

Case Study: The Art of Leadership



Overview

At Talent Futures, we have developed a way for leadership teams to break from their assumptions in their work, overcome black-and-white or binary thinking, and strengthen their relationships and ability to influence across the organisation and their industry.

* * * * *

The Art of Leadership is an optional component of Talent Futures London-based leadership team events. In cooperation with consultant art historian, Charlotte de Mille, Talent Futures offers bespoke lunchtime visits to an art museum to further the agile thinking of leadership teams. The theme of each visit is suggested by the facilitator, based on the team's organisational context, and is agreed with the team in advance. Charlotte de Mille then designs a personalised tour for 90 minutes at a museum close to the event venue.

Prior to these events, a team may consider the museum visit as "down time" during the workshop. However, the works chosen and the discussion about those works give the team opportunity to experience and discuss art that, while unrelated to their work, is directly related to their learning objectives. Themes from previous clients include:

- Cultural norms
- Compliance and regulation
- Housing and modern living

Why and how does this work?

When attention is devoted to an object of art, we are stimulated to reflect on our different values and perspectives, as informed by our personality, our past experiences, and our present circumstances. This "self-challenging" act is critical to developing new responses. Back at the venue, after the tour, the facilitator poses questions about the experience and ties the responses from participants to the learning objectives of the workshop. For example:

- A video installation about blind people making visual art resulted in some of the team feeling discomfort at others being taken advantage of, until they saw how much participants enjoyed what they were doing. This underscored how matters of ethics can be divisive, and reminded them of an ongoing disagreement with another team. They resolved to seek the individual views of the other team and collaborate on a solution.
- In response to a work that challenged the roles of gender, race, and religion in modern society, the team were able to discuss the assumptions they made about diversity in the workplace and their team in particular.

Outcomes

In post-workshop review discussions, the following outcomes of *The Art of Leadership* events have been noted:

- Discussing art with colleagues means each person takes a risk in sharing thoughts that are purely opinion and observation; no logic is involved. This shared vulnerability brings people together and tensions subside.

Case Study: The Art of Leadership



- The way to influence people with opinions different from ours is through listening, not logic.
- The importance of validating others' opinions and understanding others' perceptions increases in significance.
- Once assumptions are broken, the door to more creativity and a better strategy opens.
- Black-and-white thinking is spotted quickly, and the experience stretches the thinking of participants. It becomes possible to consider other ways of looking at things without risking reputation.
- Discussing “What is and isn't art,” leads to “what is and isn't leadership,” and “what is and isn't the way to get things done in the organisation.”

To learn more about *The Art of Leadership* events, please contact us at askacoach@talentfutures.com.