, every creator has a level based on campaigns they have completed.

BRONZE

0 to 9 completed campaigns. New, or still building a record.

SILVER

10 completed campaigns. Unlocks paid gigs.

GOLD

25 completed campaigns, with a 90% completion rate.

04 WRITING A BRIEF

WRITING A BRIEF THAT GETS HONEST RESULTS

A good brief tells the creator what to do with your product. It never tells them what to think about it.

ASK FOR

- ✓ Use it for a set number of days
- ✓ Show it in real use, in their normal life
- ✓ Say what they honestly think, good and bad
- ✓ Clear deliverables: one Reel or Short, photos, raw video
- ✓ The disclosure label, upfront
- ✓ Answers to a few feedback questions, sent to you privately

NEVER ASK FOR

- ✗ A star rating
- ✗ "Must be positive"
- ✗ A set number of marketplace reviews
- ✗ Scripted opinions, like "say it is the best you have tried"
- ✗ Claims you cannot prove, like "cures acne"
- ✗ Hiding or shrinking the "Ad" label

SAMPLE BRIEF

COPY AND CHANGE

WHAT YOU GET	One 50 ml tube of our new gel sunscreen, shipped to you free.
HOW TO USE IT	Use it every morning for 10 days, the way you normally would.
WHAT TO POST	One Instagram Reel showing it in your real routine. Your words, your style. Start the caption with "Ad" and show the label on screen.
WHAT TO SEND US	5 photos and the raw video files. Plus short answers to these questions: 1. What did you like? 2. What did you not like? 3. Would you buy it at this price? Why or why not? 4. What would you change?
REUSE	We may repost your Reel and use your photos on our Instagram and website for 3 months. If we want to run them as paid ads, we will ask you first and agree a fee.
WE WILL NOT	Ask for a rating, tell you what to say, or ask you to post a review on any marketplace.

Give freedom on the words. Viewers can tell when a creator is reading your script, and an honest "this was okay, but" sells better than a forced "amazing".

Many quotes cover posting on the creator's own channel only. Creators may charge extra if you reuse their content in ads, landing pages or product pages, so agree this up front.¹⁰

05 THE RULES

STAYING INSIDE THE RULES

Two sets of rules matter most. ASCI, the Advertising Standards Council of India, has guidelines for influencer advertising.^{1,2} The Department of Consumer Affairs released "Endorsement Know-hows!" for celebrities and influencers on 20 January 2023.⁵

Free product counts. If a creator got anything from you, even an unbiased post about it is an ad and needs a label.

ASCI lists free products "with or without any conditions attached including those received unsolicited", discounts, gifts, trips or hotel stays and media barter as a material connection.¹ The government guide lists free products, discounts, gifts, trips, hotel stays and media barter too.⁵

WHICH LABELS ARE ALLOWED

ASCI's list. Any one or more can be used:¹

Advertisement	Ad
Sponsored	Collaboration
Partnership	Employee
Free gift	Affiliate
"Paid Partnership" tag on Instagram	
"Includes Paid Promotion" tag on YouTube	

The government guide names "advertisement", "sponsored" and "paid promotion" as examples.⁵ Short forms like "#collab" are not on ASCI's list, so use the full word. "Ad" works under both.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

You are, as well as the creator. ASCI says responsibility for disclosure lies with both the advertiser and the influencer. The brand must make sure the post follows the guidelines, and ask the creator to edit or delete it if the label is missing.¹

REAL USE MATTERS

The government guide says creators should not endorse a product they have not personally used or done due diligence on.⁵ A trial, where the creator actually uses your product, fits this well.

YOUR CLAIMS, YOUR PROOF

If you give creators a claim to repeat, like "SPF 50" or "sugar free", you must be able to prove it.¹

Health and money

If a creator gives technical advice on health, nutrition, banking, insurance or investments, they need a relevant qualification and must show it upfront. For stock or investment advice, that means SEBI registration. Generic promotions do not need this, since the April 2025 update.^{1,3,4}

Virtual influencers

A computer-made influencer must also tell people, upfront, that they are not a real human being.¹

Penalties

For misleading ads, the Central Consumer Protection Authority can fine a manufacturer or endorser up to ₹10 lakh, and up to ₹50 lakh for repeat violations.⁶

The safe default for every trial post: "Ad" at the very start of the caption, the same word on screen, and Instagram's "Paid Partnership" tag turned on as well.

Built from ASCI's rules: "Ad" is on the allowed list, the label must be upfront, it must sit on the video itself, and the platform tag is used in addition to the creator's own label.¹

WHERE THE LABEL MUST GO

ASCI's rule of thumb: the label must be upfront and prominent so an average person does not miss it.¹

FORMAT	WHAT ASCI ASKS FOR
Caption or text	Upfront. Not buried in a group of hashtags or links. Likely to be missed if it is only in the bio, at the end of the post, or after "more".
Photo or video with no text, like Stories	Put the label on top of the picture or video itself.
Video, 15 seconds or less	Label on screen for at least 3 seconds.
Video, 15 seconds to 2 minutes	Label on screen for one third of the video.
Video, 2 minutes or more	Label on screen for the whole part where the brand is mentioned.
Live stream	Say it at the start and at the end.
Audio or podcast	Say it at the start, at the end, and before and after every break.
Platform tags	Use the platform's own tool, like "Paid Partnership", as well as the creator's own label, not instead of it.
Language	In English or the language of the post, and easy for an average person to understand.

The government guide says the same in short: hard to miss, not mixed in with hashtags or links, placed on images and inside videos, not only in the description.⁷

MARKETPLACE REVIEWS

Amazon's Community Guidelines do not allow reviews in exchange for compensation, including "payments, refunds, discounts, products, gift cards, warranties, or services". Reviews influenced through any channel, including social media, break the rules.⁸ So never make a marketplace review part of a trial. Feedback comes to you, privately.

KEEP PROOF

- ✓ The brief the creator agreed to
- ✓ Screenshots of each post with its label
- ✓ Chats where you asked for fixes
- ✓ Payment and shipping records

Tax. A product a creator keeps can count as a business benefit for TDS.⁹ Ask your CA before you start.

Please note. This section is general information in plain words, not legal advice. Rules change, so check the latest ASCI and government guidelines, or ask a lawyer, before a big campaign.

06 MONEY

WHAT CREATORS CHARGE IN 2026

Three Indian pricing guides published in 2026 give rates for one Instagram Reel. They roughly agree. Treat them as a starting point for a conversation, not a price list.

BAND	UPGROWTH Sep 2026 estimates ⁹	TICKTIME 11 May 2026 ¹⁰	GRYNOW 21 Aug 2026 ¹¹
Nano 1K to 10K	₹2,000 to ₹8,000	₹2,000 to ₹10,000	₹1,000 to ₹12,000
Micro 10K to 100K	₹8,000 to ₹80,000	₹8,000 to ₹75,000	₹8,000 to ₹80,000
Mid-tier 100K to 500K	₹50,000 to ₹3.5 lakh	₹50,000 to ₹3.5 lakh	₹50,000 to ₹3.5 lakh
Macro 500K to 2M	₹2 lakh to ₹12 lakh	₹2 lakh to ₹8.5 lakh*	₹2 lakh to ₹12 lakh
Mega 2M and up	₹8 lakh to ₹1 crore+ per campaign	₹6 lakh to ₹25 lakh+*	₹6 lakh to ₹25 lakh+

* Ticktime draws its top bands at 500K to 1M and 1M and up. upGrowth prices its mega band per campaign, not per Reel. K means thousand followers, M means million.

WHY QUOTES VARY SO MUCH

- The ranges are wide inside every band. Niche, city, quality and demand all move the price.
- Many quotes assume posting on the creator's own channel only. upGrowth says usage rights, exclusivity and format can move quotes 2x to 3x.⁹
- Stories, YouTube videos and extra revisions can cost more.¹¹
- Regional-language YouTube channels can cost 40% to 60% less than Hindi or English ones, by upGrowth's estimate.⁹

BARTER PLUS A LITTLE CASH

For nano creators, product plus a small fee is common. Ticktime suggests barter or a low fee for product seeding with nano and micro creators. It also warns that free product may be enough for a simple unboxing, but may not be fair for a scripted Reel.¹⁰

The more work you ask for, the more cash it should carry. Ten days of real use plus a Reel plus raw files is real work.

HOW TO USE THESE NUMBERS

1. Ask a few creators. Get quotes from three or four creators in the same band and city before you decide.

2. Compare like with like. Check what each quote includes: Reel only, or Reel plus Story, raw files and reuse.

3. Put it in writing. Deliverables, use period, reuse terms, and when you pay. Before anything is sent.

07 PLANNING

PLANNING YOUR FIRST CAMPAIGN

Every trial goes through the same six stages. How long each takes depends on your product, your city and your creators, so set your own dates and leave room for delays.

1

Brief

Write what you give, what you want back, and the reuse terms.

2

Invites

Shortlist creators and send the brief.

3

Accept

Creators say yes to the brief. Confirm address, slot or date.

4

Try it

Product reaches them, or the visit, slot or event happens.

5

Send back

Feedback, posts with labels, photos and raw video.

6

Reuse

Use the content as agreed. Fix the product using the feedback.

BUDGET

Creators × (cash per creator + product cost + shipping)

Example only: 20 nano creators × (₹3,000 + ₹600 + ₹100) = ₹74,000

FIRST CAMPAIGN WORKSHEET

FILL THIS IN

Goal

What do we want to learn or get?

What we give

☐ Product ☐ Visit ☐ Slot ☐ Online access ☐ Event invite ☐ Cash

How many creators**Which band**

☐ Nano ☐ Micro ☐ Mid-tier ☐ Macro

City and language**Deliverable**

Per creator

☐ Instagram Reel ☐ YouTube Short ☐ Photos ☐ Raw video
☐ Written feedback

Cash per creator**Total budget**

Creators × (cash + product + shipping)

× (+ +) =

Reuse terms**Launch date**

08 BEFORE YOU LAUNCH

LAUNCH CHECKLIST

PLAN

- ☐ **One clear goal**
Feedback, content, footfall or sales. Pick the main one.
- ☐ **Format chosen**
Product, visit, slot, online access, event invite or cash.
- ☐ **Budget worked out**
Cash, product, shipping and a little extra for delays.

CREATORS

- ☐ **Last 6 posts checked**
Views, real comments, quality, no clashes.
- ☐ **City and language match**
Their audience is where you sell.
- ☐ **Track record checked**
Do they finish what they agree to?
- ☐ **Address, slot or guest list confirmed**
Before anything is sent or booked.
- ☐ **Your own item**

BRIEF

- ☐ **Use period and deliverables written down**
How long to use it, what to post, what to send.
- ☐ **No rating, no "must be positive"**
No scripted opinions, no marketplace reviews.
- ☐ **Only claims you can prove**
Remove anything you cannot back up.
- ☐ **Reuse terms agreed in writing**
Where, how long, and whether paid ads are included.

RULES AND AFTER

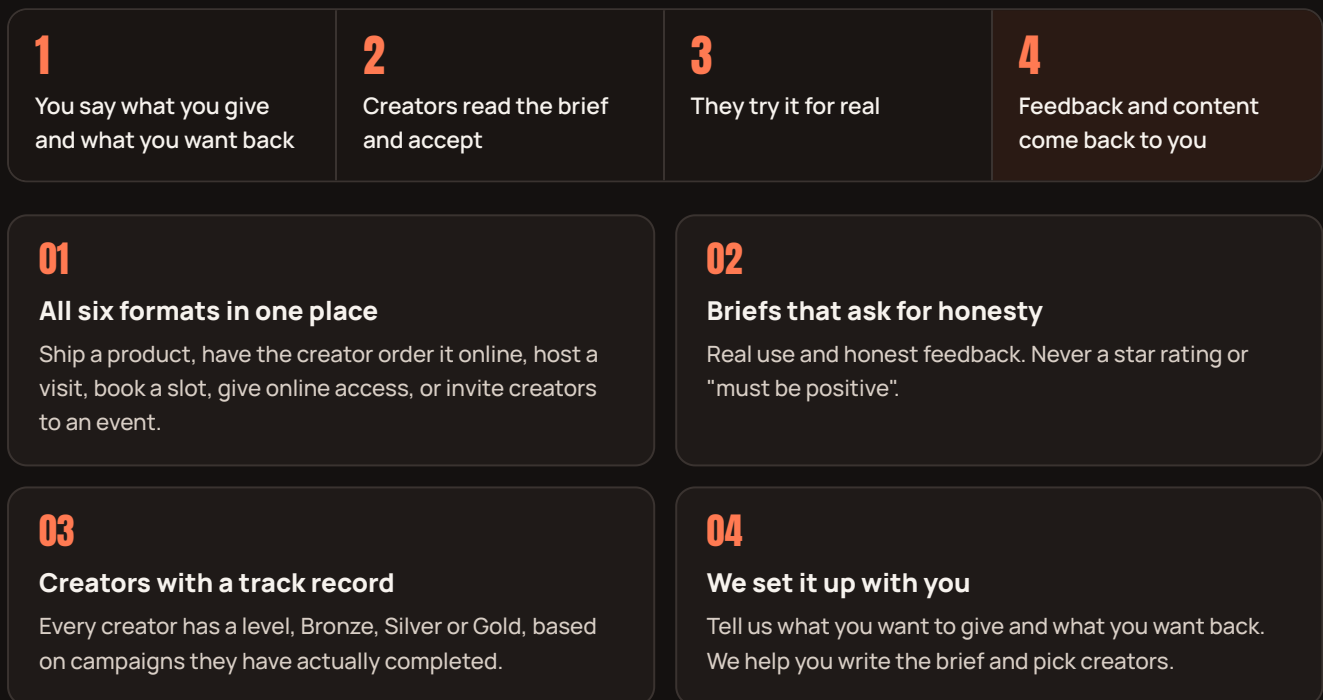
- ☐ **Label in the brief**
"Ad" or "Collaboration", upfront, on screen.
- ☐ **Every post checked for its label**
Ask for a fix if it is missing.
- ☐ **Proof saved**
Brief, screenshots, chats, payments.
- ☐ **Feedback read and acted on**
Share what you changed with the creators.

Stuck on any of these? We set it up with you. Chat with us on WhatsApp, the number is on our website: kabirmunjhal.github.io/trial-loop

09 HOW TRIALLOOP HELPS

RUN YOUR FIRST TRIAL WITH TRIALLOOP

Trialloop is an Indian platform for creator trials. You give a product, a visit, a slot, online access, an event invite or cash. Creators try it and send back honest feedback, plus Reels, Shorts, photos and video you can reuse.



CHAT WITH US ON WHATSAPP

WhatsApp: number on our website
kabirmunjal.github.io/trial-loop

This guide is free to share. It is general information, not legal or tax advice. Rates are third-party estimates and change often. Sources are on the next page.

10 SOURCES

SOURCES

Every number and rule in this guide comes from the pages below. All were opened on 10 October 2026. Dates are as shown on each page.

- 1 **ASCI, Guidelines for Influencer Advertising in Digital Media** (with Addendum 1 dated 15.07.2021 and Addendum 2 dated 17.08.2023)
ascionline.in/social/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/ASCI-Influencer-Guidelines.pdf
- 2 **ASCI Social, Influencer advertising guidelines page** No date shown
ascionline.in/social/guidelines/
- 3 **ASCI press release, guidelines for health and finance influencers** 17 August 2023
ascionline.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Health-and-Finance-Guidelines-Update-Press-Release.pdf
- 4 **ASCI press release, influencer guidelines update (generic vs technical advice)** 28 April 2025
ascionline.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Press-Release_Influencer-Guidelines-Update.pdf
- 5 **PIB, Ministry of Consumer Affairs: "Centre releases endorsement guidelines for Celebs and Social Media Influencers" ("Endorsement Know-hows!")** 20 January 2023
consumeraffairs.nic.in/sites/default/files/PIB1892527.pdf
- 6 **PIB, Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements, 2022 (penalties under Consumer Protection Act, 2019)** 8 February 2023
pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1897389
- 7 **King Stubb & Kasiva, summary of "Endorsement Know-hows" (placement details)** 14 February 2023, updated 26 May 2024
ksandk.com/newsletter/guidelines-by-ministry-of-consumer-affairs/
- 8 **Amazon, Community Guidelines (customer reviews)** No date shown
amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=GLHXEX85MENUMUE4XF
- 9 **upGrowth, Influencer Marketing Pricing India 2026** Published 20 April 2026, updated 16 September 2026
upgrowth.in/influencer-marketing-pricing-india-2026/
- 10 **Ticktime, Influencer Rate Card India 2026** 11 May 2026
ticktime.media/blogs/influencer-rate-card-india-2026-instagram-reel-story-youtube-video-pricing
- 11 **Grynow, Influencer Marketing Cost in India (2026)** 21 August 2026
grynow.in/blog/influencer-marketing-cost-in-india.html

Trialloop creator levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold) are Trialloop's own rules. Examples in section 02 are made up for illustration. The engagement rate formula is a standard calculation.