



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Is there life after Twitter?



Elon Musk was delighted when he took over Twitter and "set the bird free". But there are many who were not so lucky. It seems, even, that there are too many of them. Is the network in crisis, how deep is that crisis and does it, perhaps, threaten its survival? In the week after Musk purchased Twitter for \$44 billion, the social media platform lost more than 1.3 million users.

MIT Technology Review reported the firm Bot Sentinel, which tracks behavior on Twitter by analyzing more than 3.1 million accounts and their daily activity, "believes that around 877,000 accounts were deactivated and a further 497,000 were suspended between Oct. 27 and Nov. 1." That's more than double the usual number, the outlet is reporting. Following the downward trends, CNN asks? - what will happen if Twitter dies? Is this question baseless or not? That question would have been mostly unthinkable just weeks ago, but a cascade of events precipitated by the company's erratic new owner, Elon Musk, has thrown the future of the platform into uncertainty. And if Twitter (TWTR) were to suddenly cease to exist, the consequences would be enormous, given how integral the platform is to global communications. The platform has often been compared to a digital town square and for good reason. It is much more than simply a social media website.

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World leaders use Twitter to communicate, journalists use Twitter to newsgather, dissidents in repressive countries use Twitter to organize, celebrities and major brands use Twitter to make important announcements, and the public uses Twitter to often monitor all of it in real-time. If the platform were to die off, or to become unusable because of instability issues, no single space would likely replace it.

"Twitter vs not Twitter isn't a simple binary, particularly not for news journalism. The 24

hour global connectivity has changed almost everything about workflows in newsrooms and even for freelance journalists," said Emily Bell, founding director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia Journalism School, in a series of tweets Friday. "What replaces it, or what Twitter becomes now with an owner expressly hostile to and ignorant of the business of daily reporting, is really unsure." Instead, communications would become fractured across multiple social media websites, leading to a seismic disruption and slowdown in the flow of information.

Some users would probably head to one of the Twitter clones. One Twitter-like microblogging platform that has gained some traction in recent weeks is Mastodon. But that explosion in popularity is relative: Mastodon is still far smaller than Twitter in scale and lacks the usability for mass appeal to the public. Most other Twitter clones have largely been designed to target conservatives who have for years, and usually baselessly, accused Twitter of harboring an anti-conservative bias.

Those websites include former President Donald Trump's Truth Social, Gettr, and others. And, of course, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and others are options. But none of these apps seem destined to inherit all of Twitter's users or perhaps more importantly, become the central place for public conversation and debate as Twitter has been for years.

A US senator, for instance, expressed to CNN Thursday night via Twitter direct messages that they would miss the platform. "My main concern is that I do think some people want to hear directly from me, and it's a very efficient way to curate a news feed. So I'm just figuring out what comes next", the senator said.