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The WhatsApp Cloud API: advantages, disadvantages, what it costs and who it is for

WhatsApp & APIs

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The WhatsApp Cloud API: advantages, disadvantages, what it costs and who it is for

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The **Cloud API** - what everyone calls the «WhatsApp Business API» - is not a better app. It is a different thing: a technical connection, with no screen, between WhatsApp and a system of yours or a support platform. And it charges per message.

For

What only it does	Why it matters
Several people on one number	A whole team answers the same number, with queues and assignment. The app was never built for this.
Messages that send themselves	Order confirmation, delivery status, appointment reminder - fired by your system.
It reaches people who have not saved you	**This is the difference that justifies the cost.** With a broadcast list the message only reaches people who have you in their address book; through the API it arrives anyway, provided the person consented.
No 256 cap	Broadcast lists stop there. The API does not.
Real reporting	Delivered, read, replied - per message and per campaign.

Against

1. **You pay per message**, by category and by country. On a large campaign the bill adds up fast.
2. **It has no screen.** On its own it is useless: it needs a support platform or a developer.

3. **Messages you initiate must use templates approved** by Meta, requested in advance. You do not write whatever you like in the moment.

4. **There is setup work:** business verification, a dedicated number and configuration. It is not install-and-go.

5. **The number becomes the API's.** You can no longer use it in the ordinary app - and going back is awkward.

What it costs, with the right numbers

Since **July 2025** Meta charges **per message**, not per conversation as before. The price changes by category and by destination country:

Category	What it is, and what it does to the cost
Marketing	Promotions and news. The dearest, and it has **no volume discount**, however much you send.
Utility	Confirmations and notices about something the customer already asked for. Cheaper, with tiers that drop as volume rises.
Authentication	Verification codes. Also tiered.
Service	Replies to people who wrote to you. Still free - but see the warning.

On 1 October 2026 service messages stop being free.
They start being charged at the same rate as utility. If you are budgeting a project, **budget with that cost already in** - many of the quotes circulating out there were built when replying was free, and they stop adding up. One detail in your favour: Meta only charges for messages that are **delivered**.

Risks

1. **Runaway cost.** It is risk number one: with no ceiling set, a campaign to a large list spends more than it returns. Work it out first: recipients × category price × country.

2. **Blocking still applies.** Having the API is no licence to message people who did not ask. Reports count, and the number's quality rating falls until you cannot send at all.

3. **A template refused at the last minute.** If the campaign has a date and the template was not approved in time, there is no campaign. Request early.

4 **Dependence on an intermediary.** If you go through a provider, your data and your number pass through them. Choose carefully and know how to leave.

☆ Who for

For anyone with a team answering, a system to connect, or volume that justifies the cost. A shop with hundreds of orders a month, a clinic with automatic reminders, a service sending verification codes.

It is not for someone answering alone who just wants to talk to customers. In that case the app is enough and it is free - see **WhatsApp Business: advantages, disadvantages and risks**.

An honest test before deciding.
Count how many messages you would initiate per month, split them by category, and multiply. If the result frightens you, the answer was the app. If it does not and you have a team, the answer is this. And if the goal is mass reach at low cost, compare with **e-mail marketing** and **SMS marketing** before deciding.

NEED A HAND?

Want help deciding between the app and the API?

Talk to us →

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