

Replicating Kindo's enterprise controls yourself costs more than it looks. A lot more.

You bring your own model API keys either way, so inference spend is a wash. The real build is **the control plane around the models**: DLP on every prompt and completion, policy-based authorization for agents, compliance-grade audit, integrations, and durable orchestration. Here is what owning that yourself actually costs.

~\$10.5M

3-YEAR TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

~14x

THE 3-YEAR COST OF KINDO SAAS AT LIST

15–18 mo

TO A PRODUCTION-CREDIBLE V1

9 FTE

SPECIALIST HIRES, IN THE HARDEST MARKET IN TECH

WHAT “BUILD IT YOURSELF” ACTUALLY MEANS

This is not a wrapper around a model API. A Kindo-class control plane is:

- ~660,000 lines of production code across 30 backend services: durable agent orchestration, a model gateway with routing and failover, RAG, code-execution sandboxing, SSO/SCIM, and metering.
- The controls nobody ships: DLP/PII redaction on model traffic, per-resource policy authorization for agents, and identity-linked agent audit. Absent from every general automation platform surveyed; you build them either way.
- An integrations platform: OAuth broker, a custom provider catalog, and a fleet of MCP servers that must track every vendor's API changes.
- Perpetual upstream maintenance: every third-party component is pinned, patched, and rebuilt; CVE and breaking-change churn across the stack never stops.

THE HIRING PROBLEM IS THE REAL BLOCKER

- AI-platform engineers are the most contested talent pool in tech. You are bidding against AI labs and AI-native startups; expect 4–6+ month searches, agency fees of 20–25% of first-year base, and high offer-decline rates.
- 15–20% annual attrition in exactly the hardest-to-fill seats makes recruiting a recurring cost, not a one-time one.
- Key-person risk: on a 9-person team, losing two engineers stalls the roadmap for a quarter.

THE COSTS THAT NEVER END

- The on-call floor. A sane 24/7 rotation needs 5–6 engineers who each understand the whole system. You cannot staff half a rotation: ~\$1.7–2M/yr just to keep the lights on.
- Control-plane drift. Model provider APIs change quarterly; every new model, tool, and integration re-opens your DLP, authorization, and audit surface.
- Compliance. The platform now carries its own SOC 2, pentest, and audit burden: \$50–150k/yr.

THE TEAM YOU WOULD HAVE TO HIRE

ROLE	FTE	FULLY LOADED / YR
Tech lead / engineering manager	1	\$350k
Senior backend / platform engineers	3	\$285k ea
AI platform engineers (gateway, routing, evals)	1.5	\$380k ea
Frontend engineers	1.5	\$255k ea
DevOps / SRE	1	\$285k
Security engineer (DLP, authz, sandbox)	1	\$300k
Build-phase team	9	~\$2.7M / yr

THREE-YEAR COST OF OWNERSHIP

	YR 1 (BUILD)	YR 2	YR 3
Payroll (fully loaded)	\$4.0M	\$2.2M	\$2.2M
Recruiting + backfill	\$0.5M	\$0.15M	\$0.15M
Cloud platform infrastructure	\$0.25M	\$0.3M	\$0.3M
Compliance + tooling	\$0.1M	\$0.15M	\$0.15M
Total	~\$4.9M	~\$2.8M	~\$2.8M

Model API token spend excluded from both sides: you bring your own inference either way. Year 1 delivers zero user value until month 15–18.

DIY VS KINDO, THREE-YEAR COST

Build it yourself

~\$10.5M

Kindo SaaS (list)

\$0.75M · \$250k/yr MSRP, BYO inference

Same model API bill in both scenarios. Everything above it is overhead you either buy once or build and staff forever.

THE BOTTOM LINE

DIY costs roughly **\$4.9M and 18 months before the first user logs in**, then **~\$2.8M every year after**, contingent on winning a hiring market you are structurally disadvantaged in. Kindo SaaS lists at **\$250k per year, bring your own inference, deployed in days**. Over three years that is roughly 14x, before counting the roadmap your engineers didn't ship.

Assumptions: 2026 US-market compensation (Levels.fyi-range bases, fully loaded at x1.35 for payroll tax, benefits, and equipment); agency recruiting at 20–25% of first-year base; platform on managed Kubernetes with multi-AZ datastores and non-production environments; model API token spend excluded from both scenarios (BYO inference either way). Kindo SaaS at \$250k/yr MSRP; negotiated pricing may differ. Figures are planning estimates, not quotes. Scope basis: the Kindo production codebase (~660k LOC, 30 services) and its self-managed infrastructure modules.