RED FLAGS CATEGORY

Third-party Services and Supply Chain

Ford Foundation
In their book Ghost Work: How To Stop Silicon Valley From Building A New Global Underclass, Mary L. Gray and Siddharth Suri reveal the “vast, invisible human labor force” behind data-driven digital systems. Content moderators, hotline coordinators, and data annotators numbers among the “ghost workers” who are usually underpaid, overworked, and without normal job benefits such as health insurance. The vendor should know the “invisible” human labor that goes into its services’ supply chain, otherwise, it might unintentionally contribute to exploitative labor practices.

**EXAMPLE**

A company in the U.S. puts out a call for content moderation or data labeling jobs (i.e., determining content that is offensive), easily to be filled by remote workers in the Global South. Not only are there potential vast workers’ rights abuses and ramifications for workers’ rights and working conditions in the long term, but the choice of who to hire to label data and moderate content creation and dissemination affects the algorithms - and thus decisions made - by users all around the world, often with little to no oversight or accountability.

**QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY THIS RED FLAG**

- Beyond your own employees, can you tell us about the labor forces that make your services possible?
- Have you mapped out your full supply chain? Do you have a policy ensuring that the supply chain is ethically sourced?
- Do you work with any third-party services that provide crowdsourcing services? If yes, have you done any due diligence to ensure their practice is not exploitative?
RESOURCES

- We Are Dynamo: Overcoming Stalling and Friction in Collective Action for Crowd Workers


- The Supply Chain Risk You Didn’t Know About: Navigating Responsible Sourcing in AI

- Family Units: Can the families whose labor powers AI seize the means of production?

- Anatomy of an AI system

- What Green Costs