

# Don't be nice

Jacco van Uden

Recently I sort of picked a fight with the authors of Training Artists for Innovation (<http://trainingartistsforinnovation.eu/about-tafi/>). Sort of, because I'm not quite sure if we disagree as much as I'd like to. I'm struggling.

Let me explain.

The main goal of the Training Artists for Innovation project was to “develop a qualification and skills framework for artists working in business”. The underlying idea is that while “there is considerable evidence of the need of business for the creativity that artists and creatives can deliver, there is a shortage of artists with the necessary expertise and experience.” Enabling the artists to become more effective in the business domain, the authors claim, requires that these artists familiarise themselves with the language and the logic of business, and master essential business skills.

The thing is, I sympathise deeply with this project. I come from the world of management and I firmly believe that indeed we do need artists. And I'd hate to see artists being forced to withdraw from the field of business because they lack the knowledge and skills to be effective. So yes, by all means, please, artists, get trained for innovation, make sure you are here to stay.

But still. I guess I am uncomfortable with the instrumental approach of it all. The artist is essentially seen as a source of creativity and the challenge is to find clever, effective ways of tapping into that source. I have no problem with using artists whatsoever. I care about business, and much less so about artists. And it is from a business perspective that I'm not sure that building a “qualification and skills framework for artists working in business” is really the way to go.

Maybe I have a romantic, naïve understanding of the arts, but I like to think that artists have more to offer than creativity. And while the artists themselves may be very happy with the development of a framework that claims to be able to make clear what it takes to work in the field of business, I still believe that of all people, artists should be the last group of professionals that you should want to pigeon-hole. And let me stress it again: I say that from a business perspective.

The very reason I take an interest in exploring the value of arts for business is that most of the time I don't get art. Art

doesn't make sense to me, not in the way business does. To me, art fails to be coherent, clear in its intent or meaning. It is not goal or solution driven. There are hardly any answers in art, just more questions. Bringing all this to the world of business, I believe, is as unsettling and frustrating as it is necessary. In the world of business we have more than enough answers, but raise too few questions. We try to create clarity when we should be wondering. We replace thinking with protocols and procedures. This is what we do and we can't help ourselves.

By all means, artists, please do help. But don't allow us to tell you how to do that. Don't allow me to tell you how to do that.

As if you would.

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