THE ART OF ELECTION CONTENT MODERATION - STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES REVEALED

Executive Summary

The rise of social media and on-line campaigning has introduced new challenges for democratic elections.

Any brand in the social media, news and entertainment, gaming, or even telecommunications spaces, faces crucial challenges when it comes to managing on-line content while staying true to their values. In election season, this is particularly important. From combatting the spread of disinformation, to creating safe and reliable online communities, it has never been more vital - and more difficult - to ensure that

users are engaged, trusting, and protected when interacting with your brand and each other.

In this white paper, we'll explore the key challenges when it comes to Trust & Safety and user and business generated content moderation during elections. We'll talk about specific industries to cater to, and provide you with some practical advice for developing effective content moderation strategies. With this, Trust and Safety experts can ensure responsible online engagement and contribute to a free and fair electoral process.

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Introduction

The landscape of democratic elections has been irrevocably transformed by the advent and proliferation of social media. These platforms have become powerful tools for political campaigns, allowing candidates to connect directly with voters, disseminate information, and mobilize support. However, this digital shift also presents unique challenges, particularly when it comes to ensuring fair and responsible online discourse.

We need look no further than the 2021 US Presidential Election, which saw platforms such as X (then Twitter) and Facebook flooded with politically-motivated content. This included a significant amount of misinformation and disinformation, often spread through fake news articles and social media bots.

Among some of the greatest challenges faced by platforms at this time were identifying fake news and targeted political advertising which many believe resulted in voter misinformation and polarization. Since then, these platforms have implemented measures to combat misinformation and improve content moderation. However, the issue remains complex and constantly evolving, requiring ongoing efforts from social media companies, Trust and Safety partners and government policymakers. Trust & Safety specialist companies play a vital role in navigating this complex terrain. Trust and Safety has become a core service of the world's top outsourcing companies, as they work with social media companies, professional associations, communications regulators, and other stakeholders to ensure online spaces remain conducive to constructive political dialogue.

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Election cycles also see a dramatic surge in the volume and complexity of online content. Campaigns produce vast amounts of material, while voters express their opinions and engage in discussions across channels. This intensified activity makes the task of content moderation far more demanding, requiring a scalable and nuanced approach - something that BPOs often excel at, due to greater flexibility and optimized ramp-up processes.

More and more, Trust and safety professionals shoulder significant responsibility for upholding election integrity in the digital realm. By identifying and addressing harmful content, such as hate speech, disinformation, and incitemento violence, they help protect the democratic process

According to the 2023 Anti-Defamation League (ADL) survey, 52% of respondents reported experiencing online harassment or hate, indicating a 12% increase compared to the previous year.

from undue interference. Their efforts contribute to creating an online environment where voters can access reliable information, form informed opinions, and ultimately exercise their right to vote without manipulation or intimidation.
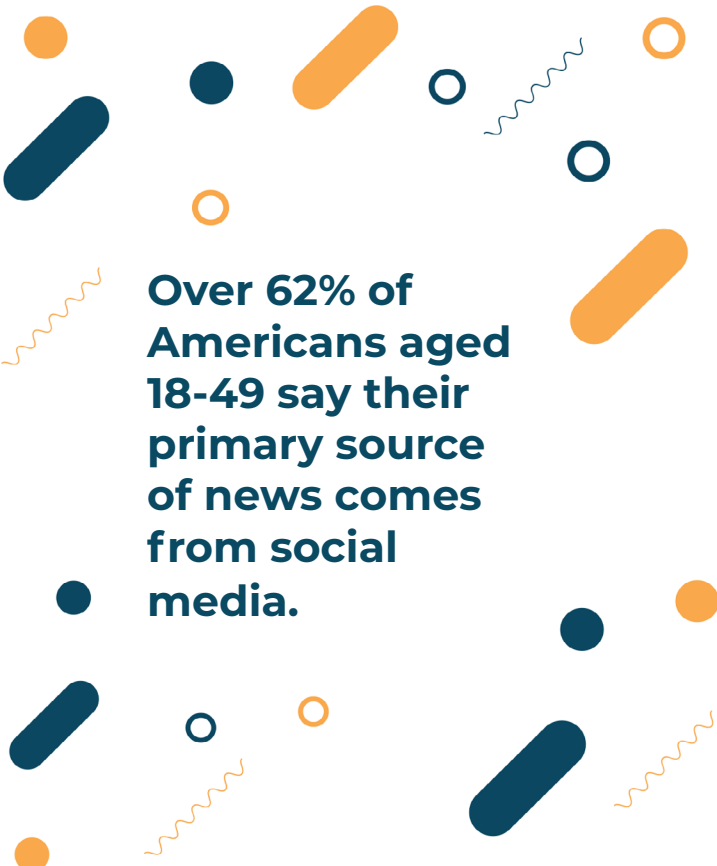
In this dynamic landscape, technology plays a pivotal role. From advanced AI algorithms for content analysis to automated moderation tools, technology empowers Trust and safety professionals to swiftly identify and address harmful content at scale. By leveraging innovative technological solutions, platforms can stay ahead of evolving threats and ensure a safer online environment during crucial election periods.

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Social Media: The New, Digital Town Square

To some degree, one might argue that politics is a part of every aspect of daily life. Representatives of government have the power to legislate and affect the way we live our lives, and so it's only natural that when the time comes to vote, this dialogue can breach the boundaries of conventional political campaigning. Think the discussion forum on your favorite recipe website turning into a heated debate.

Social media platforms are now the channels by which the majority of political content is shared and discussed.

Over 62% of Americans aged 18-49 say their primary source of news comes from social media.

The sheer volume of user-generated content combined with the heightened emotions and potential for misinformation during elections create a perfect storm for content moderation difficulties.

Political campaigns themselves increasingly rely on social media and online advertising. They need to ensure their content complies with platform policies and avoids

spreading hate speech or negativity, while still promoting their message effectively. Meta has recently implemented adjusted settings for users that limit the volume of 'political' content that is displayed for them. This has been met with a mixed response, with civil rights groups concerned about muzzling civic action, and with others praising the attempt to remove potentially divisive content.*

What remains key to protecting fairness and a democratic process on these platforms? An effective and sustainable content moderation strategy and operation.

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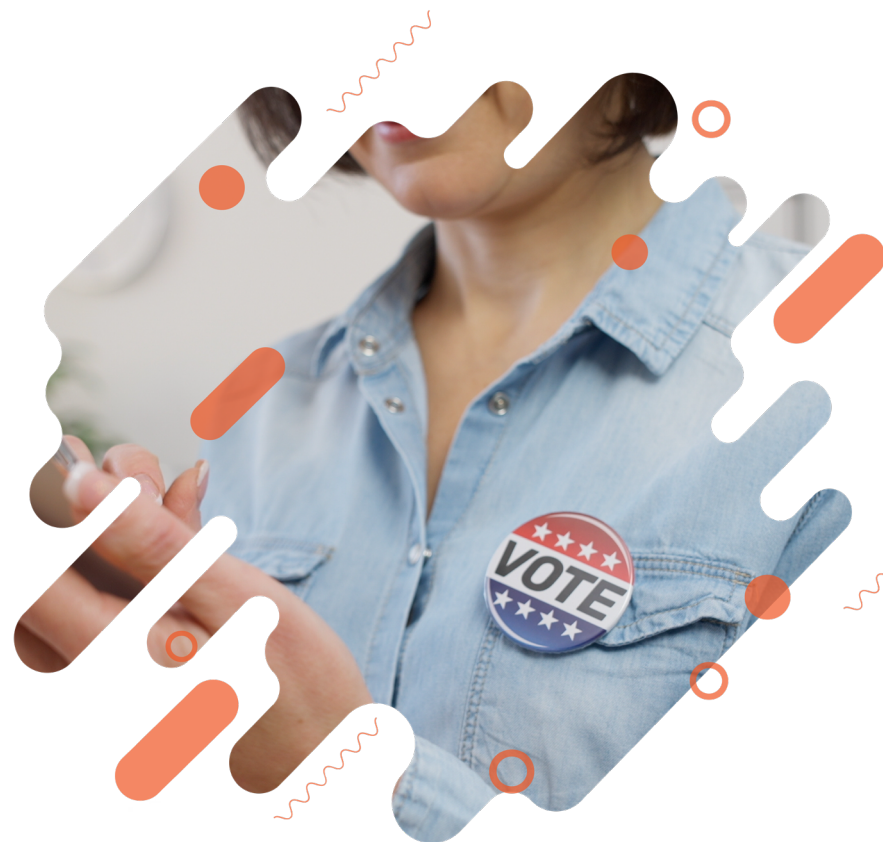# The Key Challenges For Content Moderation During Election Seasons

Peak seasons can be challenging in any industry and for any reason. Brands need partners that are flexible, ready to deploy new solutions, and always keeping in mind how to provide the highest possible quality experiences for users. By building trust and safety, particularly in times of heightened emotions and stakes, brands can truly stand out as stalwarts of their industry.

1. Capacity planning and volume spikes.

Election seasons inevitably lead to dramatic increases in content volume across social channels. BPOs need robust capacity planning strategies including sophisticated forecasting models, buffer management for unexpected spikes, and flexible staffing models to quickly scale up their moderation teams when needed.

How to tackle this:

- Implement intelligent forecasting models and flexible staffing solutions. Don't let content moderation be an after-thought. By partnering with a customer experience expert, you can ensure that scaling up or down is done exactly as needed.

- Collaborate with third-party trust and safety boards for external support. Be proactive in reaching out for more expert voices that can guide you in the latest and best direction.

2. Combatting misinformation and disinformation.

Combating the spread of deliberately false or misleading election-related content is a major challenge. BPOs need near-perfect fact-checking capabilities, including collaborations with reputable fact-checking organizations.

Speed of response is also crucial here. An experience outsourcing partner will develop sophisticated tools to identify and flag potential misinformation quickly, often within seconds, so that it can be addressed by the relevant teams before it has a chance to impact a significant number of users. Removing harmful content is a condition of the law in most countries, and nearly impossible to do without people and technology working together effectively.

How to address this:

- Collaborate with trusted fact-checking organizations. Here is where a great BPO partner will be able to help, with a network of reliable third-party vendors.

- Ensure complete alignment with platform guidelines and regulatory frameworks through robust policies, collaboration with legal departments, and routine check-ins.

The optimal time to resolution for content moderation submissions is less than a few seconds.

3. Political neutrality and impartiality.

Content moderators must strictly adhere to principles of neutrality, ensuring their personal political beliefs don't influence their decisions. BPOs must establish and enforce clear guidelines on impartiality, with regular training and refresher sessions for their teams to maintain objectivity.

Election-related content may also have regional nuances, local sensitivities, and varying cultural interpretations. A high level of understanding for local regulatory frameworks, customs, and cultural norms is vital, and an experienced outsourcing partner won't let regionality affect quality of operations.

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Your English-language team in North Macedonia should be more than confident providing content moderation services during elections in the United Kingdom, or Canada.

Some strategies to address these are:

· Develop clear neutrality guidelines for content moderation. Ensure that they are aligned not only with best practices in trust and safety, but also with company culture and user expectations.

· Train moderators to identify and mitigate unconscious bias.

"It's crucial to contribute to a digital ecosystem that prioritizes the well-being of its users."
-Iulian Bacain, VP Trust & Safety @ Transcom

· Your team is your backbone, and without their expertise and evolving understandings, you may find yourself adhering to outdated or irrelevant standards.

· Leverage external perspectives to maintain a balanced approach. Diversity is key. A variety of perspectives can help you discover gaps in thinking and opportunities to improve.

4. Moderator wellbeing.

As in most cases with content moderation, ensuring the wellbeing and safety of your moderators is paramount to the success of your operation. During election season, this may be particularly challenging, considering that your moderators may be exposed to a much greater volume of sensitive or unsafe material, or even have political leanings or biases of their own that could affect judgment. High stress, greater workloads, and more stringent

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requirements can negatively impact your teams. It's vital for BPOs to place moderator wellbeing at the forefront of priorities and ensure that the people who are busy creating safe spaces online have a safe space of their own.

Some practical advice:

- Implement effective and regular wellbeing checks for moderators. Mandatory wellbeing or mental health check-ins are part of most content moderation teams, and will allow you to monitor individuals and be proactive in supporting them.

- Rigorous recruitment screen-ing and evaluations. Everyone is different. And some candidates may in fact not be well-suited to work that is by nature more stressful and sensitive. Ensure that your recruitment practices take into account the emotional strain and how candidates respond to this added pressure.

- Create safe environments that are reinforced by a trusted company culture. Mental health checks and company-funded yoga classes are excellent perks, but in the long-run, what will make your teams feel safe and secure is a stellar company culture and strong, supportive leadership.

5. Evolving policies and client collaboration.

Social media platforms and regulatory bodies continually update their policies in response to emerging threats. Additionally, wider governmental and institutional regulations such as the incoming EU AI Act can produce new requirements for companies leveraging AI-based tools.

Additionally, during volatile election periods, open communication with clients is crucial for success. BPOs should establish clear communication channels

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and protocols for frequent up-dates, escalation pathways, and collaborative decision-making in high-pressure situations. This includes ensuring rapid and effective communication of these updates to moderation teams to facilitate seamless adaptation.

Key things to remember:

- Comply with local laws and regulations related to elections. This means first being aware of such legislation and creating guidelines that adhere to it.

- Conduct regular policy up-dates and daily team briefings. Keep yourself, your client, and your teams appraised of new approaches and requirements. The trends keep changing - and we have to change with them.

- Maintain transparent client communication channels. Outsourcing partners are the experts in experience, but no one knows their business like clients. Both need to work harmoniously to ensure a solid level of content moderation.

Build A Strong Digital Foundation With AI

Trust and safety is a topic that need attention all year round, not just during peak seasons. Sophisticated digital tools, including AI-enhanced solutions, can be a huge asset in ensuring stability both during on- and off-peak periods. Proactively defining clear content moderation stances, outlining potential scenarios, and establishing the best places to implement tech means striking the perfect balance between cost, quality, and efficiency.
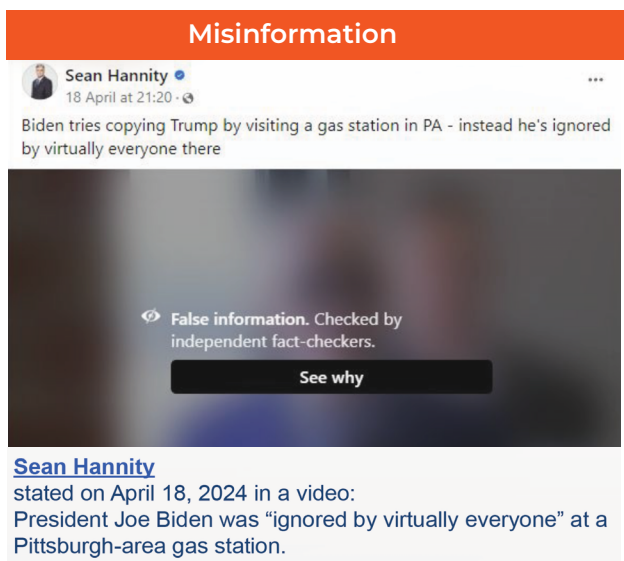
How to ensure AI efficiency and lack of bias:

· Train AI models specifically for election-related content and adjust confidence scores. We like to say that AI is a powerful tool-when used responsibly and effi-

ciently. Leveraging smaller, more targeted LLMs can improve the confidence of your AI systems. This also means lower costs, less environmental impact, and higher effectiveness.

· Integrate chatbot pre-screening to streamline content moderation workflows. Automations such as these can be crucial in the context of workforce management and planning.

· Ensure rigorous and ethical AI practices to prevent discrimination and bias. Our recommendation is to implement an internaladvisory board that is comprised of a variety of perspectives, and whose goal is to ensure adherence to best practices.
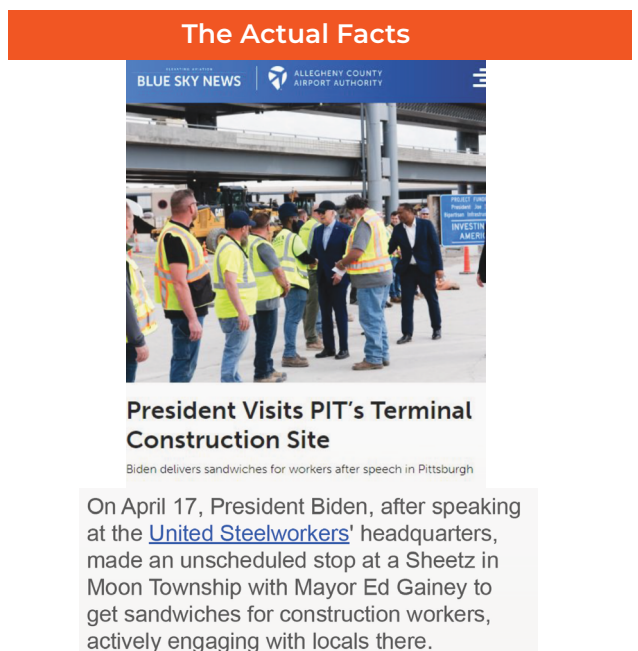
Misinformation	The Actual Facts

Sean Hannity
stated on April 18, 2024 in a video:
President Joe Biden was "ignored by virtually everyone" at a Pittsburgh-area gas station.

Misinformation during campaign seasons can come from any source, making quick recognition and tagging vital in content moderation.

President Visits PIT's Terminal Construction Site

On April 17, President Biden, after speaking at the United Steelworkers' headquarters, made an unscheduled stop at a Sheetz in Moon Township with Mayor Ed Gainey to get sandwiches for construction workers, actively engaging with locals there.

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Conclusion

Elections in the digital age demand a heightened focus on responsible and proactive content moderation. BPO companies play a pivotal role in ensuring social media platforms and the wider digital ecosystem remain safe, informative, and conducive to constructive dialogue.

The challenges are significant: surges in content volume, the need for unwavering neutrality, the constant threat of misinformation, and the complexities of adapting to evolving policies and client needs. The solution lies in the effective collaboration between digital solutions and highly-skilled talent. By employing the strategies and digital best practices outlined in this whitepaper, brands can not only overcome these obstacles but also position themselves as champions of democratic participation.

Developing scalable AI-enhanced solutions, smart capacity planning, rigorous training on impartiality and bias mitigation, collaborations with fact-checking organizations, and a commitment to transparent communication will pave the way for success.

The integrity of elections and the health of our democracies depend on these actions. By prioritizing responsible content moderation, BPOs demonstrate their significance within the global community. They become instrumental in upholding fair and informed electoral processes, safeguarding the core values upon which our societies are built.

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About Us

At Awesome CX, every day we're focused on building innovative customer experience solutions for the most Awesome Brands in the world. That's all 33,000 of us!

In 2018 we joined the Transcom Group. With Transcom's powerful BPO engine and our nimble, flexible business model, we're truly a unique customer service partner that can support clients of all sizes.

Today, we have a winning track record of supporting over 200 clients globally, ranging from industry-leading start-ups to some of the most established and influential enterprise brands in the world.

We build custom support solutions for every size. Big or small we've got you covered. As a challenger in this space, no job is too little, we'll roll up our sleeves to help you create the best CX strategy for your business. Our clients are our priority and no matter your needs, you'll never be left in the dark with us.

Let's Chat!

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