

Musk's attack on Twitter workers brings company to the brink of collapse

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Media reports on Friday were speculating about the possible collapse of the social media platform Twitter following the resignation of another 1,200 employees the previous day in response to a recent ultimatum given to them by Elon Musk.

The *New York Times* reported in an article entitled “Elon Musk’s Twitter Teeters on the Edge After Another 1,200 Leave,” that the billionaire owner sent a flurry of urgent all-hands-on-deck email messages on Friday morning to the remaining staff members.

In one message, Musk said, “Anyone who actually writes software, please report to the 10th floor at 2 p.m. today,” and, in another message 30 minutes later, he said he needed to learn about Twitter’s “tech stack,” a term that describes the social media company’s core software infrastructure.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Musk told the employees that he “planned to be at Twitter’s headquarters himself until midnight, and then back again Saturday morning, and suggested employees based in other locations should fly to San Francisco.”

In departing the company, employees said Musk pushed people to work well over 40 hours a week, but they did not think there was vision to justify it. One worker told the *Journal*, “Long hours doing good work is awesome, but not with a gun to your head.”

Peter Clowes, a software engineer, posted a lengthy explanation for his decision to leave Twitter, including, “If I stayed, I would have been on-call constantly with little support for an indeterminate amount of time on several additional complex systems I had no experience in. Maybe for the right vision I could have dug deep and done mind numbing work for awhile. But that’s the thing...

“There was no vision shared with us. No 5 year plan like at Tesla. Nothing more than what anyone can see

on Twitter. It allegedly is coming for those who stayed but the ask was blind faith and required signing away the severance offer before seeing it. Pure loyalty test.”

The mass exodus from Twitter was in response to a Thursday deadline Musk had given to staff members early Wednesday morning in an email with the subject line, “A fork in the road.” Musk told employees that “to build a breakthrough Twitter 2.0 and succeed in an increasingly competitive world, we will need to be extremely hardcore.”

For Musk, being “hardcore” means “working long hours at high intensity.” The email went on to say, “If you are sure that you want to be part of the new Twitter, please click yes on the link below,” and finished with the ultimatum, “Anyone who has not done so by 5pm ET tomorrow (Thursday) will receive three months of severance.”

The fact that more than 1,000 employees rejected Musk’s provocation is an indication of the hatred for the world’s wealthiest billionaire and his management tactics. The *Wall Street Journal* expressed astonishment at the response of the Twitter workers to Musk’s “management playbook,” given that he has previously gotten away with similar fascistic methods at his two other properties, Tesla and Space X.

In 2012, for example, the *Journal* reported that Musk threatened Tesla workers in an email with the subject line “Ultra hardcore” that they needed “to prepare yourself for a level of intensity that is greater than anything most of you have experienced before” and that “revolutionizing industries is not for the faint of heart.” According to the *Journal*, “He wasn’t wrong.”

The present dire situation at Twitter, a social media company with 400 million active users internationally who have grown to depend on the platform for critical communications and news updates, is the latest in a

series of convulsions connected with the private takeover of the company by Elon Musk in a \$44 billion acquisition that became official on October 27.

After removing the company from the stock exchanges, Musk fired Twitter's executive leadership, dismissed its corporate board of directors and proceeded to cut one half of the staff or 3,700 people after a catastrophic decline in advertising revenue. The resignation of 1,200 more people who rejected Musk's "fork in the road" decree is clearly a blow to the organization that may well prove to be fatal.

In a lengthy op-ed in the *New York Times* on Friday, former head of trust and safety Yoel Roth wrote that he chose to leave his position "at Elon Musk's Twitter." Roth added that the wave of employee resignations, "caused the hashtag #RIPTwitter to trend on the site on Thursday—not for the first time—alongside questions about whether a skeleton crew of remaining staff members can keep the service, now 16 years old, afloat."

In response to the question "why does everyone think Twitter is doomed?," a Twitter user named Mosquito Capital identifies himself as a site reliability engineer with more than a decade of industry experience and tweets an extensive list of scenarios that are "real threats to the integrity of the bird site over the coming weeks."

A report in the *Guardian* on Friday explored the potential for catastrophic system failure at Twitter and said, "There are now concerns that the site will be vulnerable to technical failures and bugs, amid signs that the complex system underpinning Twitter is already creaking. Two-factor authentication has already been affected and there have been issues with retweeting."

The *Guardian* goes on to explain that Musk himself had warned earlier this month, following the the departure of top figures from the company and prior to his ultimatum, "Without significant subscription revenue, there is a good chance Twitter will not survive the upcoming economic downturn. We need roughly half of our revenue to be subscription."

Throughout the crisis, Elon Musk has maintained and deepened his sophomoric cynicism and contempt for critics through his Twitter account. Following the resignations on Thursday afternoon, Musk replied to the tweets of others with, "Don't wanna jinx it, but

there's a chance we can keep Twitter alive ..." and, "The best people are staying, so I'm not super worried." Later that evening, Musk tweeted, "And ... we just hit another all-time high in Twitter usage lol."

These are the comments of a deranged billionaire oligarch who has wreaked havoc on one of the most important social media forms to emerge out of the intersection of the Internet and World Wide Web with wireless broadband and smartphone technologies that took place in the first decade of the 21st century. By their very nature as global communications platforms utilized by billions of people, social media platforms are incompatible with control by a single individual dictator with more money than anyone else on the planet.



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