

MAIN SECTION

**USING THE ARTS TO ACQUIRE AND  
ENHANCE MANAGEMENT SKILLS** —————

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The arts have been and are being used in many ways to assist in developing management expertise at both the content and skill levels. In the past, these have included music (Powell & Viega, 1986), poetry (Vaill, 1981), and literature (Harris & Brown, 1989; Shaw & Locke, 1993; Zajdel & Vinton, 1988). This article focuses mainly on the use in management education of drama and dramatic literature as well as symphony orchestra conductors' experiences. This use of the arts in management learning is a dynamic example of the value of cross-disciplinary studies and applications.

This article describes a wide range of such current cross-disciplinary programs, including the following:

- teaching courses using leadership models in Shakespeare's and other authors' plays,
- using acting companies to supplement and enhance management learning,
- using acting techniques (performatives) to enhance managers' communication and leadership skills,
- drawing lessons from examples of management successes in the arts area,
- drawing management lessons from the work of successful symphony conductors,
- offering insights into understanding and teaching (helping people to learn) management.

Drama and dramatic literature are a fertile source of learning resources for managers and leaders because they both involve applied disciplines. First, many plays provide dramatic illustrations of leadership and management in action (key areas of strategic management)—both successes and failures (Herring, 1998; Stevenson, 1996). Shakespeare plays provide an extraordinary example of this, in large measure because he is credited with having invented many basic character archetypes in Western cultures (Bloom, 1998). Second, local acting companies, some as large as the new Shakespeare Globe Theater in London, have developed techniques for supporting classroom learning in management and other academic discipline areas (Cowell, 1999; Hamilton, 1999).

Third, effective dramatic performances are in many instances what leadership is all about in business, frequently on a daily basis as managers and leaders inspire, motivate, and stimulate employee performance. Effective leaders are often called *charismatic* because they have a dramatic impact on people and so are able to effectively lead them. Sam Walton, Jack Welch, and Lee Iacocca were such outstanding charismatic leaders. They are in essence great performers who frequently make use of familiar acting techniques (Higgs, 1993; McKenzie, 1997). This does not mean that this is the only significant leadership skill, task, or characteristic; dozens of others, such as vision, intelligence, practical instincts, people-oriented perspectives, building trust, sharing and caring, delegating, creating a learning environment, competitive market knowledge and skills, adaptability, and others are also important. In addition, leadership styles vary from the extrovert Iacocca style to the quieter, humble but quietly aggressive, so-called Level 5 style of leaders such as Colman Mockler (Collins, 2001).

Fourth, many playwrights, such as Shakespeare, were astute businessmen as well as great writers, so that their lives provide examples of sound management practices in diverse application areas (Mockler, 1995). Fifth, the comparison between the drama and management areas and their analogies highlight the point that management, like drama, is not learned by talking about it. It is learned by doing, as is acting and writing dramas (Mockler, 1994).

In addition, many symphony conductors have discussed and written about the management lessons learned from their experiences in conducting groups of professional musicians (Jonassen, 1999; Schofield, 1999; Zander & Zander, 2000).

In a sense, drama and dramatic literature as well as symphony conductors' experiences are tools that help move the management learning experience from the lecture platform into the interactive, participative, doing phases, which increases the effectiveness not only of management performance but

also of management learning experiences. The study and use of drama especially is one more way to help move from learning about what management is to learning how to manage effectively. As Confucius has pointed out, "I hear, I forget; I see, I remember; I do, I understand."

After discussing Shakespeare as a creative business artist, the following sections describe different ways the arts have been used to bridge across disciplines to develop innovative teaching and learning tools. These tools range from full courses and programs at universities, to executive training programs in-house or on-stage, to simple basic tools that can be used in any type of management training—self-learning, on the job, or within formal learning programs.

### **Shakespeare as a Creative Business Artist**

Shakespeare was not an oddball artist working in an attic on society's fringes; he was a well-rounded renaissance man who functioned both as a brilliant artist and as a successful businessman. For example, it was clear that writing plays was not where the money was in Shakespeare's time—there were no royalties in those days. Shakespeare, therefore, became part owner of a theater and of an acting company. That was where the money was in theater. He also directed and acted in plays. When the theaters were closed, which was fairly often because of health and political reasons, he turned his hand to writing for the nobility for pay, playing at court, and touring outside London. He also had real estate ventures in his native Stratford and in London (Schoenbaum, 1991). In fact, much of what we know about Shakespeare comes from the public records of his real estate transactions and other legal transactions.

Shakespeare's creative genius was in three artistic areas—poetry and language, story telling in a theater context, and universal character understanding and development (Bloom, 1994). In working in the theater, he employed these artistic talents from a very practical perspective, however. For example, Shakespeare often borrowed and adapted other stories, exploiting his evident ability to shape stories into effective stage spectacles. He apparently often wrote during rehearsals (something still done today), enabling him to economically and quickly individualize his poetry (which is extremely difficult to do, even for a brilliant poet like Shakespeare) through his access to the richly individual personalities of his repertory actors and through using current metaphors employed by society to actualize and enrich his characters. He was able to do this in part largely because of extraordinary talent for

understanding and creating complex, multidimensional dramatic characters (Mockler, 1995).

This practical (almost business-like), integrative perspective contributed to Shakespeare's ability to write his plays quickly. For example, Barroll (1991) made the point that apparently Shakespeare wrote plays only when the theaters were open; Barroll's study concludes, for example, that Shakespeare probably wrote the stage versions of *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra* in 1 year, 1606, quickly done to exploit the brief periods the playhouses were open—an amazing achievement. The 19th century Italian opera composer Guiseppe Verdi was also an astute businessman who not only was among the world's greatest opera composers but also was invested in real estate ventures and ran for (and was elected to) public office (Martin, 1992).

## **Leadership and Management Models Drawn From Drama and Literature**

Whereas references to literary models of effective and ineffective management are frequent in business education, Shakespeare seems to have found a particularly relevant place in management education.

For example, John O. Whitney, former head of Pathmark (a U.S. grocery chain) and several turnaround companies, has for several years conducted classes at Columbia Business School that use Shakespeare as their main text (Herring, 1998). Whitney has written a book on his experiences (Whitney, Packer, & Noble, 2000). Examples of successful and unsuccessful leadership styles are studied in relation to Henry V (a hero king), Coriolanus (a warrior turned politician), and King Lear (a leader duped by flattery), with references to present-day similarities and differences in business and politics.

Drawing on such analogies while exploring with seminar participants the leadership and management insights and their implications in relation to present-day situations is relatively easy. This is because Shakespeare's characters were such superior universal archetypes of human characters—so much so that Bloom and others describe Shakespeare's writing as “inventing” human character archetypes for Western civilization (Bloom, 1998).

In 1996, Stevenson gave an extensive description in the *Journal of Management Education* of his experiences in using Shakespeare to teach management principles in a leadership course given for undergraduates. In addition to traditional reading material and Harvard case studies, students read *Henry V* during the first half of the course. Not only do students review the charis-

matic visionary characteristics of Henry, the exemplary leader, but they also discuss some of the negative aspects such as the legitimacy of his claim to the throne. During the second half, students discuss *Richard III* and the character of an immoral leader (Stevenson, 1996).

There are several other books that draw out the management lessons in Shakespeare. Shafritz's (1992) *Shakespeare on Management: Wise Business Counsel From the Bard* includes brief essays on 56 management topics in Shakespeare, including equal opportunity, estate planning, management information systems, making decisions, motivating employees, negotiating, office politics, ethics, transformational leadership, and personnel management. Augustine and Adelman's (1999) *Shakespeare in Charge* is more focused, covering leadership, confronting change, making a play in business, risk management, and crisis management. Corrigan's (1999) *Shakespeare on Management* traces how leaders in Shakespeare pursue their ambitions to great heights (Macbeth, Richard II, Richard III, King Lear), only to fall later from lack of true leadership abilities. There are also related case studies available (Burke & Mayer, 1993).

Shakespeare is not the only useful model in drama. *Other People's Money* (Stern, 1991) explores the impact of takeovers on corporate leadership and employees. *All My Sons* (Miller, 1947) raises ethical issues about management decisions within a wartime setting. *Death of a Salesman* (Miller, 1949) concerns the impact of changing times on employees and their families. *The Voyage Inheritance* (Barker, 1934) concerns the problems of personal money management. *The Adding Machine* (Rice, 1923) looks at the familiar theme of technology's impact on the individual worker. *The Great God Brown* (O'Neil, 1926) explores the role of duplicity in business and its impact on an individual. And, from a humorous perspective, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (Loesser, 1961) makes use of some of the less-than-business-like aspects of management. And there are many novels, such as by Lewis Sinclair, about business situations relevant to leadership and management (Dhir, 1999).

### **Using Acting Companies to Support Learning**

Full semester university business courses, such as those at Columbia, based on Shakespeare and other dramatists are rare. But many of the techniques used in such courses are used throughout business education.

The new Shakespeare Globe Theater in London, for example, offers a weekend executive management skills training program based on Shake-

spere's plays (Cowell, 1999; Hamilton, 1999). The management seminars are run by Richard Olivier, son of the late Lawrence Olivier, in conjunction with Cranfield University School of Management. The program focuses especially on *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V*, from which many management metaphors can be drawn and illustrated through interacting with members of the Globe's acting company.

The Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-on-Avon has a 1-day program in which managers are coached by a director, using theatrical techniques, in skills from voice projection to problem solving. Their goal is to use the experience of creating a theatrical ensemble as a model for teamwork in business. In 1999, the company took the program to the London Business School and then on to New Haven, Connecticut, where it ran the course for managers from Dunkin' Donuts, a U.S. retail chain.

The Jean Cocteau Repertory Company in New York has been conducting programs at universities in all disciplines for more than a decade. Its programs provide supplemental learning support services to college and university professors. Of the 20 programs the company provides, the following are especially useful in business management courses:

- For a leadership course, the company's director directs a scene from *Hamlet* using the three different directing approaches—participative, directive, and consultative. Students, company members, and the professor then engage in a discussion of the different business situations in which each leadership style can be effective.
- After playing short scenes from different plays involving ethics, the players and class participants are engaged in a discussion of ethical issues in business.
- The same approach is used to illustrate different gender roles in plays and then stimulate discussion of changing gender roles in business.
- Simulations of acting groups assembling and getting to know each other during performance preparations are used to provide perspectives of different ways team efforts are developed and carried out.
- The use of body language and voice techniques are also illustrated in this way in leadership and management courses. As discussed in the following section, these sections are at times extended to enable students to actually practice using these techniques under the guidance of professional performers, turning the sessions into participative training sessions.

Programs such as these are extensions of the earlier discussions of using Shakespeare in classroom settings in the sense that they move from seeing management and leadership at work in a dramatic setting to participating in the learning process through interacting with professionals. It is a sophisticated form of cross-disciplinary team teaching and learning that nurtures

understanding. The programs offered by such acting companies also involve theater and arts management topics, as discussed later.

In addition to introducing participants to management and leadership skills, these programs provide practice in entrepreneurial thinking and action as well as learning skills such as cognitive modeling of behavioral patterns of use to individual seminar participants.

For example, when looking for ways to improve the dramatic impact of a scene, a director might ask for some help from another experienced director. In one instance, Hal Prince, one of today's leading directors, provided help in this way. First, he noted that the scene as played was interesting—a woman traveling alone on a train has her ticket and money stolen. But he thought it might be possible to enrich the scene in a way that both revealed the character in more depth and advanced the story line. Second, he provided suggestions on how he might fix the scene. But he provided this warning: The play director was not to copy the way Prince fixed it; the director was to observe the “kind of” problem and solution Prince saw and then translate them into his own vision of how the play should work and his own directing style (Coen, 1996). This is the way billionaire Warren Buffet described how he learned from observing others: First, he observed what they did; then, he went through the cognitive process of modeling or understanding the kind of thing they were doing; third, he translated that into his own style of thinking and doing and practiced understanding and absorbing it into its personality (Buffet, 1999; Mockler, 1999).

Much can often be learned about management not only from artistic enterprises but also from extensive efforts undertaken by business schools to teach management skills to those working in the entertainment fields. DePaul University has one in Chicago (Buck, 1998), as does the University of Liverpool in England (Grose, 1999).

### **The Acting Experience (Performatics Techniques)**

Actors Mean Business, a consulting firm in England, extends the selective training done in some of the Cocteau, Globe, and Royal Shakespeare programs to full-fledged training courses conducted by actors focusing on interpersonal skills (“Actors Mean Business,” 1999; Higgs, 1993). Their training workshops cover such topics as working in teams; making presentations; interpersonal skills (individual interactions); sales, negotiation, and customer service; interviews, appraisal, and meetings; creative problem solving and change programs.

For example, professional actors may play roles of angry customers or employees, and training participants would act out how they would respond to them. Or, a mixed group of actors and participants might play a group of actors who are brought together to become a cast for a play and enact the steps they might go through in getting to know and trust each other and learn to work together—team training.

Bret Scott, a director, writer, and actor affiliated with Chicago's Second City acting troupe, has coached business management students by having them do humorous presentations and skits. Overall, Second City in 1999 had about 800 students in Chicago, New York, and Toronto. It was expected that during the next few years, its present \$6 million-a-year improv-training business would outpace ticket sales at its performances, which bring in about \$8 million a year (McKenzie, 1997; Quintanilla, 1999). This can be an important source of income for a small company trying to survive financially.

One popular extension of this type of training is scenario development. This type of session involves writing different stories or scenarios of possible future events that might affect business—for example, different political crises and their impact on oil prices or different possible consumer reactions to products such as genetically modified foods and their impact on product acceptance. These scenarios are then used, for example, for strategic planning, one of many scenario development application areas (Coy, 1999; Feder, 1999; Georgantzas & Acar, 1995; Schwartz & Rignland, 1998; Van der Heijden, 1996).

John Cleese, a famous comedian, has produced a series of tapes through his Video Art's company on business subjects using comic routines to make his points. The Richardson Company distributes his videos plus many other training videos featuring not only famous business gurus, such as Stephen Covey and Peter Drucker, but also acting greats, such as Lily Tomlin. Although these kinds of videos are not as effective as are face-to-face interactive sessions, such as those previously described, they are dramatic illustrations that increase participants' knowledge of what should be done and not done.

### **Lessons Learned From the Experience of Successful Symphony Conductors**

There have also been studies of how a symphony conductor deals with some of the problems faced in leading and managing business professionals and the lessons that can be learned from their experiences (Aspden, 1997; Cowell, 1999; Jonassen, 1999; Schofield, 1999; Zander & Zander, 2000).



In his study of 15 conductors, Jonassen (1999) found that like business leaders, these conductors first work at formulating and communicating a shared vision with the key professionals in the orchestra and then use a wide range of specific techniques for coaxing, inspiring, energizing, and sometimes even ordering group integration of individual performance efforts.

Benjamin Zander has described how he conducts business seminars in conjunction with music rehearsals so that participants can observe how a leader can obtain a major coordinated effort from a group of individuals who are all highly skilled professionals in their own right (*Business Education*, 1999; Grose, 1999; Zander & Zander, 2000). Conductor Roger Nierenberg also integrates executive-training seminars with his orchestra rehearsals in both London and the United States (Cowell, 1999; Sciolino, 2001).

### **Learning and/or Teaching Insights: A Rich Analogous Area to Mine**

When conducting courses in management, one sometimes forgets that the term implies managing something by someone. By definition, management is an applied field involving individual human beings and companies managing something in a situation-specific context. This perspective dictates the way the participant has to be taught—through participative, interactive learning experiences, not solely or primarily through lectures or exclusively talking about the subject (Mockler, 1994).

A similar situation is found in the drama field, where the subject can be taught from either a literary perspective or from a performing perspective. The first is directed at the critic or academic—the playgoer, play reader, or play observer. Such a literary program would focus on the plays themselves and contexts within which they were written in an effort to enrich the experiences of those reading and viewing the plays.

The second type of program is for the actor, writer, director, or other artists who put on the play. These performing courses focus on the skills needed to put on plays, such as lighting, carpentry, voice and body control and technique, language, communication, playwriting, and so forth.

Because the two perspectives are very distinct and require different talents and approaches, the same people do not always teach in both areas, although they will be familiar with both. To a degree, what is obvious in the drama field has some application in the management field where experience in business management can be very helpful when teaching it and where knowledge of applications is absolutely necessary.

Business courses can approach real experiences, the “performing” aspects, in many ways. The most familiar is through the use of case studies that give students once-removed practice in solving business problems. Student projects might go further, however, and involve writing case studies based on field research or developing plans for new ventures (either e-commerce or traditional), providing “first-hand” experiential learning. There are executive-in-residence programs that function as master classes—experienced experts coaching learners in the practice of management; this kind of training is done for performers. There are also internships, which provide students with guided work experiences. No matter what the approach, the instructor needs to be both an effective learning facilitator (participative learning) and able to speak from a sound application perspective to capture the essential nuances of the performing art.

Another aspect of acting training that is not always clearly understood is that performativity training is designed to draw out and develop an individual’s unique character and skills, not to impose an acting “style” on them that suppresses individuality. No one would ever mistake Marlon Brando for Paul Newman or Lawrence Olivier for Alec Guinness: Each has excellent basic acting skills, many of which are commonly observed (like many management and leadership skills), but at the same time, each is a very different personality with his own unique style.

There are many approaches to acquiring and enhancing strategic management skills. The paper describes one of them, the ways in which the arts have been and are being used to enrich management learning experiences. It does this through examining relationships between a major management area, strategic management (and its learning), and the creative art fields of drama and dramatic literature as well as the experiences of symphony conductors.

The specific approaches examined in this article include teaching courses using leadership models in Shakespeare’s and other authors’ plays and books, using acting companies to supplement and enhance management learning, using acting techniques (performativity) to enhance manager’s communication and leadership skills, drawing lessons from examples of management successes in the arts area, drawing management lessons from the work of successful symphony conductors, and offering insights into using the artistic process to provide understanding and teaching (helping people to learn) management.

Obviously, these are neither the only nor necessarily the best approaches for everyone in every learning situation. Their study does, nonetheless, provide stimulating insights into the subject for many now working in the field. Hopefully, this review will stimulate others.

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