Substack is getting tweets — err, ‘Notes’

Substack is getting a new tweet-like feature called “Notes,” the company announced on Wednesday. The feature will let users publish small posts about things like “posts, quotes, comments, images, and links,” according to a blog post from Substack co-founders Chris Best, Hamish McKenzie, and Jairaj Sethi.

Notes appear in their own dedicated tab, and the feed looks pretty similar to what you might see on Twitter or other social media platforms. On individual posts, for example, you can see familiar icons for likes, replies, and reshares (which Substack will be calling “restacks”). We asked if there is a character limit for Notes, but Substack spokesperson Helen Tobin declined to share details about that.

The Notes tab also has two feeds separating “Home” and “Subscribed.” The Home feed will show content from sources across your “extended Substack network,” according to Tobin, while Subscribed will show content from “a smaller universe of sources tied to your subscriptions.”

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Despite the similarities to a certain bird-themed (well, currently Doge-themed) social network, Substack’s co-founders argue that because the company’s business model is based on subscriptions, its platform offers healthier incentives to post quality content instead of things that are optimized to go viral. “Here, people get rewarded for respecting the trust

and attention of their audiences," they write. "The ultimate goal on this platform is to convert casual readers into paying subscribers."

Substack seems to be aware that letting people make tweet-like posts could lead to trolls, and the co-founders are vaguely promising some ways people will be able to protect against those. "As we develop Notes, we will focus on building a system that lets people control the contours and boundaries of their subscription universe so that it is easy to keep trolls out and even easier to let valuable contributors in," they write. Tobin declined to share more about what some of the tools in this system might be.

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There have been a lot of Twitter alternatives cropping up as of late, and while Twitter itself is getting worse by the day, it continues to hang around. However, with Notes, I do think Substack is well positioned to capture some people who are looking for a new place to post, especially if those people want to build a subscription business on Substack itself; creators on Twitter are still waiting for the Twitter Blue revenue sharing model Elon Musk promised in February, after all.

Notes will start rolling out in the "coming days," according to Wednesday's blog post from Substack, and everyone will get access to the feature, Tobin says.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/4/5/23670452/substack-notes-tweets-posts-twitter