

# Buzzfeed Achieves Greater Efficiency and Confidence Using Hanzo to Manage its Slack Data For Litigation Response

## BuzzFeed

### Company Name

BuzzFeed

### Industry

Digital Media

### Location

New York, NY

### About

BuzzFeed is the world's leading independent digital media company, which leverages data and innovation to reach hundreds of millions of people globally.

### Website

[buzzfeed.com](http://buzzfeed.com)

## Objective

BuzzFeed uses the collaboration platform Slack to augment email and its other modes of internal communication. As a result, its legal and IT teams wanted to ensure they were prepared to identify, review, and produce Slack data in response to ediscovery matters and investigations. BuzzFeed needed a tool that could efficiently locate, preserve, and export that data in a review-ready format.

## Key Issues

- Quickly and easily search through Slack users and channels to identify relevant information
- Seamlessly export that information in a reviewable format
- Confidently state that all relevant data had been identified and considered—demonstrating defensible processes

## Approach

Thanks to Hanzo, BuzzFeed's legal and IT teams have a tool that they can use to locate all relevant information within their organization's Slack application in response to any ediscovery or investigation request. Moreover, they can produce that data to outside counsel for further review.

## Situation

BuzzFeed is a digital publishing company initially launched in 2006 to track and amplify viral content and has become a source of award-winning investigative journalism. The staff at BuzzFeed use the collaboration platform Slack. BuzzFeed, therefore, required a tool to prepare, collect, process, and review Slack data for investigations and ediscovery.

But what tool?

In response to a request, David Arroyo, BuzzFeed's Vice President and Associate General Counsel, explained that there were two possible ways to gather information. First, there's the manual option: "You could reach out directly to the involved individuals, asking them to go into their Slack and print any exchanges that have anything to do with the inquiry topic. That would be time-consuming, of course, and you'd have to rely on those individuals' ability to capture everything." This manual approach also makes it difficult to account for deleted and edited messages, content which may be relevant to a search.

David continued: the second method is how we approach data sources using traditional tools. With email, for example, "We can ingest that data into a database, do keyword searches, and extract whatever's relevant. That's the approach we wanted to be able to take—we just needed an analogous way to do that with Slack data."

Chris Hickman, Senior Counsel, Media and Intellectual Property, explained, "The bigger the case, the more challenging it is to define the target and identify all the data." Being able to confidently address their data collection obligations and efficiently assess new cases becomes paramount.

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## Challenges

The general process for gathering information from Slack was the same as it would be for any other data source: it all starts with identifying relevant custodians and narrowing the search down to a reasonable and defensible scope. Three fundamental problems surfaced, as BuzzFeed investigated potential solutions.

### Data Volume

With Slack, people don't have a discrete "mailbox". Instead, they might participate in multiple channels with different groups of individuals. From that dataset, the challenge is to identify which channels a data custodian participates in and which channels include relevant information. Phil Wilson, IT Manager, summed it up simply: "It was a problem of scale." Sorting through multiple, discrete channels manually is inefficient. Compounding this problem is the dynamic nature of the content, since active channels can change as users interact with Slack.

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## Manual, Time-Consuming Process

Another challenge is that the sorting process can be slow and laborious. Jason Margeotes, IT Manager, explained that “Using Slack’s API was a manual process. When we get a request involving specific users and channels, the task of gathering all responsive information would have fallen on IT’s shoulders. It is time-consuming to identify and compile every bit of that information.”

Adding to that burden is the form of the output generated through Slack’s API. It returned JSON files that require time to convert into a usable format.

## System Creation and Maintenance Costs

One option BuzzFeed considered was building a solution to automate parts of that manual process to query Slack’s API and return results. But it would necessitate a “from scratch” build and ongoing maintenance.

So BuzzFeed sought out a specialized partner.

## Solution

BuzzFeed considered the commercially available tools for extracting Slack data and chose to work with Hanzo’s purpose-built solution. Wilson stated, “We appreciated Hanzo’s willingness to work with us and walk us through the process. They were always available to share what their system could do and how it could benefit us. Ultimately, cost savings was a big driver, but the customer support was a key factor as well.”

Since adopting Hanzo’s solution, BuzzFeed has used it in several matters to identify and extract relevant information, leveraging Hanzo’s advanced scope management to identify the right custodians, zero in on the right channels, and target case-critical data.

BuzzFeed has also been able to easily export its Slack data for review by outside counsel. Instead of working with Slack’s unwieldy JSON exports, the output from Hanzo has been integrated into BuzzFeed’s standard ediscovery workflows.

As Wilson put it, “We’ve looked to Hanzo as the right tool to better archive and chronicle Slack data.”

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## Benefits

Since adopting Hanzo, BuzzFeed has realized several benefits.

### Time Savings

Hanzo’s abilities have allowed BuzzFeed to reduce the time they’re spending searching through Slack data. Hickman remarked, “Our time savings have been material. It takes hours to do something that would have taken much longer if we didn’t have Hanzo.”

### Confidence

Arroyo said, “As officers of the court, we have an obligation to provide a complete set of Slack data in response to a request. Hanzo Hold aids us in meeting that obligation.” Margeotes added, “Being able to more confidently say that this is complete information and that we’ve been able to reliably capture all the necessary data, from a legal perspective, is a great benefit.”

**“ Everyone has been able to use Hanzo really easily, saving time for both IT and legal. With Hanzo, I get a very clear, easy-to-read PDF report and a review-ready output—and I know I’ve got the information I need.**

### Search Capabilities

Hanzo’s adjustable scope controls provided another benefit. As Hickman described, “One of the things I like is that you’re in control of the range of returns that you get. You can always begin with a wide scope, and then follow any apparent patterns by refining the controls and increasing or decreasing the amount of information that’s being returned.”

### Helpful Customer Support

“I had to make a more nuanced request, looking for direct messages in a certain time frame and with a specific subject. Hanzo’s support team was a tremendous help. They understood what I needed and were very clear about explaining what I should do. I later had to repeat that same process and didn’t need any additional help because they’d been so transparent the first time,” commented Margeotes.

### Intuitive, Easy-to-Use Platform

Finally, Margeotes noted that BuzzFeed’s legal staff could use Hanzo without any need for IT support. “Everyone has been able to use Hanzo really easily,” saving time for both IT and legal. With Hanzo, I get a very clear, easy-to-read PDF report and a review-ready output—and I know I’ve got the information I need.”



Is your organization ready to get a handle on its Slack data? Hanzo can help. [Contact us today.](#)