

# [***Truth Social made Trump richer and gave him a new megaphone. But it's struggling as a social media site***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BMB-3921-DY7V-G00J-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; When he's not raising horses or working at a construction site, 28-year-old Nick Mirtschink says he spends "a lot" of time on Truth Social, the social media platform started by [*Donald Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/president-donald-trump-45).

So does Bree Duke, a retiree from northwest Georgia, who said she regularly checks in with Trump's frequent posts, called "truths."

"I love it," Duke told CNN. "I have it on my TV, and I have it on my phone."

Mirtschink and Duke shared their glowing reviews of the app while attending [*Trump's recent rally in Rome, Georgia*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/election-campaign-news-03-09-24/index.html), where regular users of Truth Social were easy to come by. Outside of his MAGA movement, though, the social media site is struggling to find a wider audience. It is hemorrhaging users, and its traffic has plummeted. There were roughly 860,000 accounts active on the site as of November - a tiny blip compared with more mainstream platforms.

And yet, on Friday, Digital World Acquisition Corp. [*approved a lucrative merger with Trump Media & Technology Group*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/22/business/trump-truth-social-dwac-shares/index.html), Truth Social's owner - one that is expected to deliver a multibillion-dollar windfall for the former president just as mounting legal troubles and judgments have compromised his business empire, personal wealth and campaign finances. It won't bring immediate relief, though, as Trump is restricted from selling his shares for six months.

It's a critical milestone for the social media site as well as for Trump, providing a path for the former real estate tycoon's return to Wall Street. The company will trade under the ticker DJT, putting Trump's initials alongside some of the most iconic brands and corporations in the world just as Trump Tower once did.

For Trump, whose animated and antagonistic Twitter presence helped him chart a path to the presidency, the social media site has also become a new megaphone for his unvarnished opinions. His most devoted followers, political reporters and even his own staff and advisers rely on the site for a window into his latest thinking, which he shares across dozens of posts a day.

But as Trump's foray as a social media mogul enters its third year, the app's long-term viability - and purpose - remain unclear. Truth Social is not a serious threat to compete with, let alone eclipse, X, Facebook or YouTube - it's not among the 100 most downloaded social media applications in the Apple App store - nor has it separated itself as their conservative alternative. Trump Media's management warned last year that the company was at risk of insolvency without a merger, and most analysts are skeptical of its current valuation above $6 billion.

"It's grossly overvalued," Jay Ritter, a finance professor at the University of Florida, told CNN this week. "It qualifies as a meme stock for which the price is divorced from fundamental value."

Instead, the sky-high appraisal appears closely tied to Trump's political comeback attempt. But Truth Social has not proved it can survive, let alone thrive, unless the nation's gaze is affixed on the site's most famous user.

"Truth Social's clout is driven very much if not entirely by Donald Trump's popularity," said Josephine Lukito, who researches the intersection of ***politics*** and social media at the University of Texas at Austin. "Without him, I don't think there's a viable path forward for it."

Early optimism

Truth Social [*launched in early 2022*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/21/tech/trump-truth-social-app-store/index.html), a year after Twitter, now known as X, and Facebook had [*locked Trump out of his accounts*](https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/08/tech/trump-twitter-ban/index.html) over his incitement of the [*January 6, 2021, US Capitol attack*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/january-6-insurrection). Both platforms have since reinstated Trump's account, though he posts almost exclusively to Truth Social.

Trump recently told a South Carolina audience he bought the name of his app for $2,100 from "a guy."

"I would've paid millions," Trump claimed to the crowd.

Some conservatives, looking for an alternative to mainstream social media sites seen as hostile to their point of view, initially seemed eager to embrace Truth Social. A 2021 survey found that 3 in 5 Republicans [*expected to use the new site*](https://twitter.com/MorningConsult/status/1453388015682867205).

"Get ready!" Trump wrote in [*his first Truth Social post*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/17/tech/trump-app-beta/index.html). "Your favorite president will see you soon."

But the hype for the app exceeded actual usage. Three months after it launched, only 2% of Americans reported regularly using Truth Social to get their news, [*Pew Research found*](https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2022/10/06/americans-are-more-aware-of-some-alternative-social-media-sites-than-others-but-overall-very-few-get-news-there/), in line with other niche conservative social media alternatives such as Gettr and Rumble.

Activity on the app has capsized since its early peaks. The site's monthly active users on iOS and Android devices are down 39% year-over-year, according to Similarweb data shared with CNN earlier this month. Visits to the site on mobile and desktop have plummeted as well by nearly 29% during that stretch.

The app itself is somewhat clunky and not without technological problems. It appeared to go down during [*President Joe Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/joe-biden)'s [*State of the Union address*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/08/politics/biden-state-of-union-analysis/index.html) when Trump promised to provide live commentary.

CNN attempted to reach Truth Social for comment through an email address on its website. The email bounced back.

Trump Media CEO Devin Nunes, a former Republican congressman, said in a statement last month after US regulators allowed for the merger: "Moving forward, we aim to accelerate our work to build a free speech highway outside the stifling stranglehold of Big Tech."

Trump insists Truth Social is "on fire," as he has put it. He regularly promotes the app at his rallies and during interviews. For example, Trump recently plugged Truth Social while recounting for an audience his post in support of in vitro fertilization treatments after an Alabama Supreme Court ruling led some clinics to halt [*access to some IVF services*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/20/politics/alabama-special-election-abortion-rights-ivf/index.html) in the state.

"The ultimate joy in life is a beautiful, healthy, wonderful baby," Trump said, before adding: "I put that message out on a thing called Truth Social. Has anybody been tuning in lately? Hot. Truth Social's hot."

Many Republican politicians and conservative have not joined Truth Social or they post infrequently. Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin's last post was in July 2022. Popular conservative podcast hosts Megyn Kelly, Ben Shapiro and Glenn Beck don't appear to have active accounts. South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott only recently joined Truth Social - just as his name surfaced as a potential running mate to Trump.

Even those who have embraced Truth Social continue to be active on its competitor platforms - including those in Trump's inner circle.

"His surrogates are very active on X. They're active on other platforms," said Matt Terrill, who was chief of staff for the 2016 presidential campaign of Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, another prolific social media user. "It's a recognition that is where a lot of people are getting their news."

To his supporters, the venture is further evidence of Trump's business acumen, a reputation he built during a career working in real estate and as a reality television personality.

"It's brilliant because by the sheer virtue that we're having this conversation right now, it's impressive," Paul Leslie, a writer who attended Trump's Georgia rally told CNN. "You create your own social media platform and then people even talk about the fact that, 'Oh, you're not on Twitter.' It's just another source of press, and as anybody can clearly see, there's never been a more impressive public relations genius than Donald Trump."

Trump Social

On any given day, Trump will post dozens of times to Truth Social, providing a running stream of commentary on his legal troubles, sharing favorable poll numbers, responding to negative coverage and weighing in on the political disputes of the day.

It's on Truth Social that Trump first commented on former South Carolina Gov. [*Nikki Haley*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/06/politics/nikki-haley-2024-presidential-race/index.html)'s exit from the race.

On Friday alone, Trump attacked the judge and state attorney general in one of his legal cases, expressed support for Cuban protesters, endorsed an Arizona state Senate candidate, shared eight videos of him speaking straight to camera and suggested he has enough money to cover the $464 million civil fraud judgment in New York - a potentially troubling admission for his legal team.

The posts replicate Trump's past social media usage - and style; he often posts in all-caps - but with only a fraction of the reach. On X, the site formerly known as Twitter now owned by billionaire Elon Musk, Trump has 87 million followers - 13 times his audience on Truth Social.

"It's safe to say that Truth Social has not broken into the mainstream," said Joshua Tucker, co-director of the New York University Center for Social Media and ***Politics***. "It's a place for smaller groups of conservatives to congregate and for Trump to speak to some of his supporters."

To some of those supporters, that's a feature, and not a bug.

"I think that's definitely a good thing, him being off of Twitter," Mirtschink said at the Georgia rally. "Because Twitter has a bunch of Democrats on there."

Kurt Holtzclaw, a 20-year-old construction worker and Trump supporter, acknowledged having to sift through a fair amount of Truth Social content from conspiratorial accounts that may be blocked on other platforms.

"I like to get my information from a wide variety of sources," Holtzclaw said. "But I like to get his point of view."

Where Truth Social has succeeded has mostly benefited one person: Trump. As the former president reemerged as the front-runner for the Republican nomination, Truth Social gained considerably more mentions in news coverage from reporters mining the site for Trump's thoughts on the race, said Lukito, the University of Texas professor. That has only accelerated since Trump became the presumptive GOP nominee.

"One of the misconceptions is that what's important is how big is it going to get relative to Twitter or how much money it's earning," Lukito said. "The reality is he's winning because he's able to successfully leverage media coverage through Truth Social. Most people learn about it not because they're on the platform but because they see it in the media."

Trump recently acknowledged this phenomenon after Jimmy Kimmel made fun of the former president's commentary of his performance hosting the Academy Awards.

"He ends up reading my truth. E (sic) said this guy's even dumber than I thought," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "The thing went viral. It's been all over the world now, and all he had to do was keep his mouth shut."

Still, even some of his supporters long for the days when Trump's posts reached a broader audience.

"Trump would tweet and, oh boy, was everyone offended at that," Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene said at the recent Trump rally. "I tell you what, I'd give anything for some good old Trump tweets. Hey, you know, you can find him on Truth Social. You know where he's at."

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