

# RENAISSANCE MAN

## How to Become a Scientist Over and Over Again

The following text has sentences removed. Read the text and the sentences. Write the letter of the sentence that fits the gap.

Erez Lieberman Aiden will talk with you on any number of intellectual topics. Just don't ask him what he does. "This is actually the most difficult question that I run into on a regular basis," he says. "I really don't have anything for that."

(1) Aiden is a scientist, but while most of his peers stay within a specific field - say, neuroscience or genetics - Aiden crosses them with almost casual abandon. His research has taken him across molecular biology, linguistics, physics, engineering and mathematics. He has studied the evolution of human culture through the lens of four per cent of all the books ever published. Before that, he solved the three-dimensional structure of the human genome, studied the mathematics of verbs and invented something called the iShoe, which can diagnose balance problems in elderly people. "I guess I just view myself as a scientist," he says.

(2) Instead, Aiden is interested in problems that cross the boundaries of different disciplines. He moves about, searching for ideas that will stimulate his curiosity, extend his horizons and hopefully make a big impact. "I don't view myself as a practitioner of a particular skill or method," he tells me. "I'm constantly looking at what's the most interesting problem that I could possibly work on. I really try to figure out what sort of scientist I need to be in order to solve the problem I'm interested in solving."

(3) He gravitates to problems that he knows little about. "The reason is that most projects fail," he says. "If the project you know a lot

about fails, you haven't gained anything. If a project you know relatively little about fails, you potentially have a bunch of new and better ideas." And Aiden has a habit of using his failures as springboards for success.

As a child, Aiden learnt the value of being curious and well-rounded from his father, a technology entrepreneur called Aharon Leiberman. (4) "The idea that one could support oneself by making ideas a reality is one my dad always emphasizes. He gave me a lot of self-confidence. This helps, because when you suddenly change the subject in your work, all you take with you are your brains and your confidence in your own ability to figure things out."

Aiden's approach is similar to an older era for the sciences, when people like Liebniz and Newton commanded respect in a variety of different fields. Such people are a rare breed in today's world, where the widening frontiers of scientific knowledge steer scientists into narrow specialist channels. (5) "Thirty years ago, you didn't know what was going on in a different field and you didn't have Google. It could take you months to figure out that an idea was a good or bad one. These days, you can get a good sense of that in a matter of minutes. That's really, really huge. It makes it much easier to move from one field to another."

The free flow of information also makes it clear how many problems there still are, enough to fill a rich career of discipline-hopping. (6) "Now, I think, wow, we don't know anything yet."

A Rather than specializing in any one area, Aiden takes the opposite tack.

B But Aiden senses that the balance is shifting and the connective power of the Internet plays a large part in that.

C And having expertise in a wide range of subjects had its advantages.

D It is easy to understand why.

E "I spent many days and even summer months working with him in his factory," says Aiden.

F "I had this this feeling out of graduate school that everything had been done," says Aiden.

G His approach is in contrast to the standard scientific career which tends to be to find an area of interest and become increasingly knowledgeable about it.

