DIGITAL INDEPENDENCE DAY · 01 / LEAVING SLACK

From Slack to Discourse

Digital independence begins with responsibility.

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What we will cover

1. **Why leave Slack?**
2. **What Discourse makes possible**
3. **Who controls the platform?**
4. **Admin Code of Conduct and governance**
5. **Digital independence as a shared process**

When someone else sets the rules

Pricing, retention and product decisions shape what a community can do.

90 days

Accessible message and file history on Slack Free.

Beyond one year

Older data is deleted under the Free plan’s standard policy.

Our shared memory depends on someone else’s terms.

Slack Free documentation · checked 17 October 2026 · History limits

Independence includes responsibility

We need a say in:

- **Software and infrastructure** — what runs, and who operates it.
- **Data** — what we keep, who can access it, and how we leave.
- **Decisions** — who sets the rules, and who can challenge them.

Self-hosting gives us more work as well as more control.

02 / A DIFFERENT SPACE

Conversations we can return to

Slack

Fast conversation in channels and threads.

Useful for coordinating work as it happens.

Discourse

Structured topics alongside real-time chat.

A place to revisit decisions and build shared knowledge.

Discourse features

A quick tour of Discourse

- **Find a discussion:** categories, topics and search.
- **Choose the audience:** groups, restricted areas and personal messages.
- **Work together:** polls, wiki posts and notifications.
- **Stay connected:** chat and email replies, when configured.

Demo: open a topic → reply → find it again.

Participation needs more than features

Trust levels and group permissions can distribute capabilities.

Community flags help bring problems to moderators’ attention.

> Participation tools do not guarantee a fair distribution of power.

Discourse permissions reference

Who owns the infrastructure?

More room to choose

Open-source code, self-hosting, APIs and backups make alternative arrangements possible.

Someone must operate it

Updates, recovery, email delivery, funding and technical support need named owners.

A backup only helps if we can restore it.

Discourse open source · Project and installation documentation

What moves with us?

1. Agree scope and inform members.
2. Check export access and retention.
3. Decide how to handle private data.
4. Test the import in a restricted space.
5. Verify files, authors and visibility.
6. Help members join; agree a cutover.

An export is not a complete migration.

Slack export options depend on plan and data type

We left Big Tech.
Where is the power now?

Many decisions move to our own organisation.

But who is “our organisation”?

Leadership? Administrators? Moderators? Members?

Who watches the admins?

Technical access and legitimate use

Inside Discourse

Administrators manage users, permissions and settings, with broad content access.

Moderation powers depend on the assigned role.

At the hosting layer

Server, database and backup access can expose stored data beyond the web interface.

Being able to do something does not make it legitimate.

When power is misused

- A personal disagreement becomes an account suspension.
- Confidential information is read or shared without a legitimate reason.
- Criticism is removed or made harder to see.

Who can review the decision when the complaint concerns the administrator?

ANONYMISED SCENARIO

When criticism becomes invisible

Public topic

Members raise concerns.
Others can compare experiences.

→

Personal message

Only a limited audience remains.
A shared pattern becomes harder to see.

Reason given: “Support requests must be private.”

Who decides what is private support and what is a public concern?

Rules must also bind administrators

A member Code of Conduct governs participation.

An **Admin Code of Conduct** governs the use of technical power.

> Agree it before launch, with independent ways to enforce it.

Seven principles for administrators

1. **Privacy** — access needs a documented, legitimate reason.
2. **Transparency** — explain significant decisions.
3. **Proportionality** — limit interventions; prefer reversible steps.
4. **Conflicts of interest** — do not judge your own case alone.
5. **Accountability** — keep critical actions open to review.
6. **Least privilege** — grant only the access a task requires.
7. **Appeal** — provide an independent route to challenge decisions.

Governance makes the code enforceable

Decision	A procedure must answer
Appointing administrators	Who appoints them, reviews their role and can remove them?
Reviewing moderation	Who can reverse a decision?
Changing the rules	How do members participate?
Complaints about leadership	Who reviews them independently?

The code defines duties. Governance defines how they are enforced.

Who watches the admins?

- **Separate responsibilities:** at least two accountable people; no shared login.
- **Record critical actions:** reason, scope and reviewer.
- **Review conflicts independently:** including changes to criticism’s visibility.
- **Make appeals usable:** clear contact, timeframe and authority to act.

Logs support accountability. They do not replace governance.

Three dimensions of independence

Technical	Control software, infrastructure and data.
Social	Share responsibility and make participation possible.
Institutional	Limit power, protect rights and resolve conflicts fairly.

Open source gives us a starting point

> Open source lets us regain control.
> A Code of Conduct and transparent governance help us use it responsibly.

Democratic participation must be organised by people.

We are choosing how to live together online

The move to Discourse is a chance to agree how we share power.

- Which rule belongs first in our **Admin Code of Conduct**?
- Should leadership have unrestricted administrative control over the space where members criticise it?

Who watches the admins — and can they act?