



Leadership is a creative process in the same way that painting, acting, drawing, or other arts are a creative process and the essence of that creative process is in the craft practice, rather than the flash of creative insight.
— Steven S Taylor

Leadership Craft Leadership Art

*Steven S Taylor's new book **Leadership Craft Leadership Art** provides cogent insights and observations on leadership development. Taylor argues, most of the practices around the art of leadership are really about the craft of leadership.*

The craft of leadership only becomes artful when it achieves mastery, but that is beside the point. The point is, achieving artistry in anything is hard work that involves developing and refining your craft. Leadership, says Taylor, is a practice. He asks, "What might leaders learn from the craftsman?" Good question. I don't think many people in our post-modern world really understand the value of craftsmanship. (I didn't until I tried to craft things of aesthetic beauty out of metal and clay. As a beginner, it was very hard to do.)

Taylor explores the nature of creativity in this book provides the reader with a theoretical and practical understanding of the craft and art of leadership. This book is an important addition to the growing field of arts based learning in business. He also dispels the myth that leaders are born.

Here is an excerpt from Chapter 2:

The creative process is a practice and that hard work and craft skills play a large role in that practice. It is not fundamentally about a brilliant creative insight. When I talk to artists about creativity and raise the question that is often asked by business people about how to be more creative, I usually get a blank stare. The artists don't know what I mean by being more creative.

The Swedish artist, Mikael Scherdin told me that being more creative wasn't the problem, his problem was about being less creative. He had too many ideas, too many things he would like to do and not enough time to do it. He went on to say that for him it was all about the process and that any "artworks" that were produced were simply a byproduct of the process and not really important. It's nice when the world likes what you've done and rewards you for it, but that's not why you do it and that's certainly not the point of doing art.

Other artists I have spoken with have also expressed bewilderment about the idea of being more creative or teaching business people to be creative. They often just don't get what it means, saying that they just do their art and they don't really understand what I mean by being creative.

When I draw I don't have any sense of creativity as being about new ideas and/or inspirational sparks of genius – I just draw. When I write, I don't have any sense of being creative in any way that is special or different from other things I do, I just have a sense of the hard work of writing, word after word. I do have a sense of drawing upon my whole self and using every craft skill and aspect of the discipline that I have. It is that sense that I want to explore as it relates to leadership.



Steven S. Taylor is an associate professor in the School of Business at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. His research is focused in two areas: Organizational aesthetics takes seriously the idea that management is as much an art as it is a science, and applies art-based scholarship and practice to management and organizations. Reflective practice is the ability to analyze our own actions and learn from that how to be more effective, ethical, and artful as managers and leaders. At the heart of his work as a researcher and teacher is his own practice as a playwright. From his work in the theater he has come to realize that learning is a whole body sport and this belief influences both his research and teaching.