Musk overtakes Obama as most followed Twitter account

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Elon Musk has surpassed former US president Barack Obama as the most followed account on Twitter, five months after he bought the platform in a tumultuous takeover.

The founder of Tesla and SpaceX on Thursday had 133,084,560 Twitter followers, a nose ahead of Obama, who had 133,041,813.

The feat comes as the role of Twitter as a key platform for the exchange of news, ideas and PR messaging seems increasingly troubled.

Musk last week told employees the company was worth half the $44 billion he shelled out for it and the tycoon is still struggling to find a way to take the brakes off content moderation without spooking advertisers and government regulators.

Since taking control, Musk has sharply cut the group's payroll from 7,500 employees to fewer than 2,000 and has put his faith in drumming up paid subscribers to make the platform financially viable—but the results have been disappointing.

The app has seen a string of technical snafus, including an incident where tweets by Musk suddenly dominated the feeds of millions of users, even those not following the tycoon.

Musk has encouraged users to communicate more freely on Twitter and said the site would impose the least amount of censorship allowed by law.

The platform said that starting on April 1, the trust-building "blue tick" for certain individual accounts—such as celebrities or journalists—would be rolled back and reserved for paying subscribers.

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