



Peter Clowes @peterclowes Fri Nov 18 04:17:00 +0000 2022

Why I left @twitter or rather why I did not sign up for “extremely hardcore” Twitter 2.0

■

It's not because I want Twitter to fail or think the site is about to collapse. Some think it will, maybe but I dunno. I wasn't in infra and those people were incredible, the systems are resilient.

Remember what happened when the queen died while SMF1 was down? Ya, nothing

I want Twitter to succeed, I want it to be better than ever. I spent a couple years of my life building a small piece of it. I hope it is still chugging away for a long time!

I am sure others feel this is their life's work. The idea that some would sabotage it makes me sad.

I didn't leave because I hate @elonmusk. I definitely didn't agree with many of his decisions or how they were carried out but I also understood and respected others.

I don't know him and if someone tells me to hate a stranger I say “no thanks”.

I didn't leave because of the 50% company wide layoff that missed me. We all knew a layoff was coming. Prior management would likely have cut too shallow at first and then had to do multiple rounds. I think that would have sucked regardless.

I left because I no longer knew what I was staying for. Previously I was staying for the people, the vision, and of course the money (lets all be honest). All of those were radically changed or uncertain.

Obviously, a 50% cut is hard but my org was cut at 85%+ on the first round. (An admitted mistake by leadership when they were trying to retain the survivors) I was the last one standing in multiple large slack rooms and JIRA boards. The office was depressing.

Nevertheless myself and others were banding together, triaging services, updating on-call, literally saying to my wife on Tuesday “I'll give it my best shot what do I have to lose?”. Then Wednesday offered a clean exit and 80% of the remaining were gone. 3/75 engineers stayed.

If I stayed I would have been on-call constantly with little support for an indeterminate amount of time on several additional complex systems I had no experience in. Maybe for the right vision I could have dug deep and done mind numbing work for awhile. But that's the thing...

There was no vision shared with us. No 5 year plan like at Tesla. Nothing more than what anyone can see on Twitter. It allegedly is coming for those who stayed but the ask was blind faith and required signing away the severance offer before seeing it. Pure loyalty test.

Additionally there were rumors the new vision might be radically different. Not just subscription based but possibly having adult content be a core component of subscription offerings. That is a BIG departure and one I wouldn't get behind.

<https://www.wired.com/story/elon-musk-adult-content-sex-twitter-content-moderation/amp>

I don't know how concrete those rumors are but I definitely saw things internally that made them seem not too far fetched. Again there was no communication from leadership to dispel them or set the vision.

Finally, there was no retention plan for those that stayed. No clear upside for sticking it through the storm on the horizon. Just “trust us” style verbal promises. But tweeps overall were untrusting after the 7 months of acquisition drama, recent

tweets, and leaks etc.

So my friends are gone, the vision is murky, there is a storm coming and a no financial upside. What would you do? Would you sacrifice time with your kids over the holidays for vague assurances and the opportunity to make a rich person richer or would you take the out?

To be clear I love hard work, I do well with chaos, but I like doing it with people I like, for a mission I care about and ideally with significant upside potential (financial or otherwise) to balance downside risk.

I just want to know what I am signing up for (besides pain).

(Side note: Being left solely to put out fires and keep services running isn't exactly what I dream of doing as an engineer)

Deeply thankful for everyone I worked with (ex-tweeps and those that stayed) and the users we serve. I am cheering for you all and hope you succeed.