

Laissez-faire

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?Godspeed, Bob and Doug!?

If you're a Canuck, hearing that phrase might make you think of a couple of plaid and toque wearing hosers heading out across the frozen lake on a beer run or singing their version of The Twelve Days of Christmas

However, that was the send-off given to two astronauts as they launched in a SpaceX rocket to rendezvous with the International Space Station.

SpaceX was the first private company to send astronauts into orbit. They also have a few other impressive firsts under their corporate belt.

It's all because Elon Musk, the South African / Canadian / American billionaire, had a vision.

Musk wasn't born into a wealthy family, he's a self-made man.

Obviously, he's an intelligent man, but on top of that, he is driven to succeed and he acts on his ideas.

There are plenty of people who are very smart, but lack ambition, and never really get anywhere in life.

When SpaceX launched Bob and Doug into space, it also marked the first time NASA had contracted to a private company to get the job done. At the time, NASA hadn't launched a rocket from American soil in nine years.

If anything, this shows what can be accomplished by private business when allowed to operate without too many government regulations.

Of course, certain rules and regulations are in place for a reason. You can't have companies operating in a dangerous manner putting the health and lives of employees at risk.

I don't know how SpaceX operates as a company, but any private outfit that can successfully launch men into space won't have a lot of middle management sitting around and twiddling their thumbs while two engineers in the back room design a rocket.

Most likely they have a dedicated and experienced group of people who are focused on getting a job done ? and getting it done right.

If you're launching a rocket, there will be no greater failure than having your craft explode on the launch pad, killing your astronauts and destroying your payload.

There's a real lesson here. It demonstrates how a laissez-faire approach to business will get things done. It means ?let do? with the theory that business works best without intervention of regulation and subsidies.

There was a need for someone to start building rockets and Elon Musk filled that need ? something that a government agency couldn't do.

Government run agencies require funding, and approval for that funding. Then they have to hire a whole bunch of people including consultants, committees, consultants to committees, supervisors, managers, people to approve plans, and people to approve people who approve plans.

At the end of a year they still won't have a project completed.

With private companies or publicly traded corporations there is a goal and investors to answer to. If you're going to be successful you can't waste time on unproductive people and exercises.

Then there is the competition in a free market society that drives companies to do better.

Probably the best example of this was when eastern Europe was run mostly by communist governments. It was an absolute disaster.

With governments in control of production, standards dropped to an absolute low. No western country would trade with places like the former Yugoslavia because they knew they wouldn't get what they needed. Have you ever seen an automobile designed in a communist country?

There was no competition so no one felt the need to do better. If you didn't want a product because it was garbage, too bad ? take it or leave it.

A friend of mine toured eastern Europe when communism was in full swing. Although he had a good trip, there was an air of suspicion around him all the time, both by government officials and local people because nobody could understand why a westerner would want to go there as a tourist.

He noticed that every time he was in a town, it wasn't long until he was covered in a layer of fallout from local factories. With no one to challenge the government regarding pollution, they had no cause to try to fix a problem that was slowly killing their own people and environment.

Elon Musk's goal is to colonize Mars. Whether he can realistically come even close to that goal in his lifetime remains to be seen.

However, his entrepreneurial spirit and team of engineer is proving what private business can accomplish.

And Bob and Doug both appreciate the effort