



Andrews McMeel Universal™

Q + A with Mindy Nelson
Director, Digital Operations

ModSquad Provides a Safe, Welcoming Environment for Communities of Comic Strip Fans

Through the years, iconic comic strip figures like *Charlie Brown*, *Garfield*, and *Calvin & Hobbes* have become part of the pop culture landscape. [Andrews McMeel Universal](#) distributes these beloved series to newspapers across North America, where readers cherish the stories and characters they've known for decades.

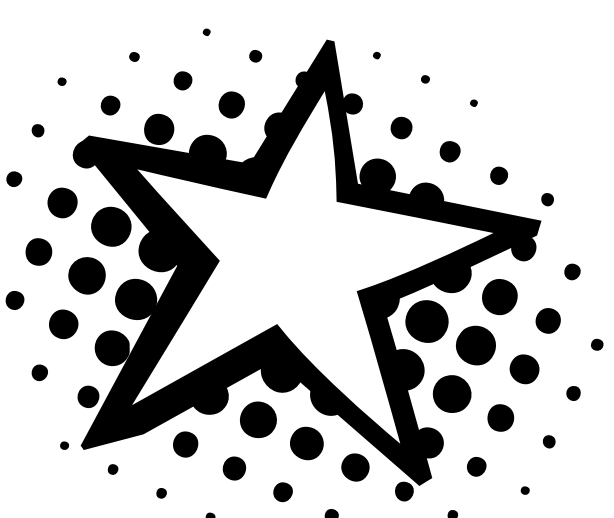
With the ongoing shift to digital publishing, fans are now able to read these comic strips and panels on Andrews McMeel Universal's GoComics.com, which draws in dedicated communities of comic enthusiasts. While adapting to the digital space was naturally a huge success, a bigger challenge presented itself. Without the resources to properly moderate those communities, flagged reader comments sometimes remained unapproved for extended periods. Using software not originally developed for moderation, the company ran the risk of missing other inappropriate material.

Andrews McMeel Universal's Director, Digital Operations Mindy Nelson explains more about the challenges the company faced and why ModSquad offered the ideal solution.

A stylized comic book speech bubble with a red background and white polka dots. The word "COOL!" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif letters with a black outline. There are three yellow stars around the bubble. The entire graphic is set within a black, hand-drawn style border.

Service Provided

Moderation



**Q: Hey Mindy!
Tell us About Andrews McMeel Universal.**

A: We got our start by syndicating the comic strip *Doonesbury* in 1971. The company would go on to syndicate the world's most popular comic strips and panels, including *Calvin & Hobbes*, *Peanuts*, *Dilbert*, and so many others. Out of that grew our publishing arm, with books and calendars based on these popular comics. We also distribute other content, both in print and digital, from lifestyle columns like *Dear Abby* and *Miss Manners* to kids content like *Big Nate* to poetry, puzzles, and downloadable games.

As we've grown, we have built our own digital products, and today publish more than 400 pieces of content daily on our flagship GoComics website, including comics like *Foxtrot* and *Cathy* as well as political cartoons. We have other sites: [UExpress](#), which features our popular columnists, being one that ModSquad now helps moderate.



Q: How was Moderation Handled Before ModSquad?

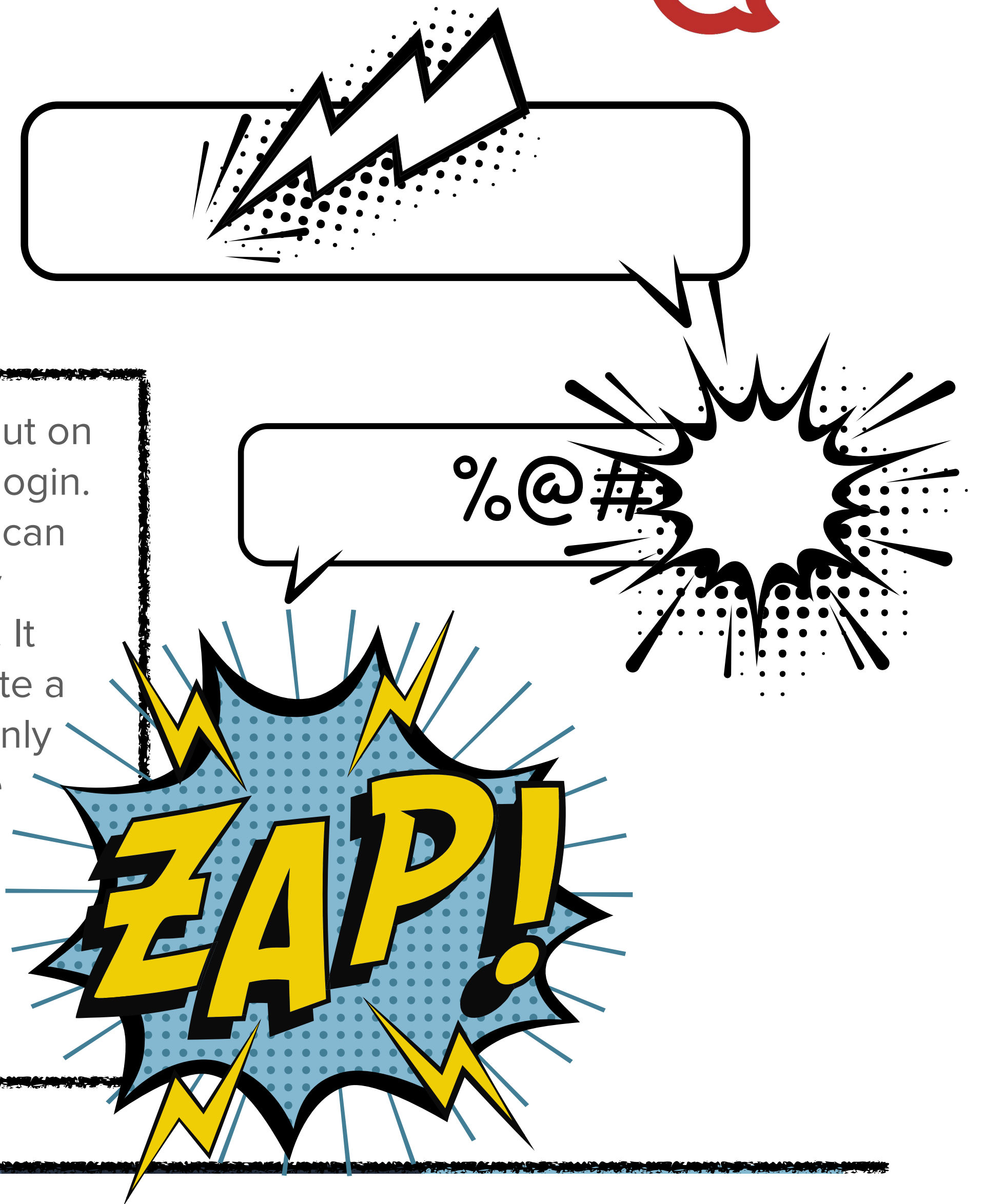
A: Prior to hiring ModSquad, all moderation was handled internally. We'd pull in people to help because there were too many comments coming in, especially with the politicized nature of things recently. It got to be too much. We didn't have a dedicated role for moderation; we had employees managing moderation that had other full-time jobs.

Our Chief Digital Officer said he wanted to get the moderation in the hands of a company that specialized in it as part of a long-term effort to focus more on community engagement vs. only moderation. Working with ModSquad has allowed us to get more hours and more eyeballs on the site quickly.



Q: How are Comments Presented for Moderation?

A: We use a popular commenting software tool for most of our content, but on GoComics we have a homegrown solution, which is tied into the user login. We built GoComics ourselves, and that means sometimes moderation can take longer and need a closer eye. The Mods have had to learn a very different moderation tool, because it wasn't really built for moderation. It was built for users to flag comments for us to review. We couldn't create a list of forbidden words or prevent links in comments. We have to not only go into flagged comments, but also do proactive moderation, because people might not always flag the things that we don't want out there.



Q: What Prompted you to Select ModSquad for your Moderation Needs?

A: Two of our employees had a positive history with ModSquad. One worked with ModSquad when he was at a large cable television network and told us about ModSquad's quality of work. The person in charge of one of our major products had also worked with ModSquad at a major greeting card company. Both of them had positive experiences with ModSquad which made hiring ModSquad a no-brainer.



A NO BRAINER

Q: How has it Been Collaborating With the Mods?

A:

Working with the Mods is really great; they've been wonderful. With their experience, they can offer insights into how other companies handle moderation. We've had a lot of good conversations with our legal team to make sure we're prepared when certain things come up, so that we know what we're supposed to do.

It's nice to have professionals who view this stuff all the time and who we trust to make informed decisions on what should be removed. There is also a 24/7 availability of Mods that can scale up during times of crisis, as we saw with some of the political environment recently.




Q: What has Been the End Result?

A:

We have freed up time for the operations and product teams to focus on their core roles while increasing moderation of the sites. Before hiring ModSquad, we were falling behind because of how our moderation tool works. This also meant that serious comments that needed immediate deleting could remain on the site for too long. Now, our sites are always caught up, which is just amazing.

Honestly, the big win for us has been getting a dedicated team of people who have time to do this, getting us caught up, and having more proactive moderation where we need it.

A large, hand-drawn style speech bubble with a thick black border and a tail pointing towards the bottom right. The background of the bubble is white, and it is set against a blue background with a pattern of black dots of varying sizes.

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– **Mindy Nelson**, Director, Digital Operations
Andrews McMeel Universal



About ModSquad

ModSquad is a global provider of on-demand CX services, known as ModSourcing: outsourcing modernized. Our experienced professionals engage your customers and communities on a personal level across online, mobile, e-commerce, in-game, application, and social media channels.

ModSquad offers expert service in customer support, moderation, social, and community. We've strategized, designed, and delivered digital initiatives for clients in more than 70 countries, with the capacity to respond in 50+ languages and dialects. We are the Mods!

[SEE WHAT MODSQUAD CAN DO FOR YOU](#)

WE ARE
THE MODS

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