

For the tech giants, security is increasingly a paid feature | Nieman Journalism Lab

By Joshua Benton

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For more than a decade, the conventional wisdom has been that a social platform needs to be free to its users to succeed. It's a [two-sided network problem](#): Social networks need a critical mass of users to be of much value to anyone. And that user base has to be big enough to attract advertisers' attention. Any sort of paywall gets in the way of the scale required to create a revenue megalith like Facebook.

Elon Musk, as he is wont to do, challenged that conventional wisdom when he made Twitter's blue "Verified" check — previously evidence of actual verification — [into a paid product](#). Verification was initially intended as a confirmation of identity, the sort of small mark that makes a platform *sliightly* more trustworthy and secure. But it became some weird marker of status to some of the internet's worst people, and so it became an \$8 SKU.

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