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Arts & Business *working together*

Creative Development

Tim Stockil, 2006



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Artful Development – how different art forms can address business issues

Introduction

This report analyses the characteristics and attributes of a number of different art forms and evaluates what each art form offers to business in the field of creative training and development. It provides a model to show how arts-based training and development can make a significant impact on a wide range of business issues. Although it is not an academic paper, the report draws on a range of academic publications as well as the experience of practitioners in the field.

The report includes an exploration of a number of different art forms and which business issues they have been used to address. It is not exhaustive but it will allow the reader to extrapolate from the examples given.

To help both artist-trainers and managers in business who might commission such work, we set out a “decision tree” which guides the reader through a series of possibilities leading from the original issue to a (possible) arts-based solution. We also explore the cost and resource implications of using an arts-led approach in business training and development.

Why the Arts?

Before exploring the attributes of individual art forms, let us focus on art in general. The growth in the number of arts-based training and development programmes over the last decade, not only in Britain but in many other parts of the world, has been substantial. What has led to this? Why are the business community as well as government and the public sector turning to the arts to help them address the issues that they face?

One reason is undoubtedly the desire for a change. The majority of large businesses invest heavily in the development of their staff so, by the time they are in their thirties, many managers may well have attended a huge range of courses. Most of these will probably have been of the “chalk and talk” variety – lots of written material, lots of tutor input, lots of presentations from experts brought in for the occasion. Some courses may have been more experiential, often involving outdoor activity or outward bound-style exercises. In some companies we have come across, the sense that managers have been trained up to the hilt has led to low take-up of courses on offer, non-attendance even when managers have signed up for a course and a general resistance to traditional training programmes. It is therefore not uncommon these days to hear Training Managers in organisations plea for something different to tempt their colleagues’ jaded palates – and, for now, an arts-based approach may provide a suitable alternative. Arts-based approaches are also fun. The energy and enthusiasm of a group being asked to create their own opera or compose a new piece of music or bang on djembe drums is palpable. Many adults have not done any drawing or painting since childhood but the familiar messiness and ‘hands on’ element brings out the playful side of individuals. Would that all training and development were as entertaining.

But there are many more compelling and substantive reasons why the arts are valuable means for addressing business issues. The ever-increasing need for creativity and innovation in business, greater appreciation of “whole brain approaches” and the need for “multiple intelligences” and more understanding of the ways in which adults best learn are just some of them and we explore these in

more depth. But first we will explore the wide range of business issues being tackled by the arts and artists.

Business issues amenable to arts-based approaches

Lotte Darsø, in her book, *Artful Creation – Learning Tales of Arts-in-Business*, suggests that there are four ways in which business uses the arts –

- Decoration – the artwork in the lobby and corridors, the pictures on office walls and so on
- Entertainment – giving employees tickets to see shows or bringing performers into the office environment
- Instrument – business uses the arts as instruments for teambuilding, communication, leadership development and so on
- Strategic Transformation – business integrates the arts in areas such as vision and values, creativity and innovation, branding, marketing and customer relations.

This is a useful distinction though in practice there can be some interesting areas of overlap. For example, some companies use the process of choosing art for the office as a learning opportunity. For our purposes, however, it is the last two of these categories that concern us – business either using the arts in courses and workshops with specific learning objectives or using artistic processes and interventions to challenge the status quo and drive change through the whole organisation.

The issues addressed by arts-based training and development over the last decade or so cover a huge range. Predominantly, they are the so-called “soft” skills - that is, behaviours and attitudes rather than hard, technical knowledge. That is not to say that technical subjects cannot be enlivened by creative approaches – it is quite common, for example, that managers preparing a presentation on a dry, factual matter will turn to actors or similar artists to help them turn what could be boring into a powerful, compelling and interesting speech.

The following list gives an idea of the range, though it is by no means exhaustive. In order to break it down a little, we have split it into four sections. There is some overlap, but it may be a useful distinction:

Personal Development - skills and attitudes that individuals need to have

- Presentation skills
- Personal impact
- Pitching to clients
- Influencing and negotiation
- Giving and receiving feedback/appraisal interviewing
- Creative leadership (and followership)
- Customer care
- Working creatively

Team Development - how existing or newly-formed teams can work better together

- Communicating in teams
- Building trust and rapport

- The creative team

Cultural Development – working on how a team, a department or a whole organisation can improve their culture or “the way things are done around here”

- Vision and values
- Mergers
- Changing work practices
- Diversity issues
- Bullying and harassment
- Fostering a creative culture

Organisational Development - working with usually senior executives on major change programmes which affect the whole organisation

- Strategic development
- Developing a creative company
- Change and change management
- Scenario planning (i.e., helping a company to envision possible future directions)
- Disaster planning

These business issues are generally distinct in nature, but one must not ignore the less easily defined areas. The arts are gateways to exploring issues such as intuition, spirituality, consciousness and knowing, chaos, faith, compassion and so on. Margaret Wheatley, author of *Leadership and the New Sciences*, is quoted by Lotte Darsø as saying:

“Is it possible for business leaders to realise that the dilemmas they are facing cannot be solved by their traditional management behaviour, their traditional management tools? And that they are going to need to dwell in the deep domain of human experience and things like faith, courage, friendship, love, compassion, all of those emotions, grief, loss, which are only expressed in the arts.”

It is a rare business leader that has made that cognitive or emotional leap but the potential is there for the arts to be less an instrument for personal or organisational development and more a paradigm for a new way for business. Darsø herself suggests that: “A profound change is taking place in the organisations that are seriously concerned about the future of business and society as they are realising that ‘rational man’ is giving way to ‘artful human’.”

We will refer back to some of these elements through this report but, since 99.9% of the organisations using the arts have not advanced their thinking this far, we will concentrate on the more pragmatic angles.

Just as there have been a wide range of business issues, there have been a wide range of art forms (and sub-sets of art forms) that have been used to address them. We know of:

- Theatre
- Mime
- Improvisation
- Opera
- Dance
- Classical music

- Jazz
- Drumming/Percussion
- Singing
- Storytelling
- Carnival
- Poetry
- Painting
- (Life-)drawing
- Sculpture
- Pottery
- DJ-ing
- Circus
- Magic
- Stand-up comedy

And there are probably others.

For the purposes of this report, we will take a number of these and show how their key attributes have been particularly suited to addressing certain business issues, leaving the reader to extrapolate from these examples how other art forms might address other issues.

Theatre

Theatre is the most universally applicable art form. All the business issues above can be and have been tackled by theatre practices.

Theatre is the least daunting art form because it appears to need little skill to master its basics. Speaking out loud, walking around, holding conversations are things that we all do, and many of us think we do them pretty well. Other art forms – think of dance, music, and painting – seem to demand a high level of craft so for the lay person these are much more intimidating. But theatre appears to be feasible even for someone with no acting experience.

Theatre also encompasses most if not all of the other art forms. Plenty of theatre practitioners are expert in music, singing, making props, building and painting sets, mime, movement, storytelling, writing and so on. Working with theatre as your medium gives you immediate access to the other art forms.

Of course, role play has been around for many years and many businesses recognise the value of using suitably skilled and briefed actors to play disgruntled customers, staff in appraisals and so on. When well-handled, this is undoubtedly one of the most powerful contributions that theatre can make in the business arena. Delegates have a chance to put into practice their (newly-explored) interpersonal skills in a risk-free environment. If an interview with an actor is not going well, it can always be stopped and re-started; the other delegates can suggest alternative approaches, the facilitator can make suggestions and the staff-member in the hot seat can try another way, all of which increases significantly their chances of learning a new behavioural skill. In our experience, actually playing out the scenario with the actor in role gives a participant the best chance of really learning how to behave differently, but even observing others having a go is valuable in its own right.

Not surprisingly, presentation skills and “personal impact” are business issues that are often tackled by actors and other theatre-based specialists. Breath control, dealing with nerves, vocal variety, status, physical presence, passion, connecting with the audience, structure of speeches and so on are just some of the areas in which theatre professionals have real skills to pass on to business people and companies are increasingly looking to the arts world for such input.

Like the other performing arts, theatre is a team effort. A group of actors may turn up to the first day of rehearsal not knowing each other or any of the other specialists who will be part of the creative team, perhaps with the exception of the director. By this stage, the play they are about to create will already have been marketed and there will be a firm and clear deadline set, so they will have to become a team, an ensemble, very fast. Many of the games and exercises theatre companies do are designed to help develop precisely the sense of mutual trust and support that all teams need. Similar exercises are regularly used now in creative training courses for business people.

The process of putting on a play (or indeed an opera or dance performance) requires a particular form of leadership. It is leadership which encourages ideas and contributions, fosters risk and balances the needs of the team and the individuals in the team with the demands of the task in hand. It demands a vision and the clear communication of that vision but also welcomes contributions that open up other strategies and visions. It is leadership which is caring and supportive but also demanding of excellence.

Many theatre-based games and exercises are particularly suited to exploring elements of leadership and followership. For example, an exercise which is often called “Blind Guiding” physicalises the leader-follower relationship in a most revealing way. Delegates are split into pairs; one of each pair closes their eyes while the other, in silence, guides their partner round the room. Over time, the facilitator gets the leaders to reduce the amount of physical contact so that the “blind” follower is only touched when it is necessary to make them stop or change direction. Otherwise, the follower is on their own. Eventually, the exercise becomes a group responsibility with leaders agreeing, non-verbally, to swap partners.

Of course, such an exercise explores notions of trust and rapport as well as leadership and followership. Delegates discover how they like to lead – do they like to keep a firm hand on the tiller or are they a leader with the lightest of touches? How clearly do they convey the message to change direction or stop? How easily can they lift their head up, see the whole picture and assume responsibility for the whole room (company)? And as a follower, do they fret at what they feel is restrictive leadership or do they need firm direction? The exercise literally walks delegates through the process known as Situational Leadership, a model that is in common use in businesses today. Such an exercise encourages a form of feedback, in a physical sense.

Feedback, in all its forms, is part of the culture of theatre and this is another area in which business people can learn from the arts world. Every night, the audience will give its own immediate feedback on the performances of the actors; but even more important is the feedback that is a central part of the rehearsal process. One of the key roles of the director is to give the actors feedback about their performance in order to draw even better performances out of the cast. That is the intention of feedback in any organisation, but it is rare that feedback is as deeply rooted in an organisation’s culture as it is in the theatre. Directors can give very direct feedback to many actors who will welcome it warmly; similarly direct feedback in most businesses would leave the majority of staff flabbergasted or calling for their union representative.

Of course, the direct approach is not the only one. Chris Higgins, of the Map Consortium, suggests that there are five distinct styles used by theatre directors – The Direct (see above), Reflecting what he or she has observed without further comment, Challenging the actor to go further and take more risk, Enquiring (i.e., just asking the actor a good question about what they have been doing) and Supporting the actor so that they feel more confident.

Each actor will need different styles of feedback at different times – and these styles work just as well in business. In many businesses, problems arise because feedback is linked to reward, only happens once or twice a year and is delivered by managers who find it difficult or a chore. In the theatre, feedback is not about reward but about performance, it happens constantly and is part and parcel of the rehearsal process for both actors and director.

In their book *Artful Making*, Rob Austin and Lee Devin use the term “iteration” to describe the theatrical process of repeating a scene in rehearsal, each time adding a small extra element that eventually leads to an effective end product. They suggest, very convincingly, that this process is one that many businesses could learn from. In many businesses, such as car manufacturing, the aim is to get the details right first time as the costs of re-tooling the factory are prohibitive. But many other businesses – IT software developers, for example - could benefit from adapting an iterative approach, adding layers little by little until the product is “right”.

As has already been mentioned, the creative and innovative processes themselves are often explored through drama. Typically, but by no means always, the initial creative process is undertaken by a playwright working alone – an initiator. It is then developed and put into practice by a team of interpreters, which is no less of a creative process, but a different one. These two processes have many lessons for other organisations. One relates to the idea of iteration. In the theatre, it is fairly common practice to explore as many ideas as possible about how to tackle a scene before the cast and/or the director determine, through a sort of filtering process, which approach to take. Then the sequence repeats itself for the next scene, this time informed by the previous decisions.

Very few businesses operate like this. It is much more common for them to have one idea, often initiated at board level, which is then passed down the organisation for the lower echelons to try to put into practice in many different ways. It is exactly the opposite process. Very often what this means is that the filtering process, in which experienced and analytical people consider the practical application of the idea, is ignored, to its detriment.

To take just one example, an international corporation recently decided upon a new set of values which were expressed as five words. The edict came down from on high that these words were to be disseminated throughout the company, though no filtering system to check their applicability had been put in place. The internal communications department decided it would help if these were displayed on posters and stickers, on pens and on mouse-mats so everywhere in this company’s offices the staff would be reminded of the corporate values. This did nothing to reduce the general cynicism of the workforce towards these words; people did not understand what they meant in the context of the company, the words themselves were badly chosen (some were nouns, some adjectives) and none of the multifarious efforts of the communications team were making the values any more lived than they had been before. Showing what the values meant by showing them being lived (or not) is something else that theatre could have done for this company.

Many companies use psychometric tests and models such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator™ (MBTI) to help their staff understand more about themselves and other people. Sometimes, business people are exposed to these models to the extent that individuals know more about themselves but are still

unsure as to how the different types interact. To take Myers-Briggs as an example, if you discover you are an ENFP, which may be very revealing, will you then know how best to work with an ISTJ – or an ESTP or any other of the 16 types? Using actors and theatre skills is a powerful way of helping people really understand how different types interact and how to change behaviours in order to achieve more productive relationships with others.

One of the most powerful ways in which theatre skills can be used in business is through Forum Theatre, or Interactive Theatre as it is sometimes called. Forum Theatre is a process developed by the Brazilian director, Augusto Boal. It has since been taken and adapted by many other practitioners working in fields as diverse as therapy, social engineering and business as an extraordinary way of exploring possible solutions to challenges.

Although there are many variations, the way it is usually employed in a business context is as follows. A director/facilitator and a writer research the issues that are facing a business and develop a play or a series of scenes that illustrate those issues in action. Sometimes the play is set in the organisation itself, sometimes in a parallel organisation. The play is then performed by professional actors to small groups of staff from the business (about 25 at a time is typical). At appropriate junctures, the facilitator will step in to stop the action and invite the audience (“the Forum”) to tell the characters what is going wrong and what they should do to change the situation for the better. The actors then re-play the scene, often more than once, according to the suggestions of the audience. Sometimes, members of the audience are encouraged to step into the scene and become “spect-actors”, Boal’s term for those who start as spectators and become actors.

In this way, the audience recognises the issues that are bedevilling the organisation, realises the impact of the attitudes and behaviours that are current in the organisation and defines the attitudes and behaviours that will lead to a better outcome. The behaviours are often very specific, too. It will not work to tell a character that he should smile more – the actor playing him will just come in with a rictus grin, obeying the letter but not the spirit of the instruction. The audience must accurately describe both the behaviour and the intention informing the behaviour before the characters can move to a satisfactory outcome. Thus the audience members train themselves at the same time. Of course, they must also find solutions that take into account the personalities and motivations of the characters. Frequently, a forum theatre workshop will be followed up by a skills workshop in which the audience members will have a chance to practise new behaviours (often with the actors in role).

Forum theatre is a very powerful tool. It engages both the intellect and the emotions. When the audience members see themselves portrayed on stage, they enter wholeheartedly into the experience and often become very animated in their contributions. However, the process encourages contributions that are blame-free – an audience member can point a finger at a character’s behaviour, criticise it and suggest an alternative without directly censuring a colleague (or themselves).

For this reason, this approach is particularly valuable in tackling contentious issues such as bullying and harassment. A good actor will walk the fine line between forceful joshing and bullying and the audience members will determine, often arguing at length amongst themselves, what is acceptable and what is not.

Almost any interpersonal issue can be addressed through Forum Theatre. Drama is nearly always about characters having aims and wants which clash with someone else’s, so situations in which one group of employees want something and another group want something else are ripe for exploration through this medium. Customer service, the introduction of new technologies or processes, managing difficult people, influencing and negotiation, selling, feedback and appraisal interviewing, leadership

and followership, mergers, any aspect of change that involves people, in fact, can be tackled through the judicious use of Forum Theatre.

There are many other ways in which theatre has been used in business and it remains, perhaps not surprisingly, the predominant art form when it comes to arts-based interventions. Its major advantage is that it appears completely accessible, since just about all of us can walk and talk competently, or feel that we can, while relatively few of us feel able to play a musical instrument or paint a picture. In fact, this advantage is an irrelevance, as we shall see in the sections that follow.

Music

Music as a medium for personal development tends to fall into one of three camps, though some practitioners successfully combine these. One is concerned principally with observation and reflection, another with a practical experience; a third uses music structures as metaphors for organisational structure.

It was Peter Drucker in the 1980s who popularized the model of the symphony orchestra as prototypical of the then emerging "knowledge organization" that would define complex enterprises in the 21st Century. Other experts agreed - Sir John Harvey-Jones, for example, wrote a book called *All Together Now* which advocated this concept. A decade later Drucker recognized that "multi-leadered" musical ensembles like most chamber and jazz groups were able to model work environments that engaged and satisfied the most creative knowledge workers who in turn were best positioned to add value to their organisations in today's innovation economy. John Kao, erstwhile Professor of Creativity at Harvard Business School, through his book *Jamming* and Mary Jo Hatch, Professor of Commerce at the University of Virginia, are two who have pushed forward thinking in this area.

"As businesses become more adaptable and flexible in response to shifting demands and opportunities in their globalizing markets, traditional understandings of organizational structure are breaking down," Hatch has written. She goes on to suggest that improvisational jazz, precisely because it is often viewed as being unstructured, is a great metaphor for re-defining organisational structure. "...it is the uneasy relationship between structure, jazz, and the musicians who perform it that makes this metaphor both so unfamiliar and so promising in the context of the emerging vocabulary that redescription serves."

In brief, Hatch believes that jazz constantly re-defines its own structure, and its processes of leadership and followership, multi-sensory listening and so on provide fertile material for businesses looking to change the ways in which they work.

Not everyone agrees with her view. Jack Pinter, jazz musician, actor, storyteller and trainer, suggests that almost all jazz music is highly structured and that the best jazz players constantly ask "What innovative and beautiful things can we do with these familiar structures? How can we tell an old story in a compelling new way? Playing jazz is like rearranging furniture in a familiar room, to create interest and surprise." This, he believes is actually closer to the business norm, in which organisations hardly ever change the nature of their overall structures. Either way, it is clear that jazz has powerful resonances for people working in organisations. Pinter describes it as a "constantly evolving creative conversation."

Clearly, one of the drawbacks with music as a medium in training and development is that very few business people are going to have the playing skills of a professional instrumentalist. While we would not suggest trying it, you could probably spend most of a day working with business people just trying to get them to make a decent sound on a french horn; although it would be a frustrating time, there are undoubtedly some interesting learning points one could draw out of such an exercise around, for example, persistence, trying things out rather than just discussing them and a heightened admiration for the skills of specialists. It is important to stress, however, that it is the process that matters in this sort of artist-led intervention, not the product. It would not matter if none of the participants could play a simple tune on the horn by the end of the day, any more than it would matter if delegates could not, to any degree of competence, draw, paint, dance, act or sculpt at the end of a workshop using those media.

As a result of this skills barrier, many very successful music-led interventions place the delegates within an orchestra or have them listen to a string quartet or other ensemble leaving a skilled facilitator to draw out learning that has come from listening to the ensemble playing, observing their interactions and reflecting on the relevance of their observations to their own work situation. Those trainer-musicians wishing to provide an experiential workshop tend to rely instead on those aspects of music which seem (we use this word advisedly) not to need too much skill – drumming and percussion playing, composing and conducting.

John Cimino of Creative Leaps, one of the long-standing arts-based development organisations in the USA, talks about “inner participation” which “bridges the gap between the performer’s virtuosity (...) and the imaginative, alive-in-the-moment, meaning-making virtuosity latent in every participant.” In our experience, both approaches, whether primarily experiential or primarily reflective, can be equally valid.

The principal areas that music-led workshops address are teamwork and leadership. Both those are broad headings and it is worth exploring these areas further.

The role of the conductor is, of course, an interesting paradigm for leaders in organisations; just as interesting is the conductor-less ensemble such as a string quartet, jazz band or, notably, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Who is the leader then? How does leadership pass seamlessly from one player to another? Harvey Seifter, who used to be Executive Director of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, has written at length about this in his book *Leadership Ensemble – Lessons in Collaborative Management from the World’s only Conductorless Orchestra*.

The processes that the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra goes through have particular resonances for businesses. For example, each new piece for the repertoire is chosen, not by a conductor as there isn’t one, but by a small number of the players. Having chosen it, they decide as a group how to play it – what interpretation to put on it, what tempi and so on. That process itself is full of lessons for business – how does a group of highly-skilled professionals, all with their own areas of expertise, agree on such subjective issues? The answer is through “cognitive conflict” – the ability to argue a point cogently without the discussion descending into personal wrangling. Then, the small group has to sell their concept to the whole orchestra – i.e., yet more high talented specialists.

As Seifter explains, every member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra has both leadership and followership roles to play and each one will constantly move in and out of the different roles. “With no conductor to act as a filter to the what and why behind the group’s decisions, the members of Orpheus are uncommonly energized and responsive to the needs of the organization and to the desires of its leaders. Staff turnover is extremely low and employee satisfaction is extremely high.

The result is a better product, increased customer satisfaction and a healthier bottom line.” What business would not like that?

Many trainers using music as their medium will place delegates amongst the players or closely surrounding them so as to allow them to observe the processes up close – and this is the method used by the Orpheus. This becomes a visceral experience as well as a visual and aural one – delegates often talk about feeling the music through the soles of their feet. The attention to detail, the sense of playing for each other, the impact that one change of emphasis can have on other sections of the band and on the piece, the importance of each player’s contribution to the whole, however small, the concentration, the importance of rhythm and momentum – these are just some of the elements of teamwork that come clearly out of such music-led workshops.

Another artist-trainer whose workshops demand reflection and listening rather than hands-on experience is Miha Pogacnik, virtuoso violinist and cultural ambassador for Slovenia, who created the Idriart Festivals and a regular arts and business conference at Castle Borl in Slovenia. Pogacnik takes a classical piece of music and deconstructs it to show the journey of the Hero or leader as he or she grapples with fundamental issues. He is convinced (and convincing) that great music reveals a journey of transformations through archetypes and that by taking an audience through a sonata or concerto almost phrase by phrase, we will find resonances in our own lives as leaders in organisations. Above all, we will learn to listen really deeply when he comes to play the whole piece without stopping.

Sophie Brown of the City of London Sinfonia is clear that there are many lessons to be learnt from a combination of observation and experience:

“A typical session when we work with business people moves from observation (delegates watching musicians rehearse) to participation (delegates compose a piece of music, using percussion instruments, facilitated by musicians) to performance (delegates perform to their colleagues). A good orchestra should be more than the sum of its parts which means setting aside your ego for the good of the orchestra and the piece (i.e. the company and the task). Sometimes musicians are asked to play music they don’t really like, with a conductor or other musicians they don’t necessarily get on with, but they still do so with complete commitment. There’s a sense of collective responsibility for the vision.

“Musicians have to interpret someone else’s vision (i.e. the music) but be able to adapt it to suit the venue, the audience (or customers), the other performers, etc. They have to be expert at listening and at non-verbal communication. Musicians tend to have very short rehearsal time. There’s never enough time to discuss all the issues or rehearse everything, so they have to be able to decide what’s important, make compromises, adapt to the situation quickly. They learn quickly to give and receive feedback constructively so as to move the performance on in the limited time available”.

“And rehearsal itself is a vital part of the job. How many business people systematically rehearse before a presentation?”

While the ability of musicians to play (almost) without a leader is very instructive, the role of the conductor also provides many lessons for business leaders. Peter Hanke’s approach is particularly interesting. Hanke is a Danish conductor whose normal approach is to prepare some fairly simple pieces with a choir in advance of a workshop. He stresses to the singers that their role will be to react to the leadership of their conductor, whoever that might be, and not to use their sense of what is musically right for the piece they are singing. The delegates on the course will then be invited, one by one, to conduct – to lead, if you like – the choir. Each delegate will get immediate feedback in a compelling way about their non-verbal communication skills, their presence, their authority and status,

their ability to command respect, to inspire, to influence, to command, to guide and direct. The response from the choir will tell the delegate immediately how he or she is performing.

Hanke is expert at analysing the performance of delegates, making suggestions to help them convey their intentions with more impact, explaining why the choir did what they did. For example, one delegate found it impossible to get the choir to start. A few singers would utter the first few notes, hesitantly, and others wouldn't start at all. Hanke worked with her on the clarity of her direction, on ensuring that all the choir were ready, on the rhythm of her initial downbeat (i.e. getting the timing right), on her physical posture and sense of authority and in a short while, she successfully launched the choir, all together, into the piece – and a grin spread across her face. She confessed to Hanke that she had trouble kick-starting projects at work – and that all the elements he had drawn out in the workshop she could see were missing from her performance back at the office.

Hanke's approach is very powerful learning experience for leaders in organisations. It allows delegates to explore often hidden aspects of their leadership style, their ability to improvise and motivate, the strength of their values and their ability to stamp their personality on a task and give it meaning. What's more, the learning from the experience is very long-lived, as I can attest from personal experience.

Visual Arts

Peter Feroze of the Creative Knowledge Company has long experience of using the visual arts to help business people address their issues. "Looking is fundamental to our lives", he says. "It is one of the primary ways in which we are connected to the world around us. A child makes marks and elemental drawings before speaking. Empowering adults in a business context to make simple paintings and drawings releases and rekindles their individual creativity in an immediate and powerful way and develops greater self-awareness."

Feroze refers frequently to the metaphorical nature of art – what he calls a complementary language through which to communicate with each other and the outside world. Gestures, marks, images and colours provide a softer, more empathetic form of communication than words, making them ideal tools for creative exchange, appreciating other people's perspectives and characters, and expressing potentially contentious subjects. Subconscious ideas and feelings can surface in a drawing or painting more easily and quickly than through verbal discussion around a meeting table thus accelerating and clarifying communication, fresh thinking and solutions to business problems.

Drawing and painting are not used by organisations such as the Creative Knowledge Company just for individual development. Giving a group the task of creating a joint picture can draw out many key learnings about working together, and the process, being non-verbal, can often be a good leveller, encouraging more equal contributions from each team member or participant in a group situation rather than just those whose superior skills of verbal expression can lead them to dominate the proceedings. The visual interpretation of a document by each team member will reveal very quickly the different ways in which people receive and process the same information.

Like the other art forms, the visual arts demand both an intellectual and an emotional approach. Different modes of thinking and behaving can be readily explored through the flexibility of the medium. Feroze offers an example – "Drawing from observation of a subject such as a still life or a life model can be approached using a number of different artistic processes, each of which has a parallel business value in relation to behaviours around decision-making. Participants can be led through

visual exercises exploring Reduction (identifying the essence of a problem or situation), Prioritisation (focusing on what's important), Integration (Structuring Complexity), Emergent Thinking (allowing ideas and decisions to emerge and develop over a period of time)."

Both Feroze and Martin Shovel, cartoonist and director of CreativityWorks, insist that delegates need no great skill to participate. Shovel often starts a workshop by spreading a vast selection of cartoons around the room and getting people to choose a couple that appeal to them for some reason. As a way of getting delegates to open up about themselves and what makes them tick, it can hardly be bettered. What's more, an analysis of the cartoons chosen will almost inevitably lead delegates to conclude that no great draughtsmanship is required to express yourself tellingly in a cartoon as many cartoonists' draughtsmanship is not sophisticated. Shovel is adamant that everyone can draw. "If you ask a five-year-old if they can draw, they would think it a strange question – of course they can. Ask an adult if they can draw and they immediately assume you are asking them to draw like Picasso. No one expects to be able to write like Shakespeare so why should you expect that your drawing has to be at an elevated standard of artistry?" Just as writing can be used for a novel or for a shopping list, drawing can be used at many different levels.

Cartooning and sketching are ideal ways of capturing memories, ideas, sensations in the world around and then using these as resources for change and innovation. Sketching can also quickly facilitate the analysis and renewal of a brand concept alongside verbal analysis. Values and beliefs may be expressed very powerfully in a painting and this approach is particularly compelling for those whose preferred way of communicating is predominantly visual - 'I can see what you mean', 'I can understand your perspective', 'Ah, that's your vision for the future of this department' are not just clichés but often statements of how people make sense of the world. It has been calculated that as much of half our brain is dedicated to visual thinking and processing and that at least 70% of the information we take in is visual. Not surprisingly, therefore, the visual arts have a great deal to offer in business development.

Linda Naiman, painter and author (with Arthur Van Gundy) of *Orchestrating Collaboration at Work – Using Music, Improv, Storytelling and Other Arts to Improve Teamwork*, uses painting and drawing to stimulate innovation and solve problems. She finds the visual approach very powerful in getting teams to develop their capacity to have valuable conversations – things that might not be said can be drawn instead. Like others, Naiman often combines art forms, in her case getting delegates to represent pieces of music through painting, as a way of getting them to tap into subtleties and emotions that are often hard to express.

Nick Nissley, Executive Director of the Banff Centre's Leadership Development programme, and an expert in applying arts-based processes in organisations, notes a couple of other uses of the visual arts. He recounts how a new joint venture company in the oil industry employed an artist, Todd Siler, to work with them on knowledge creation – helping the executives to share their combined knowledge and make the unconscious, conscious.

Nissley also points out that the arts in general and the visual arts in particular can help in Appreciative Enquiry, the now widely-used process that uses positive imagery and future-focus to facilitate change. As with the other art forms we have already explored, this section covers only a fraction of the ways in which the visual arts have been used to help businesses address their development needs.

Storytelling

Storytelling is as old as time. Just as soon as mankind learnt to speak, stories have been a fundamental way of conveying our feelings, our attitudes, our truths and our dreams. Stories are the way in which we make sense of our experiences and those of other people. “Stories are emotionally and symbolically charged narratives. They do not present information or facts about ‘events’ but they enrich, enhance and infuse facts with meaning” writes Yiannis Gabriel in his book, *Storytelling in Organisations*.

Storytelling is used in business development in more or less the same ways as theatre and writing, both of which depend hugely upon stories for their impact. In fact, it is a moot point as to whether storytelling needs a section to itself in this report. For example, good leaders always need to be able to tell powerful stories to get their point across, to instigate change, to define strategy and to set tone. They may do this face to face, and in which case their theatrical performance skills will be needed, or they may do this in writing – the ways in which they deliver the stories are as important as the stories themselves.

So, for a business manager exploring the use of storytelling, most of the issues highlighted under the theatre and writing sections can almost certainly be addressed through judicious use of storytelling too. However, it is worth noting a few particular benefits of using stories.

Philippa Tipper of the storytelling organisation *A Word in Edgeways* is very experienced in using storytelling in business contexts. She suggests that there are a number of principal ways in which storytelling is an invaluable medium.

Stories are an ideal way to get employees talking about the organisational and operational issues that confront them, share their views on the impact of these issues and explore new ways of dealing with them. Tipper cites some work she did with the Department of Trade and Industry on the process of writing a White Paper. Through storytelling, those involved with the creation of a White Paper were able to express their emotions about the process (a “therapeutic” element to the work) and highlight ways of improving the process in the future (the creative element). The story that the participants in the programme created was then used to disseminate the learning to others within the department.

Writing - Poetry and other forms of Literature

It is remarkable how few business people are trained how to read and write effectively. Most had their last English lesson back at school. But many management jobs demand high level skills in these areas for anything up to 70% of the time.

Although there are exceptions, most of the uses of poetry and writing in business concern the advancement of communication and thinking. Poetry in particular is concise and precise and much of the thinking and communicating in the world today (not just in business) is long-winded and flabby. Poetry too is rich in metaphor which, as we have already discussed, is often a key way to help people think differently about their problems or situation and to see things in a new way. In the maelstrom of modern business life, with images and pressures and demands assailing you from all directions, poetry can be both a voice of calm and a way of bringing you back to the essence of your purpose. David Whyte, poet and author of *The Heart Aroused – Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America*, is adept at using poetry to clarify, challenge and move an agenda on. In a workshop or at a conference, he will give voice to a poem, perhaps one of his own or one from his seemingly inexhaustible repertoire of poetry ancient and modern, that takes the core message of the

previous session, throws it in the air, tosses it around and brings it back to earth refreshed, clarified and re-emphasised. Poetry can do that in a way that no other art form can.

Learning how to express yourself well is a vital skill for business people today. Misunderstood emails, badly written letters and muddled reports have caused untold problems in organisations, both internally and externally. Clients and customers have been lost, reputations sullied and contracts broken.

Interestingly, this is an area in which artists often literally teach the art form. In a music or dance workshop, as we have said, the process is more important than the product; no one expects the delegates to learn how to dance or play a violin to a high standard. But many poets and writers working in business are trying to help people to write well.

John Simmons was a writer in residence at Lever Fabergé, where the Catalyst programme (which has since expanded to other companies in the Unilever group) is the most advanced and integrated arts-based development programme in the world. Simmons has written tellingly about the power of good writing in business in his books, *We, Me, Them and It*, *Dark Angels* and *The Invisible Grail*. He declares that good writing is an essential skill for business leaders who want to put their points across – “More expressive writing will help you to establish greater personal authority and be respected as someone who should be heeded.”

Simmons berates the normal standard of business writing, much of which is what he calls “writing short”. Emails, for example, or the words that go on packaging or executive summaries are some of the ways in which the business world demands concision and precision but rarely gets it. Much business writing consists of lists, but he suggests that even these can be infused with personality and imagination. He quotes Maura Dooley’s poem, *What Every Woman Should Carry* (which, incidentally, was commissioned by Polo Mints), which lists the contents of her handbag:

My mother gave me the prayer to St Theresa
I added a used tube ticket, Kleenex,
several Polo mints (furry), a tampon, pesetas,
a florin. Not wishing to presumptuous,
not trusting you either, a pack of 3.

Simmons is convinced that creativity is what distinguishes us as human beings and that “the surest way to unlock this creativity is through writing.”

Branding is another area to which Simmons has turned his pen. In *The Invisible Grail*, he writes that “Brands need to discover or rediscover the power of words to help them connect more emotionally with consumers, with all audiences. The means to do this is through verbal identity, which enables brands to use names, expressive language, conversations, narrative, storytelling, as consistently and emotively as they have previously used visual identity (logos, symbols, colours, graphics.”

Poetry is also a powerful tool for helping people to think and see things differently. What is so powerful about poetry is often the writer’s ability to see what we all see but express it in a way that shows us not its external carapace but its essence. How does a poet do that? That is a real lesson for business people or indeed anyone else.

It is not just the writing of poetry that helps but the reading too. Clare Morgan of Oxford University and Kirsten Lange and Ted Buswick of The Boston Consulting Group have been working together to show

that regular reading and analysis of poetry can increase the breadth of your thinking. Morgan says, in talking about a workshop with a British high tech firm, “A poem is a distillation of thought, experience, and emotion into a tightly controlled form that utilizes words, images, sound and rhythm patterns to create a complex set of meanings that constantly form and re-form themselves. Its components take it beyond argument into a realm where expectations of single, analyzable meaning are deliberately questioned and subverted. All art does this, but poems do it in a particularly condensed and therefore intensive way.”

This quote comes from an article in the *Journal of Business Strategy*, one recent edition of which (Volume 26, No1) was entirely given over to arts-based training and development in business. Morgan goes on to say: “The more practiced you become in reading poetry, the more easily you can switch between rational analysis and allowing the responses of the ‘feeling state’ to come into play. What you gain is a space for thinking additional to, and complementing, the usual cause-and-effect mode.”

Because poetry is so precise and concise, it also demands intense listening. In normal daily life, our brains may work at a rate of about 2000 words a minute while the person who is talking to us may only be speaking at 200 words a minute. Not surprisingly, our brains race ahead, we start to interpret what someone is going to say before they have said it and we stop listening deeply – if we ever started. Poetry, because of its depth and concision, ensures that we keep working at deep listening, which is again a skill that we could all do with mastering.

Cost and Resource Implications of using Arts-based Training and Development

Cost

In general, the cost of using artists as trainers and developers is not significantly different from using “traditional” professionals. This is as it should be. Many of the practitioners in this field have degrees as well as post-graduate qualifications in their specialism, so organisations buying in artists will be getting well-educated and highly-skilled experts with many years’ experience. What’s more, it is an integral part of many artists’ lives constantly to continue their own development, to hone their existing skills and pick up new ones. Musicians will rigorously practise their scales every day, opera singers will have personal singing coaches, actors will go to classes at places like the Actors’ Centre – it’s the equivalent of a business person regularly attending training courses or reminding themselves of their MBA modules on a daily basis.

While some of the less experienced practitioners will charge around £600 a day, the more experienced and those working on a national or international level will charge between £800 and £2000 a day, with a few charging much more. A number of practitioners will charge a lower daily fee for preparation and research (non-contact time). Many artist-trainers will give significant discounts when working for charities.

There is a lower scale for actors being used as role-players – normally around £250-£400 a day – though once an actor is asked to take on work beyond the normal role-play, it is customary for them to charge a trainer’s fee.

There are a number of variations on these scales. In general, practitioners working on a local or regional basis or for smaller clients will charge less. On the other hand, major American or global corporations will find all these charges very low. As with all such services, the fees will be as high as the market will allow.

Some particular types of arts-led interventions may seem to be relatively expensive. For example, a full-scale Forum Theatre programme has high up-front costs. A writer and the director/facilitator will need to research the business issue and, in some instances, the actors may also need to experience the working lives of the people they will portray, so that they can act the parts convincingly. The writer will then need to go away and write the play or scenes – and in many instances, such a play, if performed straight through without a break, would last over an hour. Even the speediest writers need several days to produce that length of work to a high quality. Then one needs to factor in the cost of casting and rehearsal, and costumes and set, if any. All this happens before the first workshop and it can easily amount to £40,000. If the relevant audience within the client company is so small that the workshop only needs to be repeated a few times, then such up-front costs may make using Forum Theatre prohibitively expensive. However, if the workshop is repeated, say, 20 times, reaching 400-500 staff, the cost per head of this sort of development intervention may only amount to £170, which compares favourably with many other types of intervention.

It should be stressed that it is possible to deliver a powerful, smaller-scale Forum Theatre programme that does not cost so much up-front and so is feasible when the prospective audience is much smaller. In such instances, the need may only be for one or two scenes that a director/facilitator and two or three actors can devise in a day or two. The actual script may never be finalised; instead, each scene will have “milestones” that the actors aim for in succession in order to tell the story. Since much of their work will be improvised anyway, having a concrete script is not necessary provided that the issues are relatively straightforward. Such an approach reduces the costs of a Forum Theatre programme significantly and makes it feasible for a one-off course.

Other types of arts-led interventions can also be expensive. Much of the work around scenario planning is likely to demand extensive research and a high quality set. Some such events have involved taking over an empty office building and creating a complete work environment, for example, with many actors peopling the desks and so on.

However, as a general rule, arts-based training and development is no more expensive than other forms of development, and sometimes much less so.

Resourcing issues

Some arts-based interventions make use of multi-media input and can demand considerable technological apparatus such as screens, lights, sound effects, smoke and so on. In our experience, these are fairly rare and are limited to major global corporations wanting a spectacular event as much as a training programme.

Sometimes, large-scale events are less dependent upon technological wizardry than upon space and realism. Ralph Kerle, of the Creative Leadership Lab in Australia, recounts how, for one client, he was asked to create a new corporate Headquarters, complete with actors playing key staff, messengers turning up with packets that had to be signed for, signage and so on, all so the client’s customers would believe that they had been invited to the real launch of a new company. Similar events have taken place in Europe and the USA to our knowledge; particularly successful have been events that simulate a disaster with which the client’s staff have to cope. All airlines, train companies, major local authorities and others should explore the potential of training staff to cope with a disaster through living through “the real thing”.

In the vast majority of cases, however, arts-based programmes are relatively light on resource requirements. Just as many theatre productions need merely “a bare board and a passion”, so many arts-based courses just need space (lots of it), some chairs and perhaps a flipchart. This need for space is one that many business people find hard to understand. We have known an occasion when an artist-facilitator arrived at a venue to run an experiential workshop to find that the room allocated was occupied by a huge boardroom table, bolted to the floor, with wires running through the middle of it attached to data projectors and speaker phones. In the event, the course was run in the (thankfully empty) lobby.

Since most arts-based programmes are experiential, this need for specific types of space is paramount. A drawing or painting workshop may have delegates sprawling on the floor, covering flipchart-size paper with charcoal or poster paints, and then hanging the resultant work on the walls. A room with a pale carpet and lots of pictures screwed to the walls will not be appropriate. A dance or theatre-based course will require participants to move around and in the case of dance, may need a sprung floor; an opera or music programme may require a reasonable acoustic and proper sound-proofing. It is hard for other office workers to concentrate if they constantly hear bursts of African chants or post-romantic percussion.

In addition, the privacy of the space needs to be considered. If you want your delegates to behave like five-year-olds while they get back in touch with their creativity, you cannot have them in a room into which others can see. The essence of much of this work is the opportunity to take risks in a safe environment, and privacy is therefore a key requirement.

It is rare that a business has facilities that can meet these sorts of requirements, so we always recommend holding such programmes out of the normal working environment and, for preference, not in a soulless hotel or dedicated training facility. This is because it gives a powerful, if implicit, message that a training course held in an alien environment is not “business as usual”. Some hotels with character and other interesting venues like historic houses can work well, but generally an artist’s studio, a stage or studio theatre, a rehearsal room or a dance studio will always be preferable. These are places that are designed for creative experimentation so they are ideal for the majority of arts-led programmes. They may not be immaculately furnished or equipped with high-speed internet connections, but they will almost certainly be more appropriate for the task in hand. And they will probably be a lot cheaper than the same sized room in a hotel.

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

For many companies, using an arts-based approach in training and development demands a series of decisions, particularly if they have not used such an approach before. All training managers have to take decisions when determining which supplier to choose, of course, but when exploring the possibilities of an arts-led approach, some of the questions to ask themselves may be different. Assuming that the training manager has identified what development is necessary, the first question will be “Do I take a traditional approach or one that is pushing the boundaries?” To answer such a question, more questions need to be asked. “Are the staff tired of the traditional approaches? Are they trained up to the eyeballs so a different approach is necessary to excite jaded palates? Is the culture of the company such that a more creative approach will be accepted? Are the staff ready for such a change?”

In our experience, it is a rare company these days that has not tried a more creative approach to training and development, principally because the traditional “chalk and talk” methods have failed to produce the desired results. Given what we now know about adult learning, this is not surprising.

However, not every company has had a positive experience using more creative methods. The training and development market is not controlled and there are many incompetent providers of both traditional and creative development. The company that has been sued by some of its employees who have injured themselves walking on hot coals or abseiling down a mountain will be reluctant to try such methods again, and the same applies, though perhaps not so dramatically, to those whose first experience of arts-based development has not been a happy one.

Assuming that the company has not been put off for life and a more creative, experiential approach is desired, the next question is “What kind of different approach is the one to go for?” There are many options out there. If your need is for teamwork or leadership, for example, you might plump for outdoor exercises such as climbing walls, defusing a ticking bomb, getting four people onto the top of a 30ft high pole, or walking blindfold through a maze, such as those programmes run by Brathay and many others; you might want to try indoor versions of such exercises, using proprietary tools such as the Business Process Mirrors™ developed by Future Factory; you might prefer to try a particular sport – sailing, canoeing, orienteering or whatever. All such approaches have their advantages and many of the companies offering them are successful, experienced and highly competent.

We have already explained the advantages of an arts-based approach so we won't repeat them here. There are, of course, reasons why some companies choose not to use the physical approach described above. Often it is because they have used them before and, much as they like them, feel it is time for a change. Sometimes, they feel that the physical activity may become competitive and exacerbate rifts within teams rather than heal them – paintballing is renowned for being an opportunity for settling old scores. Sometimes, they feel that the culture of the company is not very energetic or sporty. Or sometimes they feel that such an approach will suit some of the participants but not all. Some of the same objections can be levelled at the arts-led approach, though it should be noted that the arts are fundamentally collaborative and so have an advantage over a number of the more competitive activities if your need is for good teamwork. Even if your need is to motivate a competitive sales force, it may be important to ensure that their competitive streak is directed at other companies rather than their colleagues.

Once a training manager has decided on an arts-led approach, the next question is “Which art form?” As this report has shown, there are many business issues which could be addressed by almost any art form. In this case, the choice may depend upon a sense of the culture of the company, or a feeling for the preferences of the potential delegates or even the preference of the Chief Executive or the training manager him or herself. Sometimes, the business of the company seems to lend itself to a particular art form.

For example, a perfume manufacturer decided to use music since perfume is often described in musical terms. Scents rise to a crescendo; they have low and top notes and so on. A computer company opted for painting as the medium; the reasoning was that computer buffs look at a screen all day, so they would be comfortable working on a similarly-shaped painting even if the rest of the course content took them out of their comfort zone. And a consultancy working extensively in Brazil chose Carnival as its art form.

However, this synergy of art form and business product or culture is not necessary. Often, indeed, it is the strangeness of the art form that is its principal attraction. Being convinced that a singing workshop, for example, will really stretch the delegates may be the best reason for choosing it. Equally important is the choice of artist-trainer or arts-led company as provider. As has already been mentioned, the market is not accredited so it can be difficult for training managers to be sure that they have chosen a competent provider. Often, business people will choose a provider whom they have

met at an exhibition or conference, not realising, perhaps, that the market has many more suppliers than they know about and that those who shout loudest at exhibitions may well not be the most experienced or competent. Indeed, the majority of the most experienced providers tend to shun such marketing opportunities, as they get most of their new clients through referrals. Other suppliers run open “taster” events to which they invite training managers, and these are an excellent way of seeing an arts-based supplier’s work in action. Yet others invest in a few days at a specialist “speed-dating” conference such as Trac (run by McLean Events) at which roughly 50 training providers of all sorts have the opportunity to meet an equivalent number of business representatives who are looking for new ideas and new suppliers. Last, but by no means least, good contacts can be provided by Arts & Business whose staff have met most of the top arts-based providers and know what they are capable of. Arts & Business also runs regular courses to help artists move into the field of training and development.

However they have come across a provider, training managers should always ask for references and follow them up. Most companies that have used arts-led programmes before are only too pleased to pass on their opinions of them to other companies. All the other indications of competence that training managers would look for in a traditional provider should also be evident from an arts-led one – a professional proposal, an understanding of the business issues, the ability to listen to the learning needs and suggest solutions, a concern for evaluation and return on investment, evidence of past client satisfaction and so on. If a training manager is considering using an artist-trainer who has no previous experience of business, they should at least have experience of applying their workshop skills with teachers or similar groups.

Selling an arts-led approach inside the business

Some training managers are reluctant to run with an arts-led provider, particularly for the first time, since it can be difficult to sell the concept within the business. The person who signs off the expenditure may well be a Finance Director whose preference would be for a traditional chalk and talk course. The internal client, for whom the Training Manager is sourcing the programme, may also be reluctant to try something different. In addition, the reputation of training managers will rest on the quality of the courses they provide, so it can be a considerable risk for them to propose something unproven. It is important to understand that all the stakeholders in such a situation have different motivations and objectives.

However much these may be understood, overcoming them remains difficult – there is no magic wand. Experience has shown, however, that having a senior champion such as the Chief Executive will allow the training manager to push through even quite radical proposals. Some training managers have merely not mentioned the fact that a new supplier has an arts-led approach when getting the necessary sign-off or advertising the course to potential delegates, relying instead on the programme to prove its worth. This approach will work better, of course, if the supplier is called, for example, The Creative Knowledge Company or StepChange Training or, indeed, Ci: Creative intelligence rather than Sing for your Supper or Dancing in the Dark or some other obviously arty name.

The Underpinning Theory

One professional services firm which used a multi-art form approach to improve internal communications and cross-selling reported £2 million of new business as a result – for an investment that amounted to less than £5000. Would that all returns on investment were so successful. Certainly it is easier to sell the concept of arts-based training if you can refer to other companies’ successes with it, and particularly if there are examples of thorough evaluation and return on

investment. Regrettably, too few companies properly evaluate any of their training and development work and this seems to be particularly true when it comes to the sorts of soft skills that arts-led approaches tend to tackle, not least because these can be difficult to measure. How does one measure someone's creativity, whether before or after they have been on a course designed to improve it? Nevertheless, those companies that have seriously evaluated the impact of arts-led training and development have almost invariably found that the investment has been well worth making.

For many people in business, it is comforting to know that this huge increase in the use of arts-based learning has its roots deeply implanted in properly researched theory. As we suggested, there are many reasons why more and more organisations are turning to artists in their search for effective solutions to their development problems and here we explore just some of the theories and research which have underpinned this movement.

One reason relates to creativity. The world of business began waking up to the need for creativity as it became more and more clear that repeating the success of the past was likely to mean failure in the future. In fact, success was probably going to result from the creation of new products and services. The Nomura Institute, in one of its research papers from 1997, saw the progress of the civilised world as having moved from Agriculture, through the Industrial Age, on to Technology and now on to Creativity. Other more recent writers have picked up the same theme.

Daniel Pink, for example, in his 2005 book *A Whole New Mind*, categorises the last two stages as the Information Age (knowledge workers) and the Conceptual Age (creators and empathisers). "....now we're progressing yet again – to a society of creators and empathizers, of pattern recognizers and meaning makers." His thesis is that in a world of abundance, our search is for meaning; in a world of automation, white collar workers now need to develop aptitudes that computers cannot achieve better or faster; and with the rise of the Asian knowledge worker, there are already many jobs being done as efficiently and significantly more cheaply in India and the Far East that were once the province of managers and professionals in the developed world.

Pink suggests that many of the attributes needed in this Conceptual Age are ones that can be found in the world of the arts, and that the difference between successful enterprises and failing ones will depend upon the extent of their creativity – their ability constantly to come up with new ideas, products and services and to get them to the market efficiently and effectively. Pink is developing the ideas of many others. Business gurus such as John Kao, Charles Handy and Tom Peters urged their readers to unlock their own creativity and that of their colleagues.

Sir Ernest Hall, entrepreneur, concert pianist and founder of Dean Clough in Halifax, declared that "The only reason to employ people in the future will be to benefit from the qualities that raise them above machines, the qualities of inspiration, creativity, imagination, commitment, enterprise and ambition."

So many of the opinion-formers were talking about creativity that business and government began to wake up to it. But they ran into a problem. The education system in most of the developed world actively discourages creativity in favour of facts and logic. As Kobus Neethling has shown in his 15-country research project, creative behaviour diminishes from 98% in the 3-5 year old age group to 32% by age 10; by the time children are turning 15, only 10% are behaving creatively and it's only 2% by the age of 25.

So, for years, businesses (and government) had been tending to employ people whose preferred style was fundamentally analytical, logical, numerical, as that is what comprised the labour market. Not only had they tended to employ analytical, numerate people, these organisations also tended to train them to be even more so.

Now suddenly the gurus were saying that organisations need staff who are imaginative, ingenious, creative, lateral thinkers. As Professor Simon Majaro of Cranfield says, “There has been such a push to the left, mathematical, quantitative and analytical side of the brain that the software of the brain on the right has been neglected.”

No one is suggesting that the analytical processes should be thrown out of the window or that businesses should only employ creative people. What Majaro and his ilk were urging was that organisations needed to unlock the creativity of the people they already had, on the basis that we are all creative.

But the problem is that most businesses don't know how to do that. Most of the analytical, numerate thinkers at the top of companies who saw the logic in the argument for more creativity were the least able to unlock their own or other people's latent talents. Casting around for help, they came to the logical conclusion – the arts. The arts are full of creative people so surely business can learn how to be more creative from them.

And the answer is, of course, that they can. The arts world has been developing techniques for encouraging creativity and maintaining creativity and filtering creative ideas for centuries and many artists are happy to share them. We explore how in greater depth below.

Another reason why the arts are such a valuable means of addressing business issues is that they are all about change – and in business, the mantra goes, change is the only constant nowadays. Change is an inherent attribute of the arts. First and foremost, the arts are about creating a change to the status quo. Nothing that an artist creates was there until he or she invented it. The sculptor turns a block of stone into a statue; the painter turns a blank canvas into a picture; a writer combines words uniquely into a poem; a composer does the same for musical notes. Art is about changing the world and our perception of the world. Then art is also about change because no artist worth the name will ever try to reproduce the same work again – they always want to do it differently and better. A director at the Royal Shakespeare Company, tackling Hamlet for the umpteenth time, will never suggest doing it exactly as they did it before. “A creative artist works on his next composition because he is not satisfied with his previous one,” as Shostakovich said. So one might say that the arts are about “change for the better.”

A third reason for using the arts to address a business issue is that the arts are fundamentally experiential – they are about doing. Even the more sedentary of art forms, such as literature and painting, require practitioners to do things. And most art forms demand much more experiential activity – sometimes, as in the case of dance and mime, activity that is extremely physical. That is not to say that watching a play or observing a picture, for example, cannot in itself be an “experience” and we explore many such reflective arts-based approaches below. However, many arts-based programmes demand that the people attending the courses actually experience the art by practising it.

This experiential aspect of art corresponds with an increasing understanding of how people learn – and retain their learning - most effectively. Much of the reaction against “chalk and talk” training has been because it is seen as being inefficient. Delegates just don't learn much. This is particularly the case when the subject matter is behavioural, of course. Often quoted in this area is Edgar Dale's

Cone of Experience which dates from the 1960s and which suggests that students (he was working in the education field) learn least from words alone and far more from experiences:

Learn least

Read

View images

Watch video

Attend Exhibits or sites

Watch a demonstration

Participate in a hands-on workshop

Design collaborative lessons

Simulate or model a real experience

Design/perform a presentation – do the Real Thing

Learn most

This model has attained wide acceptance and it is often associated with some more speculative figures suggesting that people remember 10% of what they read but 90% of what they do. However skewed some of the research may be, it still seems to be plausible to most people and is confirmed from their own observations by many people working in training and development.

One more reason for the power of the arts in development is that as well as providing experiential learning, they also engage learners in intellectual and emotional responses to those experiences. In fact, the arts demand the use of all the “intelligences.”

Howard Gardner, the American psychologist and Harvard professor, posits the theory of multiple intelligences – innate abilities that we all use to a greater or lesser degree depending on our preferences, our genes, our upbringing and our work and social environments. Gardner argues that we all have seven or more “intelligences”. When we are born, we might have two or three types of intelligence more dominant than the others, but the vast majority of us have all of them to some extent. As we have already discussed, there has grown a general acceptance that the most important intelligence to have is what Gardner calls the Logical/numerical intelligence. This is predominantly what is examined by IQ tests, and it is the type of intelligence that is most valued and fostered by business.

Gardner’s seven intelligences are:

Logical/mathematical

Spatial

Bodily/Kinaesthetic

Musical

Linguistic

Interpersonal

Intrapersonal

(He later added an eighth, Natural intelligence, the capacity to understand and relate to plants and animals.)

The logical/numerical intelligence is, as its name would suggest, concerned with reason and analysis. It is the intelligence of the mathematician and scientist, but it is one upon which we all depend every day. Constantly, we are presented with problems, we analyse the situation and determine upon a logical course of action. For example, our route to work is blocked by a road accident and so we

decide to double back and go by another route. Or we go shopping for a dinner party, discover that the supermarket is out of some special ingredient that we needed, and so we decide to change the recipe, or substitute a similar ingredient, or shop elsewhere. We all use this type of intelligence every day. In business, one does the market research, analyses the results, ensures the numbers stack up and makes a logical decision based on the information available. Some artists also need this type of intelligence to a considerable degree. For a theatre director or a conductor, the ability to analyse a play or piece of music, for example, is of course extremely important.

Spatial intelligence is that of the architect, the designer, the painter and the sculptor. It involves not only interacting with and making sense of the space around us but seeing the big picture as well. Interestingly, it is also one of the abilities of the choreographer and theatre director, dance and theatre being both art forms that we see as well as hear. In the business world, we might think of it as the intelligence of the graphic designer or the person who re-organises the office space. On the whole, these are skills that many businesses buy in rather than value enough to have employed people with those particular abilities.

Then there is bodily or kinaesthetic intelligence, the intelligence of sportsmen and women. We have all seen television interviews with footballers whose only insight is “Well, I just hit it and it went in the back of the net, Brian” and we conclude that their physical prowess outweighs their analytical insight and articulacy. This is, of course, not always the case – many sports, such as tennis, rugby, cricket and athletics, seem to attract people whose physical prowess is matched by their eloquence, insight and interpersonal skills. There are many others who combine highly advanced kinaesthetic intelligence with other forms of intelligence. Dancers, musicians and actors for example, are very skilled physically.

Musical intelligence is exactly what is says on the tin. Mozart had it in abundance. Highly valued by the arts, almost totally ignored by business, it is, nevertheless, an intelligence that we all have and use every day. Our ability to use pitch and tone and variety when we speak is essentially a musical intelligence, and one that actors, for example, rely on to a great extent. Anyone who has ever attended a conference and sat through numerous, deeply boring lectures delivered by business people or academics in a relentless monotone will know that this intelligence is not universal.

Linguistic intelligence is next. This is not just the capacity to learn a foreign language, though that is part of it. It is just as much to do with articulacy, the ability to express oneself well, to use words with impact, to write or to speak so that you are read or heard. We can't all be Shakespeare or Oscar Wilde or even Stephen Fry but we all recognise in ourselves and others when linguistic intelligence is being well used. Incidentally, note how quickly one aspect of this particular type of intelligence atrophies with disuse. Children growing up in a multilingual family will pick up all the languages spoken at home, without particular concern for grammar or syntax, but by listening and repeating. At no time will they complain that the effort is too much or that learning two or three or more languages is beyond them. For most of us, however, trying to pick up a new language in our teens or beyond is significantly more difficult. This is partly because of the way we are taught, of course, but it would also suggest that part of our linguistic intelligence rapidly diminishes with lack of exercise. In business, it is not an intelligence that is greatly prized whereas it is one that is the cornerstone of many art forms.

Interpersonal intelligence is one that the business world has woken up to. This is the ability to put oneself into others' shoes, to empathise, to influence, to negotiate, to inspire. Many business courses exist to help people develop this type of intelligence and it is also, of course, the intelligence of the novelist and playwright and librettist and the actors, dancers and opera singers who interpret their

work. Indeed, much of the core of the performing arts is an exploration of interpersonal intelligence (or lack of it).

The last of Gardner’s original list of seven is intrapersonal intelligence, the ability to be self-aware, to recognise and balance one’s own strengths and weaknesses. Some people seem to have a handle on their own motivations and desires just as others seem to be sadly self-deluded. It is an intelligence that is central to a sense of self-worth and self-esteem, to confidence and self-belief and in the arts world it is highly valued. Yet it is singularly underrated by business, though there have been some examples of influential writers encouraging the business world to attach more importance to this.

Daniel Goleman’s work on Emotional Intelligence and Danah Zohar’s on Spiritual Intelligence are, in essence, an elaboration of Gardner’s Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Intelligences. They have, however, touched a nerve in the business world and more and more organisations are recognising the importance of developing the emotional and spiritual intelligence of their staff.

It is instructional to look at Gardner’s seven intelligences and the extent to which business and the arts value and foster each of them. We are of course generalising here – an architects’ firm or advertising agency (or any one of the “creative industries”) will tend to value spatial intelligence, for example, far more than a manufacturer of widgets. Nevertheless, the comparison is telling:

Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences

Valued/fostered by business	Type of Intelligence	Valued/fostered by the arts
✓✓✓	Logical/mathematical	✓✓
✓	Spatial	✓✓✓
x	Bodily/Kinaesthetic	✓✓✓
x	Musical	✓✓✓
✓	Linguistic	✓✓✓
✓✓✓	Interpersonal	✓✓✓
✓	Intrapersonal	✓✓✓

As businesses and other organisations increasingly recognise the need to develop all the capacities of their staff, it is not surprising that they are looking increasingly at the arts. It is in the artistic process that all those intelligences that are not normally valued by business are given their full scope.

Creativity and the Creative Process of Innovation

Because creativity has been one of the main reasons for using arts in business, the processes of creativity and innovation themselves have become important elements of the relationship.

Generally, creativity is defined as coming up with ideas, and innovation as the (creative) process of putting those ideas into practice. (There are many other definitions but these will suffice for our purpose.) It will be clear that the arts are concerned both with creativity and with innovation.

In order for an organisation to foster creativity, a number of attributes need to be in place. Professor Rob Goffee of the London Business School is one who has undertaken considerable research in this area. He identifies:

- Shared, long-term vision
- Commitment to common goals
- Leadership at many levels
- Effective teamwork
- Rich communication
- Cross-functional working
- Market pressure
- Restless pursuit of high standards
- Cognitive conflict
- Fun

The experience of artists working in this field with businesses would suggest a few more to add:

- Time & Silence
- A safe environment in which to try things out
- Readiness to take risk
- Discipline
- Building on each other's ideas
- Trust
- Diversity
- Lack of hierarchy
- Making connections
- Emotional openness

As well as needing to foster the attributes necessary for creativity to thrive, it is crucial that an organisation has structures in place and a process formulated so that creative ideas can grow and flourish and get turned into actual products and services (the innovation process). We see it as a restaurateur might see the process. Once the initial ideas have been generated, the journey from getting the ingredients together to the point where they are consumed at table would typically look like this:

- Seasoning – adding other people's ideas to the original ones
- Marinating – protecting the initial ideas and letting them develop flavour and colour
- Cooking up dishes – trying out combinations of ingredients, testing flavours
- Deciding on a menu – filtering out the ideas that don't work or are not working now and need more marinating or a different combination of flavours
- Writing out the menu – communicating the ideas
- Consumption – when the dishes are finally eaten

This is not the only way to get from ideas to finished product but it is a common one – and it is exactly what happens in the performing arts. The rehearsal process is all about adding the performers' and director's ideas to those of the initiator (author, composer), taking a wide variety of ideas forward and letting them germinate, testing out ideas as a scene gets built, filtering out the ideas that don't work, communicating the product to the market (both internally and externally) and finally offering up the finished show for consumption. The process followed by a visual artist is not dissimilar though it may be a more solitary journey.

The arts have a unique insight into creativity and its journey to innovative products. Consultancies such as the rather fancifully named What if? operate very successfully helping organisations to

develop such journeys, though they do not always credit the arts world for its insight. Artists working in any field should be able to help a business become more creative and innovative.

Conclusion

We started this report expecting that the different art forms would be best suited to tackling different business issues. We anticipated that theatre would have the monopoly on Presentation Skills and Personal Impact, for example, but it is clear that if an organisation's issue relates to communication in its wider sense, any of the art forms would have much to offer. We expected too that the performing arts, operating in multi-functional groups, would have the edge on team work and leadership; but here again, the more typically solitary art forms such as painting have shown that they have valuable insight and processes to offer.

We should add that organisations are by no means limited to using one art form at a time. We know of programmes that have combined dance and song-writing, opera and ballet, theatre, sculpture, poetry, storytelling and mime and so on. Project Catalyst, the arts-based programme at Lever Fabergé and other operating companies of the Unilever Group, very successfully synthesises just about all the art forms, allowing connections to be made across disciplines. John Cimino of Creative Leaps suggests that these interdisciplinary art experiences help hold together "big picture" understandings of what we know and aspire to know. When it comes to using the arts, perhaps more is more.

In fact, if this report has demonstrated anything, it is that there is a plethora of opportunities to source unusual, interesting, impactful and creative learning programmes through the arts and artists, and any Training Manager worth their salt should be taking full advantage of those opportunities.

Tim Stockil

Ci: Creative intelligence

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