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Nov 23 · 3 min read

Elon Musk Probably Invented Bitcoin



Walter Isaacson asks Elon Musk about Bitcoin — Link

Update: Elon says he's not Satoshi.

. . .

Ready for 3 oddball ideas?

1. Satoshi Nakamoto is probably Elon Musk

2. Elon Musk is today's Ben Franklin

3. Bitcoin could be more useful with Elon's guidance

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1. Satoshi is probably Elon

Is Elon capable of inventing Bitcoin? Probably.

- The 2008 Bitcoin paper was written by someone with a deep understanding of economics and cryptography. Elon has a background in econ and wrote production-level internet software for Zip2 and X.com / Paypal.
- Bitcoin's source code was written by someone with a mastery of C++. Elon seems to have a firm grasp of C++, insisting it be used at X.com and at SpaceX.
- Experience aside, Elon is a self-taught polymath. He's repeatedly innovated across fields by reading books on a subject and applying the knowledge. It's how he built rockets, invented the Hyperloop (which he released to the world as a paper), and could have invented Bitcoin.

Would he have wanted to create it? Probably.

- It was 2008 (Great Recession), and he may have been motivated to solve the lack of trust in banks by creating a currency that doesn't need them.

Does the original Bitcoin paper sound like Elon? Somewhat.

- The hallmark reasoning from first principles. The order-of-magnitude calculations. And in forum posts, casual use of "bloody

hard.”

Would Elon have stayed anonymous for 10 years? Probably, on principle.

- Satoshi created Bitcoin as a peer-to-peer currency that wouldn't need a central authority.

Did Elon reveal his identity in 2014 with this tweet? Maybe.

- The tweet came one week after this Satoshi forum post.

Can Elon not own any bitcoin and still be Satoshi? Yes.

- Elon has said publicly he doesn't own any bitcoin, which is consistent with a “Good Satoshi” who deleted his private keys. This means Satoshi's one million coins (worth about \$8 billion) are gone for good.

Could Satoshi be a group of people led by Elon? Probably not.

- Satoshi could be a collaboration of Musk, Nick Szabo, and Hal Finney. But it seems more likely that Elon read their research papers, took inspiration from them, and built the product solo.

Would Elon choose a pseudonym that's an anagram for “So a man took a shit?” Of course.

2. Musk is like Franklin

Elon identifies the most urgent problems of our time and dedicates his time to solving them: sustainable energy, multiplanetary life, AI safety. The sum total of his actions have seriously increased the chance that the future will be good for more people.

Ben Franklin, likewise, “did what needed to be done, at the time it needed to be done.” He was a polymath entrepreneur who also wrote public pamphlets for the general good, e.g. “A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper-Currency.”

And Franklin's pseudonym of choice? “Silence Dogood.”

Franklin and Musk have a few other fun things in common. Both

- started in the newspaper business
- share beliefs on patents
- did research with capacitors
- founded UPenn / graduated from UPenn
- made America / made America great again

3. Bitcoin could use his help

Bitcoin has some problems. It had a major split in August and just avoided another this month. It takes at least 10 minutes to verify a transaction and its throughput is 5000 times less than that of credit cards.

If Elon is Satoshi, it seems like this knowledge would become public at some point anyway. But if it were public now, Elon could offer guidance as the currency's "founding father." (Vitalik Buterin plays this role for Ethereum.) Elon could coordinate changes in the block size and the lightning network and thus make bitcoin useful for more people.

Elon – if you are Satoshi, thank you. If not, well, thanks for the Tesla Roadster.

- Vanity Fair interview
- Wait But Why series
- Bitcoin paper

