

# 86. Blue Checks

**\*\*Chapter Summary: Blue Checks, Twitter, November 2–10, 2022\*\***

In early November 2022, Twitter navigated tumultuous changes under James Musk's ownership. Yoel Roth and the content moderation team, despite facing layoffs, continued their critical work amidst advertiser unrest and trolling issues. Roth worked on a new misgendering policy while Musk introduced "Community Notes," a rebranded version of the "Bird Watch" feature to allow public content moderation.

The pressure on Twitter escalated as advertisers began pulling out, influenced by a boycott movement against the platform. Musk responded with threats of naming and shaming companies withdrawing their advertisements, demonstrating an aggressive stance against what he perceived as immoral actions by boycott advocates.

The situation intensified when Musk, in a deeply authoritarian move, demanded Roth to ban users advocating for advertiser boycotts, contradicting Twitter's stance on free speech and prompting Roth to consider resignation. Their disagreement highlighted the ethical dilemmas and internal conflicts within Twitter, marking a significant governance challenge.

Moreover, Musk's initiative, Twitter Blue, aimed at introducing a subscription model offering blue verification marks for a fee, encountered both conceptual and practical challenges. It aimed at reducing fake accounts and generating revenue but faced potential exploitation by impersonators. The implementation was rushed and chaotic, leading to widespread impersonation and misinformation, notably impacting stock prices of misrepresented companies.

Musk's authoritarian management approach and impractical strategies led to operational turmoil. His ultimatum for staff to return to office work and confrontational interactions over policy decisions revealed a discordant leadership style, culminating in Roth's resignation after challenging Musk's directives and expressing concerns over the Twitter Blue model's viability, especially regarding compliance with Apple's policies.

Roth's departure underscored deep internal conflicts and Musk's contentious leadership, adversely affecting Twitter's operations and reputation. This episode demonstrates the complexities and pitfalls of rapid organizational change, highlighting the need for balanced governance and thoughtful decision-making.