

Most People Don't Have Good Taste — And What You Can Do About It

11 MIN • YOUTUBE • [HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/A3XMCSJY7YK](https://youtu.be/a3xmCSjy7Yk)

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SUMMARY

The discussion emphasizes the importance of developing the skill to identify world-class talent and insights in one's field, rather than relying solely on consensus results or celebrity status. It highlights how biases can cloud judgment and the necessity of cultivating taste to discern true quality and potential in others.

- *Most people assess skill based on lagging results and consensus rather than intrinsic qualities.*
- *The speaker uses a hypothetical scenario to illustrate how perceptions of talent can change over time based on external success indicators.*
- *Many individuals justify their choices with convoluted logic, often influenced by the success of the individual rather than the content itself.*
- *A lack of taste can hinder one's ability to recognize quality and potential in others, leading to superficial judgments.*
- *Developing taste requires a baseline skill level in one's craft and an open mindset free from biases.*
- *People often attribute the success of others to luck or external factors, which can prevent personal growth and acknowledgment of talent.*
- *The speaker challenges listeners to evaluate their ability to identify potential in their field without relying on external validation.*
- *Cultivating a discerning eye for talent and insights is essential for personal and professional development.*

[Music] I'd like to make a few points here so first we have to understand how do most people figure out if something is world class or someone is world class and let's assume this is being done in our own field so whatever field we are in design engineering product management I will make the observation that it is a skill to figure out how talented or how skilled somebody else is it is absolutely a skill it's not a skill

everybody possesses everybody thinks they possess it the manner in which most people judge somebody's skill is basically through a very lagging measurement of results and not just results but consensus results when the world agrees that okay these results are exceptional that's when a majority of people will then say oh this person is very skilled or must be very skilled must be world class must be at the top of their game now for anyone who's

listening who thinks okay yes that's plausible but that doesn't apply to me I will perhaps ask a very simple question let's imagine where in 2012 you pay to go to a conference and that conference like most conferences has multiple sessions running at the same time and it's a high quality conference let's just say there are two options you have right one option is you can attend a session with let's say uh Mark Pinkus the founder of Zinga and the other

option at the same time concurrently is a session with Jensen Wang the founder CEO of Nvidia so now understand that this is 2012 and my simple question is which of those two sessions would you have chosen to attend if you said Jensen Wang you are most likely lying to yourself most people in say software product management would have attended the Mark Pinkus session nothing wrong with it Mark Pinkus is brilliant okay let's imagine 2012 conference never happened

now imagine it's 2024 same situation 1:00 session concurrent Mark Pinkus Jensen Wang what session are you attending now then it's worth thinking okay so what changed in 12 years did Jensen Wang suddenly become much smarter or a much better Communicator did you become more wise about whom to listen to or what world class looks like or what somebody at the top of their game looks like and ask yourself how much of this decision or this change in what session you attend

is simply related to Nvidia stock price now versus back then furthermore ask yourself because there's levels of depth here that most people don't even think about none of which requires high IQ but most people don't think about it which is why most people can't think as clearly as they would wish ask yourself if actually attending Jensen Wang session in 2024 is the right call for you how much Alpha are you going to get how much of an advantage are you going

to get in 2024 from listening to Jensen versus how much Advantage you might have gotten in 2012 I'll further make the observation that you would have gotten way more Alpha in 2012 listening to Jensen than the founders and product people who obsessively follow everything he says now in 2024 I'm sure the man has grown in the last 12 years but I'm certain that he was extremely smart and insightful in 2012 too so this shows up

in everything you decide to consume in fact not just what you decide to consume but the value you attribute to something the level of insight you attribute and observe in some piece of writing is largely a function of this kind of the Authority or the lagging success of the individual who's sharing it more than the content itself I'll also observe that smart people don't want to admit this to themselves and smart people want

to maintain this sense that they very smart they're very rational they're very intelligent so what do we do as smart people what we do is we say oh yeah yeah no sh it has nothing to do with any of this stuff they'll come up with reasons like oh I want to listen from somebody who's been in the arena or who is in the arena right now or I want my company to be like Nvidia now that's why I want to go

to that session again smart people they do need to be reminded that you fall prey to this all the time which is you first make a decision and then you justify it with some convoluted logic that makes you feel smart and makes you sound smart so once you really internalize it you will see that there are sources of expertise sources of knowledge sources of alpha that you have been ignoring because you are looking for who's the famous highly successful

person I look up to that is saying something and you just attribute tremendous wisdom tremendous insight to

word that are in fact not that insightful because you are just dazzled by the celebrity and the net worth and the prestige associated with that person now so where does this arise the root cause of this is a deficiency or an absolute lack of taste

because I want you to think about this like why wouldn't you be able to see a piece of writing that is particularly insightful particularly useful for you why wouldn't you be able to detect how special it is how much Alpha it'll give you if you truly understand it and internalize it and act according to it and similarly now let's take it to work situations You observe somebody working with you maybe they're a counterpart in engineering design product whatever the

case might be are you able to see when you're working that they are at the top of their game before they reach these kind of external consensus signs and signals that this person is at the top of their game and the reason we many of us cannot do that is because we are lacking taste or in some ways deficient in taste literally what is taste right taste is the ability to identify sometimes in non-consensus ways the

quality of a certain thing so in that sense these things are opposites taste is merely about looking at the object in front of you whatever that is whether it's a document some wrote a piece of content somebody created or something else a piece of software that you can play with to be able to judge that on its own merits without any other biases including where this originated from so you know there are people in the workplace who will proudly say things

like well I'm a very tough grader I'm very Discerning and I never am satisfied with what is presented to me they nitpick and they find all sorts of problems and all sorts of proposals and basically they're never happy with anything well if you think about it that whole I'm a tough grader thing including things like well you need to prove results to me right I'm not going to make any kind of judgment around your talent and your ability until I see

these lagging results and that makes me sound very smart that makes me sound like a great leader great business person Etc these are all excuses for a lack of taste because think about it it takes zero skill or talent to basically criticize everything that came in front of you takes zero skill not good enough not good enough not good enough you can take some sports analogies too you can look at the goats of each sport and you

can say yeah that saint Tendulkar he wasn't that good he had these problems you know Messi yeah he's okay but he lost so many matches yeah Tom Brady yeah he won a few Super Bowls but he messed up in so many other places yeah not good enough right like it takes zero skill to do that my question is could you have detected a Tom Brady before Tom Brady became Tom Brady could you have detected a saint Tendulkar at age 14 not at age 16

but at age 14 and you likely couldn't have cuz you're not a cricket expert you're not a football expert you're not an NFL expert so the point is you couldn't have but can you do it in your own field something you are going to spend tens of thousands of hours of your life on can you do it in your own field is the question right so now the

last part of this is well how does one develop that taste how does one

do it how does one detect that somebody is world class how does one detect that somebody's at the top of their game well the manner in which you do it I already explained which is you have to be able to just look at the artifact whatever it is and be able to without biases which is very difficult evaluate it and that does require a certain Baseline level of skill in your craft right like if you're completely clueless you're not going to

be able to do it because you don't have that skill right so it does require a certain Baseline level of skill most people possess that Baseline skill so it is actually not a skill issue it is a mindset issue because most people have a lot of this garbage all of these biases that get in the way these are biases about what the world is these are biases about who you are these are also biases about what does it mean for me if I

accept that somebody else is at the top of their game in my own craft what does it mean for me for some people it is a source of enthusiasm it's a source of excitement it's a source of curiosity for other people it engenders insecurity fear self-doubt disappointment in oneself and if that happens to you recognize that because our tendency as human beings when we are confronted with these feelings is to sh them away and the manner in which we sh

them away is by saying ah it wasn't that good or oh oh wait I need to wait for the results right and by the way when the Great results come in what do we do then we start attributing the results to luck extraneous factors or they had a good team they were supported by a great team or whatever else or the other path we pursue usually is we then start saying oh yeah I could have also done it

had I not been facing these adverse circumstances had my engineering partner been more amable had my boss been smarter if I were born with a different skin color if I were born in a different location on the planet if I were born in a different time a different gender different whatever we start attributing whatever we feel our shortcomings are in results to those factors right so it's either that this other person who is at the top of their game is just lucky or

they're supported by the right structure or they were born in the right place in the right time with the right ethnic whatever the case might be whatever identities we associate to ourselves and then it's like oh yeah of course they did it but you know for me it is harder so even this whole thing of I'll wait for the results is basically an excuse again think about it if you do have to wait for results to be able to tell how

good something is what is your skill what is your talent any idiot can do that any idiot can look at nvidia's earnings reports and say oh yeah the CEO and founder must be really skilled any idiot can do that my question is could you do that in 2012 [Music]