

RED FLAGS CATEGORY

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# Third-party Services and Supply Chain

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Ford  
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## RED FLAG

### Vendor lacks sufficient knowledge about the hidden labor that goes into the design, development, and maintenance of a service.

#### AT A GLANCE

- The vendor may lack knowledge about the hidden labor involved in design, development, and maintenance of a service, which may contribute to exploitative labor practices.
- This hidden labor is mostly performed by content moderators, hotline coordinators, and data annotators, who often lack job benefits and fair compensation.
- To identify this red flag ask about the vendor's knowledge of their labor forces, supply chain mapping, and due diligence regarding third-party services.

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 (ie 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](#)
- Gray, Mary L., and Siddharth Suri. Ghost work: How to stop Silicon Valley from building a new global underclass. Eamon Dolan Books, 2019. [\(link\)](#)
- Roberts, Sarah T. Behind the screen. Yale University Press, 2019.
- [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](#)