

Case Study

“Arts-Based Experiential Learning at General Electric @ GE’s Global Leadership Development Center Crotonville, NY 2012 – 2022”

Lead Author and Chief Analyst:

Johanna Kouzmine-Karavaïeff
Artisans of Innovation

Co-Author:

Krista Petäjäjärvi
Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture

Graphic Design:

Liene Lesiņa

Financed and supported by:



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland



MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION AND CULTURE
FINLAND

This case study is excerpted from “Arts & Design Based Collaboration and Cross-Innovation”, a policy brief from the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture.

This case study documents 503 workshops created and implemented by Art of Science Learning and Creating Futures that Work

The **Art** of
SCIENCE
Learning

CREATING
FUTURES THAT
WORK

Harvey Seifter, Director and Principal Investigator

Each workshop offered direct, hands-on experiences that used the arts to help GE participants strengthen the foundational skills of innovation and develop key mindsets of future ready leadership – from accelerating change and adapting to disruption, to empathic listening and high performance teamwork.

Guided by Seifter and his team of teaching artists in close collaboration with GE learning and development professionals, participating GE leaders and managers worked with twenty-two different art forms including classical music, clay sculpture, improvisational theater, outdoor mural-making, suminagashi (an ancient Japanese form of water painting), expressive movement and poetry.

ARTFORMS USED

ARTFORMS USED

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	Chamber music (classical)	Charcoal drawing	Clay sculpture	Collaging	Dance and movement	Environmental woven sculpture	Idea modeling	Improvisation	Jazz music	Kinetic sculpture
Finding opportunity in disruption						x		x	x	x
Improving non-verbal communication skills	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Improving verbal communication skills	x				x		x	x		
Integrating diverse perspectives into a coherent view	x		x	x		x	x	x		
Leadership balance and equilibrium			x		x	x				x
Leading change					x			x	x	
Leading in environments you do not control	x				x	x		x	x	x
Leading through influence					x	x		x	x	x
Leading through uncertainty					x	x		x	x	x
Learning to see what isn't there, as well as what is		x		x						
Moving from image to action			x		x					
Overcoming self-limiting beliefs		x								
Rapid prototyping	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		
Strengthening perception (observation, listening, pattern recognition, etc.)	x	x	x					x	x	
Teambuilding					x	x	x	x	x	
Telling powerful stories					x			x		

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	Oil pastel drawing	Pencil/pen drawing	Performance Art	Photography	Poetry	Portraiture	Printmaking and postering	Suminigashi	Theater	Vocal music	Writing and journaling
Agile behavior		X	X				X	X	X	X	
Accelerating innovation		X	X					X	X		X
Adapting to emergent complexity	X						X	X			X
Building and developing contextual intelligence				X		X		X	X	X	X
Building high performance team culture	X		X						X	X	
Co-creation with customers											
Collaboration skills				X					X	X	
Collaborative leadership						X			X		
Connecting with audiences				X				X	X	X	
Creative problem solving	X	X		X			X				X
Cultivating resilient behaviors		X							X	X	
Developing an iterative mindset		X							X	X	
Empathetic listening					X	X			X	X	X
Enhancing creativity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Exploring the difference between how we see ourselves and others see us	X			X		X			X		X
Finding opportunity in disruption								X	X		
Improving non-verbal communication skills	X	X					X	X	X	X	X
Improving verbal communication skills					X	X	X		X		X
Integrating diverse perspectives into a coherent view					X						
Leadership balance and equilibrium											X
Leading change							X		X		
Leading in environments you do not control									X	X	
Leading through influence			X						X	X	X
Leading through uncertainty		X							X	X	X
Learning to see what isn't there, as well as what is				X	X			X			X
Moving from image to action		X	X						X		X
Overcoming self-limiting beliefs	X					X			X		
Rapid prototyping	X						X		X		
Strengthening perception (observation, listening, pattern recognition, etc.)	X	X		X				X	X		X
Teambuilding									X	X	
Telling powerful stories	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	

Picture: Tables over Art forms used and corresponding learning objectives, 2012 – 2022. © Art of Science Learning and Creating Futures that Work, 2023. All rights reserved.

The primary audiences for these workshops were senior leaders, emerging and high potential leaders, learning and development teams, and managers at all levels. Participants came from all over the world and worked in every major GE division and business unit including Oil & Gas, Power, Water, Aviation, Transportation, Healthcare, Digital, Capital, Energy, Renewables and Baker Hughes, as well as corporate headquarters. External participants included GE customers and corporate partners.

Asked why GE made arts-based learning a core element of its leadership training and development, Bob Lewis, formerly GE Crotonville's Faculty Leader for Experienced Leader Solutions, explained "Arts-based learning helps leaders expand their point of view and look at things from a different perspective. It also helps them become more creative and innovative. That's why we use it."

Rich Rischling, formerly Culture and Learning Leader for GE Renewable Energy, highlighted a uniquely valuable contribution made by arts-based learning: "It's very important that our leaders experience different approaches, in different contexts. We use arts-based learning as a way to help them explore and make connections for themselves."

Rischling described one particularly impactful workshop: "We have our leaders observe a string quartet in rehearsal, noticing how the quartet uses consensus to experiment and find the decision. Our leaders compare what they observe to how they typically lead and recognize there are more powerful ways to engage their employees."

Lewis summed up the power and impact of arts-based learning by saying: "These workshops actually increase the creativity of our leaders. They look at things differently. Their mindset is expanded. The workshops really help our leaders become more innovative."

Creating Futures that Work engage distinctly different groups (though there is occasional overlap and cross-over) that work on their projects:

Coaches: experienced, seasoned leadership and executive coaches that have received extensive training in arts-based experiential learning and completed our intensive ICF-accredited ABEL certification program. Many of the coaches have personal creative practices that they incorporate into their coaching, but few would identify themselves as professional artists.

Teaching artists: First created to form the Art of Science Learning National Faculty, these are a group of practicing artists, working in many disciplines, who share a passion for bringing their artistic skills, processes and experiences to leaders and organizations. All have received extensive training in the AOSL curriculum and methodologies and many have contributed to the design of workshops designed to strengthen creativity, collaboration, communication,

innovation, future ready leadership and organizational transformation. The teaching artists facilitate workshops and lead hands-on learning sessions in a wide range of workplace settings including corporations, small businesses, professional associations, educational institutions, research centers, centers of informal learning, non-profits, NGO's etc. Over the past decade, they have worked with more than 100 teaching artists. The roster includes classical musicians (we even formed a string quartet for this purpose), jazz ensembles, song writers, blues musicians, actors, theater directors, performance artists, dancers, choreographers, improv theater companies, videographers, filmmakers, poets, spoken word performers, sketch artists, graphic artists, painters, clay sculptors, metal sculptors, kinetic sculptors, pottery artists, model builders, visual artists working in mixed media, muralists, environmental sculptors, suminagashi artists and creators of public art. Teaching artists collaborate closely with the founder of CFTW and AOSL and their coaches, lead workshops, and sometimes serve as artists in residence supporting our incubators - creating original artwork, documenting processes, and expanding the framework for exploring challenges.