

IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH AN OBVIOUS THING THAT YOU WOULD WANT YOUR WORK TO BE ABLE TO BE SHARED.

Jonathan explained the process of creating a secure password in a silly, simple song. He was hired to write the song by a client who handed him a long technical blog post from which to draw the information. Like a good (and rare) journalist, he translated the technical concepts into something understandable.

When he is hired by a client to write a song, he first asks them to send a list of talking points and other information they want to include in the song. He puts all of that into a text file and starts moving things around, cutting and pasting until the message starts to come together. The first thing he tries to do is grok the core message and develop the chorus. Then he looks for connections or parts he can make rhyme. The entire process really does resemble good journalism, but of course the final product of his work is a song rather than news. "There is something about being challenged and forced to take information that doesn't seem like it should be sung about or doesn't seem like it lends itself to a song," he said. "I find that creative challenge really satisfying. I enjoy getting lost in that process."

Jonathan admits that in an ideal world, he would exclusively write the music he wanted to write, rather than what clients hire him to write. But his business model is about capitalizing on his strengths as a songwriter, and he has found a way to keep it interesting for himself.

Jonathan uses nearly every tool possible to make money from his art, but he does have lines he won't cross. He won't write songs about things he fundamentally does not believe in, and there are times he has turned down jobs on principle. He also won't stray

too much from his natural style. "My style is silly, so I can't really accommodate people who want something super serious," Jonathan said. "I do what I do very easily, and it's part of who I am." Jonathan hasn't gotten into writing commercials for the same reasons; he is best at using his own unique style rather than mimicking others.

Jonathan's song-a-day commitment exemplifies the power of habit and grit. Conventional wisdom about creative productivity, including advice in books like the best-seller *The Creative Habit* by Twyla Tharp, routinely emphasizes the importance of ritual and action. No amount of planning can replace the value of simple practice and just *doing*. Jonathan Mann's work is a living embodiment of these principles.

When he speaks about his work, he talks about how much the song-a-day process has changed him. Rather than seeing any given piece of work as precious and getting stuck on trying to make it perfect, he has become comfortable with just doing. If today's song is a bust, tomorrow's song might be better.

Jonathan seems to have this mentality about his career more generally. He is constantly experimenting with ways to make a living while sharing his work as widely as possible, seeing what sticks. While he has major accomplishments he is proud of, like being in the *Guinness World Records* or having his song used by Steve Jobs, he says he never truly feels successful.

"Success feels like it's over," he said. "To a certain extent, a creative person is not ever going to feel completely satisfied because then so much of what drives you would be gone."