

More Rules, More Risk?

*How creator disclosure and brand relationships changed
from 2016 to 2026*

BUSINESS INSIDER

shespeaks
PERFORMANCE-DRIVEN INFLUENCER MARKETING

About this survey

A joint study from

SheSpeaks + Business Insider

Fielded in August 2026 among 365 creators with experience working on sponsored brand campaigns

What we wanted to understand

Disclosure today

How creators disclose paid relationships and whether brands or agencies pressure them to withhold, change or minimize disclosures

The broader creator experience

Compliance guidance, creative control, brand relationships, campaign effectiveness, platform demand and emerging concerns about AI

A ten-year comparison

Where questions were repeated or closely matched, the study compares the 2026 findings with SheSpeaks' 2016 influencer survey. Differences in wording or reference periods are identified when they affect comparability.

The rules are clearer, but disclosure became less consistent

95%

2016 creators who consistently disclosed paid brand relationships

84%

2026 creators who consistently disclosed paid brand relationships

18%

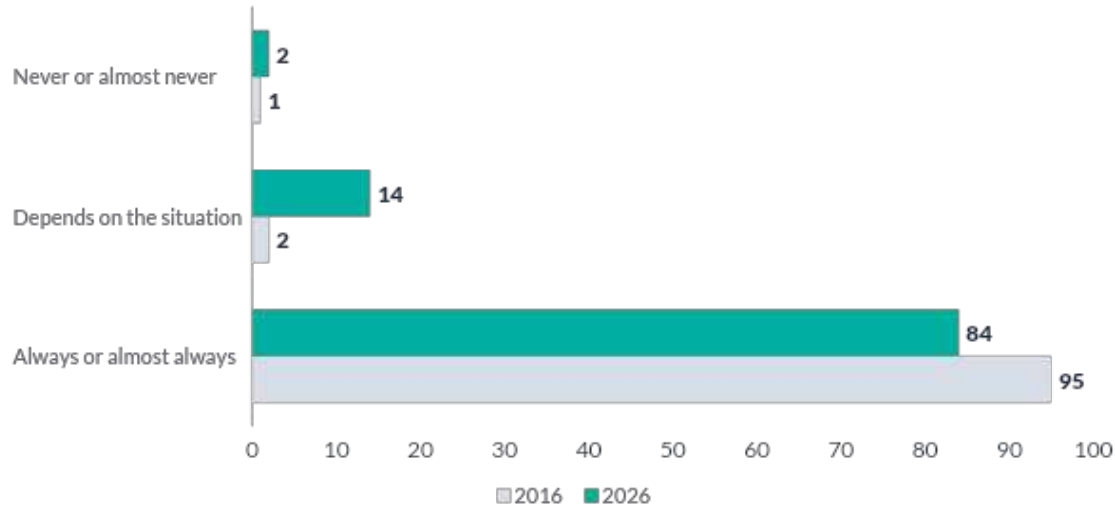
Asked by a brand not to disclose compensation within the past 12 months

SheSpeaks point of view

Influencer marketing has professionalized at the center while becoming more fragmented across a much larger ecosystem. More participants now apply clearer rules with very different levels of experience and oversight.

Consistent disclosure fell 11 points over ten years

The increase occurred among creators who say disclosure depends on the situation



2% to 14%

The share saying disclosure depends on the situation increased sevenfold in percentage terms, or approximately eightfold relative to its original level.

Survey question: Do you typically disclose to your followers when a brand has hired you to create sponsored content about one of their products?

Requests to conceal paid relationships remain a current problem

The survey changed the reference period, making the 2026 result more immediate but not directly comparable

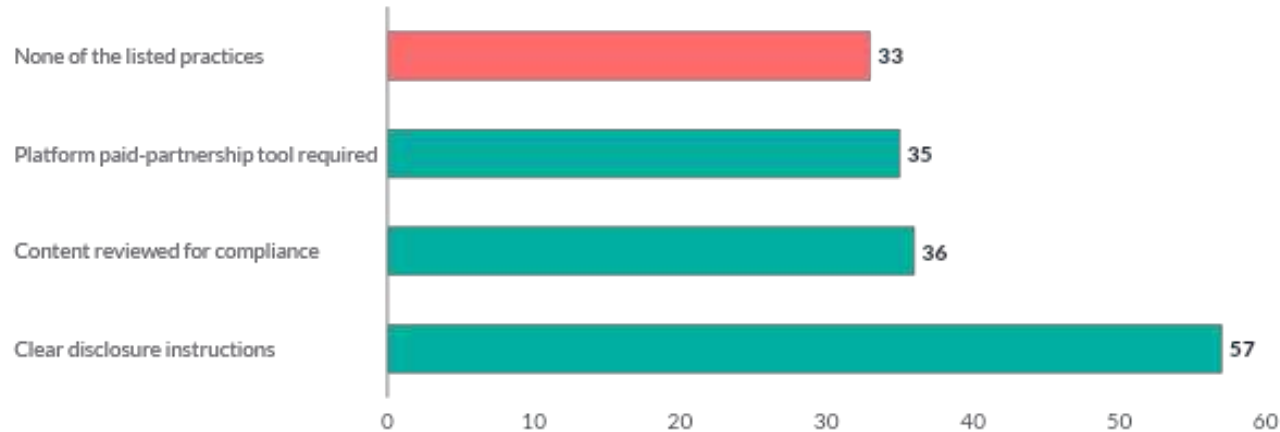


Why it matters

If the 2026 question had retained the lifetime timeframe, the percentage would have been at least 18% and likely higher. The survey cannot determine how much higher.

One-third encountered none of the listed compliance practices

Some creators receive clear direction and review, while others do not

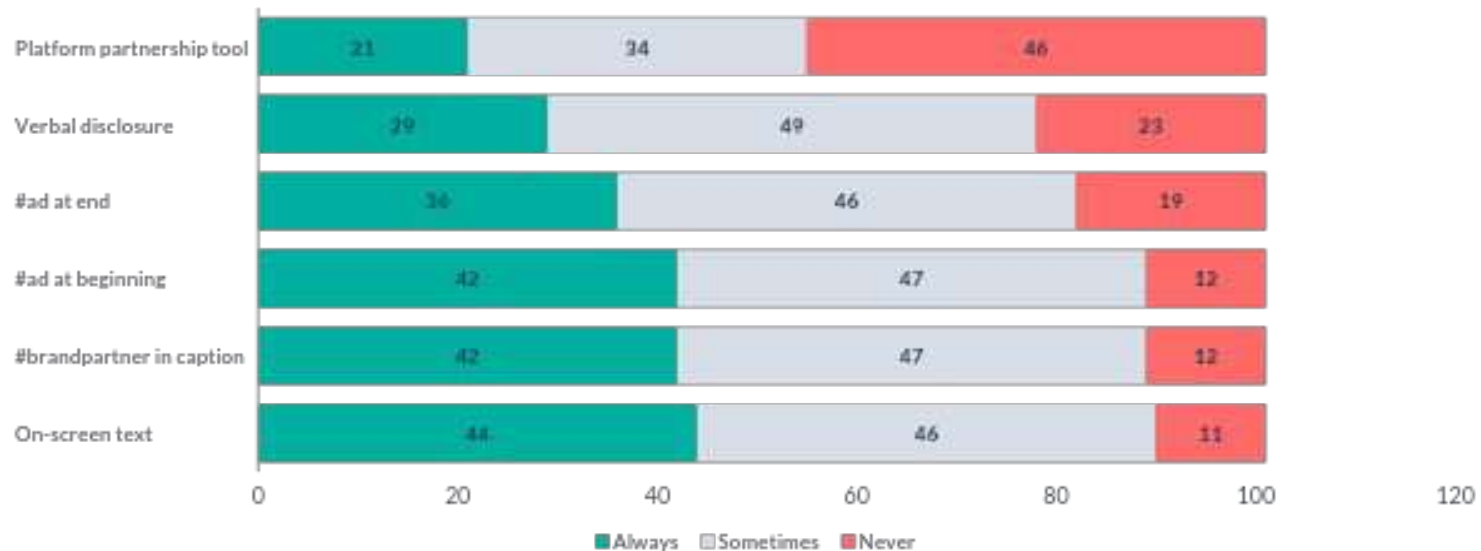


These measures do not establish that compliance practices increased since 2016. They show uneven execution within the current market.

Survey question: During the past 12 months, has a brand or agency ever done any of the following? (Select all that apply)

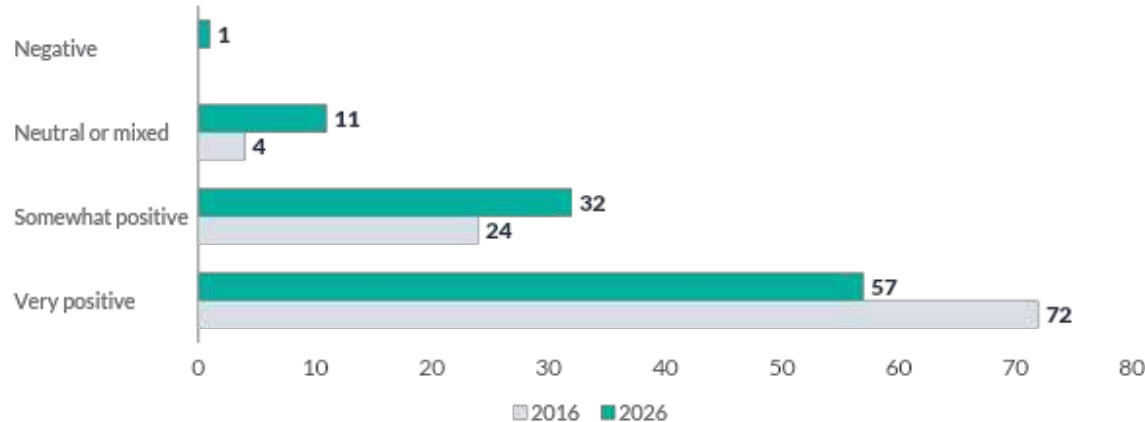
No disclosure method is used consistently by a majority

Platform partnership tools have the lowest 'always' usage and the highest 'never' usage



Survey question: When creating sponsored content, how do you typically disclose?

Brand relationships remain positive, but enthusiasm has cooled



96%

positive in 2016

89%

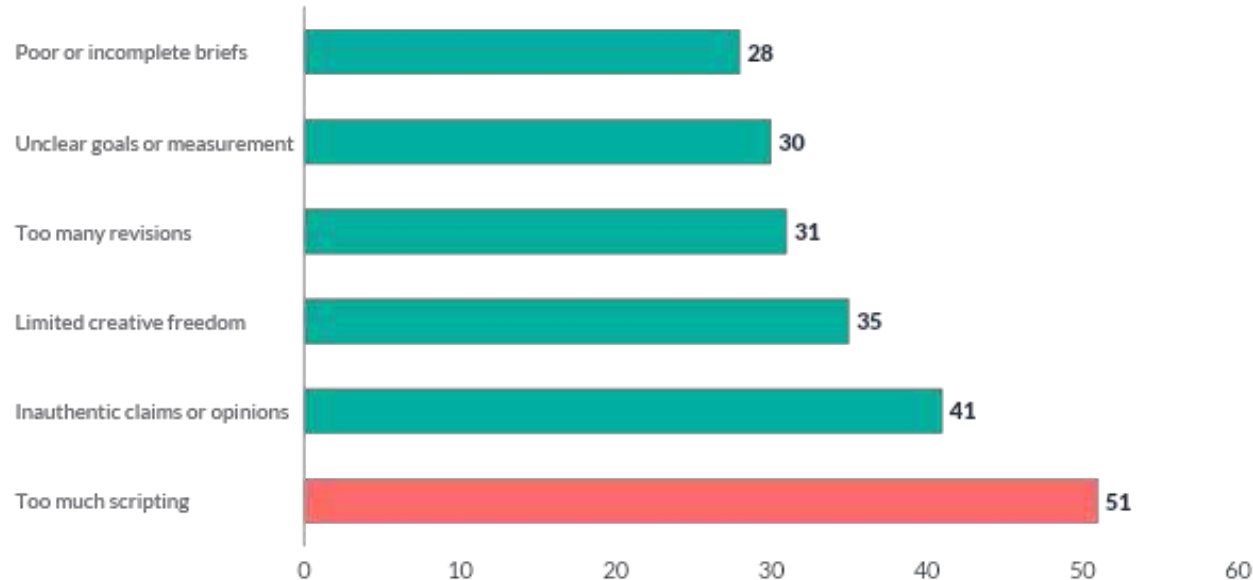
positive in 2026

The largest shift is from 'very positive' toward 'somewhat positive' or neutral.

Survey question: Generally speaking, how would you characterize your experience working with brands and agencies on sponsored content? (Choose one)

Scripting and authenticity create the most friction

Creators want clearer briefs and more room to speak in their own voices



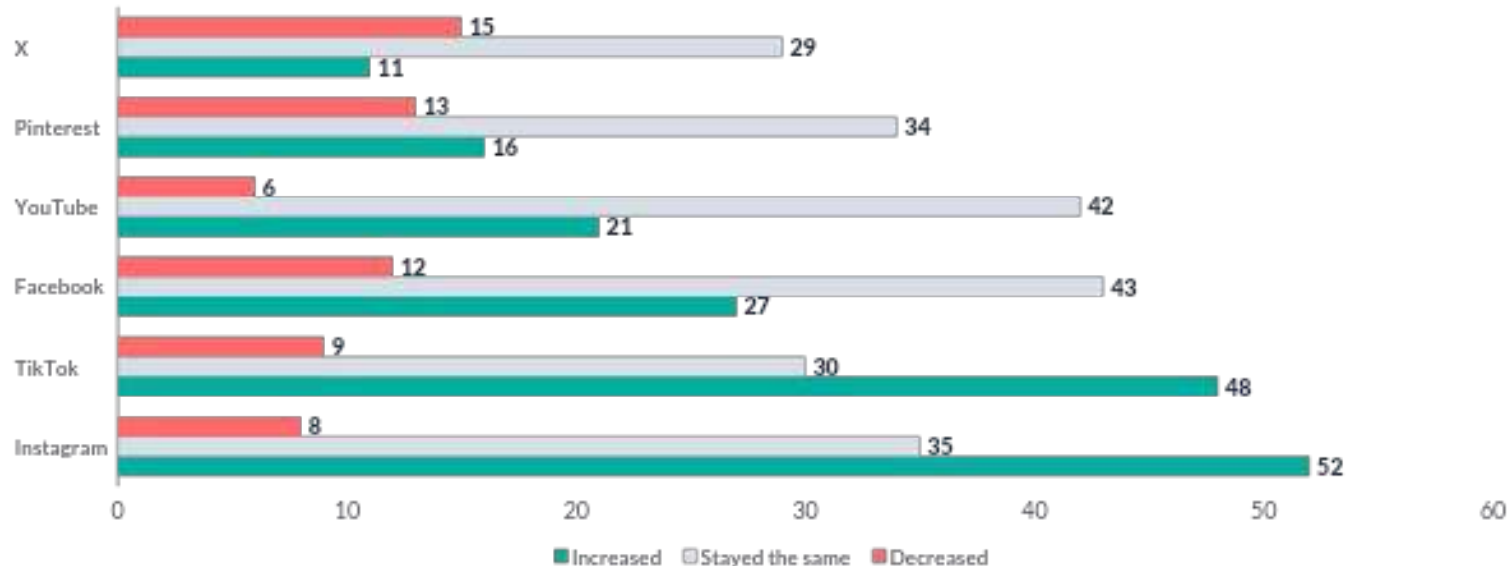
*“Lay off
forced
scripts. Let
us do what
we do best.”*

2026 survey
respondent

Survey question: What do you think is the biggest challenge in working with a brand or agency on sponsored content? (Choose all that apply)

Instagram and TikTok lead creator-reported demand growth

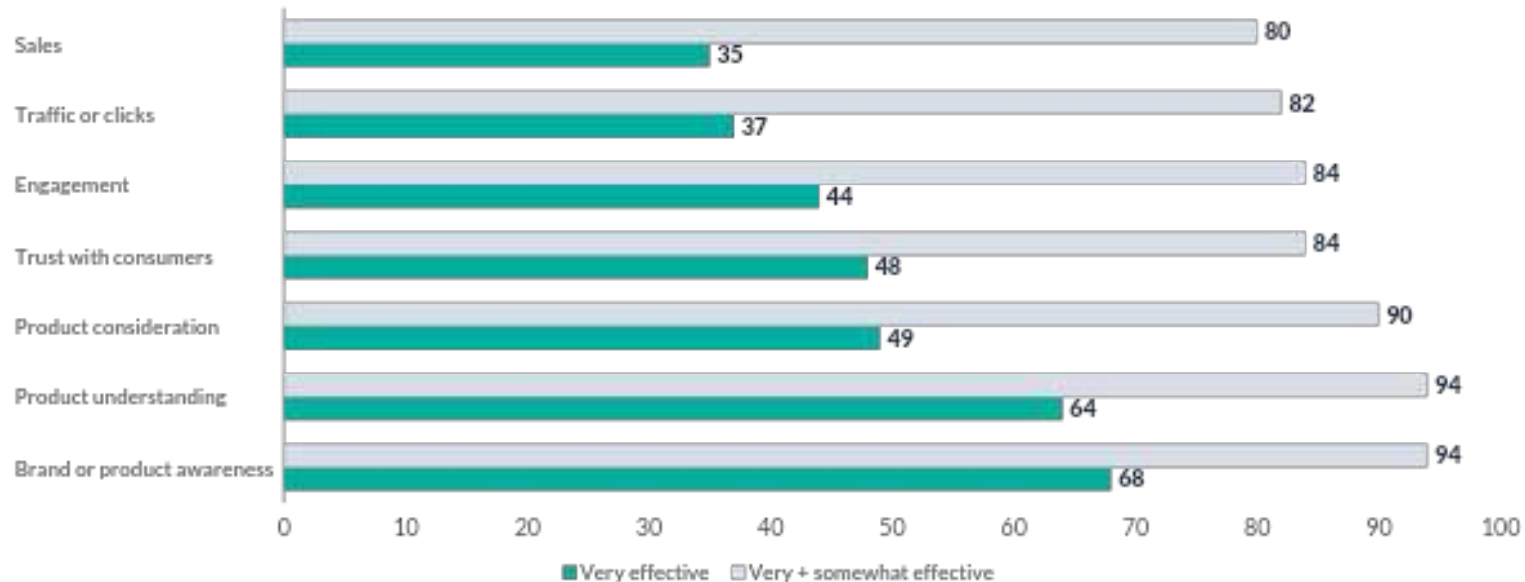
Demand appears steadier across Facebook and YouTube



Survey question: Based on your experience, how has brand demand for sponsored content on each of the following platforms changed over the past 12 months?

Creators see value across the marketing funnel

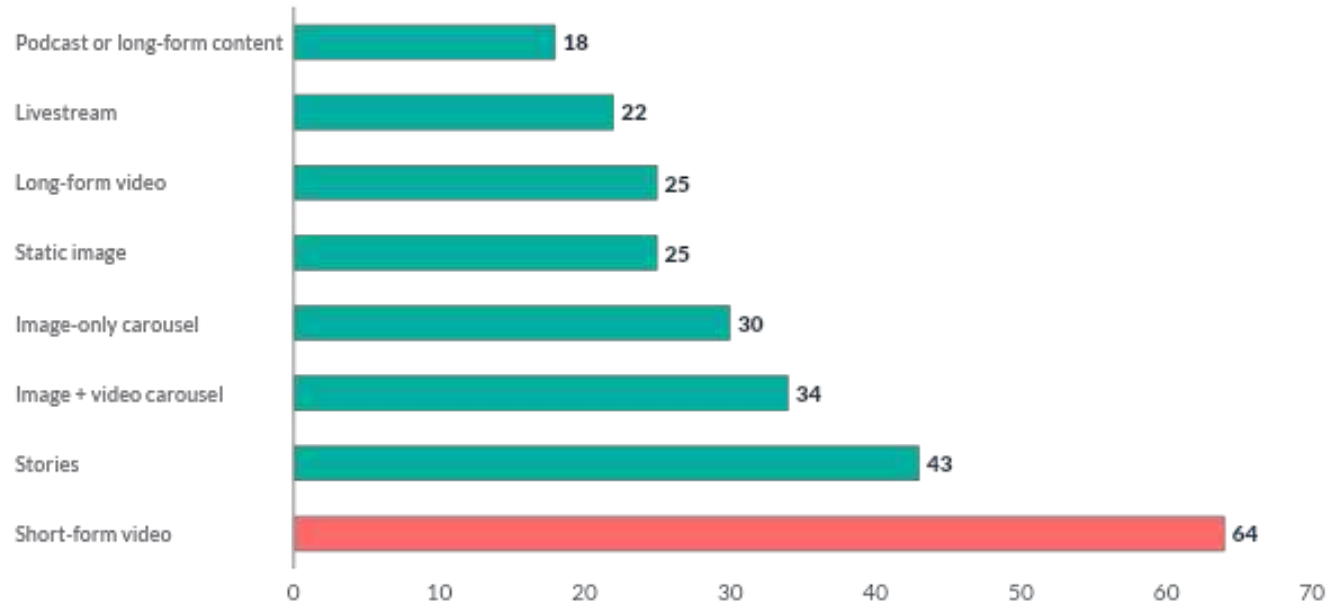
Confidence is highest for awareness and product understanding, while 80% still see value for driving sales



Survey question: How effective do you think sponsored creator content is at each of the following?

Short-form video stands well ahead of every other format

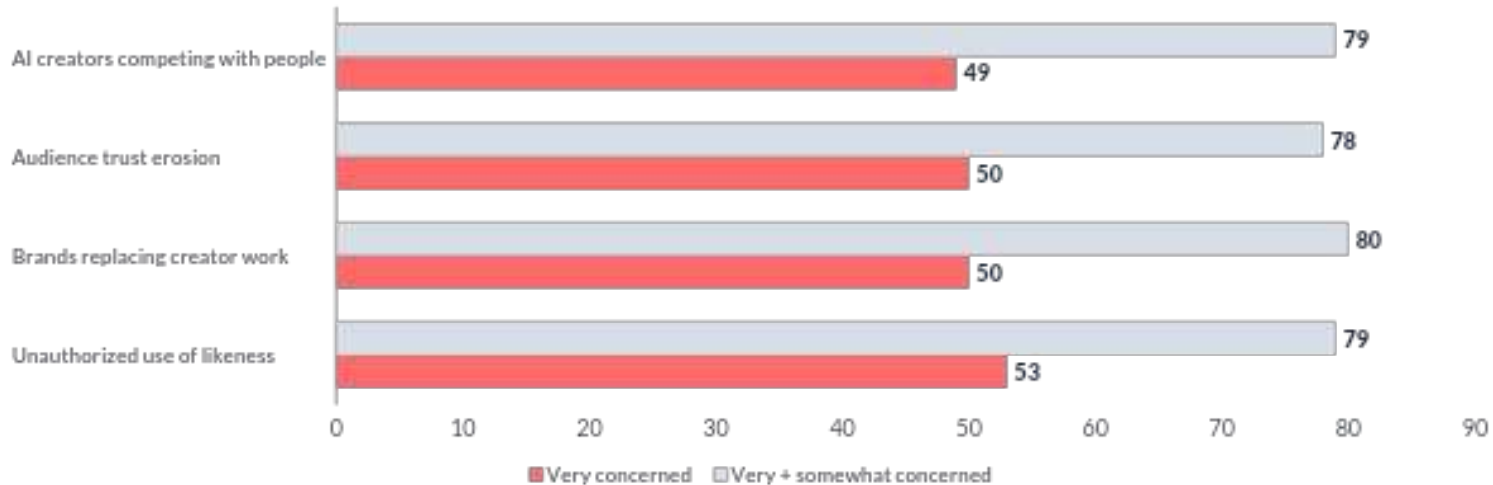
64% rate it very effective, 21 points ahead of Stories



Survey question: Based on your experience, how effective is each of the following for sponsored brand content?

AI raises concerns about likeness, replacement and trust

Roughly four in five creators express at least some concern across the leading issues



43% expect more AI-generated content to have a major impact over the next three years. 39% selected growth in virtual or AI-generated influencers.

Survey question: How concerned are you about each of the following?

Methodology and comparability

2016 survey

347 respondents
Original SheSpeaks Influencer Marketing
Survey

2026 survey

365 respondents
Fielded in August 2026

Important context

The surveys represent separate cross-sectional samples, not the same creators followed over time. Percentages are rounded. The request-not-to-disclose question used a lifetime timeframe in 2016 and a past-12-month timeframe in 2026. Open-ended responses provide qualitative context, not prevalence estimates.

Sources

SheSpeaks survey data. FTC Disclosures 101 for Social Media Influencers. FTC Endorsement Guides and 2023 revisions.



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LinkedIn
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Website
shespeaksinc.com



Email
info@shespeaks.com



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LET'S CONNECT



missy.tiller@shespeaks.com

Sr. Vice President Strategy

479.601.1262



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