

[English Translation]

Combining Music and Technology, App Helps Students with Music Exams

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[Hong Kong Economic Times - Hong Kong, 14 Mar 2013] To some, it seems like there is no relationship between music and technology. Music is about feeling. Technology is about logic. However, from the eye of Eric Yung, founder and CEO of Playnote, both are his passions. He combined both to start his company, Playnote. The company has developed an App in Tablet and AURALBOOK, which helps students prepare for music examinations.

In 1993, Eric won an award in his secondary school computer competition with this idea. More than 10 years ago, he and his professors founded Perception Digital (HKEx: 01822). Playnote won the Best Startup Company Grand Award in the 2012 Asia Pacific ICT Awards. Even though Eric is an expert in music and technology, he realizes that the business cannot rely solely on an entrepreneur's interest. As a result, he studied for his MBA and law degree and became a businessman.

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"I have thought about this product since 1993. No one tried to develop this kind of product. As a result, I started my own company in 2010 to develop it." What Eric talks about is an App—AURALBOOK. It can help to train the aural skills necessary in music examinations and can help them gain higher marks in a professional music examination.

Follow the questions and sing a melody and the App will analyze and explain

"Very good. Pitches and beats are correct. Please keep this up." This is the "human" voice by AURALBOOK. Once a student follows AURALBOOK's questions and sings, a "human" voice will analyze the student's performance by artificial intelligence.

Eric created this idea 20 years ago when Eric was still a secondary school student with a "386" computer and a big green monitor at his home. He has participated in Microcomputer in Education programming competition. Eric and his friends forecasted that the software would appear 18 years later in 2010 and they used a simple program to simulate a scene in which a computer is used to teach music. They received the best Computer Aided Learning Prize in the competition.

This is the first time that Eric combined music and technology. After, his life was still full of music and technology. However, there was no crossover between his two interests.

Eric continued to learn piano, participate in choir and compose songs. He became a conductor and opera tenor in his university life. He also continued to do programming and studied engineering at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST).

In 1999, when Eric studied in his masters program, a few professors in electronic engineering would like to start a company to manufacture a MP3 player. As Eric was the only musician in HKUST, Eric became the co-founder of the company.

All profits will go to the lawyer if you don't have legal knowledge

Eric converted his interest into business. "Even though you are very good in IT and music, you still cannot understand everything." Becoming an entrepreneur was not easy. Eric encountered problems everywhere. "At the time, we needed to handle a complicated patent. However, no lawyer in Hong Kong knew how to handle it. I needed to go to New York and discuss the issue with a team of lawyer. I realized that no matter how good the IT product was, all the profit would go to the pocket of the lawyer if you have no legal knowledge." As a result, he started to study law in UK. No one on the team knew how to do business either. Eric went to study for his MBA. At the 10th anniversary of the company, the company was listed finally and the change followed.

He has since left Perception Digital and worked in two other companies. In 2010, the iPad was launched and he had a chance to realize his dream. "In order to use the computer to teach piano, there must be a computer in front of a piano. This was impossible before. However, when the iPad was launched, it made it possible."

With his experience with Perception Digital, Eric founded Playnote the same year and researched and developed AURALBOOK. This made his dream come true. The company won the Best Startup Company Grand Award and Merit Award in electronic learning at the 2012 Asia Pacific ICT Award (APICTA). Recently, the company also received the gold award in the Asia Smartphone App contest.

No waiting, get the chance when it arrives

The current question database fits the syllabus of Associated Boards of Royal Music Schools (ABRSM) at UK, Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB) and Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) in Canada. It provides the version for the iPhone and the iPad. The Android version will be released soon. It supports Cantonese and English. More than 100,000 users have downloaded it. The initial funding was about 1 million and the company is near the point of break-even.

Eric said they will start to develop a Mandarin version in order to get into the huge market in mainland China and expand the user base in the coming 2 to 3 years. He said, "I hope everyone who wants to learn music will remember this App."

Eric kept saying that he was very lucky that he can work in a business that fits his interests. "If my parents didn't ask me to learn piano, I wouldn't have known music in the beginning." Eric started learning piano in his second year of primary school. His talent in music is not excellent. He only achieved grade 8 in piano performance after graduating from secondary school but he knows how to take advantage of an opportunity. When no one could take the role of pianist of a choir in secondary school, he took the job. When a soloist was missed in a concert, he sang. When no one wanted to be an orchestra conductor, he agreed to take the leading role. "I am lucky to have this opportunity. When the opportunity comes along, I will take it no matter what the situation," Eric said.

人物 People 2012



容志偉創業心得

- 興趣之外，要學習不同範疇的知識，要懂得當商，不可「有興趣，無Knowledge」
- 相比大企業，在新創辦的公司工作，能得到的知識和經驗會更豐富
- 要了解市場實際需求，勿過潮流
- 不要怕撞板，撞板後要克服它

▲喜音樂教育應用程式Aural Book，容志偉(右)創辦的Playnote於去年奪得2012年亞太資訊及通訊科技獎最佳創業公司。(受訪者提供圖片)

APP 創業秘技

科技與音樂，一個理智，一個感性，看似風馬牛不相及，但對於Playnote創辦人兼行政總裁容志偉(Eric)，兩樣都是他人生最大興趣。重要的是，他把兩者結合，將興趣發展成事業，開發平板電腦應用程式Aural Book，以人工智能教學學生應付音樂考試。

「93年已想到這個產品，但到2010年都無人做，我便自己開公司研發。」容志偉說的是應用程式(APP) Aural Book，用以訓練學生技巧，在專業音樂試便測驗中爭取成績。

跟試題唱出旋律 APP講解分析

「幾好，拍子和音準都不錯，繼續努力。」這是Aural Book的「真人」發聲，只要學生跟著Aural Book的試題唱出旋律，經過人工智能分析後，便會有「真人」講解表現。

這套類學於20年前便出現。當時容志偉是一名中學生，家中用的還是「386電腦」。「大牛鼻」那陣時，便參加了微型電腦與教育程式創作比賽。他與隊友估計18年後(即2010年)會出現的軟件，他們使用簡單的程式編寫電腦音樂樂譜，最後奪得最佳電腦輔助學習程式設計獎。

這是他第一次將音樂與科技結合。其後，他的生活同樣被這兩樣興趣填滿，但兩者仍然是走兩條分叉路，沒有交匯點。

容志偉繼續學琴，參與合唱團、作曲，大學時期成為樂隊指揮，歌劇男高音，另一場開，他繼續寫程式，到科大讀電子工程。

直至1999年，他趁碩士時，有幾位電子工程教授希望開設公司生產MP3，這位在科大內絕無僅有的音樂人，自然成為幻音數碼的創辦團隊之一。

無法律知識 賺到錢都給律師

順利地，他把興趣變成了事業。「音樂好叻，IT好叻，但仍會有不懂的事」。創業並不簡單，容志偉處處碰壁。「當時我們辦一個複雜的專利，但香港沒律師商量，我專程到紐約與律師團隊商量。發現到就算搞IT搞得多出色，沒有法律的知識，賺到的錢都會給了律師。」於是他便到英國修讀法律學位，而創辦人之中人無人懂得如何當商。他又去修讀MBA，在公司打拚10年，終於可以上市，改變隔之而來。



早於1993年，他已憑相同概念在聯校中學電腦比賽中獲獎；10多年前，他與教授聯合創辦幻音數碼(01822)，專門生產MP3；Playnote亦曾奪得2012年亞太資訊及通訊科技獎最佳創業公司。雖然是音樂及科技的專才，但在創業過程中，他明白單靠興趣，不僅做生意，並不能闢一營事業，於是修讀MBA及法律學位，當個全面的商人。

他先離開幻音數碼，到兩間企業任商業顧問。不久，iPad於2010年誕生，他多年前的想法終於有機會實現。「要用電腦教學，就要將電腦放在鋼琴上，但之前根本沒可能做到iPad的出現，改變了這個高限。」

攻取之前在幻音數碼的經驗，同年他開設Playnote，研發Aural Book，將令20年夢想變成現實，並於2012年亞太資訊及通訊科技獎(APICTA)中，奪得最佳新創公司大獎及電子學習優良獎兩個獎項，最近亦在首屆亞洲智能手機應用程式大賽中，獲得香港最佳新創公司應用程式大獎。

不怕面債 機會一到即接下來

現時程式的題目適用於英國皇家音樂學院、澳洲音樂考試委員會及加拿大音樂學院等考試，有iPad、iPhone版本，並陸續推出Android版本，支援廣東話及英文，至今有近10萬人次下載，最初開公司投資了近百萬元，亦快將收支平衡。

他將研發支援普通話，希望打進龐大的內地市場。2、3年內擴大受惠。他說：「希望學音樂的都會想到這個應用程式。」

能夠將自己興趣變成事業，容志偉高呼好彩。「如果不是父母叫我學琴，我根本不懂音樂。」容志偉自小學二年級便學鋼琴，天資不特別聰穎，中學畢業後才考取八級，但他懂得把握機會，中學合唱團無人彈琴，他上場：彈唱缺人，他頂替；樂團沒有指揮，他接任。「幸運是我遇上機會，而機會一到，我就不怕面債接下來。」他說。

音樂結合科技 APP助學生考試

單靠興趣難創業 讀法律及MBA闖商界



容志偉(Eric) 簡歷

- 年齡：37歲
- 工作經歷：現為Playnote創辦人兼行政總裁，幻音數碼(01822)聯合創辦人兼副執行董事(2010年)
- 學歷：香港科技大學電子工程學士、電腦及電子工程碩士、工商管理碩士、英國倫敦大學法律學士
- 其他：香港作協及作詞家協會會員、八級鋼琴演奏、實技樂隊指揮及歌劇男高音

音樂助溝通 跳出框框變包容

經驗之談

容志偉的專業結合了科技與音樂，影響理性與感性如何共存。他的經驗之談是：音樂甚至可以幫他與人溝通。

在幻音數碼創初期，合作的同事大部分是同期畢業的同學或師弟，而IT工作時因長期對着電腦，較為獨立。當大家地位相若時，如何叫他們聽我講？他說：曾有因為身份問題而撞板的經驗。

應對這班IT同事，他用當指揮時學到的溝通技巧，「大學當上樂隊指揮，要同一時間與40、50人交流，例如調整拍子，控制音量等，但都不可

用口說，只能靠手勢、眼神傳遞信息，不過這使我輕易與人溝通。」

接受不同聲音

音樂不僅助他與人溝通，更讓他更包容。容志偉指他以前是不折不扣的IT人，邏輯最重要，對與錯中間沒有灰色地帶；但接觸音樂後，發現音樂是感性的表達，一場音樂會，不同人都有不同感受，沒有絕對的對錯。他說：「音樂對我最大的影響，便是跳出IT的框框，較易接受不同聲音。」

不僅是當樂隊指揮，容志偉更曾任歌劇男高音。(受訪者提供圖片)

港無IT成功例子 人才寧從商

朝陽工業

「經濟永遠是一個Cycle(周期)，2000年科網股權破，現在(IT)正重新軌道。」在容志偉心中，科技是朝陽工業。

社會重金融地產 輕科研

容志偉表示，現時香港非沒有人才，但大部分人才不會選擇IT。他說：「香港的人才不是被企業挖走，在升大學時已被挖，學生傾向選擇商科多於電腦，即使有出色的IT學生畢業，又會被挖去做投資銀行。」

他認為，現時金融、地產已覆蓋整個社會，政府應帶領社會重視科技行業；「無人願意做科技行業，是因為沒有Role Model(模範)，當你做得好，身邊又會有人說『IT是日日坐在伺服器面前，同事有問題就問你』，有太多這種負面信息。」

容志偉又認為，政府最重要是鼓勵創新，他指香港大部分科技公司，都只是「做job做APS」。並沒有科研，「香港人環境太好，沒膽創新，若有公司做科研成為成功例子，香港人就會試。」