

## **Why creativity is important**

*'I want to become an artist!'*

Guidance counsellor: *'Don't be stupid, go get an accounting degree!'*

Why do they always suggest accounting?

To try on the guidance counsellor's worldview for a second they probably suggested accounting because the career path to accountant is well worn. It's easy advice.

Get a job with the big four, study hard, pass the exams and boom you're a qualified accountant. Next!

The guidance counsellor probably hates to hear artist because how do they provide guidance?

There is no map for artists. There is no one clear route to success. In terms of a career path, it's full of uncertainty.

There are no multinational companies handing out thousands of graduate artist jobs every year.

The guidance counsellor probably suggested accounting because they see it as a safe option and they dissuade you from a creative career because they see it as impractical.

So if Accounting has proven to be the 'safe and practical' career of the past then I think we should contemplate the 'safe and practical' career of the future.

### **The 'safe and practical career' of the future**

I bet when you're in the supermarket you make a beeline for the self-checkout machines.

I bet you've noticed that you can pay for petrol at the pump these days.

I bet you've come across an auto attendant. You know... 'Press 1 for sales, Press 2 for customer support' etc.

Artificial intelligence claimed those jobs early but it didn't stop there.

Digital advertisers no longer have to manually change ads, bids and schedules because there are software programmes that can automatically do that ten times faster and better.

Armies across the world prefer to use drones instead of pilots on some missions and if Amazon's experiments are anything to go off it looks like delivery drivers will be replaced by drones too.

Slowly but surely AI is creeping into each industry. Then where AI fails, outsourcing picks up the slack.

Have you ever rung a major corporation and not recognise the accent of the customer service rep? It's most likely because they're answering the call from another country.

It's expensive to have your call centre located in the US or UK, you have to fill it with employees who need a salary to handle the US/UK cost of living.

Countries like India and the Philippines undercut UK competitors on price every day of the week.

What is the cost conscious company going to do? Is it worth the extra money to keep the jobs local?

Or consider Fiverr.com. The website where you can find freelancers to complete the tasks you don't want to do.

Recently I searched Fiverr.com for transcribers and I was flooded with options, honestly there was over ten pages of choices. Each person undercutting the other for price and speed.

*'I can do it for €5 and complete it within 24 hours.'*

*'I can do it for €3 and complete it within 12 hours.'*

The winner in this marketplace is going to be the fastest and the cheapest and is that a game you want to win? How quickly can AI catch these freelancers and put them out of a job?

In short, if we can write down a set of clear instructions for what you do all day we can outsource it or buy a programme to do it faster and cheaper.

So the 'safe and practical' career of the future is going to be one secure from the threat of AI and outsourcing.

It's going to be based on skills that are in demand and can't be easily replicated by robots or instruction following humans.

Skills surrounding human interaction, decision making, dealing with uncertainty, leadership and you guessed it... creativity.

### **Creativity has never been in higher demand.**

Content these days has a much shorter lifespan than its ancestors. The internet has brought never before seen levels of content consumption.

It used to be that movies would run in cinemas for a whole summer now they only get a few weeks.

Netflix has to update its programmes every month.

People watch TV shows in a day and still hunger for more.

The social media post seen yesterday is forgotten about today.

We have an insatiable appetite for creativity and the internet provides unlimited access.

### **Also creativity is hard!**

Harry Potter isn't a tremendous success because it's a copy, it's a worldwide phenomenon because Rowling did the hard work of creating something original that delights her audience.

If creativity was just a case of following an instruction manual then anyone could do it.

If creativity was easy then everyone in the world would have a bestseller or a number one hit.

Here's an experiment, take five of your non creative friends and ask them to produce something creative. It could be a short film, an essay, a painting it doesn't matter.

I bet they'll balk.

They'll refuse the challenge because they're 'not creative'.

Or they'll procrastinate forever.

Or finish it but never show it to anyone because they're so ashamed of it.

Why?

Because creativity is hard. It's hard to battle long enough with your inner demons to create something. It's difficult to put yourself out there to be judged.

I didn't do much economics in college but I know that if the output is in demand and the skill is in short supply then there is your scarce economic value right there.

**Guidance counsellor:** *So you're going to tell these kids to waste their lives trying to get signed by a label or studio?*

No I'm not.

As alluded to above, the internet is here.

As well as bringing us a plethora of cat videos, the internet has also rendered the gatekeepers irrelevant.

You don't need to bend over backwards trying to please a TV executive when there is Youtube in the world.

Why tarnish your song trying to get the approval of a record label when you can post it to the internet uncompromised?

Yes the internet doesn't bring total certainty to creative careers, but it does provide a fantastic platform.

There are full time vloggers, bloggers and tiktokers in the world whose sole income is their contribution to the internet.

Kevin Kelly estimates that if you have 1,000 true die-hard fans you could make a living from serving them.

Just 1,000.

That means you don't need to be Ed Sheeran or Drake to make money from music.

For example, have you ever heard of Amanda Palmer?

Once a part of the Dresden Dolls before they were dropped by their label, she started fundraising on kickstarter for a new solo album.

She had cultivated such a loyal fan base that her fundraising target of \$100,000 was blown out of the water by fans going above and beyond to contribute (it's rumoured that the total came close to 1.2 million dollars).

## **The conclusion**

To bring this essay to a conclusion I think we can't ignore the job market signs. AI only looks to be improving and simple tasks can be outsourced for cents on the dollar.

Therefore I think the 'safe and practical' career of the future is going to be the one based on skills that aren't easy to replicate by computers or instruction followers.

I think even if you can't make creativity your full time job you will benefit from the practice. Because the practice involves creating your own course, dealing with uncertainty and coming to terms with the fact that no outcome is guaranteed.

I think this is important because I'm finishing off this essay in the tenth month of a global pandemic that nobody saw coming.

I remember when it first started and I predicted it would be over in 8 weeks. How wrong I was, but I take solace in the fact that it looks like nobody knows when it's going to end.

The future only promises more uncertainty, and wouldn't you like to get some practice in so you can deal with it better?