

## **Economic Vitality of the Arts & Cultural Sector**

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Thank you so much for inviting me to be with you. As a former resident of Washington DC—a city that I claimed as home from 1988-1992—it always gives me greater pleasure to return to this area of the country. Indeed, I owe Virginia so much—the state in which I held my first job after college, teaching high school at Woodberry Forest School; the state in which I spent two wonderful years on the faculty of VA Tech; the state where I sang and danced upon the stage, as it were, in a now defunct supper club in Virginia Beach long, long ago.

I stand before you at a propitious moment in the economic redefinition of Fairfax County.

It is a moment of seismic growth, claiming as it does more population than seven states of the union and more than many of our nation’s largest cities—Boston, Atlanta and Charlotte among them.

It is a population where the per capita rate of college degrees more than doubles the national average.

It is a region in which the growing diversity of our nation can be seen in the shifting demographic base, with people of color now comprising more than 37% of the population.

And perhaps most significantly, it is a population that recognizes that it will become increasingly dependent on its ability to attract non-resident workers to satisfy its growing workforce requirements.

In other words, it’s a community that is ripe for self-scrutiny, for long-term strategic development—and for substantial investment in the arts.

Given my background, you would normally expect me to make this argument from the viewpoint of the not-for-profit sector or from the arts community that I am now privileged to represent.

Let me instead approach this through the lens of the corporate sector where I spent almost 7 years—a sector where I worked in the charitable giving arm of the former Dayton Hudson, now Target, corporation. Target, one of the most successful corporations in America, has placed the arts at the center of its strategic planning and its public giving efforts.

To many, this choice has been surprising: indeed, when I was at Target Stores (formerly Dayton Hudson), we were frequently asked about our 50+ year track record of donating 5% of pretax profits to community groups and specifically of supporting the arts. Typically, we cited our history of giving to the arts--- a grant to an orchestra in the corporation's very first year--- as the origins of the policy. Additionally, we cited the livability of communities as enhanced by the arts--- its value to our own employees and our ability to attract them to our business sites. And we often cited economic impact studies which prove that arts organizations typically leverage an additional \$5-7 for the local economy for every dollar spent on a ticket--- dollars for local restaurants, parking, and gift shops, for local printers who print programs, for sign makers who fashion marquees, for the piano tuners who tune the instruments, for the caterers who run the concessions, etc. When the theatre is imperilled, the entire local small business community is imperilled as well. And now, groundbreaking research by Richard Florida carries that even further in establishing the correlation between vibrant civic communities and creative clusters of people—creative people who are attracted by the opportunities for self-expression and the exposure that only a healthy arts infrastructure can bring.

But while we have often emphasized the larger value of the arts for the health of the larger community, I began to appreciate at Target that the arts were internally indispensable—that they were an essential competitive advantage for any good business. Indeed, a business that ignores the arts is quite simply a business that forsakes its true competitive advantage.

Let's pretend we're taking a walk through a Target store, for example, and divesting it of the impact of arts, artists and arts instruction. Well, the music over the loud speakers clearly is the first to go (something not everyone admittedly may regret, but there you are); next to follow are the audio and entertainment departments. The book section has to go, as does the entire fashion division. Those Michael Graves teapots are out; the colorists and visual artists who work has informed makeup and jewelry means that those departments too have to go. Designers have also crafted much of the furniture and lighting fixtures--- those all go now--- both those in the retail space and those in the "backstage" area where the offices are. At the rate we're going, we're only going to have household solvents and fertilizer left, but we will need to repackage those without design labels and special holders—some paper bags will do. Frankly, it's a miracle we've found the store: we need to eliminate the advertising, the copy writing, the clever TV commercials with actors that engender consumer curiosity and loyalty, the branding graphics of the Target image itself. Without store planners, whose strategic use of space is key to retail success, we have what little merchandise we have all arranged in a cluttered heap--- and indeed, we really have no store at all, since architects, those folks who got their start largely in arts classes in schools, suddenly haven't been there to create the designs. In short, we're out in a field, where no one can find us or be aware we exist, trying to sell generic products in unappealing packaging. Those of us who follow Target are aware of its rapid ascent into the American consciousness, its place at the center of New York fashion and advertising industries even though there is no Target store in Manhattan. Clearly, they have competitors--- WalMart and Kmart among others--- but their upscale image, their trend forward fashions, their hip advertising, their in-house

lines of designer- and artist- lines like those Michael Graves teapots--- suggest significantly that the competitive edge stems from having better design, better imaging, better use of language, better art, better artists than their competitors--- artists who began to hone their skills in creative writing classes, in sculpture and painting classes, in music-- orchestra, band and chorus--- classes, in acting classes long ago as children.

For those of us who deal in the arts traffic in the world of the human spirit, and this analysis can seem a bit mercenary. With the advent of new research, we in the arts community have become increasingly sophisticated about quantifying our value in other dimensions. Resaercher Shirley Brice Heath of Stanford University has reams of studies which prove that after school arts programs dramatically outperform all other after school activities in significant ways. Working with high risk students, Heath found that arts students are four times more likely to win academic awards, four times as likely to participate in math and science fairs, show significant reduction in disciplinary infractions and perform better on verbal and math SAT scores than students without arts experiences. These studies were reinforced by a Harvard study focusing on students working with Shakespeare, work that promotes greater complexity in thinking, greater verbal acuity, tolerance of ambiguity, interpretive skills and increased sense of self-discipline and self-esteem. A UCLA study proves that high school seniors who participated in the creation of theatre are 40% less likely to tolerate racist behavior than kids who were not theatre participants, and was I the only one who registered the New York Times features on Columbine--- features where the students repeatedly said the ONLY place they felt a sense of community, where the cliques lost their power, and the disenfranchised felt welcome was in the performing arts center?

Author Daniel Goldman, in his WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE says that the primary indicator of success in today's working world --- in leading in any dimension of our society---is emotional intelligence--- empathy, team building, the ability to listen to others and motivate, self-awareness, self confidence and self control; commitment and integrity; the ability to communicate and influence, to initiate and accept change--- the very principles that lie at the heart of creating art, the very abilities instilled by arts instruction.

Increasingly, however, we understand that supporting the arts is more than simply addressing present desire and need: it's about positioning us for the long term to thrive economically, spiritually and socially. At the heart of Richard Florida's argument is the new shift that people are now less likely to relocate for professional advancement within a corporation and more likely to switch companies while maintaining allegiance to the community in which they have decided to build a home and a life. Whatever the source of attraction to Fairfax County, a health arts environment will insure that they will stay.

Daniel Pink, in his new book A WHOLE NEW MIND, notes that the hunger of consumers for artistic and design based work—from examples as mundane as the hunger for Michael Graves toilet brushes now on sale at Target to those as profound as the civic pride in the new Frank Gehry Disney Hall in Los Angeles as a source of communal distinctiveness—warrants new investments in public art and healthy conditions for artists.

And for those of us concerned about education—and who isn't—the words of Ken Robinson, author of *OUT OF OUR MINDS*, are particularly apt. Robinson notes the traditional hierarchy of education—the arts and sciences at the top, the humanities next and the arts at the bottom—spring from historical conditions—that these structures and the very school systems were designed to solve the problems of the industrial age. We live today, however, in a post-industrial economy—an inherent disconnect between our schools and our lives that lies at the heart of the profound morass in which education now seems mired. In the post-industrial world—especially one in which we export an increasing amount of blue collar work to other points on the globe or relegate to technology—creativity will increasingly be the currency of the future. Clearly we in the arts do not hold a monopoly on creativity, but we have much to offer: the community that treasures the arts inevitably is the one best positioned to compete in the post industrial world in which we increasingly live and operate.

Even without these arguments and this gaze into the crystal ball of the future, Americans instinctively treasure the arts. 87% of Americans in some polls want their children to have arts education, for example, and when pressed can be articulate about the impact of the arts in their lives.

When I worked at Target, I often traveled to new communities as part of a “swat team” to introduce a store before it even opened. We'd arrive and explain Target's remarkable policy of donating 5% of pre-tax profits to not for profits in communities where they operate. “We're coming to town,” we'd say. “We're giving money away, and here's how you can ask for a piece of that pie, if you share our three funding priorities of education, domestic violence prevention or the arts.” In every town I visited, sooner or later a hand would go up and someone would say, “In our town, we have AIDS exploding through the ceiling. We have welfare to work issues. We have a homeless shelter without enough beds, a library system that can't afford to buy books, a food shelf without enough supplies to feed the hungry. Why the hell do you people give so much money to the arts.” I'd stop and ask, “How many of you grew up singing in the church choir or acting in the school play or painting pictures in art class.” Almost every hand would go up. “What did you learn from that?” I'd say. Someone would say “I learned stage left” and someone else would mention learning to read a musical scale. But then someone would say, “You know, I learned punctuality. You could ditch class or show up late at my school, but you can't show up at 8:15 when the curtain goes up at 8.” “I learned teamwork, because when you sing in the choir, it's not about how well you sing--- it's about how well you listen and blend with others.” Others talked about delayed gratification, how they could practice those musical scales a hundred times and then suddenly one day they'd bloom without warning. Stamina. Physical rigor. My favorite was a retired Marine in Jacksonville, NC, who said, “I didn't learn discipline in the Marines; I learned discipline playing the French horn.” And when it came to theatre, people would say, “I learned to see the world. I learned to hear the world. I learned to feel the world through someone's eyes and ears and heart, other than my own.” When it comes to problems of AIDS and declining education and hunger and the host of other

problems we as a society face, if we don't have that empathic ability to see the world through each other's eyes and ears and hearts, we can't even have the conversation.

These values--- whether economic impact, competitive edge, leadership cultivation, self imaging or even empathic capacity building--- are not central merely to good business; they are central to good civilization. And they do not come without a price. What is true about the arts--- and especially about theater--- is that the arts are guided by a constant need for new products: we start over from scratch with every production, which brings together a new team of collaborators, new actors, new designs, etc., all of which have a shelf life of 8 weeks before they are swept away and our entire inventory is re-invented. We have high fixed costs, resistant to efficiency strategies--- no matter what you do, *THREE SISTERS* by Chekhov will always need 13 actors, and a complete *HAMLET* can't be done with fewer than 16. We incur our costs up front, building sets, paying actors, purchasing materials and constructing costumes, long before the first ticket can be bought and redeemed. We walk a fine line of commitment to our mission of creativity and dependence on the imperatives of the box office--- and we do all this with little or all too often no capitalization. Of the 1600 not for profit theatres in the country today, only three have endowment commensurate with National Arts Stabilization's formula for stability.

And so we look to you as true champions--- champions who understand that this doesn't come cheap. That ticket revenues typically only cover 60% of the expenses of any production--- and that they cover less when then play is less well-known or less immediately accessible to audience tastes. That every day, we have to raise more and more and more--- that a theatre the size of the Arena Stage in Washington—a \$13 million theater typically has to raise \$113,000 in contributions every week just to balance the budget, and that on the first day of a new fiscal year, it starts all over again.

Is it worth it? Clearly that's a determination you will individually reach, but I challenge you, out of your love for Utah to join me in realizing that your businesses deserve the arts. Your communities deserve the arts. And your children deserve the arts. And none of them will have the arts without your ongoing, generous and visionary help.

Probably most of you are here, not because you were ordered by your company, but because at some point in your life, a strain of Bach was heard, and your life was changed. A swan on point fluttered onstage from the wings, and your life was changed. You climbed a staircase and saw an explosion of color in a painting, and your life was changed. Or perhaps somewhere, you went into a large room, the lights went down, and when they came back up, a voice began to speak--- and your life was changed. Giving to the arts allows us to honor the past, commemorate the present, and shape and change the future in a way that does honor to all and violence to none. Giving to the arts is being an agent for change. Change that elevates. That expands. That unleashes potential, galvanizes the collective imagination, that is truly, for those of us spiritually inclined, God's work.

Thank you for all you do in God's work; and thank you for your kindness and patience in listening to me today.