

## 76. Starbase Shake-up

In early 2022, Elon Musk spurred an initiative in Boca Chica, Texas, at SpaceX's Starbase with the aim to showcase the Starship with its two stages coupled by Mechazilla's arms, despite warnings from Bill Riley about the tight schedule. Utilizing Twitter, Musk announced a public presentation for Starship, demonstrating his typical method of setting ambitious deadlines to accelerate project timelines.

During an evening at Flaps, a SpaceX restaurant, Musk engaged with NASA directors, jesting about his son's fearless nature and discussing concerns over declining birthrates and the competitive space race with China. He emphasized the significance of maintaining a pioneering spirit in space exploration, expressing concerns that China's advancements in space could overshadow the U.S.'s achievements, likening it to a new "Sputnik moment".

The presentation of the Starship served as a moment of inspiration, enlightening the SpaceX team on the grandeur of their project. Musk's informal interactions post-event with employees and high-profile visitors illustrated the blend of camaraderie and vision that propels SpaceX's culture. A discussion with astronaut Jared Isaacman highlighted Musk's decision to prioritize collective space exploration achievements over personal milestones.

Mid-2022, the focus shifted to addressing the build-up of Starlink satellites and the need for Starship to enhance launch capabilities. Musk initiated a management shake-up, sending Mark Juncosa to revitalize the Boca Chica team. This move was characteristic of Musk's hands-on approach to project management, where he seeks to instill his high-energy, risk-taking ethos in his team. Juncosa's energetic and dynamic management style was aimed at boosting morale and productivity amid the pressure to escalate project timelines.

A critical meeting underlined Musk's urgency in advancing the Starship program. He challenged the team to expedite the booster's testing process, emblematic of his relentless pursuit of efficiency and innovation. This gathering also revealed Musk's contemplative yet decisive leadership style, directing the project's pace towards achieving milestone after milestone, no matter the unorthodox methods or the intensity of the effort required.

The incident at the employee tiki bar, led by Juncosa, underscored the unique blend of determination, camaraderie, and the rebellious spirit within SpaceX. It highlighted the unconventional methods employed to foster team spirit and maintain motivation amidst ambitious projects and tight schedules.

Musk's overnight directive to hasten the booster's readiness for testing epitomizes his unconventional leadership and aggressive project timelines. His ability to synthesize information and make swift decisions reflects his vision for SpaceX – not just as a company that builds rockets, but as a crucible for pioneering space exploration and pushing the boundaries of human potential.