

Elon Musk blames data scraping by AI startups for his new paywalls on reading tweets

Elon Musk continues to blame Twitter's new limitations on AI companies scraping "vast amounts of data" as he announced new "temporary" limits on how many posts people can read.

Now unverified accounts will only be able to see 600 posts per day, and for "new" unverified accounts, just 300 in a day. The limits for verified accounts (presumably whether they're bought as a part of the Twitter Blue subscription, granted through an organization, or verification Elon forced on people like Stephen King, LeBron James, and anyone else with more than a million followers) still allow reading only a maximum of 6,000 posts per day.

Shortly after that, Musk tweeted that the rate limits would "soon" increase to 8,000 tweets for verified users, 800 for unverified, and 400 for new unverified accounts.

The limitations arrived one day after Twitter suddenly started blocking access for anyone who isn't logged in, which Musk claimed was necessary because "Several hundred organizations (maybe more) were scraping Twitter data extremely aggressively, to the point where it was affecting the real user experience."

The change is just one of several ways Musk has tried to monetize Twitter in the last several months. The company announced a three-tier API change in March that would begin

charging for the use of its API, just three months after finally rolling out the revamped \$8 per month Twitter Blue pay-for-verification scheme. Musk has also replaced himself with a new CEO, Linda Yaccarino. The former ad exec from NBC Universal has been hired to restore relationships with advertisers that had slashed their spending on Twitter.

As a private company, we know less about Twitter's financial situation than we did before Musk's purchase, but the hiring of Yaccarino reflected how important advertising revenue is to the business. Limiting access to the site cuts directly against the goal of creating opportunities to see the ad spots companies are paying for, but Musk's monopoly brain view of Twitter may be obscuring that.

But he didn't mention his decision to lay off more than half of Twitter's staff since taking over the company last fall, including people critical to maintaining its infrastructure. The haphazard layoffs meant the company even had to rehire some engineers who had been let go, and people have repeatedly warned that firing so many people would affect Twitter's stability.

Last November, an unnamed Twitter engineer interviewed by *MIT Technology Review* said that after the staff reductions, "Things will be broken more often. Things will be broken for longer periods of time. Things will be broken in more severe ways... They'll be small annoyances to start, but as the back-end fixes are being delayed, things will accumulate until people will eventually just give up." In the same article, site reliability engineer Ben Kreuger said, "I would expect to start seeing significant public-facing problems with the technology within six months." It has been seven.

Correction July 1st, 2023 4:55PM ET: A previous version of this story mentioned a response to Mr. Beast as being from Elon Musk himself. In fact, it was from an Elon Musk parody account. It has been removed. We regret the error.

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