

Build vs. Buy: The Case for Outsourcing Content Moderation

How innovative leaders choose to buy to enhance safety, save costs, and streamline operations



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01

Introduction

As user-generated content floods the internet, the need for effective moderation has never been greater. Keeping your platform safe, appropriate, and compliant with all regulations is essential. While some companies opt to manage content moderation internally, outsourcing to specialists like Besedo can offer significant advantages.

Outsourcing allows your team to focus on what truly drives growth while experts handle your platform's moderation. That's what outsourcing can do for you.

At Besedo, content moderation is our sole focus. Our proprietary state-of-the-art AI-powered moderation platform ensures we can deliver superior results more efficiently and at a lower cost.

This unique combination of advanced technology and dedicated expertise allows us to handle moderation tasks better, cheaper, and with higher quality than in-house solutions.

This eBook pulls real-world examples from global companies like **Voodoo**, **9GAG**, **Star Stable**, **Change.org**, and **Schibsted**, who chose to outsource and build on top of Besedo's API to:

- **Avoid reinventing the wheel**
- **Mitigate complexity**
- **Cost reduction**
- **Accelerate developer velocity**
- **Reduce risk**
- **Focus on what's core to the business**



We've improved moderation accuracy by over 90%, the number of items detected by 600%, and reduced the manual review time by 17%

change.org

— Jimin Lee, Director of Trust & Safety



02

Are you reinventing the wheel?

Many companies find themselves trapped in a cycle of reinventing the wheel, pouring endless hours into tasks that, while necessary, do not differentiate their business in the marketplace.

Content moderation, critical for maintaining brand integrity and user trust, often becomes a colossal time sink, absorbing resources that could be better invested elsewhere.

Companies can reclaim months of developer time by outsourcing this complex function to specialists like Besedo while reducing costs and increasing quality.

This liberated bandwidth allows your team to channel their creativity and skills into building unique features and services that truly set your platform apart.

Imagine the innovations that could result from focusing on your business's strengths rather than getting bogged down by the intricacies of content moderation.

So, why waste time reinventing the wheel when you could lead the charge on the next big innovation in your space? Developers' time is closely linked to ROI, making allocating their efforts essential.

Yes, developers must create, yet only some things require their attention. Engineering leaders often opt to build on APIs, allowing them to concentrate on enhancing the core experience rather than duplicating existing solutions.

This frees up months of developer time, allowing them to focus their energy on building what is genuinely strategic for the business.



Our goal is to remove offensive content before a user even sees it. We use third party moderation partners such as Besedo whose advanced AI-based solutions enable the app to perform live checks for offending content.

WIZZ

— Gautier Gédoux, CTO

03

How are you estimating the complexity?

Even experienced CTOs often underestimate just how complex building a solid content moderation system can be. It's not just about filtering out bad content—it's about doing it in real-time, across platforms, and without breaking a sweat. Also, outsourcing content moderation can offer significant cost savings.

Hiring and training an in-house team of moderators and developers can be a considerable expense, especially if you're looking for individuals with expertise in a specific area. By outsourcing, you can ensure financial security and allocate your budget more efficiently.



One of the mistakes I see in businesses trying to implement content moderation in-house is either reaching for a bare minimum solution that doesn't scale as your business grows, or misunderstanding and underestimating managing a large number of items in different languages.



— Petter Nylander, CEO

Suppose you're running a social media platform. In that case, you'll need backend and frontend developers, a QA team, and a team of dev ops and SREs.

Content moderators and trust and safety experts who are well-versed in relevant laws such as the **Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)**, **Kids Online Safety and Privacy Act (KOSPA)**, and **Digital Services Act (DSA)**.

When you outsource content moderation, you have a team of experts with the skills and experience to handle your specific needs. All without the associated costs of hiring and training in-house staff.

Setting up a solid infrastructure can be significant for your DevOps team. Before jumping to build content moderation – especially one in real-time – from scratch, engineering leaders need to consider the following carefully:

1. Which databases should be used to store messages, channels, user data, etc.?
2. Storing and quickly retrieving file and media assets associated with message
3. Services to support real-time data processing
4. Caching, message broker, and message queuing service
5. Error tracking, logging, threat detection, and incident response system
6. Security compliance
7. How to implement new features with all of the above considerations.

Content moderation is not as simple as it seems

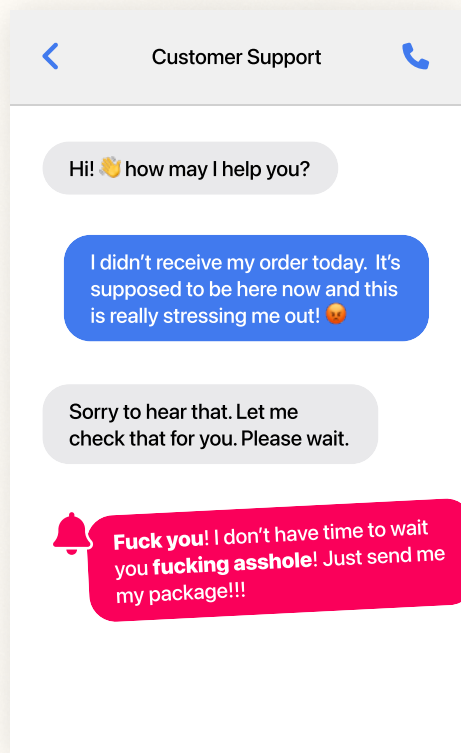
Getting content moderation to function correctly requires specialized skill sets in building datasets for machine learning, traffic and network management, and real-time communication.

So much more is involved than creating a marketplace or dating app and allowing users to roam free. Safety, performance, and the overall user experience are critical for consumer trust, and trust is essential for consumers to leverage your app functionality in the first place.

Tech giants like **Tinder**, **Airbnb**, **eBay**, **Uber**, and **Meta** have set high expectations for text, images, and video, whether in chats, messaging, or shared images. If your platform does not meet this bar for user-generated content, your users will resort to those consumer applications.

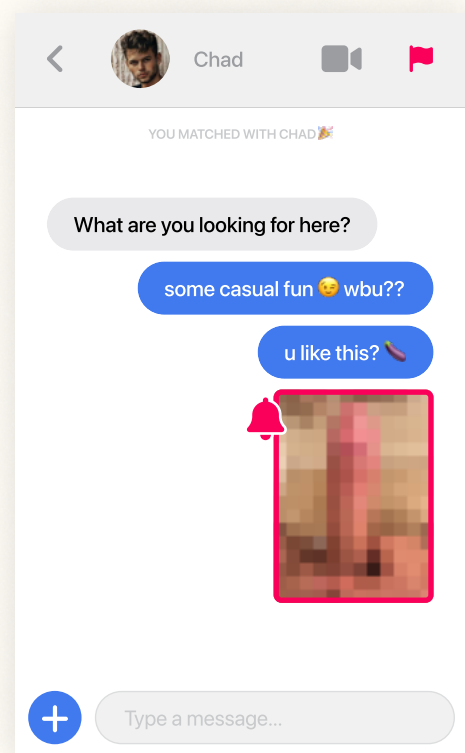
Below is a sample of key features consumers expect for chat, image, and video:

PROFANITY FILTERS



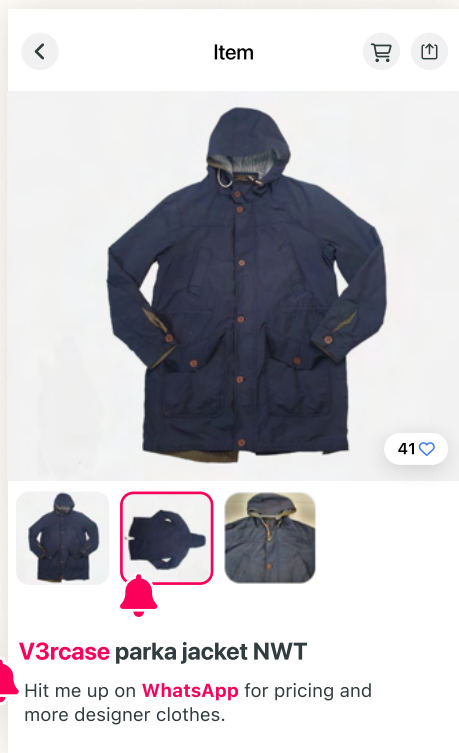
Prevent profanity, harassment, and abuse in multiple languages.

NUDITY AND NSFW DETECTION



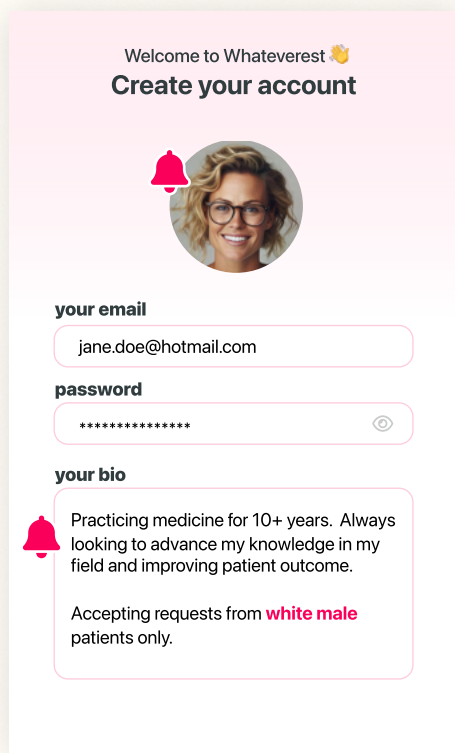
Stop unsolicited media before they ever reach users.

FRAUD DETECTION



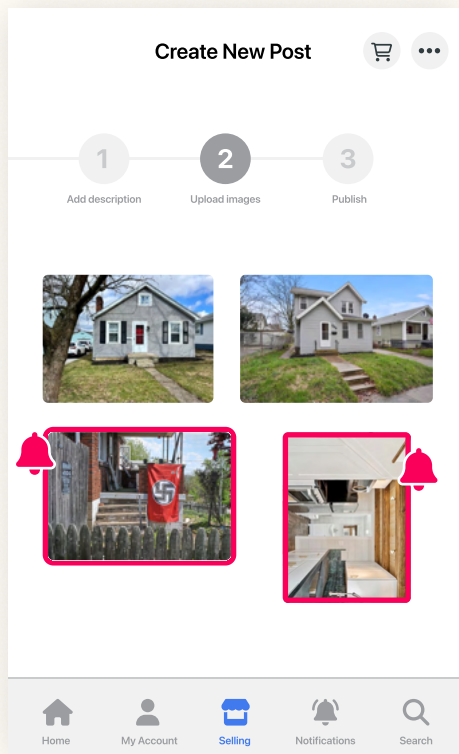
Detect counterfeit goods, stolen images, and attempts to fraud users.

USER ONBOARDING



Prevent usage of AI images or multiple accounts. Catch user violations early.

IMAGE DETECTION AND MODERATION



Block image violations like symbols or phone numbers. Scan for erroneous uploads.

RESTRICTIVE LANGUAGE



Users might use leet speak, obfuscation, or hyphenation to get around restricted words.

Fraud prevention is one of those essential features that's more complicated to build than you might think. It's tricky because fraud covers so many areas.

It's called prevention, not detection, for a reason. You need to let users post items to your server while simultaneously scanning them. These items must sync across all devices and update as users make changes.

For a marketplace, an item is more than just a classified ad; it includes the description text and all the images.

One classified ad could be 5-10 items.

As a marketplace, you want to avoid selling illegal and counterfeit goods. The images uploaded should be genuine and not just pulled from a Google search or stolen.

No matter your platform, you should watch out for **leet speak**, **obfuscation**, **extra spacing**, **special characters**, and **hyphenation**.

And chat moderation should work in real-time or with minimal latency—no big deal.

Child safety is another critical feature of any digital platform. It's more than just restricted words and not only about CSAM (child sexual abuse material). You also have to tackle grooming, which can start with seemingly innocent questions like, "Are you home alone?"

Your AI models need to catch this immediately because it can scale quickly.

Your platform needs to tell the difference between a child posing innocently for their parent and one being exploited.

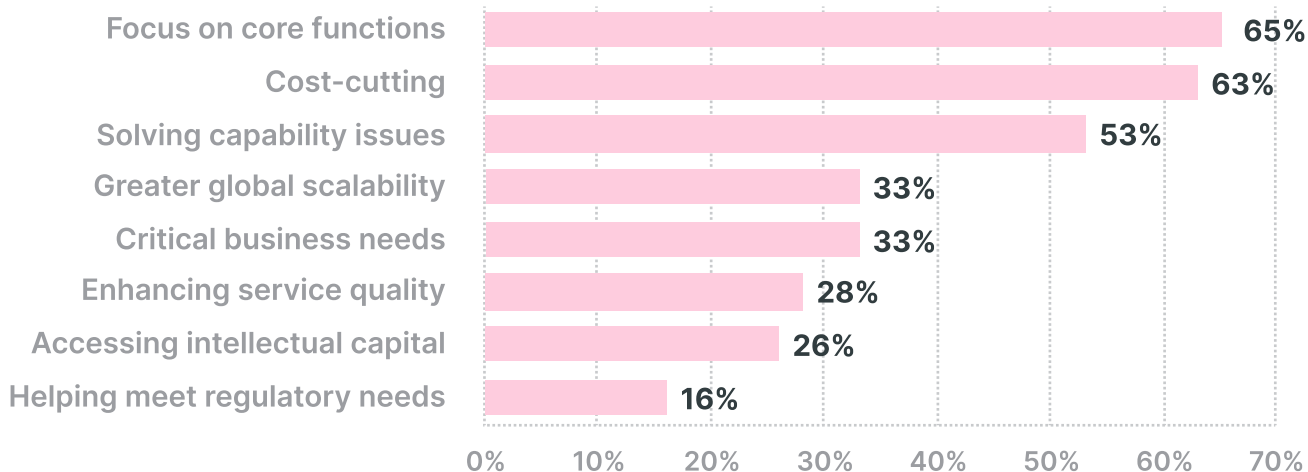
Spam-blocking features are vital for any app and are *notoriously* tough to develop. You need to block abusive activities without hindering regular user interactions.

Spammers often use bots to spread links, and they dodge standard anti-spam measures by sending messages slowly to avoid detection.

Continuously developing and updating your content moderation is essential to maintain a safe, compliant, and trustworthy platform with a great end-user experience.

Why do companies outsource?

Source: Deloitte's Outsourcing and Shared Services



04

How are you calculating the costs?

ROI is the go-to metric for assessing tech investments. But to get it right, you need to factor in the **Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)**. TCO isn't just the upfront expenses—it includes hard costs like software and hardware and soft costs like training and maintenance. Your tech buying process should account for all these aspects.

Calculating costs can be tricky. You've got the people costs for frontend and backend engineers and product managers to develop, update, and maintain the solution, plus infrastructure expenses for supporting all the content waiting for moderation on your platform.

Then, add content moderation costs in the form of humans monitoring the content AI fails to determine.

There's a myth that building content moderation from scratch is a significant upfront investment but gets cheaper over time. This view needs a reality check.

Different developers working on the project can lead to lost context and inefficiencies.

However, outsourcing to a specialized company like Besedo, which focuses solely on content moderation, taps into years of expertise and insights from working with diverse clients.

Your tech decisions directly impact your company's valuation, so being proactive and strategic is essential.

Managing the total cost of ownership puts you in control, cutting down on reactive firefighting.

It ensures your tech investments boost your company's valuation rather than becoming unexpected financial burdens during crucial times like due diligence for future funding.

User-generated content escalates quickly



Discord, a social platform, **issued 67,862 warnings to server members due to child safety** in Q4 of 2023. Furthermore, it deactivated **116,219 accounts** for the same reason.

The real ROI of outsourcing content moderation

Content moderation isn't just about reducing risks—it's about driving value for your platform. When you outsource you're not just saving costs; you're gaining scalability, speed, and expertise that can take years to build in-house.

Case Study: Change.org

Change.org, a global platform that boasts 460 million users across 196 countries, empowers people to create petitions for social change, needed a content moderation solution that could keep pace with its growing user base. The moderation challenge was immense, and building an in-house solution would have required significant resources and time.

Instead, they partnered with Besedo—and the results were impressive.

600% increase in moderated content

Change.org was able to moderate 600% more content compared to their previous solution. This surge in moderated content has significantly enhanced the platform's safety, ensuring users can trust the integrity of the petitions they sign.

17% faster review time

Efficiency is key, and with Besedo, the moderation team reduced review time by 17%.

This faster turnaround improved user experience and allowed the team to focus on more complex and critical moderation tasks, maximizing their impact.

Building user trust

By partnering with Besedo, Change strengthened the trust of its users, providing a safer, more reliable platform to drive social impact.

"Our focus has always been our users and building user trust, and Besedo shares the same goal"

— Jimin Lee, Director of Trust & Safety

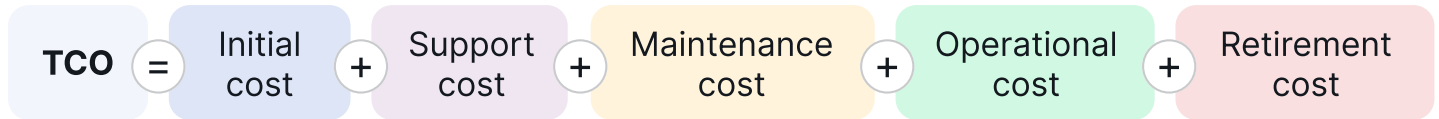


change.org

ROI Breakdown

- **Cost Efficiency:** No need to hire, train, or maintain a large internal team of content moderators. Besedo provides scalable moderation without the overhead.
- **Time Savings:** Instant setup and integration of AI moderation meant faster deployment and immediate results, freeing internal teams to focus on strategic initiatives.
- **Long-term Value:** Besedo handles continuous improvements and updates to the moderation system without added internal costs. The platform evolves with industry trends, keeping Change.org ahead of emerging risks and regulatory requirements.
- By outsourcing to Besedo, Change achieved greater scalability, faster processing times, and a more secure platform while reducing the internal costs and burdens of building and maintaining an in-house moderation system.

Total cost of ownership formula



Initial cost/ Evolving product cost

1. Infrastructure and networking equipment
2. Software/application development
3. Data migration
4. Technology stack
5. DevOps, FinOps, DevSecOps, SRE
6. Security and compliance
7. Hiring and training

Support cost

1. Helpdesk setup
2. Incident management and resolution
3. Service-Level Agreement (SLA)
4. Vendor management
5. Software documentation

Operational cost

1. Data center/hosting cost
2. Monitoring and observability
3. Tech debt
4. Data storage and backup
5. Scalability and capacity planning
6. Reliability and stability
7. Accessibility and usability
8. Third-party licensing
9. Integrations and interoperability
10. Regulatory and legal compliance

Maintenance cost

1. Predictive and preventive maintenance
2. Security upgrades
3. Bug fixing and enhancement
4. Disaster recovery and backup
5. Downtime management

Retirement cost/ Decommission cost

1. Data export
2. Archived system
3. Inactive licenses
4. Training and knowledge transfer
5. Legal and intellectual property considerations

Besedo cost calculator for building an MVP in-house

Year 1		Monthly Cost	Duration	Total Cost
Dev team costs to build	2 Frontend Developers	\$20,833	6-12 months	\$249,996
	6 Backend Developers	\$62,499	6-12 months	\$749,988
	Product Manager	\$11,817	6-12 months	\$141,804
	Designer	\$9,994	0-6 months	\$59,965
	2 Full time Moderators	\$7,455	0-6 months	\$44,730
Infrastructure costs	Data centers	\$3,800	4-12 months	\$45,600
	Security tools	\$165	4-12 months	\$1,980
	Data & analytics	\$390	4-12 months	\$4,680
Year 1 Build Estimate Total				\$1,298,743

Year 2 (maintenance and upgrades)		Monthly Cost	Duration	Total Cost
Dev team costs to build	2 Frontend Developers	\$20,833	6 months	\$124,988
	2 Backend Developers	\$20,833	6 months	\$124,988
	Product Manager	\$11,817	3-6 months	\$70,902
	2 Full time Moderators	\$7,455	12 months	\$89,460
Dev team costs to update	2 Frontend Developer	\$20,833	6-9 months	\$187,497
	2 Backend Developer	\$20,833	6-9 months	\$187,497
	Product Manager	\$11,817	3 months	\$35,451
Infrastructure costs	Data centers	\$3,800	12 months	\$45,600
	Security tools	\$165	12 months	\$1,980
	Data & analytics	\$390	12 months	\$4,680
Year 2 Maintenance & Update Estimate Total				\$873,043

Note: Monthly costs for people based on US salary data from Glassdoor August 2024 plus employee overhead cost. Not taking into consideration overhead costs like hiring and training staff. Infrastructure costs are based on an estimated number of items.

05

How much risk are you willing to take?

Outsourcing mitigates investment risk by leveraging a company focused solely on that specialty. At Besedo, our engineers are devoted to developing, updating, and maintaining a secure, scalable, feature-rich content moderation system for our diverse clientele. Our dedicated customer support teams also work closely with clients throughout their journey.

Content moderation with high latency will feel slow and buggy to your users and can tarnish your brand, leading to lower user engagement and higher churn.

Why gamble if content moderation isn't your core expertise?



Besedo offered an easy-to-understand solution that exactly targeted our needs. We couldn't have been able to develop a better solution ourselves.

anibis.ch

— Jelena Moncilli, Fraud Specialist

Debunking the myths about outsourcing

1 Outsourcing means losing control

Reality: With tools like the Besedo Control Panel, you're always in the loop. You get real-time insights, complete transparency, and the ability to customize rules for your platform's needs. You stay in control of the decision-making.

2 In-house is always cheaper

Reality: Building and maintaining an in-house moderation system comes with hidden costs—constant development, infrastructure scaling, and the need to hire specialized talent. In contrast, outsourcing offers a predictable, scalable model that grows with your business.

3 Outsourcing lacks flexibility

Reality: Besedo's solution is customizable. Whether you're moderating images, videos, or text across platforms, we adapt to your specific requirements and provide a flexible solution that can evolve with your platform's growth.

4 Outsourcing is for big companies

Reality: Besedo's scalable model works for businesses of all sizes. Whether you're a startup with rapid growth or an established platform, outsourcing lets you handle moderation effectively without requiring huge internal resources.

06

What's the core of your business?

Creating content moderation from the ground up means dedicating it to its lifecycle, including continuous support, maintenance, and updates. This dedication ensures your software engineers will focus on this challenge rather than addressing unique problems only they can solve.

Businesses often need to spread themselves thin, trying to manage every aspect of their operations, which can divert attention from their primary strengths.

The *“know your strength, hire your weakness”* strategy underscores the importance of focusing on what you do best and outsourcing areas where you're less skilled.

This approach improves operational efficiency by ensuring experts perform tasks and allows entrepreneurs to focus on growth and innovation.

Outsourcing lets you tap into specialized expertise without the overhead of building and maintaining an in-house team. This means you can ramp up quickly to meet growing demand, adapt to market changes, and focus on your core strengths.

Outsourcing with Besedo allows you to scale resources up or down as needed, ensuring you're always right-sized for your current business needs.

Plus, specialized partners' efficiency and innovation can drive growth faster and more effectively than going it alone.



Get content moderation for your platform cheaper, faster, and better

Besedo provides robust and scalable real-time content moderation for all types of content as part of its platform for businesses seeking to integrate content moderation into their applications quickly.

We handle over 1 billion monthly API calls with 99.999% uptime for engaged customers of global brands like **Vivino**, **9GAG**, **BlaBlaCar**, and **Adevinta**. Our engineers, content analysts, and data analysts are entirely focused on building, maintaining, updating, and optimizing our services around the clock so our customers don't have to.

Contact us to speak with one of our experts on how Besedo can help you build better, cheaper, and faster content moderation.

[Talk to an expert](#)

Or send an email to hi@besedo.com – and if you prefer, try besedo.com and get in touch with us from there.

