

**knock**

Making better build vs buy decisions

@cjbll\_ • September 5th 2024

**Build vs buy:  
the perennial debate**

# Once again the debate rages...

 **David Cramer**   
@zeeg

Scale has nuance, but it blows my mind people rely on cloud services for basic app functionality these days.

Auth is easy. Running a SQL instance is easy.

If you can't handle those challenges you shouldn't be calling yourself a software engineer.

 **@levelsio**  @levelsio · Aug 24

The web development industrial complex has lied to your face:

- auth: yes you can do it yourself
- scale: yes you can do it yourself
- database: yes you can do it yourself...

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10:47 PM · Aug 24, 2024 · **72.2K** Views

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 **Kenneth Auchenberg**   
@auchenberg

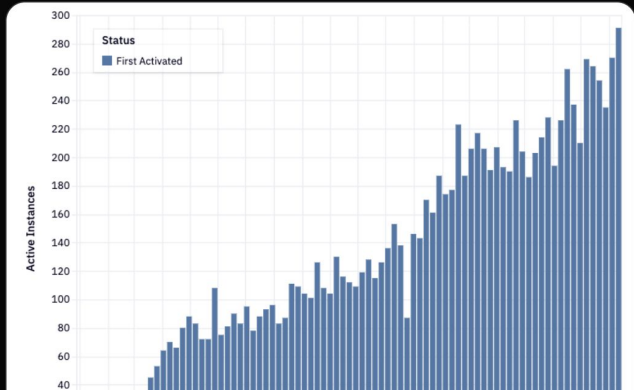
Outsourcing infrastructure isn't about inability — it's about trusting experts so you can focus on building your vision, not reinventing wheels along the way

5:16 PM · Aug 24, 2024 · **4,036** Views

 **Colin | clerk.com**  @tweetsbycolin · Aug 25

There's been lots of talk about "**buy vs build**" for auth this weekend, including concerns that auth providers might be an artifact of the ZIRP era. I wanted to share some cursory business details to help dispel that fear:

Clerk's business is good and growing. Our investors say [Show more](#)



Time Period	Active Instances
0	40
1	50
2	60
3	70
4	80
5	90
6	100
7	110
8	120
9	130
10	140
11	150
12	160
13	170
14	180
15	190
16	200
17	210
18	220
19	230
20	240
21	250
22	260
23	270
24	280
25	290
26	300

# Build vs buy: some clear cut (?) choices

- Infrastructure (servers, databases, data pipelines etc)
- Highly regulated industries and hard tech
- Security tooling
- ... but what about closer to the application layer?

# Build vs buy: application layer

- Authentication: Clerk, WorkOS
- Usage-based billing: Orb, Metronome
- Notifications: Knock, Novu
- Feature flagging: LaunchDarkly, Split.io
- Admin tools: Retool, Superblocks

**We can build anything with  
enough time and resources.  
But, should we?**

# A framework for build vs buy





- Differentiation
- Security and compliance
- Cost and margin
- Reliability and scalability
- Criticality of the service
- Roadmap and development time

# Tips on running a build vs buy process

- Get clarity on the full scope of the build
- Build your vendor non-negotiables (business continuity, security, compliance, scale etc)
- Build your RFP requirements from real use cases
- Do a vendor shootout against your RFP, even if you think you've made your choice



# Tips on what to look for in a vendor

-  Customer and scale likeness
-  Velocity and responsiveness
-  Vision alignment
-  Finding a trusted partner

Thank you!

**knock**