

Elon Musk's 2 Rules For Learning Anything Faster

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A structure to help you take over entire industries



Learning is one of the overcommunicated but underleveraged tools of the common entrepreneur.

Everyone talks about methods of learning, but few people find realistic and authentic techniques that actually yield a net profit in the information and application categories.

Elon Musk has broken through that barrier with learning techniques that have proven successful not just once, but time and time again.

A good argument could be made that Musk has leveraged his learning by becoming a disruptor. He and his companies have shifted entire industries, including the transportation sector, the energy sector, and the space sector.

He recently announced at a press conference that his plans for his biotech company Neuralink are progressing quite nicely, hinting at yet another sector which his hands will likely shift in the coming years.

Yes, Musk is a once-in-a-lifetime genius. Likely on the same levels as Nikola Tesla, Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton. He has a different way of viewing problems than the average entrepreneur.

Of course, he reads hundreds of books. He works with top-level thinkers. He has astronomical levels of funding to put towards his every whim. But that's not what makes him a great learner.

His learning methods aren't that regal. In fact, his two rules for how to learn anything faster can be implemented by anyone at any time. Including you.

You, too, can be a rocket scientist, if you wanted. Here's how.

Identify the different parts of the tree

When it comes to learning, Musk is quick to note that he believes that most people can learn more than they currently know.

When it comes to the average entrepreneur, Musk claims that they often don't break through their perceived limits and try to learn beyond their current capacity. Or, as he goes on to clarify, they don't know how to outline their information in a way that leads to further revelation.

In a conversation on Reddit, Musk discussed his approach to learning and the structure he uses as such:

“One bit of advice: it is important to view knowledge as sort of a semantic tree — make sure you understand the fundamental principles, i.e. the trunk and big branches, before you get into the leaves/details or there is nothing for them to hang on to.”

From this, we begin to see Elon Musk's first rule of learning:

Rule #1 — Make sure you're building a tree of knowledge

What does this mean for you practically? It helps the common entrepreneur understand that not everything is weighed with equal gravitas or importance.

When it comes to learning, there is a difference between material that ends up hanging from a branch and the material that makes up the base of the trunk of your tree.

It's the periphery vs. the central.

Musk is a master of understanding what is at the core of each of the sectors his entrepreneurial ventures sit in.

He starts there, ensuring that he has the best possible grasp on the “trunk” material before moving off into the minutiae of the branches and the leaves.

Many of us do the opposite. We load up on periphery facts while never fully understanding how or why they connect back to the trunk. This outward-facing-in method leaves many of our brains overcrowded with misidentified and, ultimately, unimportant knowledge.

That's not learning. It's cramming.

The result of our efforts is a tree with a toothpick trunk and an overload of teeming branches, threatening to snap off as we try to cram one more idea or thought within our brains.

If you want to learn anything faster, you need to start with the materials that make up the trunk. It might be a tad slower at the onset, but without a sturdy trunk, you won't have the base to support any additional learning and skill.

Connections power your learning

The brilliance of Elon Musk's learning strategy isn't necessarily in his ability to understand core central concepts.

Many entrepreneurs over generations have had solids grasp on core tenets and principles.

Musk's brilliance is found in his second rule of learning, which underlines his ability to build vast and towering trees of intellect across multiple sectors.

Rule #2 — You can't remember what you can't connect

This is how Musk was able to span sectors and shift entire industries seemingly overnight.

He started with solid roots and dense trunks, and then as he began to grow his knowledge upward, he began connecting branches and leaves together with other branches and leaves from other trees.

Musk never learns a piece of information at random. Everything he intakes, he connects back to some deeper, more solid base.

Most learners today are not master gardeners, but stick collectors. We walk around life, picking up tidbits here and tidbits there until our arms are full of sticks.

Once we have a good bunch of sticks, we do what comes naturally whenever there is a pile of sticks lying around. We burn them.

We think the size of our fires equals the size of our learning. But we are slow to realize what Elon Musk has built his entire learning structure on: that fires burn out.

Musk plants trees, in rich soil, that grow to be thick and abundant centers of learning.

You can do the same. You just need to embrace his two rules. Build the trunk first, then work tirelessly on making connections.

Exponential growth

Like any new system, it might take you a bit to get the hang of it. You might actually feel like you are learning slower than you did previously. That's okay. What you're actually doing is building the foundation for exponential growth.

Henry Ford once said, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got."

If you want to learn anything faster, try the Elon Musk approach, but be warned. You may end up becoming a rocket scientist far faster than you previously thought possible.