

Jack Dorsey pledges Twitter will improve blue check mark verification system

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A better version of the verification system is coming soon to Twitter, according to CEO Jack Dorsey.

Dorsey made the comment during a Periscope livestream Thursday in which he discussed the San Francisco company's efforts to measure the "health" of public conversation, Twitter's latest effort to promote civil debate on the platform.

Twitter is redesigning verification so that "people can verify more facts about themselves and we don't have to be the judge or imply any bias on our part," Dorsey said.

He hinted that the overhaul would be in place before the U.S. midterm elections to verify the identities of candidates.

A Twitter spokesman declined to provide any details.

Fixing the verification system is one of the steps Twitter says it's taking to tackle hate speech, abuse and misinformation on the social media service.

Verification, which awards blue check marks to confirm the identity of a Twitter user, was suspended last fall after the social media service came under fire for verifying white supremacist Jason Kessler, who used Twitter to organize rallies such as Unite the Right's torch-wielding march in Charlottesville, Va.

Twitter originally began verifying accounts to distinguish individuals in public life—celebrities, politicians, journalists and others—from impersonators.

Anyone can apply to be verified on Twitter, yet the decision-making process is opaque. Twitter says blue check marks are not intended to be an endorsement but they have become status symbols that confer perks such as appearing at the top of searches.

"The main problem is we use it to mean identity, but because of the way it was originally started, where it was only given to certain very large public figures, celebrities, etc., it came to have a lot of status associated with it, as well," David Gasca, one of Twitter's product directors, said on the Periscope livestream. "They think of it as credibility. Twitter stands behind this person. Twitter believes that this person is someone that—what they're saying is great and authentic, which is not at all what we mean by the check mark."

Twitter has verified the accounts of some of the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., who have spoken out on gun control after a shooter killed 17 people.

Dorsey said Twitter would be more open about decisions it makes in the wake of accusations of bias and censorship from conservatives.

"We have a lot of work ahead, it's not going to be overnight. We're going to be as open as we can," he said. "That's going to be uncomfortable for us in many ways, but we want to be very open and very vulnerable with you all about what we're facing and what our challenges are."

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