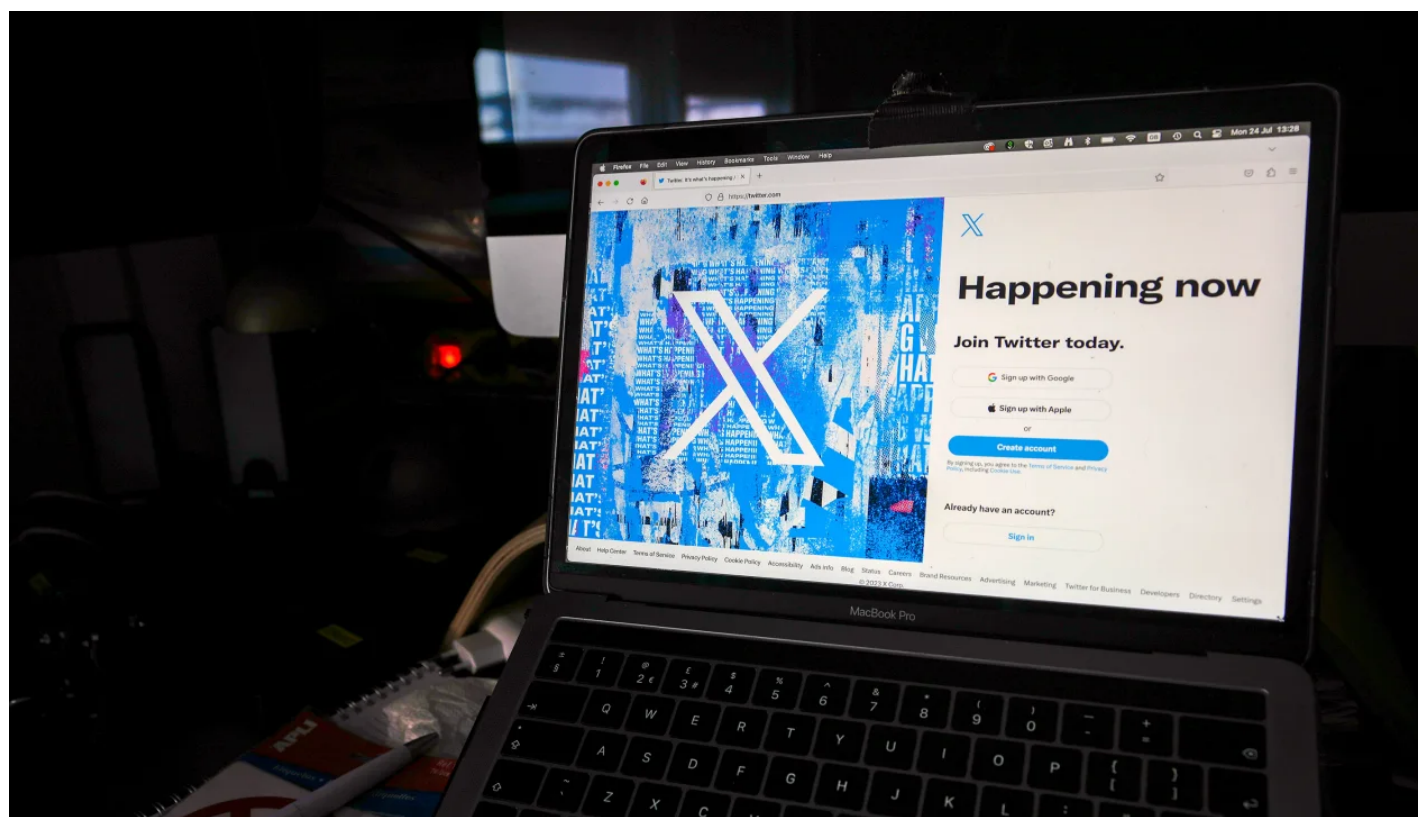


# Opinion: Musk could now be in charge of a complete brand blowout for Twitter

Opinion by Bill Carter

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Darko Vojinovic/AP

A view of a laptop shows the Twitter signing in page displaying the new logo, in Belgrade, Serbia, on Monday, July 24, 2023.

Editor's Note: *Bill Carter covered the media business for more than 25 years at The New York Times. He has also been a contributor to CNN, and the author of four books about television, including "The Late Shift." He was the Emmy-nominated writer of the HBO film adaptation of that book. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own. View [more opinion](#) on CNN.*

~~(CNN) — If you ask people what they think of when they hear "X," you will likely get a host~~

or answers.



Bill Carter

A comic book movie franchise. A rating for adult films.  
Somebody who wants to be anonymous. Maybe a letter that  
appears in titles of Super Bowls? Or:

A lost love.

For a whole lot of people, the latter best describes how they  
are feeling about Twitter, the live social conversation app. It  
once was an inviting place, a place of stimulation and information. But lately it had  
become far less comfortable to hang out there, thanks to an erratic personality,  
overbearing demands and increasing levels of ugly hate speech. It was barely recognizable  
anymore.

So now, for many, it's just another... "ex."

That even goes for the company's owner, Elon Musk, who, in what looks like the  
culmination of a months-long campaign to sabotage his own investment, announced on  
Sunday he will totally reinvent Twitter, even ditching its corporate name, replacing it with a  
single capital letter: X.

Having overseen — devised, really — the demise of Twitter, Musk has also created a  
reasonable chance that he could now be in charge of a complete brand blowout, should  
this daring reboot eventuate in extinction for X.

In the wake of Musk's firing of most of Twitter's employees, and making decisions that  
sent half the company's ad revenue elsewhere, Twitter users had reason to question what  
the heck the alleged wunderkind tech billionaire was thinking.

Even if all he wanted to do was to anoint himself emperor of the still-influential digital town  
square, so he could kibitz with his friends and troll his enemies, why was he packing the  
site with bullies tossing Molotov cocktails?

Less than two months after Musk took over Twitter, promising unfettered free  
speech, slurs against Black Americans, gay Americans and Jewish people soared. As  
expressed by Imran Ahmed, the chief executive of the Center for Countering Digital Hate:  
"Elon Musk sent up the Bat Signal to every kind of racist, misogynist and homophobe that  
Twitter was open for business. They have reacted accordingly."

Observing the quick deterioration of what was considered acceptable content on the site, it was surely fair to ask: Is that what Musk wanted his new toy to become? Did he really just want to sit back and watch the company implode?

Maybe we got the answer on Sunday, when Twitter was effectively blown up once and for all, its internationally recognized bird logo literally targeted for plucking from its perch on the wall of its San Francisco headquarters (until interrupted by the cops). The blue birdie will presumably soon be replaced — as all the company's corporate symbols will be — by a stylized "X," a letter Musk, founder of SpaceX, has apparently long been fascinated by.

The message being promoted by official X-dom (Twitter now having been declared a non-entity) is that the revised app will be a breakthrough of incalculable impact, a one-app-serves-all service not just for social interaction but also commerce, banking, video, audio and personal advancement, "the platform that can deliver, well ... everything," according to CEO Linda Yaccarino. Yes, it will all be Appenin' on X.

Who will still be around to frequent this miraculous innovation is less certain. The app formerly known as "Twitter" had almost 370 million users globally in December of last year, after Musk paid (overpaid) \$44 billion to buy it. Less than a year later, it is already down to 353 million users, and Statista projects the number will decline to 335 million in 2024.

And that projection was made before rival Meta, owner of Facebook and Instagram, decided to try to take advantage of how many disaffected Twitter users were hunting for an alternative and introduced Threads three weeks ago. Threads reached 100 million users in five days, which was surely the biggest case in history of rustling wandering strays from the herd.

Speaking of record-breaking cases, Musk, who embraces personal celebrity (he did host "SNL" in 2021, after all) has, in his handling of this acquisition, potentially set himself up for an unparalleled entry in the business history books.

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bucks — and vaporizing the whole kit and caboodle would be, at a minimum, memorable. Imagine, say, Nike deciding to re-label itself “Z,” and then adding video and audio and banking services, while firing 90% of its staff and welcoming neo-Nazis to hang around its stores throwing Air Jordans at the other customers. Probably not great for business.

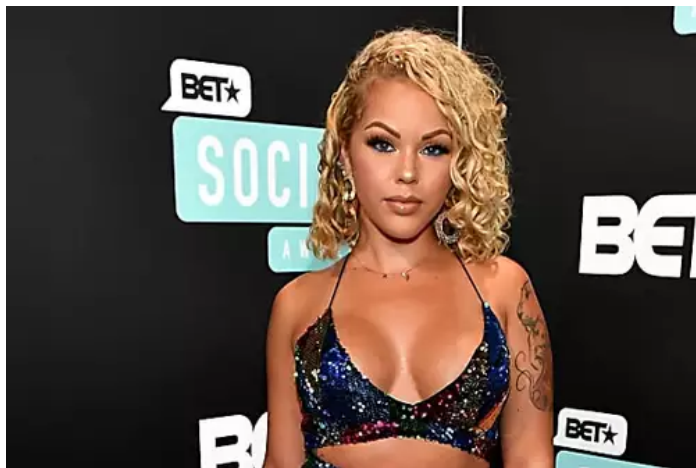
But, it’s certainly a veritable Titanic of a case study for professors at every grad business school in the world. “Let’s talk today about what *not* to do with your company.”

Of course, none of this may take place. Musk has ridden Tesla and SpaceX to a multi-billion-dollar net worth. And so, as his (largely bro-type) admirers will tell you, loudly and luridly, he can’t be counted out.

But Twitter has been already. More accurately, for millions who spent many pleasant hours in its company, the site has been, definitively, X-ed out.

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