

Preface

We've all been told a lie about the nature of creativity. For as long as anyone can remember, our culture has perpetuated the myth that creative success is the result of a sudden light-bulb moment. That writing bestselling novels, creating revered paintings, or developing viral mobile apps has a mystical quality, unconnected to rational thought or logic, that is reserved for "geniuses" rather than for the rest of us mere mortals.

In fact, for centuries now we have been persuaded of this by wise men and critics who excitedly recount stories of creative genius that emphasize the individual, the subconscious, and the seemingly divine machinations behind creative achievement.

My goal in writing *The Creative Curve* is to reveal the truth about creative success: that there is in fact a science behind what becomes a hit and that today's neuroscience gives us an unprecedented ability to decode and engineer the necessary moments of "inspiration" to create popular work that your audience can't get enough of.

I have always been addicted to patterns. As a kid, this took the form of spending countless hours playing computer games, watch-

ing and waiting to see how the AI worked so I could destroy my virtual opponent and save the kingdom (or planet, or country—I think you get the idea). As a teenager, this turned into a short-lived (and fairly successful) obsession with getting cast on game shows.

Today, this lifelong geekery has found two homes.

By day, I run a company that works with large brands to help them uncover the meaning—that is to say, the patterns—within their marketing data. We help Fortune 500s and high-growth start-ups understand the marketing channels, messages, and tactics that will work the best in the future, based on the data from their past.

By night, I've done everything possible to answer the question of whether there is a pattern to creative success. I've spent the last two years interviewing some of the world's most successful creators. From culinary titans to bestselling novelists and even top YouTube Creators, I sat down, ate, chatted, and Skyped with some of the leading so-called creative geniuses of our time. In addition, I spoke to the most distinguished academics in the studies of creativity, genius, and neuroscience.

What did I find?

It turns out that the mythology around creativity is just that, myth. You do not have to be born with some X-Men-like superpower to achieve great artistic or entrepreneurial heights. In fact, there is a pattern that successful creative people leverage to make hits, one that's accessible to almost anyone. It's intuitive, but it's also learnable. And it has nothing to do with mysticism. You don't need to take LSD to get inspired, or pray for a moment of overwhelming insight.

Based on what I found, it turns out you can *intentionally* follow what the world's most vaunted creative geniuses do—and get that much closer to creating and executing your *own* great ideas.

Let's get started.