

Twitter seeks help measuring 'health' of its world

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Twitter is asking for outside experts to assess the health of its platform by measuring the impact of abuse and manipulation

Twitter on Thursday asked for outside help assessing the health of its world of rapid-fire commentary in the hope of finding cures for trolls, bots, echo chambers and other ills.

Pressure has been building on Twitter—as well as Facebook and Google—to prevent malicious uses of the online platform ranging from harassment to spreading hoaxes and manipulating elections.

"We have witnessed abuse, harassment, troll armies, manipulation through bots and human-coordination, misinformation campaigns, and increasingly divisive echo chambers," Twitter co-founder and chief executive Jack Dorsey said in a thread of tweets Thursday.

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

A Twitter statement said the social network wants "to partner with outside experts" to get a sense of the health of the Twittersphere by measuring the impact of abuse, spam and manipulation.

The move is the latest by Twitter aimed at curbing disinformation, propaganda and provocation.

Last month, the San Francisco-based one-to-many messaging service launched a crackdown on accounts powered by software "bots" which can artificially amplify a person or cause and which have been accused of manipulating the social network during the 2016 US election.

Twitter said the move was intended to rid the service of spam-spewing automated accounts, and not aimed at people using the service according to the rules.

Since the election, Twitter and others discovered how "bots" had been used to sow political divisions and spread hoaxes.

While Twitter tactics have mostly involved removing content violating its terms of use, it has been accused of "apathy, censorship, political

bias, and optimizing for our business and share price instead of the concerns of society," Dorsey maintained.

"This is not who we are, or who we ever want to be," he said.

Twitter is asking outside experts to pitch proposals for ways to measure the service's health by the quality of debates, conversations, and critical thinking.

"We simply can't and don't want to do this alone," Dorsey said.

Twitter asked proposals to be submitted by April 13, promising to fund any that are selected in a process expected to take a couple of months.

"If you want to improve something, you have to be able to measure it," Dorsey said.

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