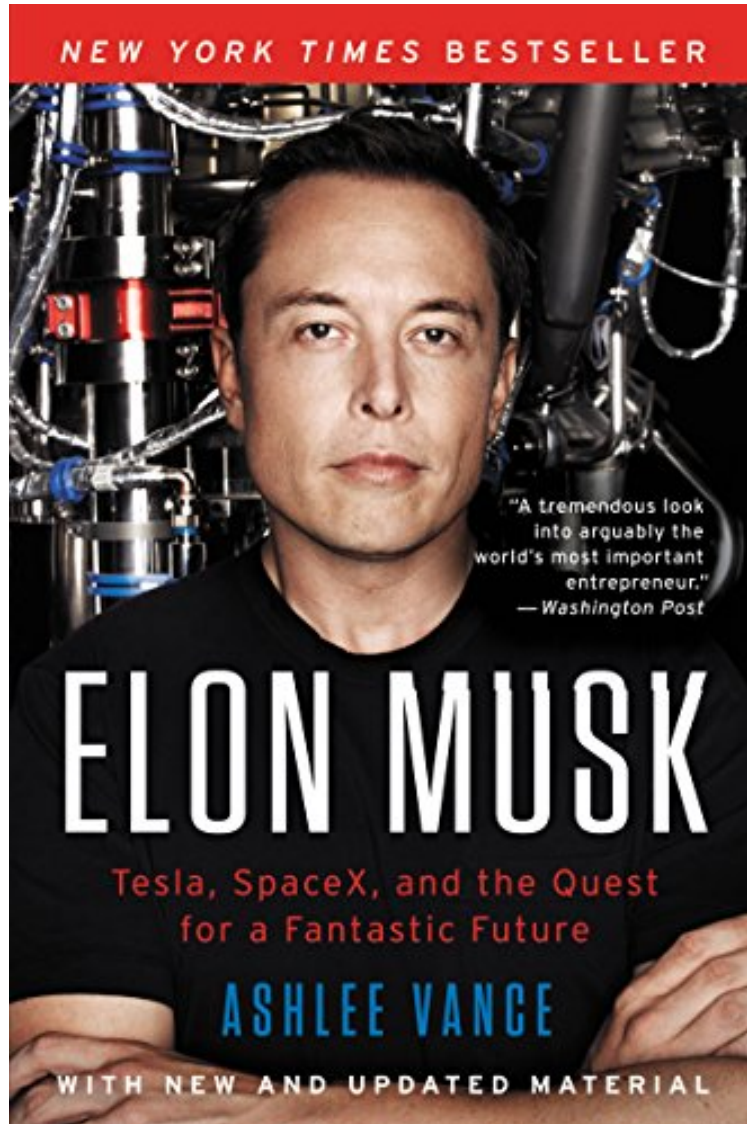


Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future

Ashlee Vance

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Ashlee Vance : Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future:

256 of 267 people found the following review helpful. Incredibly thorough insight into Elon Musk's life and companies
By S. Alex Martin
When I walked into Barnes Noble two weeks ago, I wasn't actually looking to purchase a book. Usually, I go in, browse for 30 minutes, and get out. But when I walked around to the Physics and Science section, the first thing I saw was Elon Musk's face. Inevitably, I picked it up and began reading. 2 pages in, I decided I was in this for the long haul and sat on the floor, right there in the middle of the store. 15 pages in, my friends finally

found me and forced me to leave. But I couldn't part with this. I needed this book. Those first 15 pages captured me like so few books do (in fact, only one book in the past year has totally stolen my attention like this). So I bought Elon Musk feeling on top of the world and excited to keep reading. I travel a lot between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, PA, so, since I'm in the middle of taking classes in Pittsburgh, I swore to only read this book on the bus, because I knew once I picked it up again, I wouldn't put it down. I was right. The next day, I got on the bus, got to reading, and tuned out the world. Three hours later, I was nearly halfway through -- and WOW. Vance's writing style flowed right through my mind. No clunky sentences, no jarring phrases. It's such an easy book to read, despite the complex nature of the contents. Elon Musk, if you don't know, is a biography. Yes, a biography. You'd expect the case-study of someone's life to be boring and uneventful, dragging until the very end. This wasn't the case at all. Vance opens the book at an interview with Elon Musk himself. The first line, a quote from Musk, "Do you think I'm insane?", perfectly captures the whole context of the biography. Because as you experience the story, as you see the challenges Musk went through to reach the pinnacle he's at today, the question nags at you. Musk isn't soft-spoken, or easy on his employees, or a man who kicks his legs up on his desk and snoozes while his companies mill around him. Vance shows how Musk is both the CEO and an employee of his companies, simultaneously the teacher and student. He gets in the work, asks all the right questions, gives all the right orders. His vision is THE vision, and if you get in the way, Musk has been known to fire you on the spot. Musk breaks every convention, every tradition, every standard. Vance takes you deep into the details, from Musk's childhood and lineage in South Africa, all the way to Canada and the United States, where the bulk of the story unfolds. When Musk looks at big businesses, he sees unmovable behemoths that refuse to change their methodologies. American innovation became a thing of the past. Technology and industry was growing - but nowhere near as fast as it should. So we follow Musk's journey from his small start-ups, Zip2 and X.com, and move into his larger, more permanent ventures, namely SpaceX, Tesla, and SolarCity. I myself am a huge fan of Elon Musk. Still, until the past year or two, I only thought of him as "that guy who made SpaceX" and "that guy who runs Tesla." Until reading this book, I never knew the struggle -- no, the hell he went through to make and keep these companies. You think, oh, he just has a lot of money. Yeah, now he does. But did you know SpaceX and Tesla were hours away from going bankrupt? Did you know that the Falcon 1 rocket kept failing, and one more failed launch literally meant the end of SpaceX? Did you know SpaceX tested these rockets on an island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and would fix problems they encountered in a matter of days, as compared to months by standard companies? This book is the first time Musk has explicitly let anyone interview him for a biography. Aside from a few questionable quotes that have been publicly denounced by Musk after the publication of this book, we're still given a tremendous amount of insight into his head and how he runs the companies. Vance interviewed more than 300 people and spent over two years compiling this account. And I have to give credit to how up-to-date the information is. There are several events Vance mentions that occurred into 2015, such as the first landing attempt of Falcon 9 on the sea barge, which took place in January, and he refers to the second attempt as being in a couple weeks, which means that Vance included this information on a very tight deadline, probably mid-March (the second landing attempt happened on April 14, 2015). I want to congratulate you, Mr. Vance. Well done. Very well done. I'm going to reread this book in a few weeks (probably after the scheduled June 19th third Falcon 9 landing attempt, this time on solid ground, as opposed to a barge). Anyone who wants a ridiculously thorough insight into Elon Musk's life and companies should read this book. It had me from Page 1 all the way to Page 363, and even the appendices that come after. This is an incredibly inspiring book, an important look into a game-changing business strategy, and a valuable lesson to the world. As Musk says, "If something is important enough, even if the odds are against you, you should still do it." 289 of 308 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic insight into Musk and his ecosystem. By TM message. The best thing I have read on Elon Musk so far (and from what I understand, the only one that he has participated in himself). Vance is an excellent writer, and you may or may not be familiar with him from Bloomberg Business and other high profile writings. I loved the insight into Musk and how he operates, and you get a very broad and complete picture of Musk as a driven visionary that is absolutely set on delivering some of the most aspirational goals of any human in history. You also get some great insight into the overall ecosystem around Musk - his companies (SpaceX and Tesla primarily), relationships with other companies and gov entities, as well as the important people around him. Many bios give you a timeline of the person, but little insight into the broader context and I appreciated that in this book. You get unique insight into his personal relationships, how he coped with things that went wrong (not always a pretty story), and how he manages through both failure and success. Since you learn so much about his childhood and formative years, you get a good grounding on why he is the way he is, and how those relationships developed. Finally, you get a lot of detail around 'green' industry, space exploration, etc. which really fills out this ecosystem and delivers an inspiring and educational view of one of the most intriguing people of our lifetimes. The book almost seems to ask "What are you going to go out and reinvent?" Well worth reading and even gifting to friends who may be fans. 143 of 155 people found the following review helpful. Well written, general overview. By Philip Trubey. Solid, well researched book about Musk's early life, early companies (Zip2 and PayPal), and current companies (Tesla, SpaceX and SolarCity). Throughout the book, Vance doesn't just let a startling assertion or quote stand still, he researches events to give the reader a balanced view of what transpired. This is especially important as there have more than a few highly

charged emotional events in Musk's life and it would have been all too easy for a biographer to highlight the sensational at the expense of providing insight about complex events. Vance starts the biography by delving just enough into Musk's early life to help understand who he has become. He then launches into fairly detailed accounts of his early companies (Zip2 and PayPal). These accounts are invaluable as there is little else available about these companies that is reliable and not agenda driven reporting. SpaceX gets the most coverage in the book, befitting Musk's passion and time spent, although there is a reasonable amount of time devoted to Tesla and a relatively quick overview of SolarCity. Oddly enough for a 400 page book, I sometimes wished he would provide a more blow by blow account - for instance there was no insight at all into any board meetings in any of the companies. In addition, Vance does not delve in any real depth into the complex technology that Musk has created, relegating the very few verbatim explanations from Musk to footnotes. There was a lot of boosterism about the companies, and while Vance did try to describe a timeline, in the end the book had a lot of unconnected vignettes and stories. Having said all this, it is a very readable, very interesting book. The 2008 triple Musk meltdown (personal life, SpaceX and Tesla) was gripping. Most people who have not been watching Musk's every move for the past 20 years will find lots of new information here, presented in a very balanced and entertaining way.

In *Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future*, veteran technology journalist Ashlee Vance provides the first inside look into the extraordinary life and times of Silicon Valley's most audacious entrepreneur. Written with exclusive access to Musk, his family and friends, the book traces the entrepreneur's journey from a rough upbringing in South Africa to the pinnacle of the global business world. Vance spent over 40 hours in conversation with Musk and interviewed close to 300 people to tell the tumultuous stories of Musk's world-changing companies: PayPal, Tesla Motors, SpaceX and SolarCity, and to characterize a man who has renewed American industry and sparked new levels of innovation while making plenty of enemies along the way.

Vance uses Musk's story to explore one of the pressing questions of our time: can the nation of inventors and creators which led the modern world for a century still compete in an age of fierce global competition? He argues that Musk--one of the most unusual and striking figures in American business history--is a contemporary amalgam of legendary inventors and industrialists like Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Howard Hughes, and Steve Jobs. More than any other entrepreneur today, Musk has dedicated his energies and his own vast fortune to inventing a future that is as rich and far-reaching as the visionaries of the golden age of science-fiction fantasy.

For anyone interested in technology, entrepreneurship or the price of greatness, Ashlee Vance's new book, *"Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX and the Quest for a Fantastic Future,"* is a tremendous look into arguably the world's most important entrepreneur. Vance paints an unforgettable picture of Musk's unique personality, insatiable drive and ability to thrive through hardship. The book bursts with telling anecdotes and quotes that illuminate who Musk is. - The Washington Post "Exhaustively reported . . . this work will likely serve as the definitive account of a man whom so far we've seen mostly through caricature. By the final pages, too, any reader will sense the need to put comparisons to Steve Jobs aside. Give Musk credit. There is no one like him." - The New York Times "The result is a book that is smart, light on its feet and possesses a crunchy thoroughness. . . . Mr. Vance delivers a well-calibrated portrait of Mr. Musk, so that we comprehend both his friends and his enemies. It's a book with many ancillary pleasures. Mr. Vance brings us up to date on the states of green energy and space launches. He also veers away from his subject just often enough, offering profiles of the frequently brilliant people who work alongside Mr. Musk. The best thing Mr. Vance does in this book, though, is tell Mr. Musk's story simply and well." - The New York Times

From the Inside Flap

There are few industrialists in history who could match Elon Musk's relentless drive and ingenious vision. A modern alloy of Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Howard Hughes, and Steve Jobs, Musk is the man behind PayPal, Tesla Motors, SpaceX, and SolarCity, each of which has sent shock waves throughout American business and industry. More than any other executive today, Musk has dedicated his energies and his own vast fortune to inventing a future that is as rich and far-reaching as a science fiction fantasy. In this lively, investigative account, veteran technology journalist Ashlee Vance offers an unprecedented look into the remarkable life and times of Silicon Valley's most audacious businessman. Written with exclusive access to Musk, his family, and his friends, the book traces his journey from his difficult upbringing in South Africa to his ascent to the pinnacle of the global business world. Vance spent more than fifty hours in conversation with Musk and interviewed close to three hundred people to tell the tumultuous stories of Musk's world-changing companies and to paint a portrait of a complex man who has renewed American industry and sparked new levels of innovation--all while making plenty of enemies along the way. In 1992, Elon Musk arrived in the United States as a ferociously driven immigrant bent on realizing his wildest dreams. Since then, Musk's roller-coaster life has brought him grave disappointments alongside massive successes. After being forced out of PayPal, fending off a life-threatening case of malaria, and dealing with the death of his infant son, Musk abandoned Silicon Valley for Los Angeles. He spent the next few years baffling his friends by blowing his entire fortune on rocket ships and electric cars. Cut to 2012, however, and Musk had mounted one of the greatest resurrections in business history:

Tesla, SpaceX, and SolarCity had enjoyed unparalleled success, and Musk's net worth soared to more than \$5 billion. At a time when many American companies are more interested in chasing easy money than in taking bold risks on radical new technology, Musk stands out as the only businessman with enough dynamism and vision to tackle--and even revolutionize--three industries at once. Vance makes the case that Musk's success heralds a return to the original ambition and invention that made America an economic and intellectual powerhouse. Elon Musk is a brilliant, penetrating examination of what Musk's career means for a technology industry undergoing dramatic change and offers a taste of what could be an incredible century ahead.

From the Back Cover "Ashlee Vance has given us an intensely reported, wonderfully spirited account of Elon Musk's rise to the pinnacle of the business world. This is the definitive look at the man who may have the biggest impact on the human race. Should Musk bring humanity to Mars, this will be the planet's founding document." -- BRAD STONE, author of the bestselling *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon*

"Elon Musk is a man after my own heart: a risk taker undaunted by setbacks and ever driven to ensure a bright future for humanity. Ashlee Vance's stellar biography captures Musk's remarkable life story and irrepressible spirit." -- RICHARD BRANSON, founder of Virgin Group

"More than any entrepreneur since Steve Jobs, Elon Musk sets the bar for what's possible in technology. We are fortunate to have our very own real-life Tony Stark in Elon, and here, for the first time, we have his story vividly told." --MARC ANDREESSEN, venture capitalist and Web pioneer

"Ashlee Vance offers a clear-eyed look at a man who has played the underdog again and again--challenging old thinking and changing the world. I dare anyone to read this book and not be inspired to set their sights a little higher." --TONY FADELL, creator of the iPod and iPhone, and CEO of Nest Labs

"Elon Musk is one of the greatest entrepreneurial minds of our time. His combination of extreme intelligence, relentless drive, and steadfast belief in his bold ideas is ensuring that all of society has the chance to benefit from his efforts. The book *Elon Musk* is a compelling firsthand, behind-the-scenes look at how Tesla, SpaceX, and SolarCity were formed, and how Elon works to bring his passions to fruition. He is a unique character changing the world, and Ashlee Vance's book is a riveting account of how Elon's game-changing ideas have been conceived and born, and now flourish." --J. CRAIG VENTER, Ph.D., first human genome sequencer and creator of synthetic life

"This thrilling book will make you want to start a car company, build spaceships, and go to Mars. The only downside is when you eventually remember that you're not Elon Musk." -- AARON LEVIE, CEO of Box