

ELON

(43) SOUTH AFRICAN, CEO OF SPACEX AND TESLA MOTORS

MUSK

Entrepreneur, genius, tycoon, playboy. Elon Musk is all that. But none of that gets to define him completely. To understand Musk, one must understand the mission on which he is embarked. Every goal in his agenda; battling global warming, democratizing solar energy, ridding the auto industry of oil dependence, colonizing Mars - aim at a perfectly precise goal: saving humanity.

WHAT HE DID

■ In 1995 he founded Zip2, a company dedicated to the management of media websites. In 1999, Compaq Computers acquired Zip2 for US\$ 307 million in cash and US\$ 34 million in stock options. Musk received \$22 million from the operation.

■ In 1995, he founded X.com, a financial services and online payments company, which in five weeks already had 100,000 clients and two years later it would become PayPal. In 2002, eBay bought PayPal. The payment was US\$ 1,5 billion in eBay shares, of which Musk received US\$ 165 million. His now former partners would later create other companies, such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Jammer and Yelp.

■ In 2002 he founded SpaceX, developer of the Falcon 1 and Falcon 9 rockets, and the Dragon spacecraft. In 2008, NASA signed a US \$ 1,6 billion

contract to use the Falcon 9 / Dragon combo for aerospace transport.

■ In 2003, he founded Tesla Motors, a manufacturer of electric cars and components for electric vehicles propulsion, which is listed on the NASDAQ. In 2012, Tesla Motors launched the four-door sedan, called Model S, which sold 22,477 units in 2013 in the United States and Europe, and the Model X minivan, which was commercialized in 2015.

■ In 2006, he acted as the main investor and advisor to his nephews, Peter and Lyndon Rive, in the founding of SolarCity, a pioneer in leasing programs for solar panels for residential homes. Currently, SolarCity is the largest provider of solar energy systems in the United States.

■ In 2013, he launched the Hyperloop proposal, which he defined as the "fifth means of transport";

an alternative to boats, planes, cars and trains. His idea, as he describes it, consists of "moving humans and goods through a tube powered by air and vacuum, three or four times faster than a high-speed train." Building a Hyperloop powered exclusively by solar energy, capable of covering the 560 kilometres between Los Angeles and San Francisco in half an hour or less, even faster than a commercial airplane, would cost an estimated US \$ 6 billion.

WHAT HE IS

Early starter.

At age 10, Musk bought a computer with his savings and learned to program on his own. Two years later he sold his first program at US\$ 500, a space game called Blastar.

Rebel.

He emigrated from South Africa to Canada with his mother, at age 18, after a fierce confrontation with his father for refusing to join the military service in a country that was still subject to apartheid.

Dreamer.

Although he lived in Canada, Musk was excited about going to the United States, where "great things are possible". He obtained a scholarship at the University of Pennsylvania, and there he received a degree in Physics and Business Studies.

Daring.

In 2008, when Tesla was on the verge of bankruptcy, Musk invested all his money and asked for contributions



Foto: gentileza Tesla.

from his friends. He states that, as he put everything he had, "others were willing to invest."

Motivating.

In August 2008, one of its Falcon rockets managed to take off after two failed attempts, but lost communication and the mission failed. Dolly Singh, employee of SpaceX, remembers that Musk gathered the 300 employees of the company and told them: "We knew it would be difficult; this is space engineering. We have to stand up because there is a lot of work ahead. I will never give up."

Demanding.

He is known for not giving his employees respite. "Musk is a machine," says Singh, "and the rest of us are human. However, every drop of sweat is worth

it, because working with him leads to growth that we would not achieve elsewhere."

Relentless.

His employees know that not meeting deadlines is equivalent to automatic dismissal. If Musk asks a question and someone is not ready to answer it, his message will be direct: "Good luck."

||||||| **WHAT HE LIKES**

On weekends, when he does not travel to his private island in the Pacific Ocean, he visits the most exclusive restaurants and bars in the world, drives a \$ 1 million McLaren F1 sports car and offers parties at his mega mansion in Los Angeles, with Hollywood famous guests. Since his divorce he is con-

sidered one of the most sought for bachelors in the world.

||||||| **WHAT HE SAYS**

"I do not believe in processes. In fact, when I interview a potential employee and he or she tells me something like everything has to do with processes, I consider that statement as a negative point. In most companies, processes become a substitute for thought. The idea that we are all part of a complex machine is just a system to retain people who are not intelligent or creative enough."

"One of the lessons I have learned is not to delay the dismissal of people. You do not have to put energy and work into trying to solve something that you know will not work."



"It's a mistake to rely too much on someone's talent. It has happened to me more than once. It's important that, in addition to talent, people have a heart."

"Talent is fundamental. As in sports, groups whose members have individual skills generally win. But there are other variables, such as teamwork and strategy."

"I do not consider that swings of the market are important. The markets are manic-depressive."

"It takes a lot of mental energy to innovate."

"If there are no failures, it's because you're not innovating enough."

"Humanity evolved over millions of

years, but in the last 60 years nuclear weapons brought about the possibility of extinguishing ourselves. Sooner or later we will have to expand our lives beyond the planet earth."

"I want to die on Mars, having created a colony of 80,000 people there."

||||| WHAT IS SAID ABOUT HIM

"Elon conveys his vision as if it were a mandate from heaven. When someone says something is impossible, he says vehemently that he can do it."

MAX LEVCHIN, cofounder of Paypal

"In a short-term-minded society, Elon takes great risks, knowing that his ideas will take years to come true."

MICHAEL DELL, president of Dell

"Elon is a man of the Renaissance, in an era where you need men like that."

JON FAVREAU, director of the movie Iron Man

"Musk is an extraordinary person. It's as if Steve Jobs, in addition to everything he did, would have revolutionized agriculture and the financial industry."

STEVE JURVESTON, investor



"IT'S A MISTAKE TO RELY TOO MUCH ON SOMEONE'S TALENT. IT HAS HAPPENED TO ME MORE THAN ONCE. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT, IN ADDITION TO TALENT, PEOPLE HAVE A HEART."