

How Couchsurfing creates a safe platform for travelers worldwide

- ✓ 99% increase in review accuracy
- ✓ Increased customer satisfaction
- ✓ Lower amounts of fraudulent, spammy, and abusive content

OVERVIEW

Global travel marketplace

Couchsurfing is a global marketplace, dedicated to connecting travelers around the world. Founded in 2004, Couchsurfing offers a social experience whether users wish to stay with locals, meet up with like-minded folks in their home cities, or host travelers with a place to stay. Couchsurfers can make connections via desktop site and mobile app, and make up a community of over 18 million people in more than 200,000 cities.



Challenge

- Abusive, spammy content putting legitimate users at risk
- Required a solution that kept bad users from sneaking back onto the platform



Solution

- Thousands of hidden spam accounts revealed using Sift
- 50-70% of review now automated



Results

- Greater efficiency, detecting fraudsters before they can act
- Safety and security of the community is maintained



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More than 60% of our deactivations are handled by Sift, mostly automated. We've also noticed fewer fake accounts, a drastic reduction in spam accounts, and faster removal of duplicate accounts.

Don Fultz, Head of Trust, Safety, & Customer Support



CHALLENGE

Acting proactively, not reactively, to fraudulent content and repeat offenders

As a community, Couchsurfing operates on a currency of trust. Fake accounts and spammy content not only affect the experience for legitimate users of the platform, they might even involve phishing, malicious comments, or further risk when linked to offline schemes. To prevent this off-platform movement, Couchsurfing built in-house tools that were clunky, led to lots of manual review, and became outdated quickly. They needed a solution that could address a variety of bad content, malicious users, and returning users who were hiding their identity after being banned.

Furthermore, there was no way to proactively improve safety for the community by preventing these bad users from creating fraudulent content. Couchsurfing needed to determine who the bad users were and ensure they couldn't come back – even if disguised under a different name, email, IP address, or device. They required something that could help them proactively fight and prevent content abuse, fake accounts, and other forms of fraud on their platform.

**SOLUTION**

Greater efficiency thanks to automated content abuse detection

The team looked at dozens of vendors of all types, ranging from member reputation systems to identity solutions. There were many solutions that had visually impressive tools, but lacked a robust fraud detection engine that delivered the results they needed. Sift not only provided a stellar user experience, but also best-in-class machine learning technology and platform infrastructure.

Upon adopting Sift, the team's efficiency greatly improved – they discovered thousands of spammy accounts, all previously hidden. Prior to integration, the team would have to manually go through an ever growing list of bad users daily, including accounts flagged by community reports. With Sift, at least 50-70% of actions are now automated, freeing the team to focus on other work including learning more about the behaviors of their good and bad users in the Sift dashboard.



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We never realized this much content abuse existed on our platform.

Not only did Sift help to reveal the underlying problem, it also enabled us to automate the process of addressing it rapidly. We can now do much, much more with the same people on board.

Florian Ehrbar, Trust and Safety Lead

**RESULTS****Bad actors stopped in their tracks before they can act**

The team is now operating much more efficiently. It's not just about saving hours of time, but also pre-empting support tickets and user complaints by finding fraudulent users before they can negatively impact the community. Spam, scams, and other malicious intent are much better controlled, and the company is looking forward to its next era of growth.

Couchsurfing wants people to make lifelong friends, discover cities they otherwise never would have ventured to, and trust the community enough to open up their own couches to strangers. With Sift, Couchsurfing can help ensure users it is a safe and trusted marketplace and community of strangers, but not fraudsters.

“ There are very few false positives with Sift, and its accurate device fingerprinting technology really helps. We're very happy with how we've improved member experience on Couchsurfing.

Florian Ehrbar, Trust & Safety Lead

ABOUT SIFT

Sift is the leader in Digital Trust & Safety, empowering digital disruptors to Fortune 500 companies to unlock new revenue without risk. Sift dynamically prevents fraud and abuse through industry-leading technology and expertise, an unrivaled global data network of one trillion (1T) events per year, and a commitment to long-term customer partnerships. Global brands such as DoorDash, Poshmark, and Twitter rely on Sift to gain a competitive advantage in their markets.

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