

55. Giga Texas

In early 2020, as Tesla sought a location for a new Gigafactory, a playful discussion arose among its team, including CEO Elon Musk and executive Omead Afshar. The team humorously considered various cities across the United States, dismissing many due to factors like restrictive regulations, NIMBYism, and the desire for a fresh location outside of California's well-trodden grounds. This hunt was for a manufacturing site capable of complementing Tesla's existing Fremont factory, which was at full capacity.

Intriguingly, while many cities like Chicago, New York, and even Tulsa were floated, it was Austin, Texas, that caught the team's fancy for its unique blend of culture and openness to innovation. Unlike Amazon's public quest for its HQ2, Musk took a more intuitive approach to this decision, ensuring a swift and less ceremonious selection process.

Just as this decision mirrored the choice of Berlin for a European location, the rapid development of the Austin Gigafactory showcased Tesla's ambition and operational speed. Within a year, by July 2021, the construction showcased significant progress, promising a vast space that rivaled and aimed to exceed the scale seen in both Fremont and international landmarks in manufacturing space.

Musk's operational involvement stretched to details like construction aesthetics and manufacturing processes. This included a direct focus on the practicalities of factory design, such as window sizes for sunlight management, and efficiency in manufacturing processes, exemplified by his demands for a rapid coolant system for steel processing.

A notable innovation within Tesla's manufacturing advancement was the development of the Gigapress, a massive casting machine capable of producing entire car underbodies in one piece—a leap Musk envisioned after comparing the technology to the simplicity seen in a toy Model S. This ambition led to collaboration with Idra Presse in Italy, resulting in the world's largest casting machine initiatives, fundamentally changing the production efficiency for Tesla's Model Y and the forthcoming Cybertruck. Through these narratives, the chapter portrays Tesla's relentless push towards innovation, operational efficiency, and expansion, driven by Musk's visionary leadership and a refusal to accept conventional limitations.