

Bob Baker's Empowered Artist Movement

[Bob Baker](#) has a [movement](#). It's not just some idea he came up with to make money or become famous. It's a vision to change the world and how the world view artists. He wants to inspire artists and creatives of all types to "express themselves, hone their skills, and share their talents with the world!" That's a mission and vision worth fighting for.

Bob was kind enough to provide immense value to artists everywhere with his free Youtube video series "[30 Ways to Become an Empowered Artist](#)." I'm just doing my part to spread the word about this lofty and [empowering creative revolution](#). In this first part of a three part series, I will give my thoughts on the first ten videos of his Youtube series.

1. [Give Yourself Permission to Succeed](#)



Picture by [celestinechua](#)

In order to succeed as an artist, you must first believe you can succeed. The myth of the starving artist is extremely prevalent, but there are many examples of artists who have not only survived, but flourished. If you don't believe you can succeed, you won't. Negative self talk is one of the biggest obstacles you have overcome in order to be successful.

One book I can't recommend highly enough, especially for artists, is [Choose Yourself! by James Altucher](#). In the book, James tells you how being creatively, financially, spiritually, and physically healthy will lead to success in life. If you need a boost in morale, you need to read this book.

An example of someone who has given himself permission to succeed is [Nick Onken](#). Nick is an extremely talented photographer who started as a graphic designer. He has shot for the biggest brands in Nike, Coca-Cola, and Conde Naste. If he didn't switch course and believe in his work, he never would have realized the positive impact he has created with his photography. If you are interested in learning more about Nick, check out [his great interview](#) with [Lewis Howes](#).

2. [Immerse Yourself in Your Craft](#)



Photo by [seeminglee](#)

One thing that separates successful artists from the amateurs is simply dedication. Some artists have the talent to have a successful artistic career, but are not committed to the number of sheer hours it takes to succeed.

In *Outliers*, Malcom Gladwell explains that it takes 10,000 hours to master any craft. Although this rule may be true in a general sense, I like Tim Ferriss' idea of being the best in a much narrower field to be an expert in it. In his [great interview with Chase Jarvis](#), Tim uses the example of photography in general vs macro wildlife photography. To become an expert in all photography, it probably will take the 10k allotted hours. Becoming a master in a very specific type of photography, like macro wildlife, will take a much shorter amount of time.

Now that you know what it takes to become a master, you must actually put in those hours. Don't use excuses to put off working on your craft. You must practice every day to become better and to hone your skills.

A mistake many artists make is looking at a success of another person and thinking "How in the world did they become successful so quickly?" In every single case, they are ignoring the incredible amount of work that person took to become successful. Even one of the greatest artists of all time Leonardo da Vinci was not an instant success. Stop looking at other artists and wishing you could be like them. Put in the work and your odds of success will go up exponentially. Dedicate the time, and be so good that people can't ignore you.

3. [Clearly Communicate Who You Are](#)

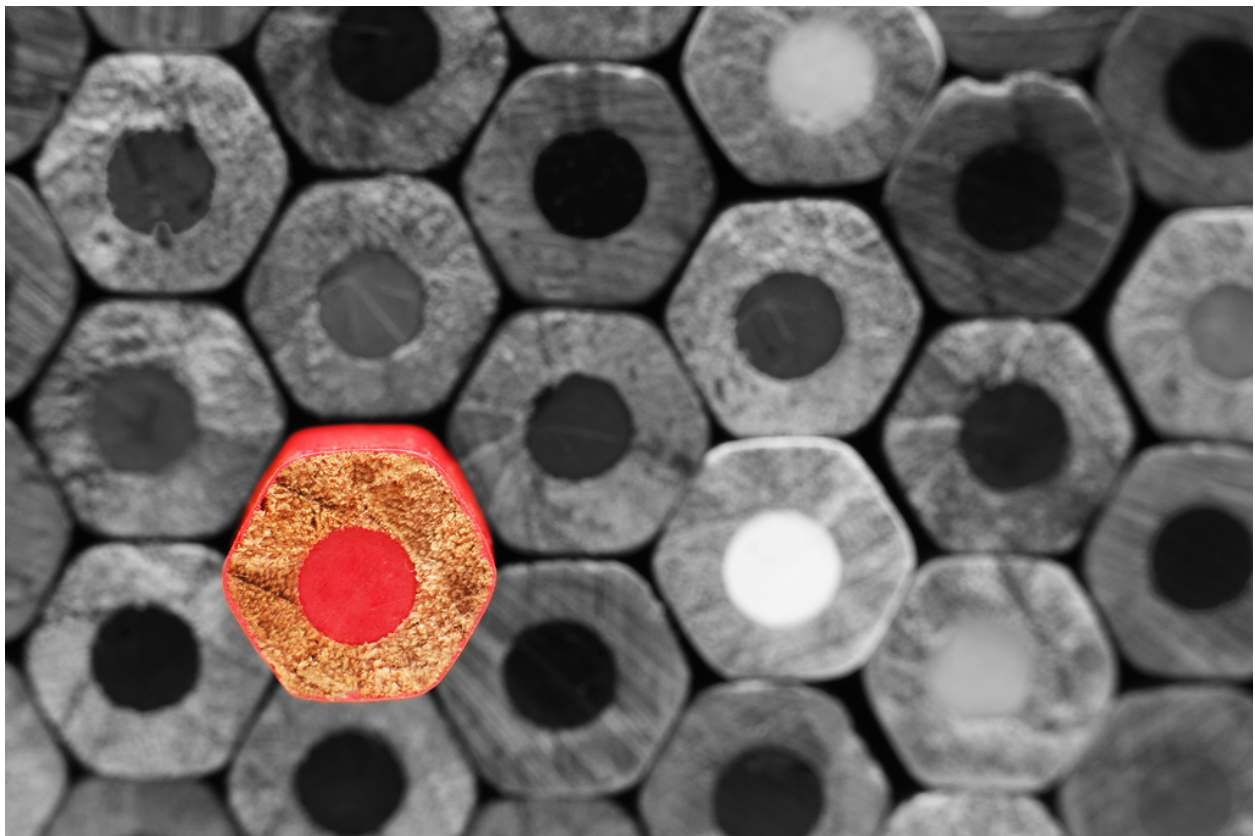


Photo by [olfiika](#)

Copying is bad. That is what you are told time and time again growing up. There is truth in this statement, but as an artist, you can definitely twist the rule in your favor. In the wonderful video [All Creative Work is Derivative](#), you will notice that artwork since the beginnings of human history is similar to other unrelated works of art. Does that make them any worse or bad? No, it means that humans share ideas, build upon them, and improve them.

Now that I've said that, at some point, you need to stop copying others and develop your own style. This doesn't happen instantly. You must find time to develop your own voice. Pull elements

from multiple artists. See what you like and don't like about their work. Creativity doesn't happen like you've been led to believe. Make sure you leave yourself time to develop your own uniqueness.

Once you've developed your own style. Celebrate it. Shout it from the rooftops. Make sure people know it came from you. Your audience doesn't like your work because you copied someone else. They are drawn to your creative twist to art and the world. Do you want to compete with the thousands of other people creating art or do you want something that is uniquely you? No matter how much we try to fit in with the world, each and every person has taken their own path through life. Everyone has a different way of looking at the world.

Even the greatest artists have gone through and refined this process. Need proof? Just watch Kirby Ferguson's amazing series "[Everything is a Remix.](#)" Everything you once thought was new and different was most likely inspired by something else. . Sure people have drawn elements they like from other artists, but the great thing about derivative art is, when you put your own perspective on those same ideas, it makes them your own. The key is putting yourself and your style into your work.

4. [Being Prolific](#)



Photo by [pdbreen](#)

If you are having trouble spreading the word about your art, there are three methods that are commonly used.

One strategy is creating work and promoting the hell out of it. Many people have had success with this method. Many photographers take part in something called [Project 365](#). In this project, you take a single picture every day for a year and share it with the world. This not only gets work into the world, but it also sparks your creativity. This project is so popular that there are [Flickr groups](#) with over 28,000 people in them and even an [iPhone app](#) for it. This isn't just for photographers, any artist is capable of taking part. If you want to learn more about Project 365, you can [read this beginner's guide](#).

The other method is creating a ton of content and getting it out into the world. Derek Halpern, the founder of the insanely popular [Social Triggers](#), suggests spending [20% of your time creating content, and 80% of your time promoting it](#). He says if your content only gets to 1,000 readers, there are likely "one million other people in the world who can benefit" from your work as well (His target audience may be bloggers, but this advice can apply to artists as well). Just because you've promoted your work before doesn't mean you can't promote it to a brand new audience.

My personal favorite is a hybrid of the two methods. This can be seen best in [Ryan Holiday's book launch](#) for his fantastic book [The Obstacle is the Way](#). For the launch, Holiday went on a bunch of podcasts, wrote a dozen articles, went on a speaking tour, created book trailers, shared his books with book clubs, and promoted his book to his e-mail list among many other things. I highly encourage you to read his [article detailing exactly what he did for his launch](#). The reason this is a hybrid method is he created a singular piece of work, his book, but he also created an insane number of original pieces to promote it.

If you are struggling to promote your work, give a try at all three methods and see which one works best for you and your audience. As always, the best way to find out is to just do it.

5. [Make the Time for Creating Your Art](#)



Picture by [MattysFlicks](#)

One excuse creative people like to use to get out of doing work is "I don't have the time." This excuse is terrible. I'm sorry. If you want to make a living doing what you love, you can make the time for it. You MUST make the time for it. If you've been using this as an excuse, you need to re-evaluate your priorities. Do you really want to create art for a living? Is your art just a hobby? Decide whether or not you actually want to pursue your creative endeavors.

One thing I have done to make time for myself is waking up earlier. As a self-proclaimed night owl, this may seem tough but I now wake up an hour earlier than I used to, so I can make time for myself. During this time, there are no distractions, no people to bother you, you can have it all to yourself. This allows you to work on what truly drives you instead of what other people want you to work on. This time is especially great if you are still working for someone else. When you get back home from work, you have much less energy than you do when you first wake up.

Along the same lines, don't put your art off. Even if you aren't feeling it, just begin. The great [Pablo Picasso said](#) "To know what you're going to draw, you have to begin drawing." This is true for any creative endeavor. A mistake many people make is thinking they will be struck by some creative muse with a brilliant idea. Thomas Edison famously failed thousands of times before

creating the lightbulb. [Edison said](#), "The three great essentials to achieve anything worth while are: Hard work, Stick-to-itiveness, and Common sense." You need to work hard and stick with it. Mihály Csíkszentmihályi says [flow](#) is completely focused motivation that leads to an ultimate experience for performing and learning. Working on your art every day can lead to a state of flow, which feels like an outer body experience. You lose sense of time and become wrapped up in your work.

Another thing you must do to be a successful creative is getting the support of those around you. It is absolutely crucial to have a great support system to encourage your art. You want to make sure people understand that your art is as important as everything else. If they care about you, they will support you 100%. Let your loved ones know you need time to work on your passion and you need their encouragement. This encouragement will give you the strength to carry on.

If you want to be a successful artist, you need to make time for your work. Don't make excuses. Find times when you are just watching TV, browsing the internet, or playing games and create art instead. Wake up early. Go to sleep late. Become the artist you've always wanted to be. In other words, just do it.

6. [Don't Let Perfection Prevent You from Sharing Your Art](#)



Picture by [x1brett](#)

Perfectionism is a blessing and a curse.

It is a blessing because it means you hold yourself and others to a certain standard. You are uncompromising in your pursuit of excellence and will not accept anything less.

Perfectionism is a curse because it can hold you back from ever releasing your art. You will constantly reiterate on your work, and you may never be satisfied.

[This quote](#) perfectly sums up perfection:

"Perfection itself would be a failure. All we can hope is that we will fail better. That we won't succumb to fear of the unknown. That we will not fall prey to the easy enchantments of repeating what may have worked in the past." - Dani Shapiro

Don't let perfectionism hold you back. Don't let it tell you "I'm not good enough." Stop waiting for the stars to align so you can release your masterpiece to the world. Even the great Salvador Dali [realized](#) he could not attain perfection, "Have no fear of perfection - you'll never reach it." You will only get better if you consistently create and receive feedback from others.

I love the idea of creating your art like start-ups create [MVPs](#) (minimum viable products). MVP is a strategy where you release a product with the least amount of necessary features and receive feedback from it. Then you improve the product based upon the feedback. This allows you to improve your product to meet the demands of the market. I know this idea may seem foreign and unconventional to artists, but there is definitely something you can learn from it. If you want to learn more about MVPs, check out [The Lean Startup](#) by Eric Ries.

If you are waiting for your art to be perfect, take the [advice](#) of Vince Lombardi, "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence."

7. [Taming the Critics](#)

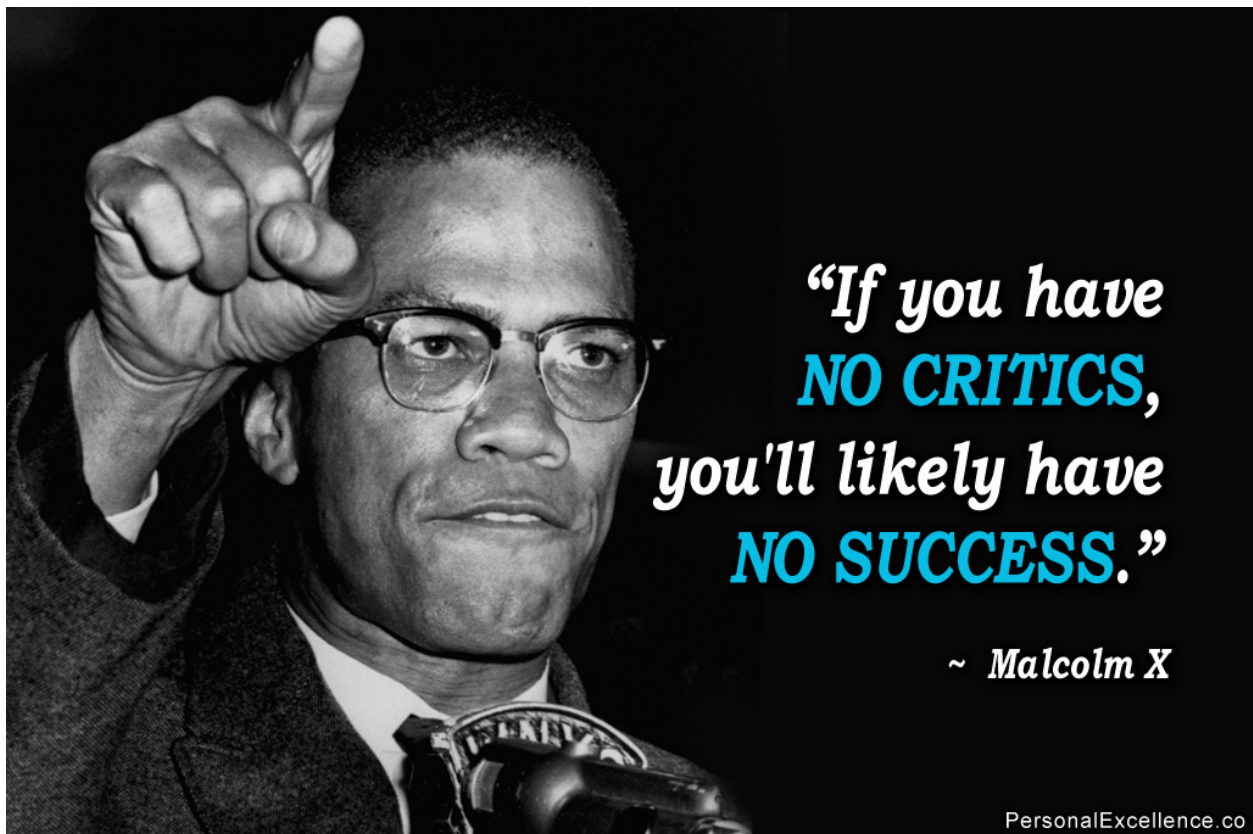


Photo by [celestinechua](#)

One thing every artist will encounter is criticism. When other people criticize your work, they are usually trying to be helpful and help you grow. Despite what you may think, everyone is not out there to "get you." Critics exist to add to the debate and give their own opinions about art. [Rick Gervais said](#), "An artist moaning about critics is like a fisherman moaning about waves. Tough. They're there. They're there because artists are there."

That being said, if an overwhelming majority of critics feel the same way, they may have a point. Whether their reviews are good or bad, you must learn to consider their opinions, learn from them, and move on. Don't dwell on what other people tell you, it can eat you alive. Any worthy artist will have critics. If you don't you aren't taking enough risks.

"As long as you are living... you will always get criticized when you're doing great things." - [Neil Strauss](#)

You will also encounter a much more powerful critic: yourself. Have you ever heard that nagging voice in the back of your head telling you your work sucks and you'll never make it as an artist? That is your inner critic, and it is the greatest obstacle coming between you and your success as an artist. If that voice inside your head is getting to you, take [Ryan Holiday's](#) advice and become "unstuck, unfucked, and unleashed." Let that voice guide you and turn your weakness into a strength. Make that voice work for you instead of against you. Let it spark your desire to succeed to prove yourself wrong.

8. Firm Up Your Filter



Photo by [martazappia](#)

The way you view the world has a profound affect on your art. The world tends to throw a lot of negativity at us. If you open a newspaper or watch the news, you would think the world is falling apart at the seems. Whether it's disease, death, or financial collapses, the media wants you to live in a world of fear and negativity. Don't let the news media scare you. Take [James Altucher's advice](#) and don't consume the news.

Instead of letting the world bombard you with negative thoughts, take it upon yourself to view the world through a positive lens. How can you do this? Write things down. Research has shown [writing can have a profound difference on your positivity](#). Writing your worries can calm you and increase performance, writing down three good things daily can improve your outlook on life, and writing down things that you are looking forward to can make also make you happier. Happiness has also been shown to [increase productivity, making you more successful](#). If you have a choice between being positive and negative, always choose positivity.

Another way to be more positive is surrounding yourself with positive people. The saying about being the [average of the five people you surround yourself with](#) is absolutely true. Over the last few months, I have made it a point to go out and seek people with similar goals and outlooks on life, and it has helped me immensely. Don't let others bring you down with their negativity.

One last thing that is especially true of artists is not viewing others' success with negativity. Don't be jealous if someone gets the opportunity or praise you think you deserve. Instead, congratulate them and give them encouragement. Just like the [Golden Rule](#) says, treat others the way you want to be treated and your positivity will be reciprocated. Weed out all the negativity in your life and you will see the world in a much better light.

9. [The Power of Questions](#)



Photo by [debord](#)

Along the same lines as positive and negative mindsets is the power of asking a good question. Many artists are asking themselves the wrong questions.

When you frame your question with a negative mindset, you will think and develop negative answers. The question "Why doesn't anyone support the local art scene?" seems like a completely valid question until you start to think of the answers. "People are too busy," "They have more important things to do," "They just don't care." These are the types of answers you will tell yourself when posing that question.

Instead, try to focus on positively framed questions like "How do I create a unique experience people want to go to?" This type of question leads to an entirely different set of answers. "I can

create a [guerilla marketing](#) campaign around town" or "I can promote the art show like a Hollywood [Red Carpet](#) event." Just because these aren't conventional ideas for an art event doesn't mean they can't work. As a matter of fact, wouldn't you be more intrigued by these ideas instead of the normal way art shows are promoted?

The ever-knowledgeable [Srinivas Rao](#) does this very thing with his [Morning Power Questions](#) routine. When you wake up in the morning instead of asking yourself the usual unhelpful question like "Why am I so tired? Why didn't I sleep earlier?, or What am I going to eat?" ask yourself "What do I have to look forward to today? What's absolutely perfect about my life? How can I make today absolutely awesome or What's the best thing that could happen today?" instead. Asking these types of questions will shift your focus towards what you want to have happen.

The truth is lousy questions will get lousy answers. Asking the right questions can make a world of difference. Just [follow in the footsteps of the great Socrates](#), who was so knowledgeable because he knew how to formulate great questions.

You can also try taking on the [questioning mindset of a 4-year-old](#), who are absolutely overflowing with questions. They are great at being curious and wondering about the world around them. Use that frame of mind to question with a purpose and to truly understand the problem.

10. [Clear Your Mental Money Baggage](#)



Photo by [68751915@N05](#)

This is probably my favorite topic so far. Artists have trouble when it comes to money, plain and simple. It's not that they don't deserve to get paid, they do. It's the fact that they don't WANT to get paid. It's a vicious cycle that can be completely wiped away. There's no need to feel like a downtrodden, struggling or starving artist. You just have to be willing to change your mindset about making money as an artist.

There are two videos by the wonderful [Marie Forleo](#) that help to dispel the undeserving artist title. The first is [valuing what you do as an artist](#). Just because you are selling your art doesn't mean

you are taking it away from the buyer. Think of it like giving joy or adding value to them instead. People who are willing to pay you for your art, WANT to give you money so you can continue to increase the joy in their life. Think of a world without any kind of art and you will begin to see the value in your work. Art is one of the few things that makes us think, feel and love, and by creating art, you are doing a service to the world.

[Marie's second video](#) is about creating a ton of work, and sometimes creating what the market is asking for, to make a living. She used the great example of Saturday Night Live, which has been creating skits for what seems like forever. Are all of them hits? Absolutely not, but by creating so many skits, many of them are absolute gems. You just have to keep on creating until one resonates with your audience, even if you don't know which ones will be a hit. She also talked about creating art that you know your audience will like. Sometimes you have to make money off of things that you aren't passionate about to fund the things that you are passionate about. There is a fantastic book about Jim Henson called [Make Art Make Money](#) by Elizabeth Hyde Stevens that goes into great detail about how Henson made money off of commercials and Muppet merchandise to fund his passion projects. If you are having trouble understanding how you can fund your projects, check it out.

If those haven't convinced you, check out this [interview with Christian Howes](#), who is one of the top violinists in the world, even after being in jail for four years. His story is truly powerful because he didn't take the straight, linear, path to success everyone dreams about when becoming an artist. He has hustled and learned how to chase opportunities. Instead of thinking of his art as "salesy" he presents it as a way to serve people. I'll close this out with a quote from Christian "You can serve a financial need and a human need and get paid...and it's still art."