

Elon Musk's Twitter abruptly reverses ban on promotion of alternative social media platforms

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Less than 24 hours after announcing a new "promotion of alternative social platforms policy," Twitter removed the statement from its Help Center and deleted a tweet thread published on Sunday that explained the policy.

The original statement said, "Twitter will no longer allow free promotion of specific social media platforms on Twitter." The policy explained, "at the tweet level and the account level, we will remove any free promotion of prohibited 3rd party social media platforms, such as linking out (i.e., using URLs) to any of the below platforms on Twitter, or providing your handle without a URL."

The list of prohibited social platforms included Facebook, Instagram, Mastodon, Truth Social, Post and Nostr. Twitter also said that accounts would be suspended for linking, "3rd party social media link aggregators such linktr.ee and Ink.bio." A third party link aggregator is an online service that brings together lists of links or content in digest form from multiple web sources.

The statement further explained that users who violate the new policy may be required to delete offending tweets, and accounts may also be temporarily locked or suspended. Twitter also threatened to remove accounts that try to skirt the new rules by posting screenshots of their other accounts or spelling out words like "dot."

Later in the day, responding to a deluge of public criticism, Musk tweeted, "Policy will be adjusted to suspending accounts only when that account's *primary* purpose is promotion of competitors, which essentially falls under the no spam rule."

However, backlash against the new Twitter policy

from others within the financial elite apparently forced the billionaire owner to completely reconsider the policy by early Monday evening. According to a report by CNBC, "The policy is unusual, as few, if any, other social media companies have rules about sharing links to other accounts. Twitter's co-founder and former CEO Jack Dorsey said the company's new policy 'doesn't make sense' in a tweet Sunday."

After venture capitalist and computer scientist Paul Graham tweeted, "This is the last straw. I give up," and posted a link to his Mastodon account, Musk abruptly changed course and tweeted, "Going forward, there will be a vote for major policy changes. My apologies. Won't happen again."

Three minutes later, Musk posted a Twitter poll that asked, "Should I step down as head of Twitter? I will abide by the results of this poll." When the poll closed 24 hours later, the results showed 57.5 percent voting yes, 42.5 percent voting no, with 17,502,391 Twitter users participating.

Although he commented on the tweets of others and shared Twitter activity statistics from Sunday's World Cup final football game, as of this writing, Musk has not responded to the poll results or commented further on his promise to abide by the results.

The fiasco over the ban on competitive platform links on Twitter follows a series of reckless and disastrous decisions made by Musk since he assumed ownership and took the social media company private in late October.

While a financial crisis at Twitter was developing prior to his acquisition of the company for \$44 billion, Musk's takeover accelerated the process and brought on an existential crisis in a matter of days.

When Twitter advertisers pulled back on spending or halted it altogether, Musk advanced a paid, Blue subscription service in November that was promptly shut down because pranksters abused it to impersonate brands and prominent public individuals.

In one instance, a fake Eli Lilly account announced that “insulin is free now” and was circulated on the platform for hours before being taken down. The stock price of the \$50 billion pharmaceutical company plummeted despite an attempt by the real Eli Lilly to correct the misinformation.

Throughout these twists and turns, Musk has intensified his identification with right-wing and fascist politics. In late November, he tweeted that he would support the fascist Governor of Florida Ron DeSantis for president in 2024, calling him “sensible and centrist.”

On December 11, Musk claimed that infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci was complicit in the spreading of the coronavirus and should be prosecuted, a position advanced by far-right politicians and media figures.

On Sunday, Musk sought to deflect attention away from himself by promoting anti-immigrant xenophobia. Three hours after he was forced to reverse the alternative platform policy, Musk retweeted a video from Republican Representative from Texas Tony Gonzales showing overcrowding of migrants at the US Border Patrol Central Processing Center in El Paso. Musk added the comment, “Why do so few report about millions of people crossing the border?”



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