Twitter to test limiting replies to tackle online abuse

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New ways for Twitter users to combat online abuse are being prepared at the social media giant

Twitter has announced it will test new ways to limit online abuse by offering users control over who can reply to tweets.

"We want to help people feel safe participating in the conversation on Twitter by giving them more control over the conversations they start," the company tweeted.

"We'll be experimenting with different options for who can reply to Tweets in early 2020."

Company officials gave details of the move at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas on Wednesday, the specialty website TechCrunch reported.

Four options are in play: the strictest option would bar all replies, while another would allow only people mentioned in the tweet to respond.

A third option would allow only a user's followers to reply. The broadest option would be for anyone to be allowed to reply.

"We thought, well, what if we could actually put more control into the author's hands?" asked Suzanne Xie, head of conversations for the platform, according to TechCrunch.

"Right now, public conversation on Twitter is you tweet something everyone in the world will see and everyone can reply, or you can have a very private conversation in a DM (direct message)."

As of now, users have few options to limit replies: they can make their account private or stop abusive comments by directly blocking people.

However, even if all responses are blocked, the tweet will still remain visible to all if the account is public. And anyone can quote the tweet on their own account.

The social media giant has already implemented initiatives to try to clean

up conversations on its platform and counter abuses.

Since November, the network has let users "hide" certain unwanted responses to their own tweets—but it's impractical to hide malicious comments one by one when there is a multitude of reactions to a given conversation.

Since September, Twitter has also let users automatically transfer into a separate filter private messages sent by accounts that they are not following.

Following Twitter's latest announcement, some users balked at the idea that the site might bar them from responding to people who post false information, or public figures like President Donald Trump.

"Agree with the risks you highlight; these are things that we are taking into consideration with how we'd build this," wrote Twitter VP Kayvon Beykpour.

"For example, I think it's important for us to allow quote tweets (an important way to dispute/debunk somebody's tweet), paired with an easier way to see QTs," he said.

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