

## The dismal state of Musk's Twitter

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He's done it. He's actually gone out and done it. Elon Musk finally bought Twitter. After 10 months and \$44 billion, Musk's takeover finally concluded last month.

The billionaire declared his intention to turn the platform into a "digital town square," a place where a wide range of beliefs could be expressed and

engaged. So with a month worth of hindsight behind us, what's Musk been up to?

His first day as CEO of Twitter, Musk posted a video of him walking into Twitter with a sink with the caption "Entering Twitter HQ [as Twitter CEO]... let that sink in!" A solid start.

Within 24 hours, Musk fired the CFO and general counsel for Twitter.

At the start of November, Twitter's verification system was revamped. Previously only approved and given out to public figures and trusted sources of information, the verification system was changed to a paid service at \$8 a month.

It was Musk's move to increase Twitter revenue streams, and it did. The New York Times estimated that 140,000 users have signed up for the new "Twitter Blue," netting Twitter \$1.12 million.

The new verification platform

however, also gave rise to trolls impersonating brands on the timeline. Eli Lilly announced that insulin was free, Chiquita Banana overthrew the Brazilian government and Mario flipped off my niece.

Rogue tweets saw affected stocks plummet. NPR reported that Twitter lost half of its top 100 advertisers. Those advertisers spent \$750 million on Twitter ads in 2022. In all the chaos, Musk paused Twitter blue subscriptions on Nov. 11. Musk then went on to reinstate many previously banned accounts, mostly public figures in fringe right wing political spheres.

Content moderators who were contracted by Twitter were laid off, leading to a sharp increase in hate speech and use of slurs on the platform. Twitter Blue relaunched on Nov. 29 with special "public figure" badges being manually approved under the old verification system.

Musk's tenure at Twitter has been rocky to say the least. For better or for worse, Twitter is in fact that digital town square Musk imagines it to be, with 237 million daily active users.

This town square continues to test society's boundaries on free speech. Advertisers certainly aren't willing to have their brands on Twitter under the new moderation policy. The rise of hate speech on the platform is not healthy for brand association.

Musk knows this and has begun to walk back on his previous free speech absolutism. In a brilliant show of reading the room, Musk banned former Grammy winning recording artist and current radicalized Nazi, Ye West, after his antisemitic meltdown.

Free speech isn't absolutely free. And that's a good thing actually. There's always been limits on the First Amendment.

In terms of legality, fraud, incitement of violence, defamation, threats and obscenity.

Ethically, I've always believed that if you have nothing nice to say you shouldn't say anything at all. Hate speech and the misinformation that fuels it only leads to the end of free speech and tolerance.

With the size of his

platform, Musk has a massive responsibility. One he seems to be taking like a rock to water. He's delicately trying to balance a shopping cart of fringe political figures celebrating his loose moderation while keeping enough advertisers to keep the already financially troubled company afloat. Musk's got his town square, and he's turned it into an open mic night.



PHOTO COURTESY OF @RAFAELSHIMUNOV ON TWITTER

## The future of the Xbox/PlayStation resale situation doesn't look hopeful

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On Nov. 10, 2020, the Xbox Series X and Xbox Series S released for \$499.99 and \$299.99, respectively. Two days later the PlayStation 5 released for \$499.99 and the digital edition for \$399.99.

Few people were fortunate enough to get one on release date, for it wasn't long before resellers started buying them en masse and reselling them for ridiculous prices. Some were even for as high as \$1500. Many people looking forward to the next generation of gaming were left empty handed or coughing up a staggering \$1000 to get one.

Two years later and we're still having to deal with these disgusting issues. The prices

are still marked up incredibly high, with some consoles going as high as \$800, \$900 or even \$1000.

Both Sony and Microsoft have taken measures, good and bad, to combat this.

In Japan, Sony supplies retailers with a special sticker that is to be broken when the PS5 is sold. This is to prevent the item from being resold as a "new" item.

This is an extremely weak attempt at fighting reselling. A simple torn sticker has not and will not stop a reseller from selling a PS5 at insanely marked up prices. I guess there's a reason this practice never left Japan.

Microsoft has a more viable solution, though it is not without its problems either.

In 2021, the company announced the "Console Purchase Pilot" program (why does Microsoft have the worst names for its stuff?). Users could sign up for the program and be able to purchase a next-gen Xbox via their Xbox One. Later on, the program was reopened to include the ability to purchase on Windows 10. It has not been reopened since 2021.

While this is a better system for ensuring only valuable customers get the new product,

it severely limits just who can purchase it.

For example, family and friends who are not very tech savvy and probably only own a phone could not purchase it as a gift for their loved ones. Christmas and birthday gifts are way too huge of a market to ignore for this kind of product, so it's understandable why it hasn't been reopened.

The best solution, which is one both companies have been doing recently, is to allow customers to sign up for invitations to buy the product. If the product is not in stock, customers can go directly to Microsoft's website, Sony's website or Amazon and request to be considered for an invite.

This direct-to-consumer method is by far the best solution, but it isn't without its flaws. The main flaw being that the decision process is totally random. There's nothing a customer can do to be on the waitlist. It may take weeks or even months before customers are considered for an invite, if at all.

Another possible solution is to limit the number of consoles a consumer can buy. While this is a good solution, it's not perfect. Some people may have

multiple other people they want to buy a next-gen console for.

For example, a Mother who has a son and daughter that live in different households would not be able to buy them each a new console. This issue, however, is rare, so the limitation is one that many (myself included) would welcome.

At this point, you may have asked yourself "Is all this reselling even legal?" The unfortunate answer is yes. There is no federal law against reselling, although there are certain states and countries that have laws against it.

The downside to these laws, however, is that they only apply to tickets. Nothing exists for other products.

As great as it might be to apply these laws to the PS5 and Xbox Series X, this would actually be disastrous for the economy.

Just think about how difficult it would be to find certain products if they weren't allowed to be resold. That old book that went out of print? Better hope there's a PDF online. That old game for a dead console? Time to dust off your pirate hat.

As horrible as the situation is, the direct-to-consumer method really is the best approach. The

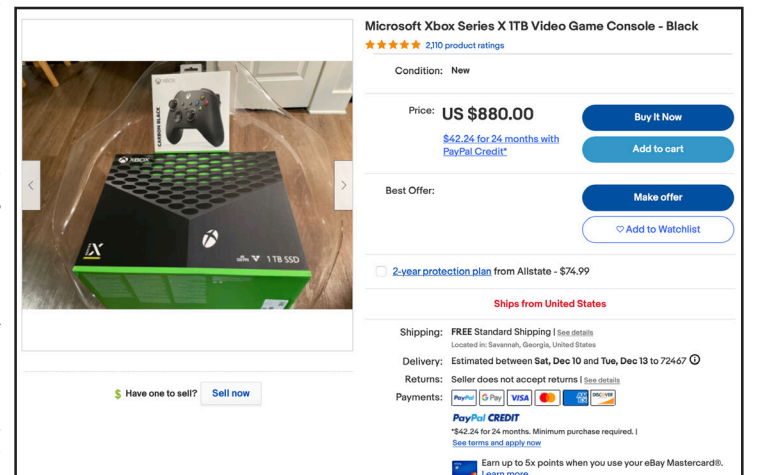


Photo by Jack Bond | Opinion Editor



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sad truth is that the next-gen consoles are still in very high demand, and ridiculous reselling will continue to be a problem

until demand dies down. Until then, all we can do is hop on the waitlist and hope for an invite.

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