

TEAM PLAYER

 *How to improve personnel management and your career*

SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

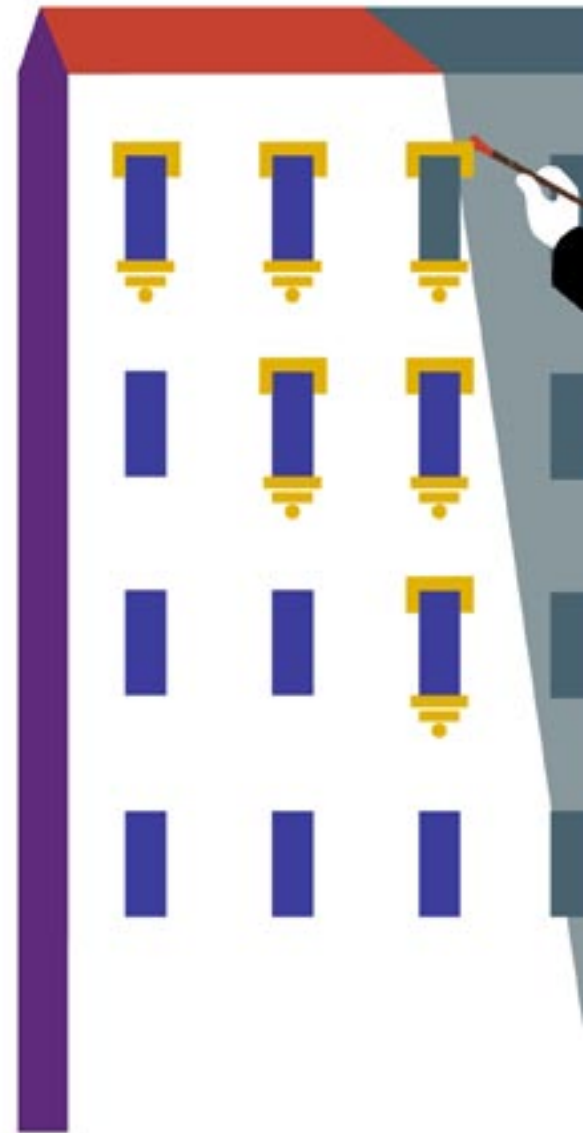
The arts can help organisations to renew and enrich management systems and to inspire and drive business model innovations.

By Giovanni Schiuma

Do the arts represent a valuable knowledge domain for managers? Have they any role to play in the development of 21st century organisations and in the achievement of excellence? Many organisations have already discovered the benefits of using art in order to solve business issues: Unilever has used an extensive arts programme to spur people's change and to develop organisational culture; Nestlé has used the arts to enhance its marketing creativity and to develop communication skills; and PricewaterhouseCoopers has used arts-based training to unlock employees' creativity energy, inspiring and challenging people to think and act differently. Many other organisations, both in the private and public sectors, are exploring the benefits of relations with cultural organisations and more generally with the creative sector in order to face problems and to support innovation. This ultimately has a positive impact on the bottom line.

MIND THE GAP However, we are still very far from an integrated collaboration between the arts and business. A chasm separates these two realities. For example, business people largely believe that the arts are something nice to have, but also that they have nothing to offer the way in which business operates. The arts are often seen as an accessory that can deliver certain benefits in, for example, social responsibility initiatives, marketing activities, asset management (where work of arts can represent an alternative to financial investments) and training in soft skills.

On the other hand, artists can have an adverse view of business and consequently do not understand how it can be



a fertile soil for developing art forms, apart from merely acting as a sponsor and patron of culture. What separates the two worlds is a scepticism fueled by different mindsets. But it is exactly in these diverse mindsets that the reasons for the relevance of the arts in encouraging excellence in modern organisations resides.

BENEFITS FOR BUSINESS How can the arts offer businesses new tools for innovation capacity development? Firstly, by raising awareness of the importance of the aesthetic features of organisational life, and, secondly, by enabling the management of the aesthetic characteristics of organisations' working mechanisms. Aesthetics within organisations are not



concerned with beauty but about how an organisation engages and uses human-based senses in order to generate and embed intangible value into products, encourage employees to give the best of themselves and be creative, foster productivity and wellbeing, move from outputs to outcomes, and understand how to generate sustainable wealth.

Today's business mindset has been built on the principles of scientific management. One hundred years after the definition of Frederick W. Taylor's principles of efficiency, control and standardisation, organisa-

tions still see themselves as something to be reduced to a machine-like system steered by management towards pre-arranged directions. But the new business age requires new principles to be integrated with the traditional ones. Today the key question for executives is not "how can I make my organisation more efficient and controllable?" but rather "how can I make my organisation more adaptable, resilient, agile and innovative?" We cannot forecast the future, but we can prepare for it by harnessing the imagination, creativity and most importantly the passion of our people. This is the secret of organisations that will achieve excellence in the 21st century.

In order to govern value creation dynamics, organisations must be capable of managing their emotional states as well as their experiential impacts on stakeholders. Dimensions such as passion, empathy, hope, imagination and creativity will be increasingly established as the new value drivers.

“The ‘four Ps’ of the arts in business are people, practices, products and principles.”

In order to develop these competitive factors, companies need to turn their attention to innovative managerial approaches. The arts offer a knowledge domain that can innovate management and support business innovations. The 'four Ps' of the arts in business are people, practices, products and principles. The arts world can enter organisations by: bringing in artists and creative people that can act as catalyst for change and disruptive thinking; by applying creative practices with the aim of renewing how traditional processes are carried out, and of unlocking people's imagination and creativity and develop new ways of thinking; by inserting artistic products in the form of artworks or creative artifacts that become part of the workplace or are ingrained into the products and services; and finally by using principles from the art world with the aim of celebrating and focusing attention on how to humanise organisations and develop their *raison d'être*.

The arts can generate further benefits for business. Through art it is possible to create and support an environment in which people are engaged with their passion and imagination, and are willing to give the best of themselves in order to cope with difficult times. The use of art influences people's feelings and energy, sparking their personal development and changing their attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, art represents a unique value driver that supports the development of organisational infrastructure.



Internally, art allows for the design and embellishment of workplaces in order to create a stimulating and empowering culture which positively affects knowledge workers' productivity. At the same time, on an external level, art represents a key factor in building a company's reputation and image, in managing stakeholder relationships, and in developing new products and services that meet the aesthetic and experiential needs of customers.

CREATIVE INITIATIVES To realise the power of arts in business, I envisage the design, implementation and assessment of arts-based initiatives. These can be defined as any organisational or management project that uses one or more art forms to allow people to undergo an artistic experience within or around an organisational context, as well as to embed the arts as a business asset. In other words, it is about the deployment of the arts to address business problems and challenges. It is primarily an experience-based process which engages people both rationally and emotionally through either active or passive participation. The focus of an arts-based initiative is not the work of art in itself, but rather the way in which the art work is experienced. It is intended to use works of art to trigger, harness and drive those emotional and experiential dimensions of an organisation that can have an impact on people and on the organisational infrastructure. In this light, arts-based initiatives represent a management approach to be integrated with more traditional management models and tools. They can inspire and support companies searching for new methods of growth and wealth creation.

In order to understand the benefits that the arts can generate within an organisation, I have developed the Arts Val-

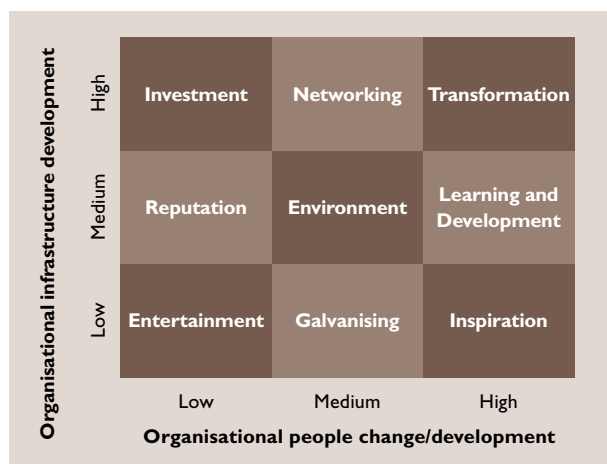
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Art as business asset

- ➔ Art-based initiatives trigger and harness experiential dimensions of an organisation that can have an impact on people and on the organisational infrastructure
- ➔ Arts in business also provide solutions to challenging managerial needs
- ➔ The arts can also inspire employees to be passionate, engaged and innovative in their work

ue Matrix. This framework (see figure 1) acknowledges that arts-based initiatives can have an impact on two fundamental organisational dimensions: 1) human resources (namely its people) and 2) the infrastructure – the company's tangible and intangible structural assets. Then, an arts-based initiative can be adopted for different purposes with direct and indirect impact on organisational and business performance. The Matrix allows us to identify and analyse the potential benefits of arts-based initiatives and to understand the role an initiative can play in achieving strategic and managerial goals. The model is built on the dimensions of people change and infrastructure development and identifies nine value categories for adopting arts-based initiatives. For the sake of simplicity, we analyse people change using simple low, medium and high measures. A low-level people change occurs when people transformation faces constraints of time and space, and has a transient impact on emotional and energetic states. A medium-level people change is realised when the experience has an influence on people's attitudes. Finally, a high-

Figure 1 The Arts Value Matrix.



level people change involves self-reflection and self-evaluation, which encourages people to analyse and eventually challenge their beliefs and values, modifying their attitudes that in turn drive the emergence of new behaviours.

The infrastructure of an organisation is the group of tangible and intangible assets that define the operative context in which organisational processes take place. The continuous development of the infrastructure affects the efficiency of business activities and more gener-

“Arts-based initiatives operate as vectors of change.”

ally the capacity to create value. To denote the possible levels of organisational infrastructure development, we again use low, medium and high measures. A low level of organisational infrastructure development guarantees the functioning of the components of an organisational system. A medium development involves a partial change restricted by some components of the infrastructure, such as changes in the design and setting of workplaces.

Finally, a high level of organisational infrastructure development is realised when new components are introduced in the organisation or when the existing components are deeply modified. In this case, arts-based initiatives operate as vectors of change affecting, for example, the organisational culture or the characteristics of company's products and services.

The nine types of benefits arising from the use of arts in business and the key management questions they address are: entertainment (how can

we release adrenaline and create fun for our stakeholders?); galvanising (how can we provoke a mood change or a tension for action within our organisation by creating an emotional state and mental energy?); inspirational (how can we activate self-reflection and self-evaluation to drive employee mindset and behavioural changes?); reputation (how can we shape our reputation and raise our image by linking with the arts?); environment (how can we shape an inspiring and creative workplace conducive to wellbeing and innovation?); training and personal development (how can we develop employees' soft skills, competencies and personal capacities?); investment (how can we create intangible value to be embedded into products and services?); networking (how can we build relational capital and a common ground for conversation and collaboration?); and transformation (how can we open up the organisation to a new consciousness and drive organisational change?).

EFFECTIVE EXPRESSION In conclusion, the arts represent a powerful means of developing a business's capacity for value creation. This not only involves the ability to improve the existing mechanisms of value creation, but also to re-think the entire organisation and its business model. In the future, companies' competitiveness and efficiency will be increasingly based on the ability to harness complexity, involving the capability to be creative, proactive and open to change. The economy of the future will demand that organisations rethink their management assumptions and corporate practices. Organisations will not only need to manage their knowledge domains but also to dynamically renew their capabilities. Most importantly, they will need to engage people's imagination, passion and energy both at the individual and the social level.

Arts-based initiatives provide a possible answer to these emergent, challenging managerial needs. The arts are about discovering and leveraging the true living nature of organisations in order to explore new and better ways of wealth creation. ■



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