Why use a hosted help center instead of building your own?

Why HelpCenter.io

A help center looks like a few pages of articles, but behind it sits software: an editor, search, hosting, security, SEO and more. A hosted help center gives you all of that ready to use, so your team spends its time on the answers instead of on the platform.

What you'd have to build and keep running

Here's what a good help center needs, and what HelpCenter.io takes care of for you.

What you need	What HelpCenter.io gives you
An editor your whole team can use	A rich editor with drafts, templates, version history, and roles for writers, translators and admins.
Search that finds answers	Results that appear as readers type. With AI Answers (Catalyst, or the AI add-on), readers can ask a question and get an answer written from your articles, with sources.

Search engine basics	A sitemap, canonical links, language tags and a search title and description for every article.
Readiness for AI tools	AI-readable versions of your pages, an llms.txt file, and a public MCP server readers can add to their AI assistant.
Accessibility	Themes with keyboard navigation, a skip link, screen reader landmarks, automatic color contrast and support for reduced motion.
Security and access	HTTPS on every page, free SSL certificates for your own domain, two-factor sign-in for your team, and private or password-protected help centers. Catalyst adds single sign-on for readers.
Hosting and backups	We run the servers, update the software and back up your data several times a day. Growth and Catalyst come with a 99.9% uptime guarantee.
Languages	Several languages, each with its own addresses, on Growth and Catalyst, plus AI translation on Catalyst.
Knowing what's missing	Statistics on what readers search for and don't find, and which articles they rate as helpful.

Help inside your product	A widget for your website or app, and FAQ sections you can embed on any page.

The real cost of building it yourself

Each row above has to be designed, built and tested, then maintained. The work doesn't stop at launch: browsers, search engines and AI tools keep changing, certificates expire, and someone has to fix the site when it goes down. For most teams, that's a second product to look after.

HelpCenter.io starts at $29/month per help center (Bootstrap, billed yearly), with no per-agent fees. See Plans and pricing.

When building your own can make sense

Some large companies with specific requirements build their own. That can be the right call if your documentation has to live inside a system you already run, or you need workflows HelpCenter.io doesn't offer, such as multi-step approvals.

If you'd rather host a knowledge base yourself, Compass, HelpCenter.io's default theme, is also free and open source (GPL-3.0) as plain HTML, CSS and JavaScript on knowledgebase.dev.

You stay in control of your content

A hosted help center doesn't mean giving up your content. Serve it from your own domain, export articles as PDF whenever you like, or copy everything out through the API. See Do you back up my content?

Related articles

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