**Sacrificed Comfort For Success**

Elon Musk – Image

When Elon Musk was just 24 years old, he cofounded a software company called Zip2. The company quickly grew to support clients like the New York Times and Chicago Tribune, and eventually sold to Compaq for more than $300M. By 28, he'd already made $22 million from his first company sale. He could have lived in luxury and comfort for rest of his life.

But He wasn't looking for comfort...

Musk immediately used $10M from the sale of his company to found x.com, which, after a quick merger, became PayPal. Just 3 years later, in 2002, PayPal was sold to eBay for $1.5 billion, netting Musk around $175 million, as he was still the company's largest shareholder. If $22 million wasn't enough to support a comfortable life... another $175 million at age 31, certainly would have helped.

But he was just getting started...

Even before PayPal was sold, Musk had already founded SpaceX with $100 million of his own money. Why didn't he want to ride off into the sunset on a ranch somewhere in Argentina? He had a larger vision of building products that changed the landscape of the universe forever. He wanted to make a dent in the universe. A comfortable life wasn't going to do that for him. The kind of legacy he was after would require some work.

The vision behind SpaceX was simple: by using new technologies and approaches, Musk could cut the costs of space travel by orders of magnitude, and in the process revitalize space exploration. Of course, such a super-ambitious goal didn't come without setbacks. By 2008 SpaceX was - according to some - days from going broke, before being "saved' by a $1.6 billion contract from NASA.

Love and a stalwart vision got him through those days...

Today, SpaceX has achieved a long list of firsts in the space industry. It's the only private company to dock at the international space station, as well as the only private company to return a spacecraft from low orbit. It has also created some of the most powerful space rockets in the world. Being a pioneer in space travel is hard, it's uncomfortable, but it's just a part-time job for Elon Musk.

Possibility took precedence over comfort...

In 2004, while heading up SpaceX, Elon Musk led the first institutional round of financing for a new electric car company called Tesla. He wasn't the founder, but he believed strongly in Tesla's ability to revolutionize the car industry and provide the first mass produced electric car. When the company fell on hard times in the 2008 financial crisis and, like SpaceX, came within days of failing... he took over as CEO.

**Failures and Problems-:**

Tesla and SpaceX are competing in extremely expensive industries dominated by enormous corporations and government entities, and their roads to success have not been easy.

According to Success magazine, "the first three rockets built by SpaceX produced crash-and-burn videos."

But neither company threw in the towel.

In 2008, struggling Tesla nearly collapsed during the financial crisis. When Tesla needed cash to fund the Model S, Musk chose to bankrupt himself — giving up the money he earned from his success with PayPal — rather than let it die. He sunk his last 35$ million in the company.

In a February 23, 2010 court filing, Musk admitted he was broke: "About four months ago, I ran out of cash." The filing, part of his divorce case from his now ex-wife, Justine Musk, said he had been living off of personal loans from friends since October 2009.

Personal bankruptcy was a daily conversation. Tesla was on the limb to deliver cars that people already paid for. Bankruptcy would have been easier than what he did. He threw everything he had into keeping Tesla alive.

Musk has never had a problem creating demand for the Model S, and now Tesla has finally hit its goal of producing 400 cars a week, the number it needs to keep hitting to generate income.

And SpaceX has managed to get successfully land back a rocket on earth after it's launch.

**The common thread in Musk's leadership that has brought both companies to these tentative levels of success is his willingness to take risks, his tenacity, and the fervent confidence that gets others on board with his seemingly crazy ideas.**

**He is truly a man who has let off the comforts of life and has taken the mental and economic pressure to save mankind and the world. He spends most of his time between his 4 companies trying to come up with more efficient ways to revolutionize the future.**

Comfort and sleep can wait when you are moving all of humanity forward...