



# Link Management Platforms: the Make or Buy Scenario

You may think building software to redirect one URL to another is simple, perhaps even rudimentary. When it's possible to build basic models in as little as [15 minutes \(Rebrandly.news/Makeorbuy\)](#), it may seem like a tempting undertaking. In actuality, it is neither simple nor realistic for the majority of business use cases and is not a solid investment for your company.

Building a URL shortener that is fit for business purposes requires consideration of a variety of important factors. Designing a solution that meets your needs in a reliable and efficient way is only the tip of the iceberg. Once built, you need to load it onto efficient and secure servers, a database to store the data, a system to track click stats and additional software for data analysis. And don't forget that once everything is in place, tested and functioning properly you need to designate engineers to monitor the system- ensuring the redirects never cease to function and the servers are always up and running.

Even with the time and money to spend on a project such as this, are you really better off doing it yourself? Does it make sense to invest resources in an area outside of the scope of your primary business and in an area where your team are not experts, especially when solid alternatives are available?

In most situations, the answer is no. Instead, you should buy the service from a trusted, reliable partner with expert knowledge in the field. This article will help you make an informed decision about whether to build or buy URL shortening software for link management.

QUESTION	BUY	BUILD
Is use of the platform business-critical? Do redirect uptimes need to be 24 hours/day?	Y	N
Would it be a burden for your IT department to build the application and maintain it long-term?	Y	N
Will the platform be used throughout your organization, interacting with other applications?	Y	N
Do you need the solution immediately?	Y	N
Are security and privacy policies (GDPR) an important priority for your organization?	Y	N
Do you require advanced features like mobile deep linking, geotargeting, QR codes, etc. or will you require them in the future?	Y	N
Do you need a solution that scales (up or down) according to your changing requirements?	Y	N
Can a member of your team to take ownership of the service, including managing the risks related to privacy, data breaches, data transfer, SSL and more?	Y	N
Are more members of your team available to supervise they system 24 hours/day?	Y	N
Do you need analytics?	Y	N
Do you need an SLA and guarantee that the system will work uninterrupted?	Y	N
Do you need a secure access levels that include SSO, 2FA, role assignment and activity audit logs?	Y	N
Are the needs of your organization going to change over time?	Y	N

***If your answer was Yes to two or more of these questions, you should seriously consider buying a platform. If these considerations are not of concern to your organization, building a platform will likely suffice for your needs.***



The most important thing for your company to consider is: **how important is this project?** Let's dive deeper into that. Depending on the degree of importance, consider:

- Budget involved
- ROI
- Time investment
- Risks for system failures

Imagine you opted for self-build and are using your links in a pay-per-click advertising campaign, but your app goes down. Each click lost equates to a monetary loss for your organization and could have devastating effects on the campaign. Or, imagine you've created thousands of URLs with your app to be sent to customers for transactional communications- but the links break and your customers can't complete their desired actions. This poor experience and service is also a problem for your organization.

## **Self-build projects have three main phases:**

### **BUILD**

Before any other steps, you need to find the most efficient design for your needs, deciding whether or not you need an interface and coming up with a design that is robust, reliable and scalable. Link redirects should be fast and well equipped to manage traffic peaks. Then, it's essential to carry out extensive testing. The process should work as follows, without missing any steps:

- Design
- Implementation
- Revision
- Test
- Server setup
- Installation
- Test



## **MAINTAIN**

Often underestimated but not to be overlooked is the cost of maintenance. A link management platform needs to run 24/7, 365. If there are even a few minutes of downtime, important projects can be severely impacted. And maintaining your platform requires both human and non-human resources, online and available day and night. Some of the costs that you may not have considered include:

- Server maintenance
- Software updates
- Database updates
- Backup
- Disaster recovery procedures
- Data security

## **UPGRADE**

Periodically, considerations will need to be made to guarantee your tool is performing at the required standard for your needs. Due to changes in your organization, new use cases or projects or involvement from additional teams who require new features, software will need to be updated. Additionally, market growth or fluctuations will need to be addressed, and the introduction of new legal/security standards will also have an impact. In this case, you can't assign any teammate to process the update. Instead you need someone well-versed in the project and the wider implications that the update will have on your systems. Consider your engineers may be preoccupied with projects related to your core offering and not available to dedicate their full attention to updates, or in the case of staff turnover you may be missing the relevant information to complete an update successfully.



## COSTS EXAMPLES

Below are our estimations the monetary and human hour costs of a self-build project. These appraisals were made based on the average cost of a European/US workforce (presented in USD).

- SCENARIO 1**

A small to medium project requiring a few thousand links that will get clicked a few thousand times per month. No analytics required, only fast redirects. No one in the organization needs interface access, all links to be created programmatically. No scalability is required.

	SELF-BUILD	REBRANDLY
<b>BUILD</b>	120 hours engineer time	Included
<b>MAINTAIN</b>	30 hours engineer time per month 1 dedicated server (on the cloud) 1 database server (on the cloud)	Included
<b>UPGRADE</b>	1 hours engineer time per month	Included
<b>COSTS</b>	Time before to start: 30 days Initial cost: \$4,800 Recurring: \$1,340/month	Time before to start: 1 day Initial cost: \$0 Recurring: \$299/month

- SCENARIO 2**

A medium to large project requiring many thousands, up to millions of links per month. No analytics required, only fast redirects. High priority project requiring absolute reliability and efficiency from the redirects. Scalability is a priority, the system needs to adjust automatically based on fluctuating needs. No one in the organization needs interface access, all links to be created programmatically.

	SELF-BUILD	REBRANDLY
<b>BUILD</b>	240 hours engineer time	Included
<b>MAINTAIN</b>	36 hours engineer time per month 3 dedicated servers (on the cloud) 2 database servers (on the cloud) 2 load balancers (on the cloud) 1 server monitor system (on the cloud)	Included
<b>UPGRADE</b>	2 hours engineer time per month	Included
<b>PRICE</b>	Time before to start: 60 days Initial cost: \$9,600 Monthly: \$1,820	Time before to start: 1 day Initial cost: \$0 Monthly: \$499



● **SCENARIO 3**

A large scale project, requiring many thousands, up to millions of links. Each department across the organization requires secure access to an easy-to-use interface to create links that have advanced features (SSO, MFA, Logging). Analytics and reporting is required. High priority project requiring absolute reliability and efficiency from the redirects. Scalability is a priority, the system needs to adjust automatically based on fluctuating needs. Links to be created manually and programmatically. The platform needs to be integrated with your systems.

	<b>SELF-BUILD</b>	<b>REBRANDLY</b>
<b>BUILD</b>	3,000 hours engineer time	Included
<b>MAINTAIN</b>	90 hours engineer time per month 6 dedicated servers (on the cloud) 3 database servers (on the cloud) 2 load balancers (on the cloud) 1 Map/reduce cluster 1 server monitor system (on the cloud)	Included
<b>UPGRADE</b>	60 hours engineer time per month	Included
<b>PRICE</b>	Time before to start: 300 days Initial cost: \$120,000 Monthly: \$8,000	Time before to start: 15 days Initial cost: \$0 Monthly: \$4,990

**SCALE UP vs. COST**

Another consideration that some companies make is the cost of purchasing a tool in the long term in the case of a scale-up. If an initial project drastically increases in size, it may seem like a more cost-effective solution to bring the project in-house and that it would warrant dedicating an engineer's time to on an ongoing basis. However, with Rebrandly, the more your projects scale, the less the cost of the subscription is in proportion. With this, *the economy of scale* philosophy, we can dedicate specialist resources and expertise to more projects- decreasing the cost for you over time.

Most companies buy specific, built-for-purpose software and don't consider self-builds for:

- CRM
- Support/helpdesk
- Analytics
- Social media automatization
- Link management platform



Similarly, at Rebrandly we prefer to buy software solutions for all functions in which we are not specialized. We're customers of:

- **Hubspot** for our CRM
- **Google Analytics** for our analytics
- **Zendesk** and **Intercom** for our support/ticket helpdesk
- **1Password** for our secure password vault
- **Slack** and **Skype** for internal communications

And of course, **Rebrandly** for link management.

### **CONTROL vs. COST**

It might be that you're thinking about taking on the additional cost and manpower to conduct a self-build project presuming that it's simpler for your organization to maintain control over your links. However, unlike other SaaS platforms, with Rebrandly you are always in control over your links and data. If your needs change in the future, or you simply change your mind, you're free to leave with all of your links at any time. We insist on customers using their custom domains that **they own**, and in this way Rebrandly puts the control back in your hands. All customers are free to export their links and import them into another platform- whether self-built or with a competitor- at any time

*"At Rebrandly, we believe you should always be in full control, so we pride ourselves on a product that was built with no strings attached for users and that can grow in proportion to your organization." (David De Guz - Founder at Rebrandly)*

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Now that you've got a full picture of what's involved, before you decide whether to build a platform yourself, contact our sales team today for advice on your project and a custom quote based on the cost/benefit ratio for your project.

### **Contact Rebrandly for a quote**

*Our engineer and sales representative will design a custom solution for your unique use-case.*

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