

HOW TO *Think* LIKE A
TALENTED
CREATOR

Johan Qin

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Intro

Everyone has talent. *Everyone*. But most people don't know how to build and develop a successful career off of their talents like a talented creator.

Talent gets you to the starting line. But to make it to the finish line, which becomes the next starting line, you need brains and brawns, strength and speed, courage and perseverance.

You can't make it as a creator if you rely on talent alone. You need to understand your market and how to market and sell yourself. You need to know your identity and gifts, and what makes you different from everyone else in your niche.

You need to know how to work on your craft, how to respond to emotions wisely, and how to analyze and finish your work when no one is able to help.

My name is Johan Qin, and I'm the founder of Talented Asian Creators. My goal with this eBook is to help you unleash your creative talent and live the life you've always wanted as a creator.

I'm excited to teach with you everything I've learned over the years creating and working as a musician, writer, artist and teacher. After reading this eBook, you will have the tools, knowledge, and skills necessary to create the success you want.

Are you ready? Let's go.

What separates the regular creators from the creators who can truly build a life on their talent, is that the talented creators know there's more to success than just talent.



Chapter 1: You Are An Artist

You are an artist. Yes, you. Even if you don't see yourself as one, there's an art, a style, to everything you do, and that is what makes you unique.

Most of the time, when we think of artists, we think of our favorite bands or writers or designers. But you are an artist too. No matter what field or occupation you are in, there is an art to everything you do. You may already understand that, but my goal in this book is to share more ideas and knowledge about talent so you can express yourself with more confidence.

First of all, what is an artist? An artist is someone who takes their feelings, ideas and thoughts and transforms it into work that others can enjoy and appreciate.

An artist is someone who is in touch with their inner self.

Every artist also possesses a unique worldview. Through their art, they are able to share their original perspective and message with the rest of the world.

Being an artist is a gift, a form of expressing your soul that leaves the world in a better and more beautiful place. It's not easy being an artist though. There are so many voices out there -- society, friends, parents, community -- who tell us being vulnerable is too risky and dangerous.

What if being vulnerable was the only way for you to reach your fans and dreams? And what if being vulnerable is your gift to the world, something that only you can do?

That's what it means to be an artist.

As I said before, there's an art to everything you do, whether it's playing the piano, writing a book, or being a software engineer. Being an artist is about understanding the personal idiosyncrasies of how you do things and letting it shine in your work. It's also about becoming whole, taking the different parts of you inside and integrating all of that into your creative work.

This book will dive into four components that comprise creative talent and artistry: craft, identity, mindset, and marketing. Together, we will explore these four parts and help you gain the knowledge and skills necessary to make your own impact as a talented creator.

Let's create.

Chapter 2: Craft

The fundamentals of creative ability.

What is craft?

Craft can be simply defined as **the fundamentals of creative ability**. Without an understanding of craft, it will be impossible to create high-quality work that influences other people.

Craft is not simple to understand, yet if you go to your local IKEA and examine the way the store is designed, or if you glance at the cover of the book on your desk, you will notice craft is all around you. It is just difficult to notice until you are aware it is there.

Once you start looking for craft, you will find it everywhere around you. From the design of your room to the speakers on the bookshelf, it is all around us.

Craft is invisible – and that is why it is powerful. The most important things in life are unseen.

This chapter will discuss craft and technique before diving into the fundamentals of form. After reading this chapter, you will have developed a greater understanding of craft and how to apply it in your creations.

Craft And Technique

What is the difference? Why does it matter?

As mentioned above, craft is largely invisible. Craft can be described as **the abstract material woven into the fabric of your creation**. You can't see it, but it can be discerned through the visible and sensory aspects of the piece. It is intuitive and reflects the ability level of the creator.

An example of craft would be the feeling and atmosphere a music producer wants to create through their chord progression. You can't see the feeling or atmosphere, but it is there in the chord progression choice. It is woven into the fabric of the song and directly shapes the nature of the piece even though there's no sign saying: "I chose C Major - E Minor - A Minor - G Major to make it sound bittersweet."

Technique, on the other hand, can be described as **the nuts and bolts that make craft come alive**. It is concrete and visible, and it allows the original idea to be seen and expressed in the creation. It is sensory and reflects the skill level of the creator.

Another way to think about technique is: **technique is the physical expression of craft**. You can have the best ideas and all the understanding of craft in the world, but without a grasp of technique, you will not be able to apply and successfully execute your original ideas.

Every creative field requires an appreciation and understanding of craft and technique in all its different forms. In the next section, I will discuss fundamental forms of craft and how it shapes creative work for creators.

Fundamental Forms of Craft

No matter your creative background, there are certain fundamental forms of craft that hold relevance for all types of creators. Let's take a look below.

Tone

Tone is the overarching mood or emotion of your work. It is determined by the internal space that you are creating from. If your work has a dreamy, romantic tone, like Korean R&B singer [DEAN's D \(Half Moon\)](#), it means you are creating from an inner dreamy and romantic place.

Tone can be a singular emotion, like frustration or rage in hip-hop and rap, or complex, the way multi-movement symphonies and full-length albums flow through multiple emotions.

Texture

Texture is the look and feel of a piece of art. When you look at the text in a novel, or listen to the drums and bass in a rock song, the texture can be clear, tight, dense, rough, loose, and so on. You can blend textures from different genres or styles to produce completely new textures.

The most simple example of texture can be found in fashion. Cotton, denim and wool are textures. Some brands blend cotton and wool together to create clothing that mixes comfortable texture with trendy appearances.

Structure

Structure is how you design the layout of a creation. Structure goes hand-in-hand with storytelling. There's usually a beginning, middle and end. For a song, there's usually a hook, verse, chorus, and bridge. For graphic design and paintings, there are layers to the composition that can be arranged to emphasize certain sections or scenes of the creation.

Story

Story is all about conflict and resolution, or tension and release. When writing a story, it is important to remember what the conflict is, how it arose, and how it is resolved.

Conflict isn't always about people who don't get along. It can take the form of tension and release too, like in music. It can be a chord progression in a jazz song that makes use of dissonant chords and unresolving harmonies. There are many ways to tell a story.

Style

The style of a creation means that it incorporates techniques, conventions and essential elements of craft from a particular genre (e.g. an Impressionist style painting) or from a particular creator (e.g. a fugue in the style of Bach). People create their own style by combining stylistic elements into new combinations that give rise to original personal meanings.

Genre

Genre is similar to style or category, but it comes with certain expectations around emotion, theme, and story. Romance and horror, two popular book genres, carry certain connotations around expected emotions, storytelling techniques and atmospheres. With music, a genre like future house is created around 130bpm and features certain drum samples and rhythms.

Taste

Taste is typically perceived as subjective, but people generally know when something is good taste or not. Something created in good taste generally means that it is unique, original, lacking in cliché, interesting and valuable. Something created in bad taste would be reductive, cliché, unpleasant or difficult to understand.

Framing

Framing is how you put a creation into context. This can be accomplished by associating it with a movement or genre, for example, or it could be as simple as the cover image of a new EP.

The frame of a creation is the first impression a consumer receives, and it directly shapes the way the consumer interacts with and experiences your creative work. Like a great painting with a bad frame, the way you frame a creation can influence the success and value of your creation.

Color

Color is not only limited to what you can see. Color can also be heard, felt, smelled and tasted.

One of the most colorful songs I've ever listened to is [Maybe It's Not Our Fault](#) by South Korean pop singer Yerin Baek. What colors do you hear when you listen to it? I hear a soft palette of violet, light pink, and pale white. My impression is influenced by the [album cover](#), which is a good example of framing.

Identity-Specific Forms of Craft

Are there any forms of craft that are specific to your identity? Take some time to list them below.

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How To Think Like A Talented Creator

No two stories are ever
the same because of
who's telling it,
how they tell it,
and *why* they're telling it.



Chapter 3: Identity

Be memorable.

No two stories are the same, but no two people are the same either. What is identity, and how do you capture your identity as succinctly as possible?

Keep Your Intro Short

The fewer words you use, the more powerful you are.

If I introduced myself as “I’m Johan Qin, and I’m a writer, musician, artist, entrepreneur, and violin teacher” every time I introduced myself to someone new, it would get really tiring quickly.

But if I got to a point where I could introduce myself as “Johan Qin” and people immediately knew what I was associated with and my record of accomplishments, I would have achieved a high level of marketing and social success.

Think of Jay Park, the hip-hop CEO of South Korean record labels AOMG and HIGHR MUSIC. Every time he’s featured on a song, people know exactly who he is and what to expect from him. That’s collaboration, publicity and longevity working. The more well-known you are, the easier it is market yourself and win.

Character Plus Personality

Identity can be defined as character plus personality. A lot of people have good characters, but their personality is not as memorable or exciting. Likewise, there are a lot of people with fantastic personalities who have bad characters.

It takes both personality and character to become memorable and succeed. Think of your favorite creators, or even most famous Hollywood stars. They all have fantastic characters and a memorable personality. They are leaders and observers. They can express a variety of emotions, feelings and ideas in their own unique way. That is what makes them memorable.

Brand Your Name

Do you ever look at your name as a brand? If you have a unique name, you own all pages of Google results if you google yourself. This is a major advantage in getting your name out there because you don’t have to fight as hard to be seen. Take advantage of it if you have the opportunity.

Express With Conviction

What makes some voices memorable and others forgettable? It comes down to the conviction in the voice, something that cannot be faked and comes from within the person.

Conviction is the lack of insecurity, and it comes from believing with absolute trust that what you are doing is right. Conviction makes you unstoppable, and it goes hand-in-hand with knowing who you are, what you stand for, and why you stand for those things.

Purpose and Passion

Why should people care about you? What makes you different? The more clear and aware you are of that the better. This ties into authenticity and passion. What are your goals and what is the purpose of your work, not only with your creation but with your career?

How do you want to change the world? All of this is part of what makes you different.

Legacy

Legacy begins by keeping in mind how you want to be remembered when you die. A talented creator establishes their legacy before they pass away in the quality of their work, the longevity of their career, and their passion. They keep showing up, especially when things get real tough.

Johan Qin

How To Think Like A Talented Creator

If you died today,
how would you want
to be remembered?

That's where legacy begins.



Chapter 4: Mindset

Develop a winning psychology.

In this chapter, I'll dive into key frameworks and practices for developing a winning psychology.

As a creator, you won't get far with a weak mindset. The world is full of talented people trying to build a career off of their talent. A lot of them have exceptional talent which can be difficult, if not impossible, to compete against. But one realm you can outmaneuver them in, if they do not work hard that is, is in the realm of mindset.

Mindset can be what sets you apart, especially if your talent is not as strong as the competition. Learning how to develop a winning psychology and investing energy effectively into areas where you do stand out can make a major difference between success and failure.

Understand Your Psychology

Have you ever sat down with yourself and observed the feelings and thoughts running through your head to try to understand where they are coming from? Whenever I feel overwhelmed, I grab a pen and notebook and jot down everything that comes into my mind. I try to study my reaction to things and see what my response tells me about myself. Then I ask myself if this is how I want to act.

When you create space from your thoughts, you create space to choose differently. That is the source of your power as a talented creator.

Do you understand the factors, reasons and motivations that have led you to where you are right now? Is where you are where you want to be in life? If so, it's safe to say you have a strong grasp of your inner psychology. If not, I would recommend getting more in touch with your inner thoughts and feelings so you can start creating the life you want to live.

Knowing your history is part of your story as a talented creator.

Output vs Outcome

As an entrepreneur and content creator, I share new work as much as I can, yet there's only so much I can do outside of marketing and selling my own content. I can't control how many people like my work, who decides to comment, or what people will think about my output. But one of the things I can control is how I decide to show up, and how often I show up.

Focus more on the output and focus less on the outcome. When you let go of the outcome, you become happier. I think that's especially important for talented creators.

Internal vs External Validation

The same can be said for internal vs external validation. Am I looking to people around me to validate my creation, or am I looking inside myself for validation and not caring or worrying about what other people think?

You can either be independently confident, with confidence stemming from within yourself, or dependently confident, with confidence stemming from outside yourself. One of the two is more stable than the other.

Act With Intention

Growing up, I played violin because I had to. I would stand there and practice for 2 hours, but I hardly concentrated, and I didn't grow much as a violinist as a result.

These days I play piano for about 30 minutes a day, but because I *want* to play piano and because I focus on improving something within those 30 minutes, I improve much faster and enjoy what I am doing.

Don't do something because you feel like you have to. Do it because you really want to. It shows in your work.

Appreciating "Negative" Emotions

When you feel frustrated or despondent because of the progress of your creation, try asking yourself what your feelings are trying to tell you. Emotions are raw information that speak to your inner self and feelings. If you can work with those emotions instead of judging or shaming them, you will make more positive, informed and well-rounded decisions.

Johan Qin

How To Think Like A Talented Creator

If you wait for everyone
around you to validate
what you're doing before
you begin, you're never
going anywhere.



Chapter 5: Marketing

Differentiate yourself to thrive.

Marketing is how you differentiate yourself from the rest of the people around you. In this chapter, I'll dive into smart marketing tips you can use to differentiate yourself and thrive.

Analyze Your Niche

Know the niche (or genre) you are in and what it takes to become a powerhouse in that niche.

If I want to succeed in the violin cover market, I should analyze the competition to see what they're doing well and what I could execute on better than them. At the same time, I have to be aware of my talent and where I am lacking in talent.

Pick and choose your market, but use your time and energy productively. Understand what it takes to surpass your competitors, or if you even have what it takes to surpass them.

Aesthetics, Imagery and Visual Marketing

As someone who has both done photoshoots and worked as a copywriter, I can say for a fact that one good photo can say much more – and work harder for you – than the best copywriting.

What feeling, emotion or mood do you want consumers to feel when they engage with your visuals? And what values and message do you want to communicate through your aesthetics and imagery? This is tied to [framing, style and tone](#) forms of craft.

Pay attention to your artist image because it's the first impression your potential audience and fans will get of you, and it can set the tone for how they engage with and experience your work.

People don't always have patience to read, but an image requires no time to appreciate.

Take Leadership For Something

What do you want to be known for? The best way to get people to follow you is to become a leader and take leadership for something, whether it is a cause, movement or creative vision.

Teach people something that you have a plethora of. Your best work comes from something you deeply and richly understand.

Develop A Social Strategy For Marketing Success

Here are three marketing strategies I can recommend from personal experience:

Choose your platform wisely. What kind of people do you want to build relationships with? Understand that each platform comes with its own norms, culture and expectations. Which platform suits your needs and personality most?

Set financial goals and healthy deadlines. How much income or revenue are you trying to generate from your creativity or creation at this point in time? What products and types of content will you use to accomplish these goals?

Choose your content type intelligently. What form or type of content makes you shine brightest?

Do you enjoy making short clips, which work better for platforms like TikTok or Instagram, or are you better at engaging others in thoughtful discussions through lengthy articles, for which you would be better geared towards platforms like LinkedIn and Medium?

What content type do you want to be known for? Choose a platform and format that works for your creativity and not against it.

Build Singular Value

Why should people listen to you, and what will they gain from you that they cannot gain from anyone else? In other words, what is something only *you* in the entire world can provide? Build your marketing strategy around that and don't let anyone distract you from your singular value.

Chapter 6: Analyzing Creative Work

Now that we've gone over these four subjects, I'll demonstrate how I analyze creative work. You can take ideas from my analysis and use it to analyze artists that you also admire.

We'll use the song [Uma to Shika](#) (馬と鹿 in Japanese, translated to "Horse and Deer" in English) by Kenshi Yonezu, my favorite singer-songwriter from Japan.

I'd like you to pay attention to three things: **lyrics**, **videography** and **sound production**. See how each of these elements works together on an individual and collective level to tell a unique and moving original story. Make sure you turn on the captions to read the lyrics too.

First of all, the lyrics by themselves already tell a deeply affecting story. Kenshi Yonezu doesn't reveal too much in the beginning. He sets the tone with lyrics like "Spring comes, I'm bruised and broken / The pain was so much I almost gave up" and "My heart won't give up / No matter how much I lose." He uses craft and technique through metaphor to tell his own story: "How can I exemplify you and me? / Through the same scars on our feet?" This comes at [3:01](#).

Let's add videography now to the analysis. This video alternates between three kinds of shots: shots of Kenshi Yonezu singing alone, shots of Kenshi Yonezu singing with a large supporting crew of actors, and shots of Kenshi Yonezu in a wide and open cavernous location.

The videography maintains a moderate distance from Yonezu for most of the video. However, there are times, like at 1:25 or 2:51, when the setting is highlighted and symbolic images like boxing gloves and a swinging log on fire highlight the contrast between water and fire elements.

The only time the camera gets close to Kenshi Yonezu is at the end, at [3:21](#). The video production begins to get increasingly intense, with both more movement from the large supporting crew, and the camera becoming uncomfortably close towards Kenshi Yonezu.

This is all done on purpose to increase the [tension](#) before releasing it at [4:24](#).

Finally, the **sound production** utilizes a boom-clap rhythm beginning at 0:44 to create a sense of movement and growing momentum. This ties in to the lyrics I mentioned before ("Spring comes, I'm bruised and broken / The pain was so much I almost gave up").

We get a sense that the theme of Uma to Shika has to do with moving forward despite nearly unbearable pain.

Now that you have a deeper understanding of how to think about creative work, you can apply these same techniques and tools to your own creation to develop more meaningful understandings into your craft, storytelling and artistic abilities.

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Chapter 7: Principles and Myths of Talented People

Principle 1: The more talent you have, the more humble you need to be.

Talented people are often just as lacking in talent in areas of their life where they have no talent. It's a commonly known fact, for example, that highly talented artists had some incredibly messy and unorganized rooms.

If you want someone to appreciate your talent, appreciate theirs first.

Principle 2: There's always going to be someone with more talent than you. But it's not about how much talent you have. It's how you use it.

Say you have a 5/10 talent but 9/10 marketing skills. You're probably a marketing genius, so I would invest more energy into your marketing and find ways to get your talent in front of more people who can witness your talent.

Or say you have a 10/10 talent and 3/10 marketing skills. Then choose your market and target audience with precision and unleash your unstoppable talent on them.

Principle 3: The general rule of thumb is: Family and community typically discourage people from pursuing their talents if it does not seem like it will earn enough money.

This comes from a place of protection, but people also need to be fulfilled in order to live a happy life. I would argue these people need more time, support and encouragement to develop their talents, and to gain experience and skills that allow their talents to shine.

Principle 4: Be with people who see and appreciate your talent. These people have the clearest eyes for what makes you different and unique.

I'm very lucky my family has supported my musical career throughout my life, but I know I'm more the exception than the norm. Surround yourself with people who accept you for who you are but encourage you to keep growing.

Principle 5: You shine brightest when you build a life and career off your unique set of talents.

You find your zone of genius by identifying your talents and finding ways to connect them. Sometimes, your talent may only shine when around other people who have complimentary talent. In that case, try building a relationship or business together.

Myth 1: I don't have any talent.

Take a look at how people have complimented you in your past. It doesn't have to be related to performance or talent. It could be the way you think, or your perspective, or your honesty when you didn't have to be.

Never forget that having exceptional character is a talent as well.

What's different about you, and what if that sets you apart in a wholly positive way? Take a negative judgment and find something positive about it. Then begin building on that talent.

Myth 2: I don't have enough talent to succeed.

It's not about how much talent you have, it's how you use it. I would recommend three things.

First, understand what your talent looks like. What type of content makes you stand out?

Second, figure how to achieve public recognition of your talent. It could look like starting a YouTube channel, releasing a song on Spotify, or holding an art show. Once you get recognized, keep building on that momentum and developing your [name](#) and reputation.

Third, understand that you are the only person responsible for developing your talents to their full potential. This is only your talent, not your parents' or mentors'. Believe in yourself. Seize the day!

Myth 3: I don't have what it takes to make it.

Maybe not right now. But it took me three years from the start of my entrepreneurial journey in 2019 to reach this point in my creative journey. When I started in 2019, I didn't know if I could make it either. But I tried my best and gained experience wherever I could. I kept putting myself out there even though it was hard and scary. I didn't get any positive feedback or response most of the time (in fact, my posts on LinkedIn rarely get more than a few likes even after a few months of posting), but that doesn't stop me from giving up. Because I know if I give up, there go all my bright future possibilities for creative independence.

Keep executing. It takes time to build yourself and develop your mind and audience. It takes time to gain new skills and develop new areas of talent. This is a game of years, not months.

If you wait for everyone
around you to validate
what you're doing before
you begin, you're never
going anywhere.



Chapter 8: How To Think Like A Talented Creator

The life of the talented creator is not nice and easy. If it was, most would have chosen it already.

The struggle is great, but the rewards – confidence, independence, freedom, power, fulfillment – are worth it. As they say, worthwhile things in life never come easy.

You are different than most people in our world because you know you can make a difference with your life and time in this world. You are aware that your life matters and that you can make a big difference with the talent you have been given.

The road of the talented creator is a road of courage, trust and vulnerability.

As someone who has been walking this road for years, it doesn't get any easier.

But you will get stronger, and that is what makes this road worth walking.

You will evolve in every way possible: emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual.

You will change for the better, and you will not be the same person as when you started.

If I had to leave you with one piece of advice, it is this:

Your work is only as powerful as your character.

Johan Qin

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Your work is
only as powerful as
your character.



Chapter 9: Conclusion

Thank you for reading “How To Think Like A Talented Creator.” I hope you learned something valuable from this eBook and that it inspired you to think about your artwork and creative career in a new way.

To connect or learn more information about me and what I’m creating, please visit my [website](#). I [coach artists and creators](#) by helping them overcome psychological obstacles to success. I also [teach the violin](#) to talented students in Northern California and work as a [writer and editor](#).

If you are interested in connecting or working together, please book a time to chat [here](#).

Finally, thank you to [Herm the Younger](#) for designing the beautiful eBook cover and graphics for the quotes. This would not have been successful without him.

Wishing you all the best,
Johan Qin