

Catalyst[©]

Catalyst is for alumni of DSI seminars and workshops to stay connected, and for clients, prospective clients, and other interested parties to learn about who we are and what we do. Available electronically on the Writings page at www.DancingStar.com

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Tapping Untapped Talent – Feeding Your Business Artists™

Since I first wrote about Business Artists in the last issue of this newsletter, I've been working with a small research team to flesh out the term. We feel strongly that understanding these people matters – to their organizations, to their peers, and to them. Here's why, and what to do about it.

Business Artists have a capacity to solve problems, innovate, and produce at a significantly higher level than their peers.

They are as passionate about creating business solutions, enterprises, and processes as an artist is about creating art. They are uniquely suited to solve the most pressing issues businesses face today *precisely because they think differently.*

This makes them extremely valuable – unless their differences become a barrier to working with others. Because their ability to outdistance others can also set them apart in ways that can be uncomfortable for all, the dilemma becomes how to give your best and brightest what they need to be happy and productive, when it's different from what others in your organization need.

These folks are free, unconventional thinkers with an inborn intuition for business, and are sometimes not well-suited to a traditional, hierarchical environment. One Business Artist client of mine has had trouble articulating exactly what he does for his clients – but when he does it, it delivers off-the-chart business results.

Another Business Artist we know stepped into a new role, where she saw immediately what needed to be fixed. However, her boss thought she was jumping to conclusions – how could she see a solution so quickly? She did, but he didn't want to believe it. So she bided her time for a year, then went back to him with her solution. He remembered their first conversation, and said "you knew all along, didn't you?" After that he trusted her instincts. As she said, it takes mature business sense to recognize and capitalize on her type of unconventional wisdom, as he ultimately did.

They wanted the best and brightest, they hired us, and now they don't know what to do with us

– Senior manager, global corporation

Too often we have heard such people, working deep in top global corporations, echo this senior manager – "they wanted the best and brightest, they hired us, and now they don't know what to do with us". And this company is reknowned for developing its best and brightest.

Too often Business Artists are told – tacitly or openly – to hold back, to "fit in" – which one called "as painful as being asked to cut off a limb".

To thrive, they will generally need a different type of role – a cross-departmental, or special projects position, for instance. One where

they can unleash their love of educating, building bridges, starting things, and bringing ideas into sharper focus.

These people value, and want to contribute, tangible results. They become frustrated or demotivated when unable to contribute to the extent of their capabilities.

So, how to help them, their coworkers, and others see their inventiveness, impatience, risk-taking, and driving energy not as flaws, but as strengths? If you suspect you have one or more on your team or in your organization, start here:

Name it. Acknowledge that they are different. Talking with them about what you've noticed can be a powerful first step to bringing new energy, awareness, and satisfaction into your interactions.

Encourage them to identify their niche. Where could they envision making a higher-level contribution? Where would their unique approach produce unique payoffs? Explore roles that might allow them to tap their strongest traits in positive ways, even if it's outside your immediate area of influence.

Give them space and support. It was out of the "skunk works" of technical creativity that some of today's most powerful technological advances came. Set parameters as needed, then step back, support them, and let 'em go!

– Deborah Huisken, the Business Artists Forum, and friends

IS THERE UNTAPPED BUSINESS ARTISTRY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

If you or your company could use some help identifying the Business Artists in your organization and inspiring them to achieve their full potential, contact Dancing Star International. US landline: +1 617 275-5706. UK cell: +44 798 521-4520.

E-mail: info@DancingStar.com. Or, visit the website, www.DancingStar.com.

Most great men and women are not perfectly rounded in their personalities. [They] are ... people whose one driving enthusiasm is so great it makes their faults seem insignificant. – Charles Cerami



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One must embrace the chaos within to
give birth to a dancing star
– adapted from Nietzsche

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Rates and deadlines available on request.

RESOURCES

These quotes felt especially applicable to the topics in this newsletter:

The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook. - William James

Failure is only the opportunity to intelligently begin again. - Henry Ford

We will start offering Business Artist Telecalls in early 2008 – if you're interested, contact us for details.

The 2005 Canadian documentary **The Corporation** is an eye-opening production on the history of corporations, their strengths, and their disturbing shortcomings. If you haven't yet seen it, check your library or www.thecorporation.com.

Deb's Corner



I love the idea of using a "Wikipedia" approach to developing the Business Artist concept.

To me, that means I hold the container, welcoming input

and feedback from any of you out there who recognize family, friends, colleagues, or yourself in the descriptions I've given, and who want to add your observations as we flesh out the concept. All inputs welcome!

Here's an input from none other than Jack (GE) and Suzy Welch, from their September 24, 2007 column in **Business Week**.

Calling them "creative people", the Welches assert that leading them differs from leading "everyone else", with which I'd largely agree. However their article, while acknowledging a creative person's value to an organization, focuses mostly on the challenges of working with them.

For instance, the Welches say "they seize on any opportunity to break from the corporate herd; [then] dysfunctional behaviors start to spread". In fact, breaking from the corporate herd is sometimes the healthiest thing one can do – Mr. Welch built his career on doing so. Being creative or different does not equate with being dysfunctional – being stymied or frustrated often does.

We will use their article as the basis for one of our discussions in the upcoming Business Artist Roundtable telecalls starting in January. If

you want to join the conversation, please be in touch.

One thing we uncovered in our Business Artists Forum meetings is the longing Business Artists have to be recognized and accepted for their gifts. Participants drove hours after full days at work and with pressing family demands, to participate in a fledgling undertaking because a part of them that is usually unrecognized, understood, or valued was discussed.

We all saw the impact of such discussions when one of us got a job she'd wanted, but wasn't going to go for until the group encouraged her. She got it, and we could all see the difference in her face and bearing at the next meeting. There was a new peace and confidence about her, despite the significant challenges of the work. The increased salary, although welcome, was an afterthought. What mattered was that now she was able to contribute fully.

On another note: I've sat down to write this issue of Catalyst a few times over the last year, but it just wasn't ready. Since I've been developing the Business Artist concept, I decided to leave it until it was ready, rather than force it.

I'm glad I did – I just found the article from **Business Week**. Like good soup, some things need time to simmer. Some of you wrote to say you'd noticed our absence. Thanks to those who missed Catalyst, and to those who wrote to tell us!

LETTERS FROM READERS

A leader sees what is obvious and does it. Many people see the obvious but never do anything about it. So seeing must be accompanied by the resolve to move things forward...and the engine, energy source...could be an individual's deep driving desire. That is where I connect with the beauty of every human who, as they get in touch with their heart's desire, express their unique capacities. – *excerpted from letter by Bob Gunn, US*

What resonated with me about the Business Artist term was that it gave me the image of a blank canvas with someone standing before it and painting a picture. A truly great picture takes a long time to paint and a lot of imagination and boldness. The artist may have a picture in mind of how he/she wants the picture to look but it will change as it develops – perhaps tints of colour, forms, additions and sometimes deletions. Good leaders also have this ability to create, adapt, and change when necessary. – *Lynda Jones, UK*

The term "Business Artist" sounds like an authentic leader. I've seen two different types of CEO entrepreneurs in my career. The "vanilla" business entrepreneur has a very good idea, coupled with the drive and stamina to make it happen. They are often successful at getting their start-up off the ground, but then need to be replaced to take it to a fully-formed company. Then there's a visionary business entrepreneur, people who create a thick, rich corporate culture which will go on to have significant impact outside their field. This is perhaps 2 to 9% of entrepreneurs worldwide, who get their organization firmly established within two three years and lead it to become huge. I think of people like Larry Ellison, Bill Gates, Michael Dell, Ken Olsen – who can connect with others and communicate what they see is possible. – *Bruce Lynskey, Professor of Entrepreneurship, US*