

74. Hot and Cold

In the chapter "Hot and Cold" from the period of April to June 2022, the narrative delves into Elon Musk's intricate process of acquiring Twitter, highlighting the highs and lows of the endeavor. Initially, Musk, after a night out, expressed to me his attempts to secure financing, even asking Kimbal Musk, who declined, but successfully enlisting Larry Ellison and others like Mike Moritz's Sequoia Capital and Binance for substantial investments. Notably, Ellison, despite not using Twitter actively, saw value in its role in democracy. Another mention is Sam Bankman-Fried, whose offer to invest via blockchain technology Musk skeptically declined, doubting its feasibility for Twitter's dynamic.

Musk's skepticism grew as he met with Twitter's management, including a remote participation from CEO Agrawal due to COVID. His interaction with CFO Ned Segal particularly stirred doubts, especially regarding the assessment of bot accounts, which Musk believed was grossly underestimated, thus questioning the company's valuation and integrity.

Despite these challenges, high-profile investors and stakeholders, including Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, showed support, with the Twitter board eventually accepting Musk's plan, expecting closure by fall. Yet, Musk's vision was met with personal and professional caution, underscored by his children's apprehension and an unsettling diligence meeting at Twitter HQ, pushing him towards reconsideration.

His contemplation swayed between commitment due to the platform's potential impact on public discourse and democracy, and hesitation over the deal's financial prudence and operational challenges. A significant moment came when Musk publicly declared the deal "on hold," citing concerns over spam accounts, which led to a temporary stock tumble and legal warnings from his team. This period of indecision was characterized by fluctuating support from allies, doubts about Twitter's operational transparency, and Musk's own introspection regarding the scope of his ambitions and the practicalities of acquiring and transforming Twitter. The chapter encapsulates the complexity of high-stakes business negotiations, the intermingling of personal belief with professional endeavor, and the unpredictable nature of ambitious tech acquisitions.