

2026 Agency Bid Review Checklist

The production landscape has shifted so rapidly that 2025 benchmarks are now obsolete. Why not compare your internal data against current market indices to find “hidden inflation”—the gap between what you are paying and what the work actually costs in an AI-integrated world. Gaining this in-depth understanding of the 2026 market reality ensures you aren’t paying a 20% markup on pass-through costs when the market has moved to 10–15%. More importantly, it ensures you are not paying premium manual rates for work that should now be automated.

1. The “Labor vs. Fee” Split

❓ Question:

Does the bid separate actual production labor from the agency’s coordination fees?

⚠️ RED FLAG:

A single line item for “Production Management” that exceeds 15% of the total budget.



RISK: HIGH

2. The Automation Discount

❓ Question:

Is there a clear reduction in man-hours for repetitive tasks compared to 2024?

⚠️ RED FLAG:

Being charged full manual rates for repetitive tasks that are now standard AI-assisted workflows.



RISK: MEDIUM-HIGH

3. The “Markup on Markup” Check

❓ Question:

Are there markups being applied to “Pass-through” costs like travel, insurance, or catering?

⚠️ RED FLAG:

Markups exceeding 10% on direct, third-party expenses.



RISK: HIGH

4. The Talent Usage Expiry

❓ Question:

Does the bid include a specific end date for usage rights?

⚠️ RED FLAG:

Lack of a clear “End of Term” date for performer rights.



RISK: HIGH

5. The Decoupling Audit

❓ Question:

Is this creative agency the most efficient choice for this specific output?

⚠️ RED FLAG:

High-volume, low-complexity assets billed at premium creative agency rates.



RISK: HIGH

BBS INSIGHT

PRAGMATIC TAKEAWAY: If a vendor pushes back on granularity, they may be protecting their margins. Transparency is the only way to ensure your 2026 budget is funding INNOVATION, not past inefficiencies.

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