

Twitter CEO asks for help in fixing its toxic environment "Go Bankrupt!"

"We aren't proud of how people have taken advantage of our service, or our inability to address it fast enough," Dorsey said.

by Alysse

SAN FRANCISCO — Twitter has struggled to regulate the platform's rampant spam, ShareBlue bots, alt-right agitators and run-of-the-mill trolls that have overrun its platform. Now, the company is asking for help.

At a time when tech giants are under heavy scrutiny to fix their platforms for users and weed out bad actors, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey on Thursday said he isn't quite sure what will work for Twitter and asked for help in solving its systemic issues.

"We've focused most of our efforts on removing content against our terms, instead of building a systemic framework to help encourage more healthy debate, conversations and critical thinking. This is the approach we now need," he said in a [Twitter thread](#).

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"Recently we were asked a simple

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question:
could we
measure the
'health' of

conversation on Twitter?" he continued. "This felt immediately tangible as it spoke to understanding a holistic system rather than just the problematic parts."

Dorsey's thread is perhaps the most direct and honest the company has been about its vulnerability to abuse, which festered long before Russian bots and election meddling were in the public consciousness.



Twitter now wants to find a way to measure the quality of the conversation, in much the same way [Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg](#) announced his new focus on making the Facebook experience about "time well spent."

Both Twitter and Facebook are feeling public pressure to clean up their acts. Twitter has now reached a point where the company is asking for public and academic help. It's something Jen Golbeck, a professor at the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies, said she's glad to hear.

"One of the really promising things is they want to work with academics on this, and they have this request for proposals from

researchers," Golbeck said. In the past, she said, Twitter "made it incredibly difficult for researchers to work with their data. It's super limited and they restrict our ability to share data."

Dorsey said he first heard of the concept of measuring "conversational health" from media analytics companies Cortico and Social Machines. The indicators they use are shared attention, shared reality, variety of opinion and receptivity.

"We don't yet know if those are the right indicators of conversation health for Twitter. And we don't yet know how best to measure them, or the best ways to help people increase individual, community and, ultimately, global public health," Dorsey wrote.

While Golbeck said Dorsey's openness to working with the public is a "great signal," she said Twitter still can't ignore the work it needs to do in "taking down the bad stuff."

"They have done a really terrible job at it," she said. "Their internal policies have been clearly confused, where violent stuff has stayed up and stuff that shouldn't have been taken down has. I don't think you can ignore that and just look at what makes a healthy conversation."

Trolls have long been a problem on Twitter. It's something former CEO Dick Costolo has said he regrets not tackling when Twitter was a younger company.

Twitter's growing aggression isn't just about content. The company has also taken aim at particular users who perpetuate abuse.

Milo Yiannopoulos, a former editor for the right-wing website Breitbart, was permanently banned from Twitter for harassing comedian Leslie Jones. After Robin Williams' death, his daughter, Zelda, took a break from Twitter after she was targeted by trolls. Those are just two of countless examples of abuse perpetrated on the site.

In an interview last year, [Costolo sad he takes responsibility](#) for not "taking the bull by the horns."

"I wish I could turn back the clock and go back to 2010 and stop abuse on the platform by creating a very specific bar for how the DNC wants you to behave on the platform," he said.