

All about Elon Musk's life, career path and success

Isn't there no reason when the whole world calls Elon Musk real-life Iron Man or compares him to Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller? The successes he will achieve will be the most obvious explanation.

About the author : The article is translated from shared by Tim Urban posted on Wait But Why - a very popular website with insightful articles with vivid illustrations on many topics. In June 2015, Urban had a series of exclusive interviews with Elon Musk and both discussed the importance of sustainable transportation development, solar energy and the future of space exploration. . The translation below is part of a series of articles about Elon Musk, Tesla and SpaceX compiled by Tim Urban. Interested readers can visit [here](#) to read the full text of this interesting document.

For those who do not know, I want to help you find out more about the path to make Elon Musk a self-made billionaire, as well as a real prototype of Tony Stark's character in the movie Iron Man (Iron Man). However, first of all, let Richard Branson explain briefly:

Regardless of what skeptics say cannot be done, Elon stands up and does it. Do you remember the 1990s? Whenever we need to order an item, we have to call and read our credit card number to the seller - even though we don't know who they are? At that time, Elon envisioned something called PayPal. Your Tesla Motors and SolarCity companies are turning their dream of a clean, new energy into reality . SpaceX is opening the way to explore the universe . It's a paradox when Elon just trying to improve this planet and building a spacecraft to help people leave it - Richard Branson, chairman of Virgin, ranked fifth in the list of Britain's richest entrepreneurs and author of the autobiography "Road to the big sea" sound .



As for me, I just saw an issue of Elon Musk being this "accidental" guy who has a foot in many areas: automotive, aerospace, solar power, energy storage, satellite, transportation. move on the ground at high speed and put people on foot to many other planets.

Perhaps, Zeus is much less stressful.

Elon Musk's career path

Elon Musk was born in 1971 in South Africa in a family with an engineer father and mother as a nutritionist and model. Having spent an unhappy childhood and unable to get along with friends at school, Musk chose to become a "nerd" boy. Kimbal - his younger brother - has revealed that Musk often reads books for up to 10 hours a day - primarily science fiction and then real science books. In the fourth grade, Musk spent most of his time devouring Encyclopedia Britannica (Britannica Encyclopedia).

What you can clearly see when learning about the Elon Musk biography is that he always thinks of people as computers and, most literally, we really are. The hardware of a human being is the body and the brain. Software - that's the way of thinking, the system of values, habits and personalities. And learning, according to Musk, is simply the process of *"downloading data and algorithms into the brain"*. Musk is too disappointed about studying in traditional classes and he finds sitting listening to the teacher explain something that is a *"download speed with super slow data" process*. Therefore, at that time, most of what he knew was thanks to reading books.

Elon Musk was immersed in his second passion when he was 9 years old when he was first exposed to a Commodore VIC-20 computer, including 5 kilobytes of memory and a programming manual to help users recover this skill for 6 months. However, the 9-year-old boy with the innate intelligent brain completed it in just 3 days. At the age of 12, Musk personally designed a video game called Blastar with the knowledge he had accumulated (Musk told me it was a *"mediocre game . but better than Flappy Bird"*) . In 1983, Blastar was sold to a computer magazine for \$ 500 (equivalent to about \$ 1,200) - not bad for a boy just 12 years old.

Musk has never felt much connection with his homeland, such as not being able to integrate with the Afrikaner culture (white Europeans settling in South Africa in the early stages of exploitation). geography) and he considers it a "nightmare" country for people who dream of starting a business. However, he considered Silicon Valley as a "promised land" and at the age of 17, he decided to leave South Africa forever. Since her mother is Canadian, Musk's immigration to the country is quite easy. A few years later, through a college transfer program to the University of Pennsylvania, he arrived in the United States.



At university time, Musk started thinking about what he wanted to do with his life by asking the question: *"What has the greatest impact on humanity's future?"* and he has the answer with a list of five things: *"Internet; sustainable energy; exploring the universe, especially searching for planets that may exist like Earth; artificial intelligence and reprogramming human genetic code"*.

Musk is not sure about how humanity's artificial intelligence and reprogramming of human code will have a positive impact, and despite being quite optimistic about the first three thoughts (in the list above book) but he never thought that he would participate in the field of space exploration. He has two choices: Internet and sustainable energy.

Finally, Musk decided to pursue sustainable energy. After graduating from college, he enrolled in Stanford University's doctoral training program to further study high-density capacitors - a technology aimed at finding a power reserve solution. more efficient than traditional batteries - which he knows will be a core factor for the future of sustainable energy and helps accelerate the emergence of the electric vehicle industry.

However, only 2 days after the start of the course, FOMO syndrome (Fear of missing out), also known as *"fear of missed"* begins, causing Musk to worry and worry. That time was 1995 (the Internet was just beginning to bloom) and he *"couldn't stand the sight" of "the Internet passing by every day - just wanted to jump in and reform it"*. Therefore, Musk dropped out of school and decided to try his luck on the Internet.

His first move was to try to work at a company that was considered a "monster" about the Internet at the time - Netscape. He used tactics to suddenly appear and loitering in the corporate hall, standing blankly, showing shame not daring to talk to others and leaving soon after. However, this "perfect plan" failed miserably.

After an unimpressive job search, Musk teamed up with his younger brother, Kimbal, to set up their own company and named it Zip2. Zip2 is like a primitive combination of Yelp and Google Maps, and at the time, nothing like that appeared. Their goal was to make business firms realize that being on *the "Yellow Pages"* (Yellow Pages) would be outdated and it was time to join an "online directory." Two penniless brothers, sleeping and bathing at the office of the YMCA (Christian Youth Association). Musk - at the time, being the main programmer - had to sit for hours in front of the computer to work and both of them were challenged in 1995, making it hard to convince businesses that the Internet was important. - many of them say online advertising is

like *"the most silly thing they have ever heard"*. However, in the end, the two began to have customers and the company gradually grew. In the booming Internet era (1990s), start-up companies were sold very bustling and in 1999, Compaq bought Zip2 for \$ 307 million. Musk collected about 22 million USD. At that time, he was about 27 years old.

True to the people of Musk, after finishing a company, he will immediately research and produce a newer, more complex with many times the difficulty.

A common practice for millionaires *"when dot.com bubble"* is that after some success has been achieved, they will either withdraw into the backstage to enjoy the pleasures and work as natural investors. god (wealthy people, able to fund another newly established business in exchange for ownership of a part of that) or if still ambitious, will set up a new company with someone else's money . However, Musk is a man who likes to "break the law". He did not choose that idle path and decided to put $\frac{3}{4}$ of the money in hand to implement a new idea - a bold plan with the goal of building an online bank that provides testing services Account balances, savings deposits and accounts of brokers named X.com. It may not sound surprising at the present time but in 1999, an Internet start-up company intended to compete with bank giants that never existed.

One of X.com's highlights is a convenient money transfer service and, later, Confinity - another Internet finance company with the same building as X.com, founded by Peter Thiel and Max Levchin - also develop a similar service. Both companies recognize the huge demand of money transfer services leading to a fierce competition. Later, X.com and Confinity were merged together to create a new company that today, most people know, is PayPal.



This merger, on the one hand, creates many advantages but also gathers many "egos" that are considered to be the cause of a series of unnecessary conflicts. Evidence is that despite rapid growth, the internal lack of peace and the end of 2000, the conflict reached its peak. Those against Musk have carried out a "coup" and put Thiel as chief executive. However, Musk still plays a very important role in the development of the company after that time and is a key factor in the sale of PayPal for eBay for \$ 1.5 billion in 2002. (then the biggest shareholder) left with \$ 180 million pocket.

In 2002, before the sale of PayPal to eBay was completed, Musk began researching rocket technology and by the end of the year, with \$ 100 million in hand, he started building one of the most unprecedented companies. Who

thinks: a rocket company called SpaceX aims to revolutionize the cost of space travel to help people become a creature that can survive on many planets through the process of "colonization." "Mars with at least 1 million" residents in the next century.

In 2004, when this "project" was just put into operation, Musk continued to build another "utopian" company: a tram production company called Tesla with the aim of revolutionizing the industry. The automotive industry worldwide by accelerating the formation of a major world of electric vehicles - to help humans make a leap to the future of sustainable energy. He also spent his own money on this idea - about \$ 70 million despite the fact that the most successful car maker in the US was the Chrysler case in 1925, after that, no further. any newly established company in this field succeeds.

Two years later, Musk spent \$ 10 million to join his cousins ??to create another company called **SolarCity** . Their goal is to revolutionize energy production by creating a large and scalable infrastructure that can install solar battery systems for millions of households. It helps to significantly reduce the consumption of electricity produced from fossil fuels and ultimately "*accelerate the introduction of sustainable energy into mass use*".

Difficulties pile up

If you look at all these events four years after the PayPal sale, you would think that this is a sad story about an Internet millionaire who is paranoid, embracing a series of impossible projects and making The only thing to waste is the money he has earned.

By 2008, SpaceX had found a way to produce missiles but they did not work properly - at that time, they had launched missiles three times but they all exploded before reaching the orbit. Meanwhile, in order to receive external investments and freight contracts to space, SpaceX must prove that they can successfully implement missile launches. Musk is confused when he only has enough money to make only one launch and if it fails, SpaceX will be wiped out.

Meanwhile, in San Francisco Bay, Tesla also fell into misery. They haven't been able to launch the first car market yet - Tesla Roadster and Valleywag - a storytelling blog that has rated Tesla Roadster as the No. 1 technology failure in 2007. If the global economy doesn't suddenly go away down then everything is probably better. However, the fact that investment flows into the automobile industry is completely stopped, especially investing in newly established automobile manufacturing companies. Tesla began to run out of capital.

While falling into such misery, Musk's eight-year marriage - seemingly stable and sustainable - also ended in a complicated and painful divorce (Urban commented on the event). that is something that is stable and sustainable means you will likely lose it forever).

However, this is important - Musk is not a fool and he never created a bad company. On the contrary, they are very, very prosperous. The only problem is that creating a real rocket or developing an automobile manufacturing company is extremely difficult. And because no one wants to invest in something (unprecedented) too ambitious, too paranoid and definitely failing - especially during the crisis - Musk is forced to rely on the source itself my force. PayPal helped him rich but the money was not large enough for him to keep his companies long-term. If there is no external source of money, both SpaceX and Teslas will soon collapse. The nature of both is not a bad idea - it's just that they need more time to succeed while time is not much.

And then, when in the darkest moment, everything revolved.



First, in August 2008, SpaceX launched the 4th rocket and did not expect it to be as expected.

That's enough for NASA to trust Musk. They bet on giving SpaceX a \$ 1.6 billion contract to make 12 missile launches. The road is prolonged. SpaceX still exists.

The next day, on the eve of Christmas 2008, Musk scrapped the final amount to save Tesla and investors were reluctant to follow Musk. So Tesla is also saved. Five months later, the situation began to improve as the company received an additional \$ 50 million in investment from Daimler.

The next 7 years and Elon Musk's incredible successes

After three failed missile launches, SpaceX made 20 subsequent launches and all succeeded. Now, NASA has become a regular customer and many more companies, thanks to improvements at SpaceX that enable them to move goods to space at the lowest cost in history. In addition, 20 times have also created many "first" for a rocket company: up to now, only four stories have brought the spacecraft into orbit and returned to Earth successfully. America, Russia, China and SpaceX. SpaceX is also testing a new spacecraft that can bring people to space. In addition, they are also busy planning to design a larger missile capable of bringing 100 people to Mars every time. Recently, SpaceX has also received an investment from Google and Fidelity and is currently valued at around \$ 12 billion.

Tesla's Model S also achieved spectacular success, shaking the automotive industry and ranking highest ever (99/100) by Consumer Reports, and high rankings. most in the history of safety is evaluated by the National Road Safety Committee of the United States (5.4 / 5). At the end of last March, Tesla also launched the Model 3 - the cheapest electric car (about 35,000 USD) with the ability to accelerate from 0 - 100km / h in less than 6 seconds and the target. will produce 500,000 units per year. To achieve this, Elon Musk has built a Gigafactory lithium-ion battery factory with an investment of up to \$ 5 billion at Sparks, Nevada, USA.

In 2012, SolarCity officially went public and became one of America's largest solar cell installation companies. Recently, Tesla reached an agreement to buy the company for \$ 2.6 billion, lower than the figure of \$ 2.8 billion they proposed earlier.

But that is not enough, in his free time, Musk also researches and promotes the development of a new mode of transportation - **Hyperloop** super-fast train system .

In the next few years, when new factories are completed, Musk companies will recruit about 30,000 more workers. After nearly bankruptcy in 2008 and falling into the situation of "moving to the basement of his parents' house", by 2016, the property value of Elon Musk is about 14.4 billion USD.

All of these have made Elon Musk almost a living legend. In successfully building an automobile manufacturer and refueling network worldwide, **Musk is compared to visionary industrial capitalists like Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller.** The pioneering work of rocket technology created by SpaceX has put Musk on **par with Howard Hughes** and many have even seen **similarities between Musk and Thomas Edison** because of the technical advances Musk gained on many areas. But the most popular is still the comparison between him and **Steve Jobs** because he has extraordinary ability to make differences in large-scale industries that have existed for a long time with what customers even I don't even know they want them. Some believe that Musk will be remembered more than everyone else. The technology journalist and biographer of Musk has argued that what Musk is building *"is more likely than anything Hughes or Jobs has created. Musk has taken over the industry. industries like aerospace and automotive that the US seems to have given up and blown into them something very new and wonderful."*



Chris Anderson - who is running TED Talks honors Musk as *"the most respected contemporary entrepreneur"*. Others call him *"real-life Iron Man"* and they have a good reason for it. Jon Favreau indeed sent actor Robert Downey to SpaceX's factory to chat with Musk before shooting the Iron Man movie so he could simulate Musk's image in his role.

During the phone conversation with me, Musk made it clear that he did not come to me to advertise for his companies but just wanted me to help him explain what is happening in the worlds around the public. That company and why things are happening to electric cars, with the production of sustainable energy and with aerospace is so important.

Musk is especially bored with people who take the time to write about him. According to Musk, there are many more important things going on in the areas in which you are involved and every time someone writes about you, you wish they could write about fossil energy needs or improvements in The printing production or the importance of putting people on other planets is even more (this is clearly reflected in the Elon Musk Biography - in the introduction of the author it is clear that Musk feel excited when there are biographers about me.

So, I definitely titled *"Elon Musk: The World's Raddest Man"* (Elon Musk - the most radical thought man in the world) will make him uncomfortable.

But I have my reason. For me, there are two very good reasons to make a "discovery" about this human life:

1. To find out why Musk does what he is doing: Musk strongly believes that he cares about what can give people the best chance to create a good future. I want to dig deep into those things and find out why he cares about them.

2. To understand why Musk can do what he is doing: The number of people who change the world at every generation counts only on their fingertips so they deserve to be studied. They have different ways to do things with everyone and I think we have countless things to learn from them.

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