

# Elon Musk abruptly cancels Don Lemon's X talk show hours after interview

Publication Date: 2024-03-13

Author: Nick Robins-Early

Section: Technology

Tags: X, Elon Musk, CNN, Internet, Television industry, TV news, news

Article URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/mar/13/elon-musk-cancel-don-lemon-interview>



The former CNN anchor Don Lemon announced on Wednesday that Elon Musk had abruptly terminated a deal to exclusively host Lemon's new talkshow on X, formerly Twitter. Lemon said in a post on the platform that Musk cancelled the partnership hours after the two of them had filmed an interview, which was set to be part of the show's debut episode. Lemon said Musk texted him, "contract terminated". "His commitment to a global town square where all questions can be asked and all ideas can be shared seems not to include questions of him from people like me," Lemon said in the post. Musk did not deny axing Lemon's show. The billionaire tweeted, "His approach was basically just 'CNN, but on social media', which doesn't work, as evidenced by the fact that CNN is dying. And, instead of it being the real Don Lemon, it was really just Jeff Zucker talking through Don, so lacked authenticity. All this said, Lemon/Zucker are of course welcome to build their viewership on this platform along with everyone else." Musk has previously called himself a "free speech absolutist". Lemon stated in his Wednesday post that he would still air the interview with Musk on YouTube and on X, and included the side-eye emoji. "While Elon goes back on his word, I will be doubling down on my commitment to free speech," Lemon stated. Musk's company first announced the talkshow deal with Lemon in January, as X sought to venture more into video content and lure big-name hosts to the platform. The Don Lemon Show was set to air three 30-minute episodes a week. Lemon was one of CNN's marquee stars before the network fired him in a surprise turn last April, following his internal disputes with other staff and a failed run as morning show host. When Lemon announced his departure from CNN in a post on X, Musk asked in a reply whether the host would consider doing his show on the platform and claimed that the "audience is bigger" than CNN. Musk has similarly hosted the former Fox News host Tucker Carlson's show on the platform after the network fired Carlson last year. "Elon publicly encouraged me to join X with a new show, saying I would have his 'full support', and that his 'digital town square is for all'," Lemon said on Wednesday. "I took Elon and his management team's word that they, for the first time, were interested in working directly with new and diverse voices." Musk has struggled to attract major talent to X, as he has tried to pivot the platform toward video content and get influencers such as the popular YouTuber Mr Beast to upload their material. Musk also announced last week that the company was launching a long-form video streaming app that will be available on smart televisions. Musk branching X out to video content is one of several ways the platform is attempting to recoup dwindling advertising revenues. A string of major companies stopped advertising on the platform in the months following Musk's takeover, as researchers documented a rise in extremist content on X including racism and antisemitism.