

Content Moderation: Who Needs It and How You Can Use UGC Successfully

Author : Josh Buxbaum

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User-generated content (**UGC**—blog or forum comments, reviews, photos, videos, and tweets, to name a few) is one of the most powerful **marketing** tools today—more influential than any other media type (at least among millennials), [according to research](#).

Recognizing the power of **UGC**, **brands** across the globe have implemented it into their **marketing** efforts. And although many **brands** have seen success, from **Coca-Cola's Facebook** Fan Page to **Starbucks'** White Cup Contest, many others have also seen the severely negative impact **UGC** can have.

The New England Patriots learned the hard way: Its well-meaning, one-millionth-follower **Twitter** campaign resulted in an auto-tweet of a racist slur that quickly went viral. And once something like that happens, the mistake will forever remain on the Web in blogs, news articles, and **social** media reposts.

Putting your **brand** into the hands of the public can be dangerous to both your reputation and your users. But the power of **UGC** is real, and if done correctly, with the proper precautions in place, it can be highly beneficial for your **brand**.

Content moderation means scanning **UGC** for text, video, or images that violate your **brand's** values—racism, nudity, and so on. The goal is to protect your users and your **brand**, without affecting user experience.

But content moderation is often an afterthought, or not a thought at all, and that's why **UGC** campaigns can get into trouble.

To ensure the successful implementation of content moderation for your next great **UGC** campaign, start your planning with these six content moderation considerations.

1.

Determine budget

Sure, you've come up with a great **UGC** campaign that you can't wait to implement. Problem is, you've used your entire budget on the planning and implementation of the campaign, with little left for content moderation.

The success of your **UGC** campaign is important, of course, but so is the safety of your **brand's** reputation and your users. Set your budget accordingly.

For example, if you are planning a user experience that invites hundreds of thousands of photos per month, it is essential to consider the potential expense of professional moderation for the life of the project, before you build it.

2.

Determine your criteria

You know you need a content moderation plan... but what will your criteria be? You'll have to decide where you draw the line with **UGC**: Some sites allow heated, aggressive conversations (think sports forums), as opposed to a children's site, where the language must remain friendly and encouraging at all times.

Many content moderators have standard criteria for photos and videos (nudity, violence, etc.), but other considerations could be bullying, racism, **brand-bashing**, etc.

3.

Determine your expected or intended volume

Before you determine your method of content moderation (see next item), you must consider the intended or expected volume of **UGC** on your site. Look at your current metrics and consider your projections.

Do you expect any volume spikes? Maybe you're planning an upcoming ad that will drive more traffic to your site. How much traffic will that bring?

4.

Determine your process

Content moderation can be done either in-house or by a content moderation company.

If you decide to do content moderation in-house, you'll have to determine how many team members are needed to ensure proper moderation. This approach can be expensive, particularly if the expected volume is high and you require 24-hour coverage. You will also need to be prepared to scale your team quickly if your volume spikes unexpectedly. You will also

need to build moderation tools for your in-house group.

If you decide to outsource, be sure to use a reputable content moderation company that truly recognizes the key role it plays in this process and has the proper tools and team in place to moderate your content effectively.

Whichever option you choose, understand that the team will be in charge of the safety of your **brand**, so select wisely.

5.

Determine your return time

Content moderation takes time—anywhere from minutes to hours—and you'll need to consider the impact on your budget: Faster turnaround could mean a larger moderation team and, thus, a larger budget). So, you will need to determine how much time you are willing to allow to pass before **UGC** goes live.

Users typically like immediate gratification when they post their content, but your method of content moderation may not allow for that. You'll have to balance your budget against user expectations.

6.

Determine peak UGC time, if any

Some sites experience a greater deal of **UGC** at certain times of the day, which might adjust the way you do content moderation. A dating site, for example, may have a high volume of **UGC** in the evening hours, but very little in the morning hours.

Depending on your audience, your site may not even require moderation overnight.

Know your audience and when you expect to receive content from them.

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In today's society, where anything on the Internet can go viral in a matter of seconds, and stay forever online, any company that allows **UGC** in any form needs a content moderation plan.

Take the steps necessary to ensure your website is protected so you may relish the results of a successful **UGC** campaign rather than be left attempting to clean up a mess that will live online forever.

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