
The Value of Arts-Based Initiatives

How to combat the recession

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Introduction

When you need an issue solved, you call in the experts. The challenges businesses are facing today are around human capital (team working, managing change, retaining talent, helping staff to reflect on the situation, see things differently and become engaged), innovating to get out of the downturn and transformation. Who are the experts at solving these challenges and generating these effects? The answer is the arts.

The skillset of the arts sector is just some of the skills a business needs in order to combat the recession. Used as part of the development solution, these businesses will emerge from the downturn more competitive, with a stronger market position, and talented and engaged staff and leaders. This is not about supporting the arts, but about delivering hard-edged change in a business in a sustainable, effective, efficient, inspirational, impactful and cost-effective way. The arts are an asset to business – a resource and tool for developing knowledge and other intangible assets, which differentiates a business and provides a unique edge to the operation.

Of course the arts have a role beyond the recession context, as Professor Giovanni Schiuma explores in his *Mapping Arts-Based Initiative* paper, but it is important to exploit and use the arts now due to the acceleration of trends, challenges and opportunities.

Arts-Based Initiatives (ABIs) are another way in which businesses can generate value from existing relationships with the arts, as well as an opportunity to establish new relationships, by exploiting the knowledge and skills within the sector for their own competitive advantage.

Despite the fact that the arts can combat and help solve challenges brought to the fore by the recession, ABIs are still relatively new territory for many businesses. One of the long-standing issues faced by business is understanding how the arts can optimise performance, address challenging issues and deliver organisational change.

By gaining insight into, and having a thorough understanding of, how the arts stimulate transformation for optimal organisational and employee performance and deliver on a range of business imperatives, businesses can prosper.

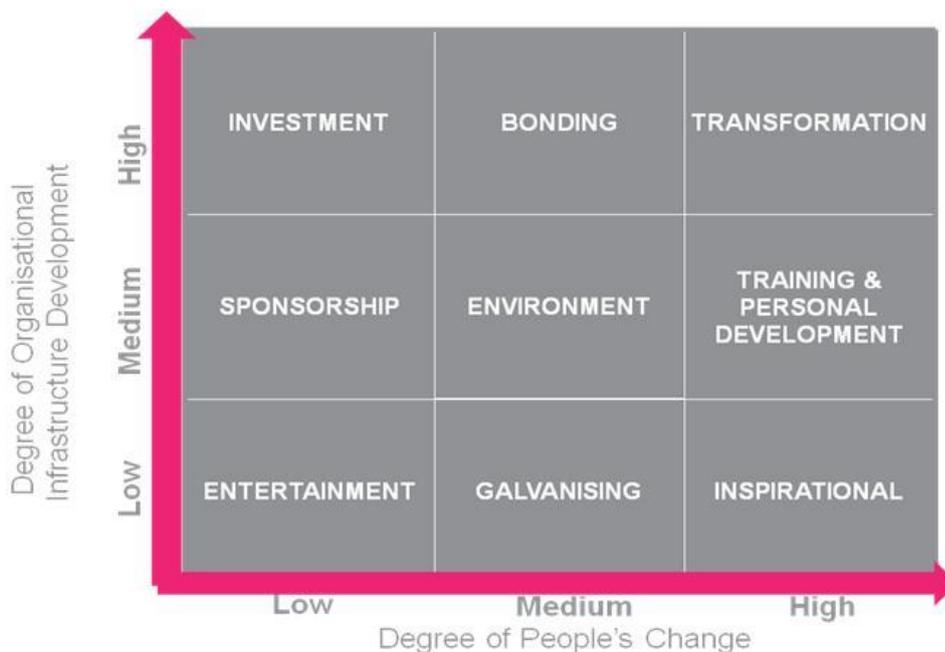
Therefore, we are exploring the specific challenges and opportunities of the recession and the unique way in which ABIs can help combat these. This short paper outlines the changing priorities and values of business and the impact ABIs can have in addressing and solving these business imperatives. This paper has been developed with input from art practitioners and businesses. It is meant as a supplementary paper to Professor Schiuma's authoritative work which explains the full scope, value and nature of ABIs to a business (*Mapping Arts-Based Initiatives*, 2009) and builds on the case John Knell made in *Art Works – why business needs the arts*.

But what are Arts-Based Initiatives?

ABIs are any organisational or management intervention using one or more artform to enable people to undergo an art experience and embed art as a business asset. They tend to be experiential learning techniques, which enable people and organisations the freedom to be innovative, improvise, take risks and be flexible. The arts are a trigger for business skills and the emotional and energetic dimensions of individuals and an organisation. ABIs can work with the whole person and the whole organisational structure, model and culture. The final characteristic of ABIs is that there are spill-over effects - the benefits of ABIs diffuse through individuals, groups, the organisation and public domain because there are continuous conversations among and between these domains allowing this spill-over to occur.

When people think of arts-based initiatives they tend to think of an entertaining day, a space to entertain employees. As Professor Schiuma's matrix shows, entertainment is just one impact arts-based initiatives can have on an individual or an organisation. ABIs will probably be entertaining, but that does not mean that deeper learning is not happening too. Actually having 'fun' is a good way of ensuring that deeper learning does take place, as studies into how we learn and how the brain retains information show. This is the wonderful, yet complex thing about ABIs, that on the surface it achieves one thing but because ABIs impact on people and organisations in an holistic manner (business skills as well as the mental and emotional dynamic) it is likely that the impact is much greater than first perceived. But of course this also complicates evaluating the intangible and knowledge impacts of ABIs.

Arts value matrix



This paper focuses on four of these categories – galvanising, inspiring, training & personal development and transformation (i.e. impact on people and organisations).

Business is changing

Everyone is well aware of the groundshift which has taken place because of the recession and many companies are still trying to establish what that change means for them in the long-term. The rate and manner of growth before the recession has proven to be unsustainable and we now need to identify and establish what that new business model will be based upon and consequently what the face of business will be after the recession.

The change which is occurring today is more rapid and significant than many businesses have experienced for some time. Those businesses which adapt, are flexible and nimble are better able to withstand and survive these changes, as evidenced from previous recessions. The arts are used to working in such an environment – they constantly need to adapt to audience expectations/demands, engage and consult with individuals and organisations outside of their sector, influence and respond to changing funding and investment climates, be at the forefront of new innovation/cultural change and be able to restructure operations to align to all of these factors whilst remaining fit-for-purpose. By businesses looking outside of their usual domain and into the arts sector, they can transfer the knowledge, insight and experience across sectors in order to handle what is an unusual context for business.

Some of the major challenges facing businesses in this recession climate, at both an operational and strategic level, are those around team building, talent development and retention, leadership and full-scale organisational development and change. These will be the focus of this paper.

In June 2009 unemployment in the UK hit a 12-year high of 2.2 million, with more than 300,000 people being made redundant in the three months to April.¹ Some HR professionals express that downsizing teams is, to some extent, harder for them to implement than closing an office or dispensing with a team altogether because of the selection and evaluation process required – the effect on those personally who make the decisions but also on staff morale and confidence.² Those who remain in an organisation and the new teams they form have to perform to a high-standard and ‘hit the ground running’. But team cohesion, confidence and trust does not emerge overnight, especially after a trauma of redundancies.

Not only do businesses have the challenge of identifying the change strategy and delivering it, there is also a considerable public relations issue as it can be difficult for businesses to spend money on training and development while restructures and redundancies are happening. However, we know that less than 60% of re-organisations achieve their objectives. The impact of sub-optimal reorganisations can be significant: loss of market position, removal of senior management, loss of stakeholder credibility and loss of employees. This is not a situation businesses can find themselves in if they are to come out of the recession.

Learning from past recessions, those who invest in their staff and organisation during a recession are able to hit the ground running afterwards and they do so considerably better than those who have taken a ‘batten down the hatches approach’.³ But despite all of this intelligence and insight, training

¹ The Daily Telegraph, *Unemployment hits 12-year high to 2.2 million*, 17 June 2009

² This matter was discussed at The Work Foundation’s *Embedding Good Work in Organisational Change*, 16 June 2009

³ The Guardian, *Staff training: chill wind hits training budgets*, 27 January 2009

budgets are still being cut. A survey conducted by Business Smart International found that of the 100 companies interviewed half of them said their training budgets would be or had been cut and just a third of them expected their training budgets to come through 2009 unscathed. The survey included the likes of Xerox, Siemens, NHS, Pitney Bowes, Deutsche Bank, WHSmith, GSK, Barclays and Oracle.⁴ This does not necessarily mean that training itself is being cut, rather off-site activities may be taking the greatest hit.

Employees are changing

Managers and employees need support on how to develop solutions to challenges and innovate in this climate of change and economic downturn. Not only can ABIs support and facilitate that specific process, they can also play a very important role in ensuring employees are behind you on that journey of change. This short paper and Mapping Arts-Based Initiatives explains and demonstrates the value and role of ABIs in this area.

There have been a number of surveys and studies conducted into the changing expectations and demands of employees. Much of this change is being led by 'Generation Y' but its influence permeates most of the generations of employees within an organisation. Although there is not an exact definition of Generation Y, they were usually born between 1978 and 1994 and are, therefore, the youngest generation in the workplace, they tend to blend their work and personal lives, are highly career-orientated, fairly impatient, are constantly wanting to develop and be challenged so they are prepared to change jobs to achieve this and want to work for an organisation which they believe in – offers them meaning.⁵

But how do you retain those talented individuals when there is an environment of uncertainty and insecurity, and rewards cannot be made through the remuneration package? Talent retention has been a growing area of interest and investment in recent years as greater focus is being paid on achieving that competitive commercial edge through human capital.

*'At a time when goods and services are becoming increasingly standardised, people are the key differentiator. And it stands to reason that if staff really like their company, they'll do a much better job of delivering their wares.'*⁶

Recruiting and keeping these talented individuals is fundamental to the future success of any business – the recession does not change that and actually makes it even more important. If a business is to come out of the recession in a competitive state, these are the people businesses need and should be listening to and supporting, after all they are the future leaders of business.

*'Now is not the time to halt employee development nor is it the time to postpone or scale-back talent management strategies.'*⁷

⁴ The Guardian, *Staff training: chill wind hits training budgets*, 27 January 2009

⁵ For a fuller explanation see Chartered Management Institute, *Generation Y: Unlocking the talent of young managers*, June 2008

⁶ 'Why disengaged employees are costing UK plc billions', *Management Today*, 16 July 2009

Therefore, employee satisfaction is increasingly dependent not just on money but a higher-value set around engagement, meaning and flexibility. ABIs target the businesses' infrastructure and personnel as well as demonstrate and develop these higher-value sets. Using Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, he puts aspects such as self-actualisation, esteem, love and belonging at the top of the pyramid of needs – they are not fundamental to existence (like food and shelter) but are needed for a good quality of life. Maslow's human needs hierarchy parallels the hierarchy of business imperatives and objectives with aspects such as meaning, authenticity and quality. What is needed is a technique and tool which bridges these two parallel but reflective hierarchies. The arts are that technique and tool because they do bridge the divide between people and organisations, as Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, and Arts & Business, explore in *Beyond experience – culture, consumers and brands*.

It is because ABIs are multi-faceted that they engage, train and develop people in such an holistic manner working on an emotional, personal, skill and organisational level. With just a third of the UK workforce engaged at work,⁸ this is an urgent area for development if the UK's economy is to be competitive and recover. There can be no better space for inspiring and engaging staff than the arts, whose daily job is to achieve just that from their audience.

*'I believe that anything that will help build customer service and loyalty, retaining your great people and generally motivating your teams will be money well spent. Using the arts where appropriate adds a unique twist to keep people inspired.'*⁹

Role of arts in learning and development

As research by CIPD shows, learners cannot be made to learn.¹⁰ There needs to an environment and culture conducive to learning, firstly, so that the learning is retained and, secondly, that it is acted upon in the workplace - which means promoting learning through engagement and motivation. The CIPD survey found that learners want a more varied approach to development than mere classroom activities and presentations; they want more interventionist organisational development and a social learning experience where they can work as teams to try out new things together, reflect, revise and practice. This means there needs to be a culture shift if businesses are to really use their human capital as a competitive asset.

This trend was first picked up in the 1990's by Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*. However, with the accelerated rate of change and new employee demands, organisations need to respond. By creating an environment and culture which is conducive to learning, reflection and engagement, organisations are better able to adapt to unpredictable challenges and opportunities more quickly than their competitors – just what is needed during a recession. To achieve this Senge says employees need:

- personal mastery - employees are empowered to create and explore;

⁷ CIPD, *Hot Topics: The War on Talent? Talent management under threat in uncertain times – Part 1*, February 2009

⁸ David Macleod and Nita Clarke, *Engaging for success: enhancing performance through staff engagement*, July 2009

⁹ Ian Watson, Head of Pret Academy, Pret A Manger, interview June 2009

¹⁰ All of this is taken from the CIPD, *Supporting, acceleration and directing learning: implications for trainers*, November 2008

- mental models – challenge employees to find new ways of performing;
- team learning – most decisions are made by groups, therefore, they should learn/explore together;
- shared vision;
- systems thinking – understanding of how the actions from one team/department will impact on others.

An experiential learning approach is important in hitting each of these pillars to generate maximum value from human capital and be a competitive business in the long-term. Edgar Dale developed the ‘Cone of Experience’ to explain how the use of different mediums helps with learning retention. His widely used model believes that the four most effective tools in getting people to retain learning were 1) direct purposeful experiences, 2) contrived experiences, 3) dramatised experiences and 4) dramatisations. What is clear is that experiential learning is one of the most effective means of development. But how do the arts fit into this?

Using a creative approach to learning hits all of these pillars to organisational learning and the demands/challenges presented by employees. The arts create a safe space where teams can come together to explore, challenge and take risks besides hearing one another’s views, reflect and observe. As some of the case studies in this paper show, the arts impact on an emotional level which is what generates behaviour change and generates engagement. Development of staff and organisations in this way has a direct positive correlation with performance, innovation, absenteeism, staff turnover rates and ultimately can create advocates for the business. The multi-faceted impact of ABIs as explained in detail by Prof. Schiuma is just what a business needs when developing a fully rounded employee or leader with a toolkit of skills and capabilities.

These are just some of the reasons why creative methods and approaches are proven to be effective mechanisms for learning.¹¹

Team working - communications and performance

‘Now more than ever, companies must empower and motivate their staff and the arts-based training initiatives achieve that objective.’¹²

ABIs which focus on team working, development, communication and performance can use a range of methods and techniques but fundamentally they are all concerned with entertaining, galvanising or inspiring people. By galvanising a team a reaction is produced which causes action and this form of ABI influences people into a specific behavioural change. It can also inspire individuals and teams so that new behaviours in a range of areas emerge. Regardless of the depth of the impact, what all of these types of ABIs have in common is that they challenge a team’s way of seeing and feeling and teaches them to question values, change their perspective, cause reflection and generate passion about their activities and actions.

¹¹ Re-enforced by CIPD’s *Creative Learning Factsheet*

¹² Jayne Cormie, Managing Director, *The Thinking Business*, interview June 2009

Oasis, a major UK women's fashion retailer commissioned Circus Space, the UK's premium circus training centre, to work with their front-of-house staff to help them understand how they interact with their customers and to gain a better understanding of how they were perceived by customers. Together, Circus Space and the retailer, came up with a programme of activity which would act as a metaphor for the situations their staff were facing on a daily basis.

A series of 8 workshops were developed focusing on:

- *customer interest;*
- *getting and keeping customer attention;*
- *face-to-face selling;*
- *building customer relationships;*
- *questioning and listening skills;*
- *selling not serving.*

The main circus skills used were clowning and magic. Clowning is very much about someone's presence on stage. It is a solo performance whereby they engage an audience through minimal movement and activity making body language all the more important. This was an excellent representation of the relationship between the front-of-house staff and customers and focused attendees' minds more closely on how they came across, how they were perceived by others and how to engage customers. With peers then giving feedback it was possible for individuals to then act out the recommended improvements.

Magic is about storytelling and engaging audiences in that story, rather than the trick itself. This is a good analogy for how front-of-house staff need to tell a story to keep a customer in store, with the trick being the selling of an item of clothing.

In between these experiential exercises, the Learning & Development Partner of Oasis facilitated workshops to ensure participants made the connections between the learning and the workplace application. Therefore, the ABI linked directly with organisational objectives, provided employees with a chance to practice, reflect on their own performance and receive motivational feedback.

This is a strong area for ABIs because the arts offer an excellent experiential analogy and metaphor for business practices while actually giving teams a different lens to see themselves through. In addition to the transferability of and the new skills taught in an engaging way, what makes ABIs even more potentially long-lasting is the fact that it has an emotional impact on teams too as they build self-confidence and trust. By being taken out of their 'comfort zone' to achieve a task, but within a field where they can achieve if they work together (i.e. the arts) it forces teams to trust one another, and pull together in the same direction.

Dealing with change

ABIs connect people and ideas. By bringing challenges, changes and ideas to life and learning through experiential training, teams come to take greater ownership over new visions and objectives.

“Being prepared to challenge the status quo and see things in a different way.”¹³

Instead of being told what future changes there will be and how they must adapt, ABIs offer a more collaborative approach where employees and teams can take on the future vision and be responsible for implementing it themselves in addition to being champions for change.

People can be resistant to change either because of the process of change or its contents, part of the development solution is to take employees along the journey of change with the organisation. ABIs are about dialogue with everyone who takes part on equal terms meaning honest and difficult subjects can be discussed freely in a safe space. ABIs can handle these emotionally-charged business discussions (such as fear, uncertainty, concern and negativity) as well as tap into the positive emotions as leverage instruments to spark and sustain change. It engages people on a human level that unlocks potential, skills and interests which may have been dormant or under-used.

“A sense of achievement, a sense of self confidence and embracing more of the concept than rather than shy away and say ‘I can’t do it’...really assume that ‘yes I can’.”¹⁴

ABIs ensure the objectives of re-organisation are achieved on a day-to-day practical level. It also fosters team spirit in an inclusive way as everyone is empowered through being given responsibility and involved.

“I am a very unconfident person...anything that inspires my confidence or inspires me to look at my approach towards a particular thing, that is good.”¹⁵

“Being part of a company is one thing but working together with them to do the exhibition is another. You are working with them on a slightly different level.”¹⁶

¹³ Quote from the Scottish Widows Arts@Work evaluation report

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

In 2007 Scottish Widows had its fair share of sceptical members of staff about the arts-based initiative work they were undertaking called Arts@Work (explored further later on). There were some initial expressions of it being a waste of time and resources, however, by the end of the initiative even those who had not participated (which was a small minority) saw value in the work and increased satisfaction levels were recorded among non-participates.

From the evaluation report, of all of the staff, two-thirds disagreed or strongly disagreed that is Arts@Work was annoying and about the same proportion disagreed that it was a waste of resources. There was of course a contrast between all staff and those who had participated but only by a small margin. The mean score for the statement 'it was a waste of resources' was 1.80 by just those who had engaged and 2.31 by all staff. (1 – strongly disagree and 5 – strongly agree).

Trust is a major aspect of managing change too. Trust that one another will perform and deliver and trust in the management team.

Managing changing teams is not unique to a recession, but the challenges around team working when there is substantial change happening certainly becomes a priority. The following case study demonstrates how using ABIs, as part of the development solution, connects directly to business outputs.

Two departments within a Council were merged as part of a re-organisation. These two teams needed to adapt as some of their previous co-workers were no longer with them, take on new responsibilities/roles and work with new people. Circus Space was, therefore, asked to host a one-day conference for the Council. The afternoon provided a forum for the management team to present the future vision and plans for the team, while the morning used Circus Space's take on arts-based initiatives to develop an open and collaborative way of working, enable everyone to get to know each other and grow everyone's confidence through developing mutual trust and support.

By using a range of circus skills from juggling through to flying trapeze, everyone was taught new skills which enabled them to play to their strengths as individuals but also perform through collaboration. The premise was to demonstrate that as a team the participants could learn any new skill (way of working) through developing trust, mutual support and utilising each other's existing and new found strengths/skills. The workshop was facilitated in-house by the Council who used part of the afternoon to relate the mornings learning outcomes to the team's new challenge.

The feedback from the event was excellent because the activity re-enforced the company's key messages within a safe environment where employees could take risks.

"If we hadn't done the workshop in the morning I doubt we would have had such a positive outcome in the afternoon in regards to the work we needed to do. The workshop brought people together; helped break down barriers so ensuring people came to the afternoon with a positive frame of mind."

Feedback from the Council

This short case study begins to illustrate the role the arts and creative skills can play in enhancing team working, managing mergers and getting people to work with new colleagues. During a recession there is particular value in undertaking this type of activity to ensure a business' restructure/rationalisation succeeds with all the staff on board with the change.

Performance at work

With employees being asked to perform multiple and new tasks/roles, even the high achievers still need to develop their performance. But how do you achieve this without de-motivating staff? This is an area the arts are experts in as they always ask their performers and artists to continually improve their performance so that audiences come back again and again, and new audiences can be attracted. The UK workforce has increasingly moved away from elementary occupations to a knowledge-based economy, therefore, doing a task well repeatedly is not enough anymore for a thriving business or economy. The need to challenge oneself and the organisation by pushing boundaries (whether that be in terms of performance or product/service) is one aspect which signifies a successful knowledge-based organisation.

This shift is reflected in the demands of new generations of workers who want to be challenged and pushed – and are prepared to change jobs to gain this.¹⁷ This shift is reflected in the demands of the new generations of the workforce. ABIs can succeed where other techniques may fail because they take people out of their comfort zone, challenge their way of seeing and doing things while providing a space for reflection and practice.

During a recession employee performance needs to be enhanced in order to succeed during an unpredictable climate and ensure all of the businesses assets (namely human capital) are operating at optimal levels.

The arts provide the perfect analogy for enhancing performance at work, ABIs provide an environment where these potentially difficult conversations can take place without de-motivating or criticising staff.

New ways of working

The way in which teams' work is changing. Although this change has been happening gradually for some time, the recession has accelerated that pace of change and brought to the fore some of the inherent challenges – namely remote working, flexible working and the blend between work and leisure.

In an increasingly global marketplace and with greater emphasis on work-life balance, remote working and disparate teams are becoming more common. These teams may not see one another very often, or have even met, yet have to trust one another and have confidence in one another's abilities and performance. The growth in remote working and home-working has been well documented but of course this presents a challenge to the traditional working and operational model, especially in terms of team working. Our network of art practitioners have reported that this is a growing area of work for them, therefore, businesses are increasingly turning to a creative learning approach to help solve challenges presented by the new ways in which we work.

But why specifically ABIs? Non-traditional ways of working are a result of new expectations, demands and needs of employees. Non-traditional approaches are needed to address the challenges this presents. ABIs help people make the link between what they do at work, them as individuals and ultimately what all of this means. Unlike other development techniques, ABIs are multi-faceted and provoke emotional responses and connections because of the experiential, participatory and dynamic nature of them. As Prof. Schiuma wrote:

'It is primarily and fundamentally an experience-based process involving and engaging people both rationally and emotionally through either active or passive participation.'

In a workforce looking for meaning and value in all that they do and are, this is what ABIs deliver while achieving business objectives.

¹⁷ There is more about this generation of workers, Generation Y, later in this paper

An international consumer product manufacturer approached Circus Space to develop an afternoon workshop programme for a remote team that work well together, but are based across Europe in different countries / regions and only meet bi-annually.

The key objective of the workshop was to create an innovative shared team-building experience, for a remote team, which reinvigorated their good working relationship, was challenging and inspired a supportive mind-set.

The theme for the event was 'Alchemy', which was developed to represent the coming together of the team. The challenge for Circus Space was to create an inspiring workshop that delivered these key objectives in a short period of time.

To achieve this Circus Space developed a bespoke workshop where all of the participants learnt four different circus skills that also required them to achieve a set of specially designed bespoke learning challenges. The four circus skills that the participants learnt were flying trapeze, acrobatic balance (human pyramid building), juggling and stilt-walking.

Each skill posed different challenges to the team, which linked into the key learning objectives.

- Stilt-walking requires participants to work together to support each other whilst relearning the simple task of walking. This required participants to build a level of trust, good communication, coordination and encouragement to build the learners confidence in this familiar, but unusual challenge.*
- Flying trapeze requires participants to support their colleagues in helping them step out of their comfort zones and overcome a fear of the new and unknown. Participants literally traveled through a series of stages where each time they had established a comfortable place the next step required them to step out of this zone to achieve the next stage.*
- Juggling requires participants to work together to keep as many balls in the air as possible, which requires coordination, communication, sympathetic passing and constructive feedback.*
- Acrobatic balance requires participants to build a level of trust where to achieve set challenges they had to literally support each other and utilise each other's strengths in building human structures.*

The teams were then given points according to how well they achieved each challenge and at the end of the workshop the winning team was awarded a prize for their team work. In each skill area individual prizes were also given to participants who inspired others the most, and also to those who persevered the most to achieve something new for the team.

"The whole team got a tremendous amount out of the activity and some real barriers were broken down. I was especially pleased to see everyone get into it as you would normally expect at least 1 or 2 cynics, but everyone I spoke to, or have come up to me in droves, thoroughly enjoyed it! Speaking with my bosses, there has been talk of 'packaging' the Alchemy programme so other business units can go through it."

Feedback from the client

Skilling staff for the future

According to a poll in 2008 of nearly 200 senior executives in the UK conducted by KPMG, 83% of respondents said human capital was the key to maintaining an edge over competitors.¹⁸ The first thing to do is to establish who those key people are and then:

*'It is important that you meet their career development needs ensuring that good learning development opportunities are available to them and that you are taking care of their career progression ... rather than letting a prospective new employer do it instead.'*¹⁹

Artistic capabilities are directly relevant to upskilling and developing talented individuals such as presentation, communication, listening, storytelling, improvisation and body language skills. These types of skills are particularly pertinent for a knowledge-based economy workforce whereby they can hone their professional and creative skills in one go.²⁰ The key to skilling employees with the capabilities needed for the future require a combination of rational-analytical skills with creative flare, so that ultimately new behaviours emerge. Organisations which have both skillsets can *'successfully generate and commercialize creative new concepts year in and year out'* but this requires teamwork and collaboration.²¹ The most cost-effective solution is to find a training and development tool which can work at both levels – which is precisely what ABIs do.

As consumer expectations have changed, so have our working practices and expectations. As consumers we are more focused on issues of sustainability, authenticity, collaboration and ethics but those consumers are the same people who are employees, and they will be looking for that same depth of meaning at work too. Generation Y, the youngest generation of the workforce are forcing companies to think more creatively about work-life balance and is a trend filtering through to the rest of the workforce.²²

A survey of nearly 4,000, 30 focus groups and 40 interviews of US College students in June 2008 and January 2009 found that those from Generation Y and the Baby Boomers were looking for a mixed-set of rewards – flexible work arrangements and the opportunity to give back to society were more important than the mere size of the pay packet.²³ The recession did not change the respondents answers, what the recession does present is an opportunity for businesses to take this employee demand and expectation on board, act upon it and incorporate it into the business model.

Employers need to respond to them and, where possible, be proactive about this change, which means taking a different approach to what has been done so far. As Albert Einstein once said:

'We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.'

¹⁸ KPMG 2008 poll results, *Retaining Talent in a Recession*, 29 January 2009, www.thetalentpool.com

¹⁹ Talent Pool, *Retaining Talent in a Recession*, 29 January 2009, www.thetalentpool.com

²⁰ For further information about the nature and structure of the knowledge economy see the work of The Work Foundation. But an approximate definition includes some business services, financial services, royalties and license fees, computer/communication and information technology, culture/recreation and sport and education/health

²¹ See Darrell K. Rigby, Kara Gruver and James Allen, 'Innovation in Turbulent Times', *Harvard Business Review*, June 2009

²² Penelope Trunk, 'What Generation Y Really Wants', *Time*, July 2007

²³ Quoted in Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Laura Sherbin and Karen Sumberg, 'How Generation Y & Boomers Will Reshape Your Agenda', *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2009. www.hbr.org

“As always Pret did something quite radical and it is paying off. I believe that anything that will help build customer service and loyalty, retaining your great people and generally motivating your teams will be money well spent. Using the arts where appropriate adds a unique twist to keep people inspired.”

Ian Watson, Head of Pret Academy

Pret a Manger had a one-day conference in March 2009 in London for their 300 Managers on how to give amazing service front-of-house. In order to bring the subject to life and get the Managers to really embody and understand the issues which were being discussed during the day (queue management, customer service and dressing with style), Chris Stagg and a team of four other actors were commissioned to help during the conference.

The team of actors opened and closed the conference to set the scene for the day and pull all of the strands/themes from the day together, in addition to delivering a number of half-an-hour sessions using role play scenarios. As a team of experienced actors, they were able to put together, with help from Pret a Manger, a Pret-centric creative package. From the business' perspective getting a third party perspective on how customers were treated provided invaluable insight for the management team.

As a result of the conference:

- *there was a considerable amount of unsolicited positive feedback;*
- *sales and profitability have increased since the event;*
- *the number of payouts being made through a mystery shopper bonus scheme which recognises excellent service has increased, which proves staff are increasingly focusing on the service they provide.*

Therefore, through using an arts-based initiative as part of their training and personal development Pret a Manger were able to embed the learning from the conference so that it has had a lasting impact on how their people work.

The momentum and change which has occurred is being maintained through promotions for staff, such as the national outstanding service competition which is about delivering on the themes explored during the conference and regular features in the weekly shop newsletter.

Arts-based training and personal development have a medium to high impact on people and the organisational infrastructure. ABIs are a tool for businesses to restore, renew or modify an organisation's culture, property stock or characteristics of its products and services.

Engagement

An American consultancy firm, Watson Wyatt, studied the relationship between employee engagement and productivity in the US and found that when employees are highly engaged with their company productivity rose by 26%. There was also lower turnover and these companies were more likely to attract the top business talent. Employee absenteeism was down by around 20% when compared to other businesses. On average these companies earned 13% greater returns for shareholders over the last 5 years.²⁴ Although this is within the American context, it does demonstrate a clear link between good business performance and staff engagement levels.

These findings are also corroborated by a recent UK report – The MacLeod and Clarke Review published in July 2009. The review examines the state and the importance of staff engagement in the UK's economic recovery and future competitiveness on the world stage. It found that:

- engaged employees take on average 2.69 sick days compared to 6.19. Sickness absence costs the economy £13.4 billion each year;
- 70% of engaged employees say they have a good understanding of how to meet customer needs, whereas only 17% of non-engaged employees say the same;
- engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave the organisation than the disengaged;
- 67% of engaged employees advocate their company compared to 3% of disengaged.²⁵

*'If companies did a better job of engaging their staff, it could lead to a step change in workplace performance and in employee well-being, for the considerable benefit of UK plc...it [the report] reckons the effect can be transformational.'*²⁶

But the report also found that levels of engagement in the UK are low and vary widely, much more needs to be done and soon if the economy is to recover and be competitive.

There are a number of different techniques for engaging staff but creativity is one of the most effective and impactful. Unlike other techniques the arts and culture are in the business of engaging audiences, getting people to be committed to their organisation, programme or cause. If the arts do not do this well they cannot survive – both in terms of revenue/investment but also visitor numbers. The audience the arts engage with is disparate in terms of cultural background, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status in addition to individual preferences and interests. The challenge the arts have set themselves is to engage some of the most inaccessible audiences (young people, BMEs, NEETS etc). Therefore, who better to help a business engage staff than the experts? Transferring just some of the exciting activities and processes from the arts to a business will deliver hard-benefits in terms of employee skills, capabilities and engagement.

²⁴ Watson Wyatt, *WorkUSA 2008/09*, www.watsonwyatt

²⁵ David Macleod and Nita Clarke, *Engaging for success: enhancing performance through staff engagement*, July 2009

²⁶ Why disengaged employees are costing UK plc billions', *Management Today*, 16 July 2009

Scottish Widows established relationships with a wide range of artists and creative practitioners to deliver its Arts@Work initiative which sought to increase communication between employees and increase the business' competitiveness (and its staff) through the arts.

With support from Arts & Business, from 2007 Scottish Widows were able to engage around 3,000 of its 4,000 workforce across two sites through a range of activities from workplace interventions, employee produced art, ticket deals, gallery tours, art workshops, arts training to Arty Parties.

A Project Manager worked two days a week for two years in its Edinburgh offices to build relationships with the artistic community as well as establish and deliver a programme for creative employee and business development. Taking such an holistic approach and having such a comprehensive strategy was completely new and, as a consequence, has delivered remarkable results for Scottish Widows.

The aim of the initiative was to provide a platform for interaction between staff based at the different offices, the major plank of its internal corporate social responsibility programme, enable employees to actively participate in the artform and for work to be produced which reflected the personnel involved.

The project was a huge success, not only in terms of level of engagement and staff enjoyment levels but also the impact on the productivity and business skills of staff. From a staff survey, the results were:

- 38% of those who engaged said it had increased their productivity;*
- just under half (43%) had experienced some real business benefits from engaging in creative work through the Arts@Work initiative;*
- two thirds felt that they had developed personally from participating;*
- around three quarters of those who engaged in the project felt it had brought them some light relief.*

The case study demonstrates the ability of arts-based initiatives to affect a wide range of people on different levels from an entertainment perspective, to enhancing the working environment, right through to transformational change in a way someone works and consequently how a business operates. The Arts@Work initiative encompassed all of the arts value matrix categories demonstrating the variety of ways in which a business can benefit from having a relationship with the arts.

“If you feel your company is providing things that are above and beyond to what is required and you can get something extra out of it, it makes you more likely to stay and work for that company.”

“If you give people a bit more freedom you can get more out of them, so the company benefits and the people benefit from their own self esteem.”

“It made me rediscover actually that I can be quite creative...I am now doing quite creative stuff at work and I am now cracking on with it.”

The programme delivered on Scottish Widows’ corporate objectives by engaging staff, improving the environment, atmosphere and skills/capabilities. Around 45% of participants said they would recommend Scottish Widows as employers as a result of the ABI. It demonstrated commitment and investment in staff by the company and in return this is reciprocated by engagement at work.

Alongside the evaluation work undertaken, the Project Manager at Scottish Widows was able to identify which particular activities generated which impacts and benefits as well as how these could be optimised in the future – allowing for improvement and refinement of the programme so that the ABI really did achieve its business objectives.

The challenge for many businesses today is ‘how to do more with less’ and this goes for engaging and motivating staff too. Remuneration packages will not be enough, or indeed possible, in the next few years to reward and engage staff.²⁷ Satisfaction cannot depend just on money. We have to move towards a higher-value set (i.e. meaning) which is a trend already started by Generation Y.

There is the perception that bringing the arts in to a business is doing something ‘above and beyond’ which further generates staff commitment to a particular organisation.

‘There is a premium on giving people something they didn’t know they were missing but that takes a cognitive leap.’²⁸

That investment in people builds a relationship between an employee and the company. The reason for this perception is that ABIs work in an holistic manner affecting personal as well as professional change. There can be no better space for inspiring and engaging people than the arts who do this every day.

²⁷ See Arts & Business, *Common Currency*, June 2009 (partnered with NESTA, Demos and the Cultural Leadership Programme) for further discussion about success, risk and reward during a recession

²⁸ Claire Warren, ‘HRD 2008: Creativity is vital ingredient in competition’, *People Management*, 18 April 2008

Eudemonic worked with social enterprise consultancy Eastside in delivering a project called Spark, which was about finding the best social enterprises working to tackle homelessness and giving them support and investment to grow. Part of Spark was about engaging large corporates to work in placements within different social enterprises, further helping the social enterprises while also benefitting corporate partners in a number of ways.

But Spark is about much more than a conventional investment programme. The difference Spark brings comes from a philosophy to connect, collaborate and inspire people throughout the programme. And to unlock the potential of these more human goals, the interactions, structure and processes within Spark borrow from creative and artistic realms.

Spark events were designed as mini-festivals, information was presented through more interactive forms of installation and media, including film, to present stories and progress from human perspectives. This all contributed to a very powerful programme that has secured longer term funding from the department of Communities and Local Government, and has inspired long-term involvement from a number of impressive corporate partners.

The project is an example of how more subtle ways of building openness, engagement and inspiration with the arts is helping to shape more compelling ways of doing business in a changing world.

Talent development

It is accepted that businesses need to invest in the future of their company by providing training and personal development opportunities for staff, not only so that they can do their day-to-day jobs but also upskill them to lead and innovate in the future.

Over a quarter of organisations surveyed by CIPD said there had been a change to their approach to talent management as a result of the downturn. Less budget and more cost-effective solutions were the most commonly cited reasons for changing policy. Despite this, those surveyed still emphasised that talent retention was more important now than before the downturn because it is an aspect which will differentiate their organisation and ensure that they survive and thrive.²⁹ These future talented leaders want to be challenged, to develop transferrable skills, work for organisations they believe in and develop/use their 'right-brain skills' (i.e. creativity).³⁰

*'...ensure through their continued focus on talent that organisations are able to bounce back faster and harder than competitors...help lift us out of this current decline and ultimately contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of our organisations.'*³¹

How do we do this though? Creativity is again coming up as a key focus for developing and retaining talent. ABIs are fundamentally about creativity; using the creative process to advance business.

²⁹ CIPD, *Hot Topics: The War on Talent? Talent management under threat in uncertain times – Part 1*, February 2009

³⁰ Chartered Management Institute, *Generation Y: unlocking the talent of young managers*, June 2008

³¹ CIPD, *Hot Topics: The War on Talent? Talent management under threat in uncertain times – Part 1*, February 2009

Talented employees want to be more creative in the way they work and the organisations they work for. Using the arts embeds creativity within the work and structures of a business and uses the arts as an asset for businesses to exploit both for the benefit of staff and for the organisation as a whole.

For example, Clarence Otis, CEO of Darden Restaurants (a Fortune 500 parent company to 1,300 restaurants in the US and Canada with an annual turnover of \$5 billion) was interviewed recently by *The New York Times*. During the interview he was asked what from his background prepared him for building and leading a team, his answer was:

“The thing that prepared me the most...was theatre, which I did a lot when growing up, in high school, during college, law school and even for a couple of years after law school. I would say that probably the starkest lesson in how reliant you are on others, because you’re there in front of an audience. It’s all live, and everybody’s got to know their lines and know their cues and know their movement, and so you’re totally dependent on the people doing that. You could have your piece down, but if one person on the team doesn’t, you’re in trouble, and it’s embarrassing because people aren’t used to seeing errors in theatre. Theatre is seamless every night.”³²

³² Adam Bryant, ‘Ensemble Acting, in Business’, *The New York Times*, 7 June 2009

UBS has a long-standing relationship with Circus Space and have supported them for the past 20 years in many different ways. But this relationship is very much a partnership and as part of this relationship Circus Space has provided UBS with training services, in particular as part of their graduate training scheme.

The workshops run for graduates focus on the core competencies of UBS as part of their two-week induction so that they are prepared for work at the company. As with all graduate training schemes, they are about creaming the top calibre students and recruiting them for your company's future rather than your competitors.

Although the graduate scheme changes slightly year-on-year it is normally a whole-day learning event where the graduates learn a series of circus skills in the morning and then in the afternoon they regroup into teams and each team has to work together to devise and create a short performance using the skills learnt.

The objective for this style workshop has been to challenge the graduates to be resourceful and work as a team to find a creative approach to problem solving, drawing on each other's strengths and working cross-culturally. The circus workshop element has also been linked previously to participants learning styles where the activity of learning circus acted as an experiential way for the participants to embed their understanding of how they learn, how fellow colleagues with different styles approach learning and how the different styles interact. Feedback from the graduate participants:

“Everybody has a different role and it is important to see this and to leverage them. And, teamwork is a lot of fun.”

“I understood that everyone learns at different pace and are good at different things, but we can still all participate and be valuable members of a team”

The skills learnt at Circus Space can then be taken through the company, meaning it has a long-lasting and penetrating impact despite the targeted and short-term activity undertaken.

Instant Teamwork were invited to add value to a leading UK professional services provider at their Personal Impact event for fast-tracking managers by creating simple, immediate techniques to deliver the experiences of how people relate to one another.

Using drumming, movement and some guided conversations, delegates were able to consider their own behaviours and raise their awareness about their impact and how they relate to other people. The learning clearly had an impact on the delegates because even during the other modules within the seminar they were applying the learning, considering how they communicated with colleagues and reflected on how they came across.

'They were such a hit when we introduced them to our annual training event that their session quickly became integral to the value we added.'

Amanda Vickers, MD, Speakfirst

Leadership

As a result of the downturn retaining talent and having talented leaders is of paramount importance in order for businesses to establish their future vision and direction and have someone/people to take them there.

'As the economy recovers, however, companies will return to the challenge of winning over enough capable professionals to drive renewal and growth'.³³

The role of leader has been put under considerable strain and pressure in the downturn. Leaders are having to re-skill in order to deal with the downturn:

'Equipped with skills and approaches honed over long years of growth, they now find their roles defined by an unexpected question: How should people be managed when fear is in the air, confidence is slipping, and it looks as if the road ahead will remain tough for many miles? This isn't the job most executives and managers signed on for, and not everyone will rise to occasion.'³⁴

'A lot of leaders who are successful in a growth economy are not good in a downturn. How do you develop leaders for the future who can lead not only in good times but also in a recession?'³⁵

³³ Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Laura Sherbin and Karen Sumberg, 'How Generation Y & Boomers Will Reshape Your Agenda', *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2009. www.hbr.org

³⁴ Robert I. Sutton, 'How to be a good boss in a bad economy', *Harvard Business Review*, June 2009

³⁵ Karen Higginbottom, 'KPMG focuses on talent management', *People Management*, March 2009

There are three clusters of knowledge and skills a leader for today and tomorrow needs – context (ability to identify social and environmental trends and their business implications), complexity (lead in the face of uncertainty, ambiguity and disagreement) and connectedness (understand the actors in the political landscape and build relationships with them).³⁶ Live dynamic forms of learning are recommended for developing future global leaders – which is precisely what the experiential learning of ABIs is all about.

An art experience provides the time and space for reflection, observation and to ask questions in a space which enables participants to take risks, be flexible, try new things and make new connections. Of course many development solutions offer such opportunities; the thing about ABIs is that these practices are inherent in art. The creative process was born from the arts sector. Leaders of the future need to deploy both their ‘right-brain’ as well as their ‘left-brain’ skills (creative and rational/analytical skills). Businesses have a track record of supporting the latter but the former is newer territory for many. Borrowing from the arts sector can provide businesses with part of the development solution they are looking for: embedding the creative process into the business as an asset, unlocking the potential of employees and developing new skills and capabilities of staff.

³⁶ Ashridge Business School, *Developing the Global Leader of Tomorrow*, www.ashridge.org.uk

Lease Plan is the world's largest vehicle management and leasing provider working in over 30 countries. They commissioned the Executive Learning Partnership, in partnership with Instant Teamwork, to deliver a week-long leadership programme for senior managers.

To begin with delegates were involved in a storytelling session to help break the ice with each other and instigate important conversations about normally taboo subjects. By the first break the group members were all on the same page and talking a common language, regardless of the number of years served or the territory they came from. A range of exercises were used throughout the week programme such as yoga and rhythm to enable participants to reflect on the conversations and presentations from the rest of the programme.

The outcomes for delegates included enhanced access to strategic discussions, based on a common understanding of what had led them to this stage, enhanced team work skills and improved communication skills. The original pilot was so successful that the programme has been used on seven different occasions since.

"Instant Teamwork's creative approach has proved to kick start learning programmes, in a way that engages and focuses the attention right from the get-go. We at ELP have been using them for several years now and the evaluation forms reflect the success of this collaboration."

Nick Van Heck, partner Executive Learning Partnership

Organisational and cultural change

"The arts can accelerate change; help bring home messages in safe ways. It can use the power of metaphor to bring difficult concepts to bear. Change is about holding different conversations and seeing things in different ways, and the arts have played an extraordinary role in doing that and getting it done a lot quicker than it would have been otherwise."³⁷

Approximately every three years an organisation goes through major change, but this has converged today due to the downturn. Of these major changes, an estimated two thirds succeed in meeting their objectives. Businesses, of all sectors and scales, are looking to re-invent themselves and move into the new corporate landscape. This requires full-scale transformational change. The aim of undergoing such change is to open up the organisation and its people to a new consciousness and drive change. That change tends to be a combination of people changing their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours aligned to the needs and wants of an organisation in terms of the company's strategic and performance objectives. It impacts on the organisations' workplace, culture, environment, practices, procedures and routines.

³⁷ Rick Haythornthwaite, non-Executive Director at Land Securities, Chairman of Mastercard and London's Southbank Centre and partner at Start Capital Partners quoted in Professor Giovanni Schiuma, *Mapping Arts-Based Initiatives*, July 2009

The arts provide the perfect stimulant for transformation and parallels to what is happening in the office. There are two main ways in which ABIs can support and develop businesses in this climate. The first of which is to identify what the organisational and culture change should look like, by creating a space for optimism, an opportunity to reflect on where the business is and the potential for re-orientating. ABIs provide a process and framework for change through facilitating and supporting discussions. The second aspect is enabling that change strategy to be implemented, delivered and achieved. This cross-references with the team development challenges highlighted earlier in the paper. There are not many flexible frameworks available for how to achieve, manage and implement transformation but ABIs offer one.

Managing change

One of the biggest challenges businesses face today is renewal. Organisations have to be prepared for change and this is especially true in a recession. The approach of the arts is very much about flexibility, being dynamic and nimble and these are qualities which need to be transferred to a business so that they can be responsive to the challenges and opportunities during this recession.

In a crisis you can either 'batten down the hatches' or you can get together with others to collaborate to develop solutions. The arts always have to re-invent themselves, push boundaries and constantly explore the new (and express what that vision looks like). When businesses need to do this but are uncertain of what or how to do this, given that it is not a standard process or procedure for many, why should businesses not look to the experienced experts – the arts? Looking beyond the normal frame of reference and field of expertise enables cross-sector learning and this is a recognised way to innovate. There is so much exciting and inspiring activity taking place in the arts, that even if a little bit of this can carry across into a business, it could make a big difference, as evidenced by the case study overleaf.

The UK Executive Board of a global IT Company commissioned an arts-based initiative as part of their wider two-day Board meeting that was focused on team working, leadership and business performance. The company was going through considerable change in October 2008 and the Board were looking for a step change in their performance.

As part of the Away Day, Welsh National Opera provided a performance masterclass, giving the Board new insights into the challenges and opportunities they faced in developing their own performance. The arts-based initiative offered them the opportunity to look through a different lens at this key business issue and provided a platform for the Board to enable them to have the crucial conversations they had previously found difficult.

To demonstrate the discipline and mindset that is needed to produce a high-quality performance, Welsh National Opera delivered a masterclass that revealed how they go about creating their world-renowned productions. By recreating their rehearsal process and illustrating the role of the Chorus Master, WNO showed how they direct, coach and enable singers to work together quickly and effectively as a high performing team.

The masterclass uncovered the environment, actions and behaviours that are needed to ensure performance standards do not slip – such as focusing on the bigger picture (not individual egos), ensuring team members listen to one another and trusting others to deliver. The need for different feedback styles to get the best out of performers, build their confidence and turn a good performance into a great one, was also highlighted. WNO's Chorus Master and Directors have to constantly critique individual and company performance, whilst ensuring artists remain motivated. Watching the live rehearsal and the way feedback and praise was delivered, gave the UK Executive Board real food for thought.

The analogies between the world of opera and the world of business were not lost on the IT company. Through dialogue, interaction and reflection, the arts-based initiative provided another perspective on the issue of performance, which fed directly into the company's long-term strategy and planning. This short, targeted and relatively small-scale initiative demonstrated how the arts can have quite a big impact on a business, making it a very effective support service for them to use strategically.

Innovating success

Innovation is not isolated to a sector or the arts. By allowing a creative and artistic process to flourish within a business, innovation can take place. By working with the arts, businesses can find solutions to challenges, whether that be change, growth or unlocking the potential in people. Collaboration within the arts and the creative process can have a significant impact and deliver tangible outcomes for businesses in a highly cost-effective way. Innovation is always key during recessions because businesses need 'to do more with less' and need to get themselves out of the downturn.

*'...innovation is both a vaccine against market slowdowns and an elixir that rejuvenates growth.'*³⁸

Achieving innovation without the creative process is impossible. As the *Harvard Business Review* explains³⁹ businesses need both a commercial and a creative approach – whether that be within the business model, through collaborations, partnerships, one-off initiatives with creatives or a longer-term programme. Major businesses recognise this and have established creative-commercial partnerships within their business models to ensure innovation can happen, risks can take place but that it is always 'applied creativity'.

*'Imagine how much better off General Motors might be today if the company had matched the pace of innovation set by Honda and Toyota. Imagine how much worse off Apple would be had it not created the iPod, iTunes and the iPhone.'*⁴⁰

These companies have commercial-creative partnerships established already – but how do other companies achieve this? Recruiting new people is not always possible, desirable or necessary, a cost-effective solution is to partner and work with the most creative people in the UK – artists. The creativity needs to be grounded in business reality and practice though so that it is sustainable – this means art practitioners/facilitators (whether that be an individual or an arts / cultural organisation).

Those businesses who innovate now will come out of the recession quicker and stronger than their competitors.

There is a greater risk in not using ABIs in this climate because the process, framework and holistic approach and impact is of paramount importance in achieving business imperatives in a difficult climate and in developing sustainable business models, practices and operations for the future.

*'Innovation isn't risky in the long run. Standing still is the riskiest move.'*⁴¹

Of course this will not be delivered overnight. The more long-term the relationship is between a business and the arts, the more compelling the impact of the ABI will be, as with any development tool. This means having a relationship with the arts, whereby different types of partnership activity can take place depending on the needs of the partners at any given time. In the past that may have been built around sponsorship, the work environment or for entertainment but at the moment cultural-commercial relationships need to be about galvanising teams, inspiring, transforming and training and development.

Conclusion

Arts-based initiatives have a particular role and impact in this turbulent economic climate. It is a difficult time for businesses and they need support and guidance in how to manage this and emerge

³⁸ Darrell K. Rigby, Kara Gruver and James Allen, 'Innovation in Turbulent Times', *Harvard Business Review*, June 2009

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Tom Kelly, General Manager of IDEO, quoted in 'Innovation is the only option if you want to keep moving', *People Management*, 14 June 2007

from the downturn in a competitive state. As well as managing in the current economic conditions businesses still need to move forward and innovate, they cannot stay still. One thing which we have learnt from previous recessions is that those businesses who innovate during a recession come out in a stronger business and market position than those who do not. Depending on a business' specific imperatives, objectives, challenges and opportunities, ABIs can be used in strategically different ways to achieve varying levels of impact (a light touch or a more embedded and deeper impact on a business). This is what Professor Schiuma's work so clearly explains from an entertainment value up to a galvanising effect right through to full-scale organisational transformation.

When thinking about investing and supporting the arts, first thought tends to turn to sponsorship and rarely do businesses think that the arts can deliver hard-edged change. Arts-Based Initiatives offer another dimension to a business' relationship with the arts – whether that is a new relationship specifically around training, development and transformation or another form of engagement from an existing partnership - making partnerships work harder for the business.

The creative and artistic process itself provides important and meaningful parallels, analogies and metaphors relating to practices, behaviour, challenges and change. The process develops skills and capabilities in a long-lasting, meaningful and practical way that allows both hard and soft skill development, as well as creativity.

By providing a space in which things can be viewed differently, where experimentation can take place and difficult conversations can be had, ABIs form an integral part of a development solution which is able to have an impact across an organisation and its people. The strengths of the arts, such as communication, team working, always trying something new, constantly improving performance, managing egos, responsive to external factors and engaging, motivating, inspiring and exciting a diverse range of people are all expertise and capabilities businesses cannot buy anywhere else. The arts are a tool like any other service to enable businesses to perform better and resolve challenges.

ABIs are another way in which the arts and culture can help businesses prosper. However, businesses need to be more aware of and have a greater understanding of ABIs so that they can purchase them and work the arts harder in order to deliver the desired outcomes and impacts.

Those who have experienced ABIs understand this already, and this value is enhanced by a recession where the issues ABIs are best at handling come to the fore. The arts are the experts when it comes to creativity, engagement, development, inspiration, transformation, motivation as well as challenging people, innovation and offering transferrable skills/capabilities. As the experienced training facilitator, Jayne Cormie, put it:

'Art and creativity are synonymous and therefore a perfect metaphor for our business propositions and the skills we teach our clients.'

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