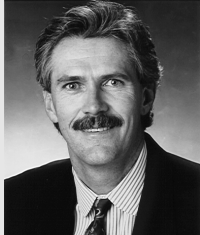


"Nothing is so well learned as that which is discovered." - Socrates

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Article by Jane Hilberry, Ph.D. and Randell Jones



We are fortunate this newsletter to have two very accomplished artists and excellent leadership development trainers share their perspectives on the relationship between

art and leadership. Kevin Asbjornson and Cheryl DeCiantis are both innovative artists and grounded educators. I think you will find their perspectives insightful.

With all that is happening in the world presently, there is probably no better time to reflect on creativity and leadership. Stress from the current international situation is affecting us on many levels. This is true for the war in Iraq as well as for SARS. Long-standing international alliances are being challenged; people are afraid to travel. The world order as well as the world's economy are being affected. The economic impact is felt quickly in the business of managerial and leadership development because non-critical travel is halted and budget belts are tightened.

As you know, stress negatively affects anyone's capacity to be innovative and creative. At the time when we most need those capabilities, we find our creative juices depleted by anxiety. How can we use our slow time to plan for future opportunities?

First, make a list of all those ideas you have not had time to tackle. Look through the list and identify the ones that can be implemented with little investment of money. Pick one idea and then prepare a development plan with a timeline. You may find that when you actually prepare a plan with clear first steps, your anxiety is diminished and your creativity flows. You can actually reverse the paralysis of stress.

Chris Musselwhite, President

Leaders as Artists: Two Perspectives

Max DePree, the former president of Hermann Miller and author of *Leadership Is an Art*, says, "Leadership is an art, something to be learned over time, not simply by reading books.

Leadership is more tribal than scientific, more a weaving of relationships than an amassing of information, and, in that sense, I don't know how to pin it down in every detail."

Leadership, like art, is part imagination and part effort, part image and part impression. It is an almost magical combining of the tangible and intangible to create something that did not exist before. And as with great art, when it comes together—when it works, everyone can see it. This edition of *Excursions* looks at the relationship between leadership and art from the viewpoints of two accomplished artists who also teach leadership.

Perspective One:

What if the best artists are also leaders, and the

best leaders are also artists? Kevin Asbjornson poses this question to a group of executives who have gathered around the grand piano at the Center for Creative Leadership in Colorado Springs on a fall afternoon. They are participants in Asbjornson's innovative leadership development program, *The Artistry of Leadership*. "Leaders and artists face many of the same

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and debtor. That sums up the progress of an artful leader."

- Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art*

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challenges,” asserts Asbjörnson, “and great leadership involves not only skill, but artistry.” Asbjörnson, a composer, contemporary pianist, and recording artist with an international MBA and 10 years of international business experience, is uniquely qualified to unite the disparate worlds of art and leadership.

Asbjörnson suggests that his participants think of their desks as pianos. He observes that as a composer, “I could just stay back here on my piano bench making music, but then I would never know what my audience was hearing.” He asks, “What happens to a leader who never asks for feedback on the message he or she is putting out?”

Participants toss out responses:

“Your isolation limits your ability to think in different ways.”

“You don’t know if people are getting it.”

“You get disconnected from the people you’re trying to lead.”

Effective leaders, then, must get out from behind their desks and discover what Asbjörnson calls *the actual vs. intended impact of one’s voice*.

Chuck Palus, co-author of *The Leader’s Edge: Six Creative Competencies for Navigating Complex Changes* believes that the metaphor of desk as piano is a radical change. “If you can share a



piano as Asbjörnson does in his workshop, you can have that kind of dialogue across your desk. It’s not just: sit here and listen to what I have to say.”

In the Artistry of Leadership program, “Music is the vehicle for teaching people how to listen,” observes Michael Cafasso, President and CEO of Pueblo Bank and Trust. Because music affects the whole person, body and spirit as well as

“Leaders and artists face many of the same challenges and great leadership involves not only skill, but artistry.”

- Kevin Asbjörnson

intellect, it moves people out of their strictly linear, left-brained modes of thought. “Music incites the affective domain,” notes Yolán Williams, Senior Staff Consultant at Verizon Communications, Inc., “and we’re more receptive to learning.”

Leaders who are highly effective

have rich character, points out Colin Funk, Director of Creativity, Banff Centre Leadership Arts. Skill, knowledge and character all are required, but character is “tough stuff to lay out in a PowerPoint.” That’s where artistry enters the equation. “Artists connect us with the human story, taking us well beyond the skill and knowledge set,” notes Funk; “the best leaders do the same.”

To learn more about Kevin Asbjörnson’s concepts, you can read the entire article, *The Artistry of Leadership™: Creating Meaningful Connections* by Jane Hilberry, Ph.D., at www.discoverylearning.com.

Perspective Two:

Cheryl De Ciantis helps develop leaders as well. She too is an accomplished artist. Her paintings and sculpted structures have been shown across North America and Western Europe.

De Ciantis is uniquely gifted in her ability to lead individuals in the discovery of their own creativity. As Artist-in-Residence at the Center for Creative Leadership, she conducted numerous workshops helping leaders unlock and discover their creative nature. In the process she helped them understand two essential skills of effective leaders: flexibility of mind and empathy for others.

For De Ciantis, an essential first step to functioning as an effective leader is to understand the difference between *creating and creativity*. “Ideas alone are not enough,”

“Cultivating the flexibility of mind and developing the relationships with people of different perspectives are the activities of successful artists, successful entrepreneurs or successful leaders.”

- Cheryl De Ciantis

De Ciantis reminds her workshop participants. “They are necessary, but as every effective leader knows, ideas alone are not sufficient. You’ve got to put those ideas into motion and make them reality.” Quite often that step requires a set of skills and a way of looking at the world that is separate and different from the skills and perspective of the idea generator.

As an artist, De Ciantis, scribbles down ideas into a sketchbook as her innate creativity helps her put together seemingly disparate

ideas into a new thought. But only some of these ideas get brought into reality through her application of talent and persistent effort.

De Ciantis says, “The same is true in an organization. Ideas are only the starting point. They are essential and those who are good at ideas are

useful to the organization. But it takes a team of people uniting their perspectives, talents and energy to bring an idea into existence.”

When De Ciantis works with organizations, she tries to get people to recognize their own creativity and to see themselves as a species of artist. Surprising to some is that discovering one’s creativity comes about in a structured rather than unstructured environment.

De Ciantis provides a controlled, safe environment for participants to explore their own creative efforts. She provides an assortment of media, a variety of colors and adequate instructions for how to proceed with their experiments in art. “Helping others discover the artist within is a very structured process,” says De Ciantis. The parallel in the

business world could be seen as leaders creating a safe and accepting environment so that people can express their ideas, preferences and perspectives without fear of embarrassment or ridicule.

“Each stage in the development of art is a new dialogue with a different set of material,” concludes De Ciantis. “Cultivating the flexibility of mind and developing the relationships with people of different perspectives are

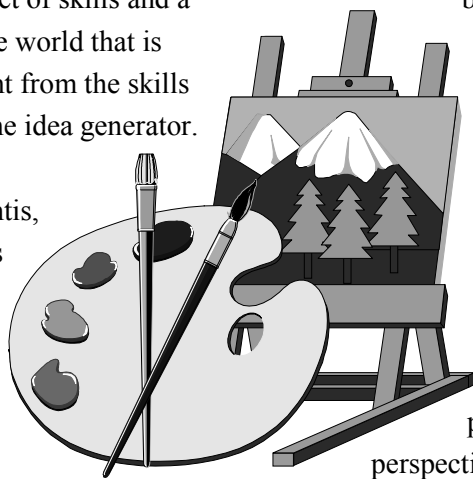
the activities of successful artists, successful entrepreneurs or successful leaders.”

Conclusion

Creativity in thinking and skill in execution are the like-minded marks of great artists and effective leaders. Either artists or leaders can bring new ideas into reality through the collective efforts of people working together. How different is that task whether the person is an orchestra conductor or a CEO, a choreographer or a plant manager, a sculptor or a chief information officer? Leaders are artists; and, both the intangible quality of creativity and the tangible results of creating are required to succeed in any worthwhile endeavor. •

Change Style Indicator

Both Asbjörnson and De Ciantis incorporate Change Style Indicator (CSI) in their artistry and leadership work. The CSI’s construct of Conservers, Pragmatists and Originators provides a valuable structure for exploring the artist’s creative process. Great artists have to be able to conceptualize, but must also make choices about what they can and will actually create. Successful artists cultivate the flexibility to work in multiple styles to usher projects from conception to execution to completion. Ideally, leaders develop a similar flexibility to move among styles. Astute leaders will also be aware of their own Change Style preferences and surround themselves with others who complement their strengths.



What's happening at DLI?

New Products: We have added a new product to our simulation mix; *Paper Scrapers* a fun team exercise can be run in 1 1/2 to 2 hours with three or more teams of 4-9 participants each. It's short duration and flexible group size fills a gap in our simulation offerings. To learn more about the simulation visit our website.

Revised Website: Our new website is up and running at www.discoverylearning.com. The site makes accessing information even easier than before. You can still find past copies of our newsletter, research summaries and up to date normative data but now there are even more resources including helpful trainer tools. One new tool allows trainers to design a program using DLI tools and then to generate the outline of a proposal. In addition people searching for trainers certified in DLI products are able to use the "Find a Trainer" function to locate trainers by product certification, geographic location, by name and other criteria. Give the new site a test drive and tell us what you think about the changes.

Train the Trainer: In partnership with Log Cabin Consulting and Florida Hospital, Discovery Learning will be sponsoring a Train-the-Trainer August 4-6, 2003 in Orlando, Florida. The session will cover *Paper Planes, Inc.*, *Change Style Indicator*, and the *Denison Organizational Culture Survey*. Participants attending will earn certification in the products covered and will be listed on Discovery Learning's website in the "Find a Trainer" section. To reserve your seat or to learn more about the session call 800-851-5188 or 336-272-9530.

New Product preview: Discovery Learning will be holding a product preview on Wednesday May 14, 2003, 9:30-12:00. Come enjoy the company of other trainers while you experience the recently released *Paper Scrapers* and a prototype of *The Acquisition* exercise available this summer. For more information call Donna Kelly at 336-272-9530 or email her at dkelly@discoverylearning.com

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