

Musk floats 'general amnesty' of suspended Twitter accounts

November 23 2022, by Julie JAMMOT



Space-X and Tesla boss Elon Musk purchased Twitter for \$44 billion in October 2022.

New Twitter owner Elon Musk on Wednesday polled users on whether the site should offer a general amnesty to suspended accounts, using the same method he used to handle the case of Donald Trump.

The move comes as Musk has faced pushback that his criteria for content moderation is subject to his personal whim, with reinstatements decided for certain accounts and not others.

"Should Twitter offer a general amnesty to suspended accounts, provided that they have not broken the law or engaged in egregious spam?" Musk asked in a tweet.

The poll was open until 17:46 GMT on Thursday and mimicked the strategy used just days ago for the former US president Trump.

Trump's Twitter account was reinstated Saturday after a narrow majority of respondents supported the move.

Polls on Twitter are open to all users and are unscientific and potentially targeted by fake accounts and bots.

A blanket decision on suspended accounts could potentially alarm government authorities that are keeping a close look at Musk's handling of hateful speech since he bought the influential platform for \$44 billion.

It could also spook Apple and Google, tech titans that have the power to ban Twitter from their mobile app stores over content concerns.

Trump was banned from the platform early last year for his role in the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by a mob of his supporters seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

'No mercy'

Musk's reinstatement of Trump followed that of other banned accounts including a conservative parody site and a psychologist who had violated

Twitter's rules on language identifying transgender people.

The CEO of Tesla and SpaceX has said that conspiracy theorist Alex Jones will not be returning to Twitter and will remain banned from the platform.

Musk on Sunday said he had "no mercy for anyone who would use the deaths of children for gain, politics or fame" due to his own experience with the death of his first child.

Jones has been ordered to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in damages for his lies about the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting that killed 26 people, mostly children.

Musk, who closed his buyout of Twitter in late October, did not make clear whether the bans to be covered by the poll were permanent suspensions or temporary ones.

The future of content moderation on Twitter has become an urgent concern, with major advertisers keeping away from the site after a failed relaunch earlier this month saw a proliferation of fake accounts, causing embarrassment.

Meanwhile the teams in charge of keeping nefarious activity off the site have been gutted, victims of Musk-led layoffs that saw half of total employees leave the company.

John Wihbey, a media professor at Northeastern University, speculated that all the chaos might be because Musk is seeking to "buy himself time."

"Regulators are certainly going to get come after him, both in Europe and maybe the United States... and therefore a lot of what he's doing is

trying to frame those fights," Wihbey said.

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