


Visualising your goal

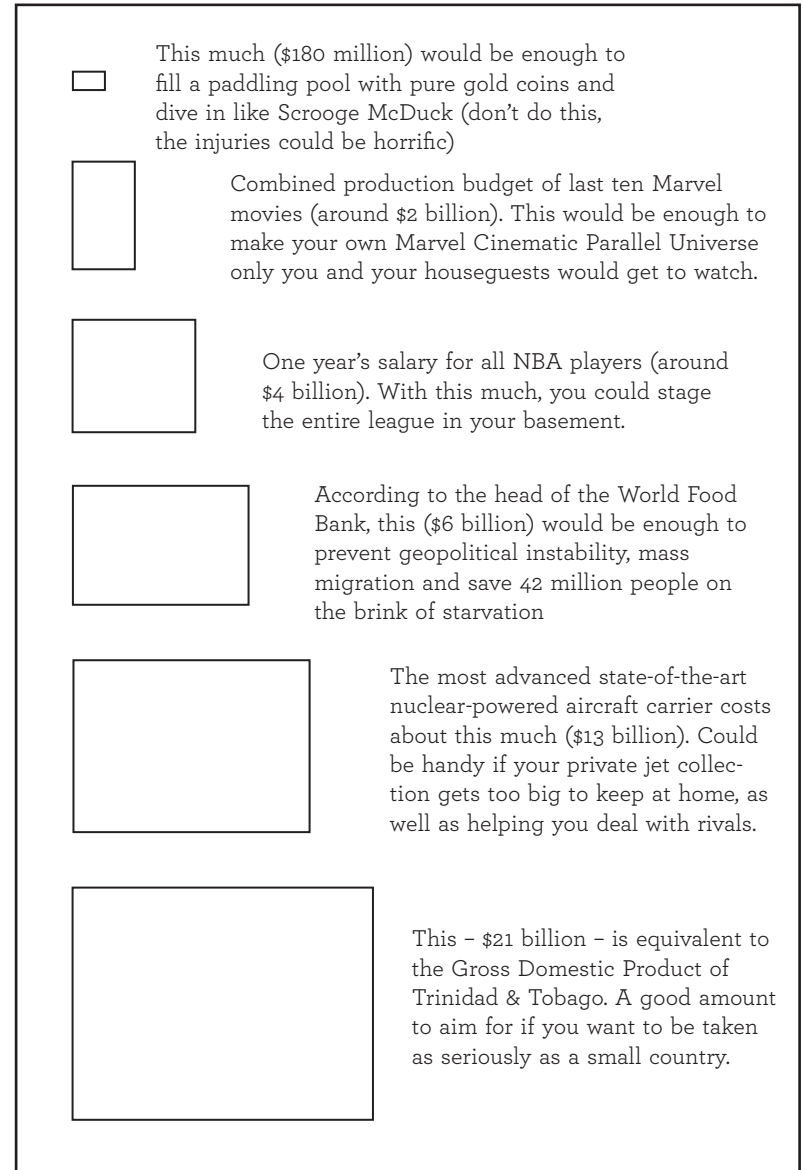
To help you decide on a personal financial goal and track your progress as you work through this book, we've created the visualisation tool opposite.

The size of the large rectangle represents Elon Musk's net worth at the time of going to press. To become an entry-level billionaire, however, you need only accumulate assets equivalent to the tiny rectangle at the top left. Looks pretty easy, right? If so, perhaps you'd like to set a more ambitious stretch goal. (We've added some other rectangles to the chart to help put these big numbers in perspective.)

Why not draw a box representing your objective and pin this page somewhere prominent in your home? That way, every time you walk past, you can stare at your box, softly cackle, and remind yourself of the money that's coming your way.

 = \$1 billion

Elon Musk's net worth (about \$260 billion)



Sources in endnotes¹

Lesson 6

Consume a lot of sci-fi

To lead your business – and one day the world – to new heights, you need a vision of the future. Fortunately, ready-made ones are available in the science fiction section at the library. All you have to do is issue instructions such as ‘Build this’ a few times in the margins of a book with an alien citadel on the cover, then toss it in the direction of your engineering team.

Sci-fi is undoubtedly Silicon Valley’s favourite genre and has captured the fantasies of many young tech billionaires. Its influence on Elon Musk can be seen everywhere, from the alphanumeric codes used instead of his kids’ names (his sixth son for instance is called X Æ A-12) to his drone ships being named after spacecraft in Iain M. Banks space operas¹⁴ (examples include *Just Read the Instructions* and *Of Course I Still Love You*). He’s been known to talk at length about the feasibility of *Star Wars*-style ray-guns based on ultracapacitors.¹⁵

Fellow sci-fi-loving space tycoon Jeff Bezos has

looked to sci-fi not just for ideas but personnel. He turned *Star Trek* actor William Shatner into a real-life astronaut¹⁶ and hired cult novelist Neal Stephenson to come up with out-of-the-box new spacecraft concepts¹⁷ (presumably as part of Bezos’s long-held ambition to offer Amazon Prime deliveries to Pluto).



When in need of product ideas, raid the work of sci-fi authors from Robert Heinlein to Octavia Butler – they are our most brilliant and visionary futurists. Just ignore any subtext you might notice about capital-istic hubris; the people who write these things make up stories for a living and can be complete airheads.

How alpha are you?

To assess your alpha billionaire tendencies, simply decide how much you agree with each of these statements and add up your results to get your score.

I am comfortable giving orders.

Strongly disagree Strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

I always know what I want.

1 2 3 4 5

I shouldn't have to explain my reasoning. Ever.

1 2 3 4 5

I always sit at the head of the table and eat first.

1 2 3 4 5

Other people don't know their own minds.

1 2 3 4 5

Before every meeting, I souse the chairs with my powerful natural pheromones.

1 2 3 4 5

Scores

6-20

You may be smart, but you have a tendency to let others trample over you. Practise taking control - perhaps start with a custom coffee order and slowly work up to striking terror into your employees.

21-30

You have a few alpha traits! You usually get your own way - but you'll need to stay on guard if you want to keep an iron grip on your business empire.

Refused to answer the questions because you never let anyone else tell you what to do

The true alpha, able to impose your will and arbitrary preferences on any situation. Born to be a tech boss.

[My business name exists] to

pioneer quantum computing

revolutionise haircare

change the clowning industry forever

terraform Wales

open up the earth's core for tourism

enhance the productivity of toddlers

using

the blockchain planet-cloning technology

sentient AI superyachts midi-chlorians

hunnable, plant-based game animals

narrative improv

with the ultimate aim of

saving humankind

stopping alien invasions

stopping climate change and also
causing more climate change

ending suffering and inducing
perpetual orgasm for all

finding the highest prime number

finding all the lost socks

preventing the eventual heat
death of the universe

Embrace your eccentricity

To build a business with a crazy valuation from scratch, you may need a crazy-seeming business idea. This is the time to let your freak flag fly in the form of a venture so left-field it just might work.

In 2001, Musk – possibly still delirious after a severe bout of malaria – became preoccupied with space.⁷ Friends worried about his mental state. One initially assumed that Musk, who'd built nothing more than websites at this point in his life, must be talking about commercial real estate. Of course, he wasn't. Rolling in money and looking for a new mission, he'd become convinced of the need to get the masses inspired about space travel again, which he would accomplish by sending mice to Mars. They'd procreate on the long journey and interested viewers would be able to watch them mating on live feeds.

As he cast around for experts willing to take his money and help him with his idiosyncratic project, Musk even travelled to Moscow with a jet scientist

Lesson 20

Go to summer camp for billionaires

Striking big deals with other rich folk is key in this phase of your journey, and there's nowhere better to schmooze with your new tribe than at the 'summer camp for billionaires' run by private investment firm Allen and Company in Sun Valley, Idaho.

Every year, private jets containing invited super-elites descend on the resort, with Musk, Bezos and Zuckerberg among regular attendees. This is the place for the campfire chats that precede huge deals, such as Comcast's acquisition of NBC Universal, or Jeff Bezos's purchase of the *Washington Post*.²³

Other activities include white-water rafting, fly fishing, being spotted in the right low-key athleisure, sending the kids off to play with an army of polo-shirted babysitters, and 'elephant bumping'. The last is Warren Buffett's favoured term for being in a place where you keep bumping into big-hitters aka 'elephants', giving you the reassuring feeling that you must be an elephant yourself.²⁴



Later in your journey, you may want to start feuds with other billionaires. For now, though, it's a good idea to be pally with them. Break the ice with these conversation starters:

A bunch of us are going down to the creek to perpetuate the global neoliberal hegemony later . . .

Nice fleece vest. I'll give you ten million for it.

Beautiful mountain, huh? What do you say we frack it?

I much prefer colluding in the fresh air, don't you?

Let's all share one fun fact about ourselves that can be deployed for profit later.

We could burn this town to the ground with everyone asleep in their beds and no one could touch us, but we choose not to. The media should give us more credit for that, don't you agree?

Is it true we're going to eat babies later, because I only like to consume adult flesh?

Can you match the tweet with the market movement that followed?

1  **Elon Musk** ✓
@elonmusk

Am considering taking Tesla private at \$420. Funding secured.

2  **Elon Musk** ✓
@elonmusk

Tesla stock price is too high imo

3  **Elon Musk** ✓
@elonmusk

Baby Shark crushes all! More views than humans.

4  **Elon Musk** ✓
@elonmusk

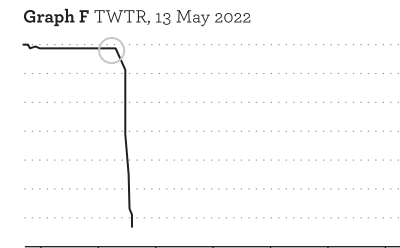
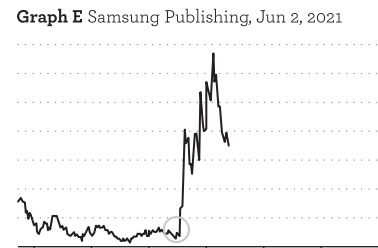
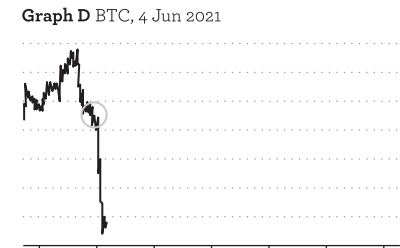
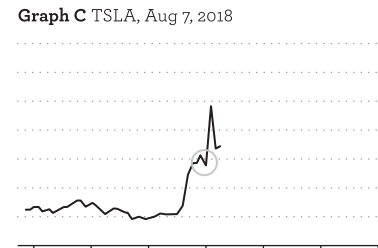
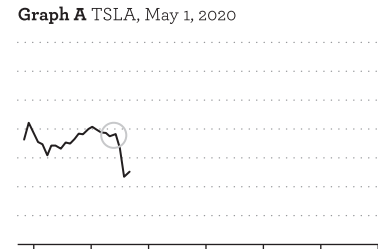
Dogecoin is the people's crypto

5  **Elon Musk** ✓
@elonmusk

Twitter deal temporarily on hold pending details supporting calculation that spam/fake accounts do indeed represent less than 5% of users

6  **Elon Musk** ✓
@elonmusk

#bitcoin  



Pest test

How would you handle these irritating interactions with non-billionaire members of the public?

Q1. *You're participating in a debate at the Oxford Union and a professor challenges your interpretation of Professor Nick Bostrom's Simulation Argument. Do you:*

- A. Ask questions to see if you can find common ground
- B. Admit you are not a trained philosopher, but explain why you find the argument persuasive
- C. Fart loudly for 60 seconds

Q2. *During a TV interview with Reuters the interviewer asks if you still think the panic over COVID-19 was 'dumb'. Do you:*

- A. Admit you could have chosen your words more carefully
- B. Explain that you were concerned about some of the unintended effects of lockdown
- C. Accuse the interviewer of bestiality

Q3. *At an SEC court hearing, a judge questions why a potentially market-influencing tweet you sent was not first reviewed by a lawyer. Do you:*

- A. Explain it was an oversight
- B. Stonewall them; they're trying to trap you
- C. Pull your trousers down and moon the judge, while continuing to play games on your phone

Q4. *You receive an email from a director of the 'In Tax We Trust' coalition asking you to join other wealthy people in signing a petition for the rich to pay more taxes. Do you:*

- A. Politely decline
- B. Send back a poop emoji
- C. Send back a poop

Scores

Mostly As You're wasting too much time on idiots! Humanity needs you focused, so practise giving pests the brush-off.

Mostly Bs Better, but you can express your disdain more succinctly. Remember, every minute you waste dealing with these atoms is a minute of progress lost for humankind.

Mostly Cs You've got the Technoking mindset! Keep whacking away at the idiots and moving on with your fantastic life.

high in Musk's list of existential concerns. 'Civilisational risk is decreased the more we trust in Twitter,' he has claimed.⁶⁾



It's important to know where you stand on current threats to life, since people are going to ask you about them and you'll need to be able to hold forth. How would you rank the following nightmare scenarios?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

- Nuclear war Asteroid strike Pandemic
- Climate change Gamma ray burst
- Supervolcano
- Crop failure Biological attack
- Religious extremism Falling birth rates
- AI uprising Being ignored

Choose a backup planet

With your Billionaire's Big Picture of all the threats facing humanity (see previous lesson), the outlook can seem scary. One Silicon Valley billionaire has estimated that half of his billionaire peers are prepping for doomsday by buying up remote hideaways.⁷⁾

But the real alphas are thinking much bigger, and we urge you to do the same. Jeff Bezos wants to move humanity off-planet into giant orbiting cylinders, with Earth kept as a kind of low-population Yellowstone National Park for occasional camping trips.⁸⁾

Musk famously has his sights set on Mars as a backup planet, as it's relatively nearby and other than its lack of atmosphere boasts Earth-like conditions. (That is to say, it's like the Arctic but much colder, like Chernobyl but more radioactive, and like the Sahara except the sand blowing into your spacesuit is sharp as razors.)