

# How Companies Can Handle A Tweeting CEO

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It goes without saying that Tesla CEO Elon Musk is a one-of-a-kind guy, and this is no less applicable to his Twitter usage. He responds to journalists and other random followers at will, shares memes, and has used it to announce deals for which Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) funding had not yet been secured, and even mocks the SEC after reaching a settlement with the authority.

Now, says the SEC, Musk has broken his commitment to leave any potentially market-shifting tweets about his firm reviewed before letting them out through the interwebs.

With regards to this last point, Musk is not alone. Communications experts would have all CEOs work closely with their communications teams in the drafting, guiding, advising and reviewing of the top boss' tweets. This is especially true of the risky or most client-pertinent variety.

"Very few CEOs hold the keys to publish on their own," says Craig Mullaney, partner at communications firm Brunswick, "that would be very rare, and it implies a level of digital communications fluency and competency that most frankly don't have." That's why Mullaney's firm founded Facebook's Global Executive Program, where CEOs and other high profile figures are given social media training.

Indeed, the most prevalent practice for companies is for a communications team to draft or suggest posts which are then signed off by the CEO.

"Most CEOs are fairly conservative and gun shy and frankly, rightfully afraid of Twitter," says Vivian Schiller, CEO of

the Civil Media Foundation and a former executive editor in residence at public relations firm Weber Shandwick and head of news at Twitter. Still, “there are certainly exceptions and you can sort of feel it. It can feel spontaneous and off the cuff – you can tell if someone is drafting their own tweets.”

This last point is especially pertinent for firms looking to build a social media rapport with their customers: tweets should not read like a press release, and a certain level of voice and personality must shine through in order to be effective. This is the tricky balancing act for CEOs, and is rarely perfected.

The wonderful thing about Twitter is it’s so personal and authentic,” says Schiller, “and the terrible thing about Twitter is it’s so personal and authentic. It really cuts both ways.” This is certainly the case with Musk. With more than 25 million followers, his eccentric tweets of memes, midnight responses and questionable business-related announcements have drawn the attention of the SEC. Still, this might still be good news for the Tesla [communications](#) team; moreover, they may have already given Musk the green light.



**About the Author:** [Ronn Torossian](#) is CEO of 5WPR, a leading PR Agency. He recently spoke at [Harvard Business School](#) on [Crisis PR](#).