Elon Musk Is A Huge Sham! He Laid Out 602 Goals. We Counted How Many He Hit.

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Elon Musk has laid out hundreds of goals over the years for what he plans to achieve at his businesses.

Mr. Musk, 54, has said his rocket company, SpaceX, will build a colony of humans on Mars. He has said that Tesla, his electric carmaker, will incorporate fully autonomous driving abilities into all of its cars. And he has promised to show that humanoid robots made by Tesla are dexterous enough to thread a needle.

None of these have happened.

Ahead of SpaceX's planned initial public offering this month, The New York Times analyzed statements that Mr. Musk has made about his businesses on social media or during investor calls over the last 15 years. He delivered only some of what he said he would, when he said he would, the analysis found.

Of more than 600 claims Mr. Musk has made ...

Strikingly, Mr. Musk's annual rate of success declined over time, even as he made more promises. Of the 13 goals he declared in 2015, he later achieved nearly three-quarters of them, The Times found. But of the 27 claims he made in 2020, fewer than half have been accomplished on time. Some still have deadlines far in the future.

How often Mr. Musk hit his goals over time

Mr. Musk's ability to follow through on what he says is increasingly in the spotlight with SpaceX's I.P.O., which is set to be one of the largest offerings ever. The billionaire has major ambitions for the company, which operates rocket launches and the Starlink satellite internet service, as well as artificial intelligence efforts and the social media platform X.

Mr. Musk owns 50 percent of SpaceX and controls more than 85 percent of the shareholder votes, according to its prospectus. His grip on the company is tight, and the performance of SpaceX, which has valued itself at $1.25 trillion, hinges on whether he does what he says he will, such as putting A.I. data centers into orbit.

About 150 of Mr. Musk's goals over the years were about SpaceX, The Times found. Of those, about 32 percent were achieved within

one year of their stated goal, while 19 percent were more than a year late or remained unfulfilled. Half of the goals could not be verified because the plans were too vague or the date was too far out.

Many chief executives overpromise and underdeliver. But Mr. Musk is a singular figure in the business world, and what he says carries extra weight. Investors typically bet on him specifically, based on his record of disrupting industries such as cars and rockets. At Tesla, where Mr. Musk serves as chief executive and owns about 20 percent of shares, the company's $1.3 trillion market capitalization relies largely on his future plans, according to analyst estimates.

"The market is trading and selling on what he is saying," Sky Moore, a corporate lawyer who has reviewed Tesla's financial filings, said of Mr. Musk.

The Times analyzed more than 69,000 of Mr. Musk's social media posts from 2011 through this January, as well as his public comments on 19 Tesla investor calls since 2021, when transcripts became available. The Times compiled what Mr. Musk said about Tesla, which is publicly traded, and his five private companies,

SpaceX, Neuralink, X, xAI and the Boring Company, though SpaceX recently absorbed X and xAI.

From those, The Times tallied any public statement that Mr. Musk made in which he committed to a future deadline about his businesses. The analysis did not include comments on podcasts, in media interviews and at other events.

Mr. Musk has gotten into trouble several times for making public statements about Tesla and X, formerly known as Twitter, that did not pan out. Public companies are prohibited by law from misrepresenting or omitting information to investors, which could amount to securities fraud.

The highest-profile instance was in 2018 when Mr. Musk said he had secured funding to take Tesla private at $420 a share, though he had not lined up the financing for such a deal. He did not end up taking Tesla private.

That same year, the Securities and Exchange Commission charged Mr. Musk with securities fraud and accused him of misleading investors. Mr. Musk and Tesla soon settled with the regulator for $40 million without admitting or denying wrongdoing. Mr. Musk also stepped down as Tesla's chairman, and the board agreed to review his communications.

In 2023, Mr. Musk separately prevailed against a lawsuit aiming to hold him responsible for investor losses related to his comments that he had secured the funding to take Tesla private.

Many people have tolerated Mr. Musk's behavior because he has enriched investors with his successes at companies like Tesla. They see his statements as a sign of ambition and his way of motivating employees.

"He does set these really ambitious goals, because in his words, he wants quantum change, and you don't get quantum change asking for incremental growth," said Jon McNeill, Tesla's president between 2015 and 2018.

Mr. Musk and representatives for SpaceX and Tesla did not return requests for comment.

No Driver Needed

Mr. Musk has talked most frequently about how Tesla will achieve "full self-driving," the company's program for vehicles that can drive themselves without human intervention. Reaching this is important to Tesla's status as the world's most valuable car company, especially as its car sales have declined since 2023.

Over 60 of Mr. Musk's more than 600 goals were related to the autonomous driving technology, which includes Tesla's robotaxi

program. The billionaire first promised the technology in 2016, according to The Times's analysis.

Here are Mr. Musk's self-driving goals

2016 **Tesla expects to demonstrate self-driven cross-country trip** **10/19/2016** **2017** Autonomy capability should improve via OTA every 2 to 6 weeks 1/22/2017 **2018** That issue is better in latest Autopilot software rolling out now fully fixed in August update as part of our long-awaited Tesla Version 9. To date, Autopilot resources have rightly focused entirely on safety. With V9, we will begin to enable full self-driving features. 6/10/2018Probably 4 to 6 months. Those who order full self-driving get the upgrade at no cost. It isn't needed just for enhanced Autopilot. 8/8/2018~6 months before it is in all new production cars. No change to sensors. This is simple replacement of the Autopilot computer. Will be done free of charge for those who ordered full self-driving. 10/16/2018 **2019** Going through final validation & regulatory approval. Probably releases to early access program owners in a few weeks. It's trippy! 1/9/2019Tesla will start FSD computer upgrade in a few months 4/13/2019Exactly. By end of this quarter, about half a million Teslas will have full self-driving hardware (pending computer swap) & we will make another half million FSD cars by mid next year. 4/23/2019We will delay $1k full self-driving option price increase until May 10 for those unable to order by May 1 4/25/2019We could have gamed an LA/NY Autopilot journey last year, but when we do it this year, everyone with Tesla Full Self-Driving will be able to do it too 5/9/2019**This is why it's possible for Tesla to have a million robotaxis if we upgrade existing HW2 fleet of ~500k & make at least ~500k FSD cars** **7/7/2019**Cost of Tesla full self-driving option increasing by ~$1000 on August 16 7/16/2019Price increase for Tesla FSD postponed until version 10 with smart summon is in wide release, which is about 4 to 8 weeks away, depending on how early access goes 8/20/2019Now that Tesla V10.0 with Smart Summon is out, Full Self-Driving price will increase by $1000 on Nov 1 10/11/2019Working with engineering team to figure out best way to do upgrade without crushing service team. Will start doing upgrades in volume in a few months, coincident with more FSD features being released. 10/11/2019 **2020** Cool, we're tracking to release more FSD features later this month 3/4/2020**Functionality still looking good for . Regulatory approval is the big unknown.** **4/11/2020**We're working super hard on getting traffic lights & stops released. Reverse summon (auto park) will be part of the core Autopilot software upgrade for FSD later this year. 4/15/2020Tesla Full

Self-Driving option cost rises by ~$1000 worldwide on July 1st. Order a Tesla online in less than 2 minutes at https://t.co/qJm9uPBCX5 5/18/2020The FSD improvement will come as a quantum leap, because it's a fundamental architectural rewrite, not an incremental tweak. I drive the bleeding edge alpha build in my car personally. Almost at zero interventions between home & work. Limited public release in 6 to 10 weeks. 8/14/2020Meant to say that it should be fixed in the latest wide release. Won't need to wait for FSD. 10/8/2020Price change is pushed to Thursday next week. Applies only to US for now. One week clock will start in other countries as beta is released. FSD monthly rental will also be available sometime next year. 10/22/2020Absolutely. We will release FSD subscription early next year. 12/20/2020**2021 Tesla Full Self-Driving will work at a safety level well above that of the average driver , of that I am confident. Can't speak for regulators though. 1/1/2021**FSD Beta has now been expanded to ~2000 owners & we've also revoked beta where drivers did not pay sufficient attention to the road. No accidents to date. Next significant release will be in April. Going with pure vision — not even using radar. This is the way to real-world AI. 3/12/2021Button timing of May is aspirational. Depends on how well limited beta of V9.0 goes, but I would be surprised if wide beta (aka button) is later than June. FSD subscription next month is a sure thing. 4/14/2021I think we're maybe a month or two away from wide beta. But these things are hard to predict accurately. The work we had to do for pure vision driving was needed for FSD, so much more progress has been made than it would seem. 5/12/2021Top Safety Pick+ from IIHS! That's the highest overall rating, but we think we can get max score for all subcategories/individual tests too. Retesting in a month or so with improved software. The improved software will then be uploaded to all cars with FSD computers. 6/29/2021Highway stack is still production version, as it is more polished than FSD for now. Single stack for all should release in 10.1. 9/11/2021**2022** Monthly subscription price will rise when FSD goes to wide release 1/7/2022FSD Beta should be available in Europe for LHD this summer, RHD a few months later. These dates depend on regulatory approval. 3/29/2022No, I meant wide release to high safety score beta participants. Going to all beta participants is expected later this year. 4/29/2022**It still needs more work imo, but we can probably widen the beta a little 5/13/2022Also, FSD Beta 10.12.2 now expanding to 100k cars. 10.13 smooths out intersection control, especially long lefts, and starts to handle roads with no map data at all. Last point is a big deal. , FSD should be able to drive to a GPS point with zero map data. 6/4/2022**FSD Beta 10.69 drops on 8/20 8/7/2022After wide

release of FSD Beta 10.69.2, price of FSD will rise to $15k in North America on September 5th. Current price will be honored for orders made before Sept 5th, but delivered later. 8/21/20222 main goals this year: - Starship to orbit - FSD wide release Many other things, of course, but those are the 2 giant kahunas. Will require insane work by many super talented people, but, if anyone can do it, they can. It is an honor to work with such awesome human beings. 8/21/2022**2023** As mentioned earlier, v11.4.1 has major architectural improvements. It's actually much more than a point release. Should arguably be v12.0, but that's reserved for when FSD is fully AI from video in to control out. 5/10/2023HW4 software will lag HW3 by at least another six months, as our focus needs to be on getting FSD on HW3 working super well and provided internationally. 8/27/2023**2024** We have been short on training compute for FSD, so haven't trained with other video, but certainly could. Will do it later this year when we have some spare capacity. 2/17/2024**Three significant improvements to FSD will roll out roughly every two weeks. Should be really shining bright . 3/18/2024**We must focus on FSD for the other 0.99 of the fleet. Cybertruck FSD is a few months away. 5/9/2024Yeah, seeing it everywhere. Btw, 12.4 goes to internal release this weekend and limited external beta next week. Roughly 5X to 10X improvement in miles per intervention vs 12.3. 12.5 will be out in late June. Will also see a major improvement in mpi and is single stack – no more implicit stack on highways. 5/15/2024FSD 12.4.1 releases today to Tesla employees. If that goes well, then it will be released to a limited number of external customers this weekend. There are a massive number of changes to this build. It should arguably be called v13, but we're sticking to 12 😂 Two other versions are in earlier stages of testing: 12.5 and 12.6, which could be called v14 and v15. We are starting to get to the point where, once known bugs are fixed, it will take over a year of driving to get even one intervention. 6/5/2024And all transport will be fully autonomous within 50 years 10/10/2024Not Teslas, once unsupervised FSD starts to happen next year 12/11/2024**2025** **As I've said previously, unsupervised full self-driving Teslas will be carrying passengers in Austin and many cities in America by end of year. This will enable passenger cars to increase in utility by roughly half an order of magnitude overnight with a software update. https://t.co/ADgZNQzmRz 3/31/2025**Robot cars (aka FSD) should have a noticeable effect in 1 to 2 years 5/23/2025For the past several days, Tesla has been testing self-driving Model Y cars (no one in driver's seat) on Austin public streets with no incidents. A month ahead of schedule. Next month, first self-delivery from factory to

customer. 5/28/2025@WholeMarsBlog @StuartZuckerma1 ~4.5X increase in params should be ready for wide release later this year. Super frugal use of memory bandwidth, caching exactly what is needed & squeezing microseconds out of everything are needed to maintain the frame rate. And the whole system needs to be retrained. 6/10/2025@farzyness As soon as we feel it is safe to do so. Probably within a month or two. We continue to improve the Tesla AI with each mile driven. 6/30/2025Tesla is training a new FSD model with ~10X params and a big improvement to video compression loss. Probably ready for public release end of next month if testing goes well. 8/6/2025Minimizing probability of injury is the goal, but we will address these other factors too. If not entirely in this build, then shortly thereafter. 8/6/2025Tesla already does that for self-driving! For real-time video generation with interaction like a good video game, I'd say next year. 8/7/2025The FSD software update next month will be a major step-change improvement for rare conditions 8/7/2025This will substantially reduce the need for driver attention, but some complex intersections, heavy weather or unusual events will still require attention. Note, the Austin robotaxi FSD build is ~6 months more advanced than what is available in cars in America and there are 8/8/2025The FSD release in about 6 weeks will be a dramatic gain with a 10X higher parameter count and many other improvements. It's going through training & testing now. Once we confirm real-world safety of FSD 14, which we think will be amazing, the car will nag you much less. 8/10/2025It will be open access next month 8/10/2025There are so many rare situations irl that even V14, while capable of being much safer than the average human driver, will take a few months to debug post release 8/24/2025**The safety driver is just there for the first few months to be extra safe. Should be no safety driver by . 9/4/2025**The Tesla Robotaxi fleet in Austin should roughly double next month 11/25/2025

Tesla has inched closer toward full self-driving. This year, it offered fully autonomous rides with no human safety monitors in the Texas cities of Austin, Dallas and Houston.

But the company lags other autonomous car providers. Waymo, a subsidiary of Alphabet, which owns Google, offers driverless rides in 11 U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, Miami and Phoenix.

In April, J.P. Morgan analysts said Tesla faced dwindling confidence in its "ability to achieve lofty out-year objectives." Its stock has fallen 14 percent since December, when it hit a record high.

Mr. Musk recently voiced a rare mea culpa. Teslas with older computer systems, known as Hardware 3, could not run software allowing them to drive autonomously, he acknowledged. In 2023, he had promised that those cars would have that ability.
"I wish it were otherwise," he said in an investor call in April.

Destination Mars

Of all the goals Mr. Musk has laid out, perhaps the most eye-catching have been about how SpaceX will reach and colonize Mars.

Mr. Musk founded his space company in 2002 with that plan in mind, saying he wanted to make human life "multiplanetary."

He has made goals related to Mars 19 times, according to The Times's analysis. But in his comments, Mr. Musk's timeline for getting to the Red Planet changed or included deadlines that are still in the future.

In 2011, he said that SpaceX would reach Mars in about 10 years or "worst case 15 to 20 years." He appeared undaunted that Mars is about 140 million miles from Earth, with an inhospitable climate and terrain. Mr. Musk decorated SpaceX's then-headquarters in Hawthorne, Calif., with pictures and maps of Mars, and one of his homes with similar renderings. SpaceX employees, including Mr. Musk, became known for wearing "Occupy Mars" T-shirts.



Elon Musk Jul 12, 2012

I think we will see people on Mars in less than 20 years. 12 to 15 years most likely. #OccupyMars

Over the last decade, Mr. Musk made progress toward getting to Mars. In 2016, he talked about plans for a "Mars Colonial Transporter," a spaceship that would ferry humans to the planet. SpaceX built the rocket, which was eventually called Starship and is larger than the Statue of Liberty. Other plans for Starship included space where humans could live for months at a time.



Elon Musk Nov 19, 2024

@LadoBitnar I am highly confident that we can send several uncrewed Starships to Mars in 2 years. If those ships don't increment the crater count on Mars, then crewed ships can be sent in 4 years.

But many of Mr. Musk's deadlines for reaching Mars keep shifting, which became particularly noticeable in recent years. In March 2024, he said Starship would arrive on Mars "within five years." A

year later, he said the spaceship would depart for Mars "at the end of next year."

NASA has said that the best-case scenario would be that humans reach Mars in the mid-2030s.

In April 2024, Mr. Musk told SpaceX employees that he expected one million people to be living on Mars in about 20 years. He had quietly directed employees to begin working on plans for a city there.



Elon Musk Mar 14, 2025

> Starship departs for Mars at the end of next year, carrying Optimus. If those landings go well, then human landings may start as soon as 2029, although 2031 is more likely.

Yet in February, Mr. Musk revised his thinking again, saying that creating a Martian city would take "20+ years." Instead, he said, SpaceX would colonize the moon.

While SpaceX has a contract with NASA to reach the moon, Mr. Musk had not previously aimed to build a colony there, said Robert Zubrin, an aerospace engineer and a former friend of Mr. Musk's who has informally advised him on Mars, as well as other people close to the tech mogul.

"He has become, in recent years, not too careful about how close his remarks are to the truth," Mr. Zubrin said.

Methodology

The Times analyzed Elon Musk's posts, replies and quotes on X between December 2011 and January 2026, along with transcripts of Tesla earnings calls from December 2021 to January 2026. The Times used a large language model to detect "promises," which were defined as concrete commitments to achieve a future goal. Reporters manually verified, researched and categorized the flagged statements, plus a sample of those the model rejected, to build a final dataset for analysis.