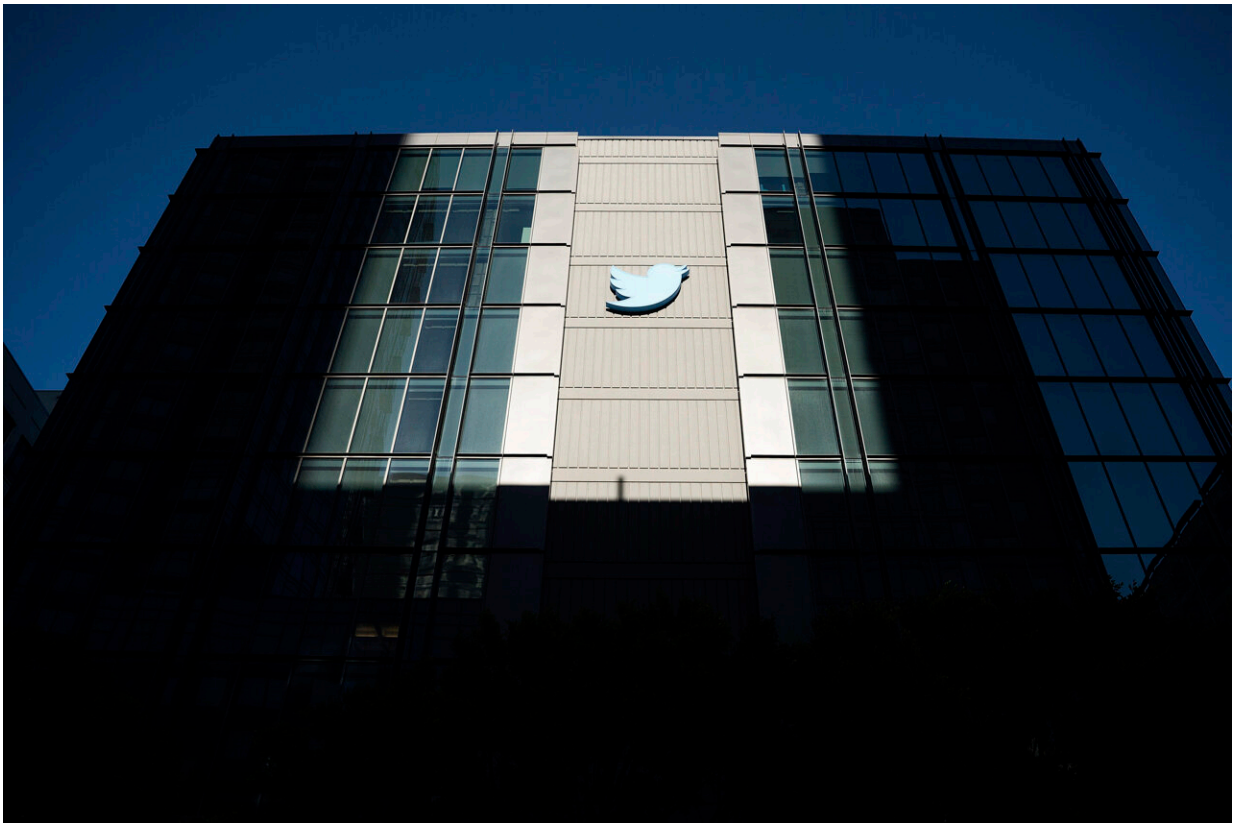


# Musk polls Twitter users about whether he should step down

December 19 2022, by Matt O'brien

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A Twitter logo hangs outside the company's San Francisco offices on Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2022. The Washington Post's Taylor Lorenz has become the latest journalist to be banned from Twitter. Lorenz says she and another Post technology reporter, Drew Harwell, were researching an article concerning Twitter CEO Elon Musk. Credit: AP Photo/Noah Berger, File

Elon Musk is asking Twitter's users to decide if he should stay in charge of the social media platform after acknowledging he made a mistake Sunday in launching new speech restrictions that banned mentions of rival social media websites.

In yet another drastic policy change, Twitter had announced that users will no longer be able to link to Facebook, Instagram, Mastodon and other platforms the company described as "prohibited."

But the move generated so much immediate criticism, including from past defenders of Twitter's new billionaire owner, that Musk promised not to make any more major policy changes without an online survey of users.

"My apologies. Won't happen again," Musk tweeted, before launching a new 12-hour poll asking if he should step down as head of Twitter. "I will abide by the results of this poll."

The action to block competitors was Musk's latest attempt to crack down on certain speech after he [shut down a Twitter account](#) last week that was tracking the flights of his private jet.

The banned platforms included mainstream websites such as Facebook and Instagram, [and upstart rivals](#) Mastodon, Tribel, Nostr, Post and former President Donald Trump's Truth Social. Twitter gave no explanation for why the blacklist included those seven websites but not others such as Parler, TikTok or LinkedIn.

Twitter had said it would at least temporarily suspend accounts that include the banned websites in their profile—a practice so widespread it would have been difficult to enforce the restrictions on Twitter's millions of users around the world. Not only links but attempts to bypass the ban by spelling out "instagram dot com" could have led to a suspension, the

company said.

A test case was the prominent venture capitalist Paul Graham, who in the past has praised Musk but on Sunday told his 1.5 million Twitter followers that this was the "last straw" and to find him on Mastodon. His Twitter account was promptly suspended, and soon after restored as Musk promised to reverse the policy implemented just hours earlier.

Musk said Twitter will still suspend some accounts according to the policy but "only when that account's (asterisk)primary(asterisk) purpose is promotion of competitors."

Twitter previously took action to block links to Mastodon after its main Twitter account tweeted about the @ElonJet controversy last week. Mastodon has grown rapidly in recent weeks as an alternative for Twitter users who are unhappy with Musk's overhaul of Twitter since he bought the company for \$44 billion in late October and began restoring accounts that ran afoul of the previous Twitter leadership's rules against hateful conduct and other harms.

Musk permanently banned the @ElonJet account on Wednesday, then changed Twitter's rules to prohibit the sharing of another person's current location without their consent. He then took aim at journalists who were writing about the jet-tracking account, which can still be found on other [social media sites](#), alleging that they were broadcasting "basically assassination coordinates."

He used that to justify Twitter's moves last week to [suspend the accounts of numerous journalists](#) who cover the social media platform and Musk, among them reporters working for The New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, Voice of America and other publications. Many of those accounts were restored following an online poll by Musk.

Then, over the weekend, The Washington Post's Taylor Lorenz became the latest journalist to be temporarily banned. She said she was suspended after posting a message on Twitter tagging Musk and requesting an interview.

Sally Buzbee, The Washington Post's [executive editor](#), called it an "arbitrary suspension of another Post journalist" that further undermined Musk's promise to run Twitter as a platform dedicated to free speech.

"Again, the suspension occurred with no warning, process or explanation—this time as our reporter merely sought comment from Musk for a story," Buzbee said. By midday Sunday, Lorenz's [account](#) was restored, as was the tweet she thought had triggered her suspension.

Musk's promise to let users decide his future role at Twitter through an unscientific online survey appeared to come out of nowhere Sunday, though he had also promised in November that a reorganization was happening soon.

Musk was questioned in court on Nov. 16 about how he splits his time among Tesla and his other companies, including SpaceX and Twitter. Musk had to testify in Delaware's Court of Chancery over a shareholder's challenge to Musk's potentially \$55 billion compensation plan as CEO of the electric car company.

Musk said he never intended to be CEO of Tesla, and that he didn't want to be chief executive of any other companies either, preferring to see himself as an engineer instead. Musk also said he expected an organizational restructuring of Twitter to be completed in the next week or so. It's been more than a month since he said that.

In public banter with Twitter followers Sunday, Musk expressed pessimism about the prospects for a new CEO, saying that person "must

like pain a lot" to run a company that "has been in the fast lane to bankruptcy."

"No one wants the job who can actually keep Twitter alive. There is no successor," Musk tweeted.

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