

A Workshop in the Art of Management - Illuminated with Modern Art

Although Seeing is Believing, Managers Need to Perceive What Can't Be Seen

Modern art can be quite baffling, and Tina Doerffer, process consultant and leadership trainer from Hanover, derives optimal benefit from this reality. Deploying contemporary artworks, she sensitizes managers and others in leadership positions in regard to perceptual processes. Concomitantly, this sharpens their powers of observation and empowers them to look beyond superficial appearances.

The concept of the "Leadership with Art" workshop evolved while Doerffer studied and subsequently taught at the Harvard Kennedy School. Since the beginning of the year, she has offered the course as an in-house corporate program.

The basic structure of the half-day workshop, the precise duration of which can be flexibly planned to meet client needs, involves confronting the participants with a work of art that is strikingly beautiful but perplexing.

An initial period of calm contemplation is followed by an exchange of personal impressions. Doerffer then augments the discussion with information about the work and the artist that alters the observers' apperception of the piece, making it more acute.

The consultant explains that the exercise enables the managers - initially on an emotional, unconscious level, but in a process that subsequently expands - to experience various dimensions of leadership. "Past workshops have made it crystal clear that each individual has a different perception, and there is usually much more going on than what the eye initially takes in," says Doerffer.

She adds, this improved insight is crucial for managers because, quoting the late management thought-leader Peter Drucker, "... leading means to see what's visible but not yet seen ...". This is the only way the potential for

innovation, among other desired qualities, can be opened up.

Subsequent workshop activities build upon the emotional learning effects of the first part; in these activities, the participants transfer their experience to the reality of management. Do they recognize the phenomenon in which varying perceptions, experiences, and goals clash in their meetings? Have they experienced that the topic on the table is not actually what is being disputed? And how do they deal with this?

Tina Doerffer is regularly offering the workshop as a sampler course.

 More info at www.doerfferleadership.com