*Alex Thaler on Elon Musk*

*Elon Musk is a revolutionary. By the age of 41, he has created an electric car, a spaceship that has docked with the international space station, created the concept for America's largest solar power system provider, and co-founded PayPal.  When filming the latest Iron Man movie, the film's director and Robert Downey Jr. turned to Musk for inspiration for the portrayal of the lead character.  All of these accomplishments stem a very strong personal vision to revolutionize industries.  In particular, he has focused on advancing the internet, space travel, and energy efficiency.*

***Brief timeline and professional endeavors***

*Musk grew up in South Africa, leaving for college in the Americas instead of serving in the army to defend apartheid.  He completed a dual degree at Penn with a major in business from Wharton and a major in physics.  Musk then enrolled in a graduate program at Stanford, dropping out after two days to start Zip2.  The company was later sold to AltaVista for over $300M.  Continuing from this success, he co-founded X.com.  The firm was later renamed PayPal and sold to eBay for $1.5B.*

*Following this sale, he began his involvement with three concepts that remain his focus today.  In 2002, he founded SpaceX.  This aligns with Musk's vision of space exploration as an imperative for the human race.  The company received a large contract from NASA and has already had a space ship dock with the international space station.  SpaceX was the first commercial company to dock with the ISS.  Musk is currently CEO and CTO of the company.*

*Musk was co-founder and is currently CEO and product architect of Tesla.  The company has introduced a very successful all-electric roadster, followed by the Model S luxury sedan.  These two cars stand out in a space of short-range, low power electric vehicles and hybrids.  Tesla vehicles have a max range of ~300 miles, and deliver acceleration that strongly compete with other cars in the luxury sedan/sports car segments of the market.*

*The last of Musk's current professional involvements is SolarCity.  Musk provided the concept for the company in 2006.  The company is a leading provider of solar power solutions for homes and businesses.  It provides flexible financing that make solar power beneficial for the consumer, including the option to pay for the large installation cost when electricity is used, providing a direct and measurable savings.  Musk is currently the chairman and largest shareholder in the firm.*

***Integrating the four domains***

*In addition to Musk's professional focus described above, he has five children, a foundation, and is on multiple boards.  With such a large number of commitments across the four domains, Musk has a few strategies for managing his time and effort.  One of strategies he uses is a strong focus on e-mail: "I do love e-mail.  Wherever possible I try to communicate asynchronously.  I'm really good at e-mail".  Additionally, Musk has a schedule that helps him balance his commitments.  A typical schedule for him is Monday at SpaceX in LA, Tuesday and Wednesday at Tesla in Palo Alto, Thursday and half of Friday at SpaceX, the remainder of Friday at the Tesla Design Studio adjacent to SpaceX, and weekends with family.*

*Despite attempts to balance the four domains, Musk has had significant challenges.  He is notorious for working long hours.  He has had two divorces, the first with the mother of his five children and the second after only a few years of marriage.  Musk also sparked controversy in his recent comments at SXSW when he stated that he is often on e-mail while with his children.*

***Lessons learned***

*The first lesson to be learned from this example is to have a strong vision and not to let challenges get in the way of pursuing it.  Musk's goals were revolutionary ideas that have failed multiple times in the past.  He did not let criticism get in his way.  In fact, he personally invested a large sum in Tesla during a very challenging time for the firm in 2008 during the recession.  Not only did he believe in his vision, he put his money where his mouth was.*

*The second lesson is to understand the level of interaction necessary to make an impact.  The best example of this is at SolarCity.  As chairman, he only spends a few hours a month on the company.  Despite this, the CEO only had positive things to say about his involvement.  He was quoted as saying that in a ten minute discussion with Musk, he can identify the hole in a plan and help you find a way to fix it.  By managing his time and involvement in this way, Musk shows that he is very effective at delegating and matching his calendar to the needs of the situation.*

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