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The Balancing Act of

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CHAPTER 1

ARTECONOMY:
STIMULATING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION THROUGH ART

Herman Van den Broeck and Eva Cools

In his book *A Whole New Mind* (2006), Daniel Pink claims that the ability to grasp 'the big picture' will be the key skill of the future, the skill which will allow employees and companies to really make a difference. In a world where factors other than functionality and cost price have long since been at play, and where design, symphony and meaningfulness are destined to become the most important criteria, the need for open and creative innovation is greater than ever before. In this new competitive arena, the 64,000 dollar question is this: can your company become as integrated and as excellent in its performances as the famous *Cirque du Soleil*? For many years, *Cirque du Soleil* has been assimilating individual world-class acts into a magnificent spectacle, which gives the spectator a non-stop emotional experience of grace and beauty that he will never forget. In so doing, they outperform traditional circuses and set new standards of quality. In a similar manner, organisations are trying to find new ways to embed more creativity, more innovative potential and more entrepreneurship into the everyday running of their businesses. This means that they also need to devote sufficient attention to really 'making it happen': all the way from innovation to implementation.

Forward-looking organisations are constantly searching for effective ways to make their organisational culture better prepared for the realisation of this new mission. And it is undoubtedly true that some companies have a clear competitive advantage when it comes to creativity and innovation. A well-established name such as 3M can justifiably boast of an 'innovative legacy', as their Vice President Jack Truong explained at the First European Home Improvement Forum 2010 in Vienna. What is the result of this legacy? In the case of 3M it means, for example, that we no longer need a hammer and nail if we want to hang something on the wall. And we can take it away again, without tearing half the house down: simple, effective and commercially viable technology, creating a win-win for everyone.

BREAKING THE MOULD: THE ARTECONOMY STORY

The Flemish non-profit Arteconomy vzw has developed a novel and ingenious method for cultivating an innovative spirit within organisations. Their secret is to bring businesspeople and artists together in a series of almost unique projects. The basic concept behind this initiative is the growing awareness that art and economics are not two separate worlds, but two aspects of a single creative process that contributes towards the development of society as a whole (1).

“It is time to shake up some of our mental models,” says Julie Vandenbroucke, founder and driving force behind Arteconomy. *“Businesses need to redefine their vision of artists as being ‘eccentric’, ‘lazy’ and ‘odd’; and artists need to learn that business means more than producing, buying and selling, and making profit. Above all, it is important for us to break out of the fixed patterns of the art world and the economic world, so that we can all learn to think in other ways (2).”*

ARTISTS AND ENTREPRENEURS: A NEW RELATIONSHIP

Michel Espeel (manager of the Espeel Constructions metal company) and his wife Julie Vandenbroucke have cherished a passionate love of art for many years. In 1989, this ‘love’ lay at the basis of an exciting new venture in which they sought to combine business sense and artistic values.

It all began when Espeel Constructions decided to start up the production of metal sculptures and metal components for various sculptors. Artists were selected on the basis of project proposals that showed real potential for a positive and mutually enriching collaboration. The couple soon discovered that the world of art is a very different environment from the world of business. In this sense, the collaboration allowed Espeel to think and live in a way that tangibly ‘crossed borders’. For most artists, ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘management’ tended to be alien concepts. As a result, their first experience of the working environment at Espeel Constructions felt like a confrontation. But as the old adage says: “What doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger” – and so it proved with the artists. This, in part, is what Julie Vandenbroucke means when she speaks of an ‘enriching’ collaboration.

Michel Espeel can now reflect on a period of almost 20 years, during which art has become embedded in his company culture: *“When I look back, I think*

I can distinguish three main phases. The first years, from the beginning of 1989 up to the middle of 1997, are what I call the 'creeper' phase. During that period our collaboration was completely internal, and we were hardly aware of what it was doing to the company. From 1997 until 2001, there was more outside interest and exhibitions began to be organised in the company lobby. It was in that phase that I started to realise that there is a huge difference in effect between a single event involving art and a more structured process approach. From then on, we worked more seriously at developing new forms of collaboration with artists in our company. That was during the years from 2002 to 2006."

The Arteconomy company was officially founded in 2002. This represented the formalisation – and an important moment of tangible success – for a joint venture that had blossomed organically over the years. The company's official aim was to investigate and develop the possibilities provided by the field of tension which exists between art and the economy. It is this field of tension which acts as a lever for reflection on entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation and social relevance. It also sheds new light on the new role that artists can play in society. In other words, Arteconomy is a genuine think-tank, a real discussion forum for art-loving businesspeople and business-minded artists: a true 'meeting of minds'.

In this respect, the above quotation from Michel Espeel is particularly revealing. It shows the way in which entrepreneurial thinking has developed, but also highlights the development of the role of the artist within this project. Whereas art was initially present as an object, or possibly as the starting point for a discussion, the whole process behind the artwork is now being used as a catalyst for change within the company. This much is clear from what Espeel says: *"Arteconomy was founded to investigate the collaboration between art and the economy, not necessarily within our own company but within the context of society at large, as a social model in its own right. At the same time, we began a parallel study to examine the possibilities for implementing this collaboration in a manner which would allow it to act as an instrument of growth and development in the company."*

A SERIES OF SEMINARS: CELLMATES OR SOUL-MATES?

Working with a group of 25 interested Flemish entrepreneurs, Arteconomy organised a series of eight seminars between February 2004 and June 2005, under the title: 'Art and the Economy: we don't see the difference'.

The seminars were introduced by eight well-known speakers, each of whom approached the central theme from a different perspective. The introductory speaker proposed and defended a controversial point of view, which was followed by a far-reaching discussion with the businesspeople who were present. The aim of these evenings was to create space for a debate about the relationship between art and economics, and, more specifically, how this relationship could lead to a win-win situation that would strengthen both worlds.

The initial premise of the series was that entrepreneurs and artists each have their own different forms of capital, but that they also share a number of areas in common. The entrepreneur's capital is money, which is used to finance the manufacture, distribution and marketing of his products or services. The artist's capital is freedom: freedom of thought, freedom to choose his own way of expressing himself.

This description underlines the differences in background and attitude between the entrepreneur and the artist. But it is precisely these differences which make the confrontation between them such a valuable and useful experience. The entrepreneurs can approach the artists to find meaning for the things that they do (for example, how to use language and symbols that are specific to art). The artists in turn can approach entrepreneurs for ideas about how their artworks can best be integrated into society (not only in commercial terms, but also in terms of communication, strategy and efficiency).

The aim of the Arteconomy initiative was – and still is – to help both partners to look at each other from the other's perspective. Or as Francis De Beir, the chairman of the series of seminars, once put it in an interview: (Ruyters, 2006): *“The two worlds of art and economics can unite, providing that everyone recognises that everything they do is more than just a fight for survival or the making of a quick profit. If they can understand that they are able to influence and change the environment through their activities, they will both feel obliged to assume responsibility for their actions. Just as it is the task of the entrepreneur to leave the world a better place than he found it, so it is the artist's task to contribute equally towards that common goal. Both entrepreneurs and artists seek to break open what already exists. But whereas the entrepreneur does not question his boundaries and limits, and only tries to find the means to move beyond them, the artist is interested in investigating these boundaries and limits, in his search for a way to recreate our space over and over again.”*

During this initial phase, the seminar series was little more than a kind of networking platform, where entrepreneurs could exchange thoughts and ideas about their hobby and passion. Yet even at this early stage there was a clear consensus among the participants that companies could increase their creative potential if they made better use of the know-how and the unique way of thinking that is specific to artists. Based on this perception and following a number of successful joint projects involving Espeel Constructions and various local artists, several business organisations agreed to set up trial company experiments, in order to test out the theory in practice. Afterwards, the participating entrepreneurs said that they felt as if they were at the beginning of a long and exciting journey – and so they were.

THE FIRST IN-COMPANY PROJECTS: FROM PIONEERS TO PROFESSIONALS

The first series of theoretical seminars on the relationship between art and business had brought together a few like-minded individuals who wanted to do more than just philosophise. They hoped to transfer the philosophy of Arteconomy to the workplace by means of a number of concrete projects.

Right from the very beginning, the approach to these projects was very open. On both sides, there was a good deal of curiosity about what would happen when the world of work and the art world were thrown together. The entrepreneurs involved saw the projects in this phase as an open meeting that would (hopefully) have creative and innovative consequences on the work floor.

Manu Tuytens, the manager of Concordia Textiles, a medium-sized textiles company in Belgium, described this approach in the following terms: *“I have felt for a long time that art challenges me to reframe certain convictions that I hold about reality. It stimulates me all the time to rethink my function as an entrepreneur. It makes me think about the entrepreneur’s role in society as a whole. It also helps me to put things in perspective. And if art can challenge me in this way as a person, then I am convinced that it will also challenge my employees in a similar way, if they are more closely involved in the creation of an artwork. Most employees are not used to asking the questions that an artist usually asks, so I hope that the project can help them to broaden and deepen their patterns of thinking.”*

In these initial projects, Arteconomy played an important role as an intermediary, helping to bridge the gulf between the artists and the companies,

by offering support to both sides in their efforts to define and organise their collaboration. In particular, Arteconomy was responsible for the analysis of the respective interests of the various participants, in order to ensure a suitable match between the right artist and the right businesses. *“At our first meeting, we don’t talk about art per se, but about the soul behind art,”* explains Julie Vandembroucke. *“Art is just a means, not an end. The idea is not to think in terms of the artwork and its value. No, the question is this: what can art achieve in the company and how can it change the company’s culture? The art project is a vehicle for bringing about a certain way of thinking amongst the employees; a way of thinking which moves beyond traditional patterns, which allows thinking outside the box. From my point of view, this artistic collaboration is based on a simple idea: I want to make a work of art with people and materials from my company, and I want this to open the eyes of my employees to the world, by bringing them into contact with the artist and working with him or her.”*

Seven projects were started up during this initial phase, varying in length from six months to two years (3). The main objective of the projects was to break through hierarchical and element-based thinking, evolving towards a more system-based approach, which would place greater emphasis on the power of diversity. The seven projects consciously chose to define a particular situation, feeling or general question as a starting point. In these first joint ventures between the artists and the companies, the focus was on the work of art itself, but as the Arteconomy concept gradually gained clearer shape and form, so the focus shifted to the process by which the work of art is created. In the beginning, this process was regarded as a side issue; now it is regarded as the central element of the Arteconomy philosophy, with the artwork being relegated almost to a side issue. By working together, the business community and the artist initiate a process whose main aim is ‘change’. The manner in which this change is achieved, and the precise nature of the link between business priorities and artistic priorities, is something that grows organically, as the company and the artist work together.

This collaboration has benefits both for business and the artists. For the companies and their staff, it is a way to sharpen their sense of entrepreneurship, to stimulate creativity and internal networking, to increase motivation and communication, and to improve the quality of thinking and decision-making. For the artist, there is an opportunity to make a work of art within the framework of a business structure. The world of commerce can teach artists new skills, such as better planning, budgeting, marketing, etc.; skills which can

later be applied to their works of art and to the successful 'business' development of their artistic careers.

AN ARTIST AND BUSINESS: THE DRAGON OF DEERLIJK AT PROMO FASHION

Promo Fashion is a rapidly growing company in the textiles sector in Belgium, making clothing for men, women and children. Promo Fashion is a good company to work for, judging by the fact that it came sixth in the 'Best Employer' polls for 2007 (in the category for small companies with fewer than 500 employees). At present, it employs about 280 people.

Business manager Michel Delfosse learnt to love art as a small child. A visit to the company's premises shows that he has brought this love of art to his work. The building is a glass construction with strong, tight lines, abundant light and greenery, stylish design lamps and desks: in short, a modern business environment, graced by works of art from several well-known Flemish artists on the walls. Promo Fashion makes a limited annual budget available to buy new works or other forms of decoration and the employees' preferences are the deciding factor in the final choice of what to purchase. This is a sound investment and a sound strategy: the same employees have testified repeatedly that working in an attractive, artistic environment contributes to a more positive atmosphere at work – and to better output.

In the past, Promo Fashion's art-loving business manager has been the driving force behind a wide variety of artistic and cultural activities organised within his company. Several exhibitions have been held in the company building and there are regular staff excursions to external art exhibitions elsewhere in Belgium. There is always plenty of interest and enthusiasm for these activities. *"Art excursions were the beginning, but also a turning point,"* says Delfosse. *"As a result, our working environment has changed completely over the past few years. For example, we consulted the staff closely about our new office furniture. A Dutch artist designed a very unusual collection for us."*

Promo Fashion is a family business. As was typical of such companies until recently, in the past management tended to be imposed on the staff from above. Delfosse dreams of evolving towards a company culture where the employees take more initiative and speak out more readily. Personally, he thinks that his employees are less aware of the need for change. They are happy with the

pleasing and ‘inspirational’ work environment that they enjoy at present. This, of course, is largely due to Delfosse’s impassioned leadership. Even so, he is not prepared to rest on his laurels. He believes that even greater creativity and bottom-up input are required to maintain his company’s innovative impetus.

After coming into contact with Arteconomy, Delfosse decided to start up a project to address this need. He was convinced that the Arteconomy philosophy could have a positive effect on the creative and innovative capital of his company: *“As I see it, contact between the artist and the employees is the central prop of this project. I want to try and bring about a cross-fertilisation of ideas between fundamentally different visions. This does not mean that I necessarily expect our people to agree with the artist’s way of thinking. For me, it’s about the encounter between different perspectives, about being open to these perspectives and showing understanding for them. I am certain that by opening our minds to new and unfamiliar visions, we can stimulate a different perspective on ‘people in general’ and on the world we live in. As a result, we also understand the world better – which helps us to perform better.”*

Delfosse went looking for an artist who could generate this kind of thought-provoking reaction within his company. After discussing the matter with his employees and with Arteconomy (acting as an intermediary), he eventually came into contact with the artist Els Opsomer. Delfosse knew that the artist needed to be someone quite extravert, who could establish a good rapport with his employees in a minimum of time. There was no need for the artist to be familiar with textiles or the fashion sector – after all, the project was more about the perception of fashion and textiles than about its reality – but it was necessary for him/her to believe in what Delfosse was trying to achieve. This was nothing less than a real collaboration between artist and employees, which would create greater sensitivity towards a wider and different perspective on fashion, the company’s products and humanity’s place in the world.

Els Opsomer was immediately intrigued. *“There were two elements that really interested me right from my very first meetings with Promo Fashion. On the one hand, you can feel that the company’s past is still an important part of its culture, but on the other hand you can also feel a need to move forward, a desire to become more involved with the whole world that can no longer be held back. If you inherit a family company, I think that it must be difficult to combine your own ambitions with your family’s expectations. How can you go your own way, whilst at the same time continuing the family tradition?”*

Opsomer wanted to build several fields of tension into the project. She not only saw a possible conflict between the needs of the local and the global economy, but was also struck by the stark contrast between the 'glitzy' design world of Promo Fashion, with its impressive reception area and modern offices, and the 'dark and dusty' backrooms of the business where the real work was carried on.

Fortunately for the success of the project, it clicked immediately between the artist and the manager. Opsomer was won over by what she refers to as Delfosse's *"enthusiasm for art, his sensitivity towards the 'everydayness' of his employees and his great respect for their vision of 'his' world."* Opsomer sensed the makings of an interesting story in the different elements at play within the company. Firstly, there was the company as an economic reality; secondly, there was the business manager's own passion, both for his work and for art; and thirdly, there were the interests and opinions of the people who worked there. As she explained: *"Opposite poles that repel each other, and often seem to be each others' competitors, actually belong together. The one cannot exist without the other. The space between them is what interests me, particularly to see how a harmony can be reached, even between seemingly irreconcilable elements."*

Once she had visited Promo Fashion and met with some of the employees to discuss the contents of the project, the artist came up with the idea of the 'Dragon of Deerlijk'. Opsomer proposed nothing less than the creation of a new work of art within the walls of the company: *"I chose a dragon because of its symbolic value and also because it didn't necessarily need to have a specific shape. The dragon was a reference to Asia as well, where a large proportion of the world textile industry is now concentrated, particularly in China. As an artist, the space to create something new and the time to allow it to mature are important factors. This is something that you gradually learn to come to terms with, by trial and error. You need blind trust in your ability to surrender to that creative 'emptiness', in order to achieve the desired end result. This is a delicate process, and one which is often sacrificed at an early stage in favour of economic (financial) security. Trusting in your own imagination and refusing to dismiss your creativity, no matter how 'silly' it might sometimes seem: these are lessons that I can offer to people in the business world, people who mainly live to perpetuate an established pattern of behaviour and activity. Working patterns of this kind sometimes mean that people lose sight of everything else. Why? Because making sure your work runs smoothly is seen as 'serious' and 'important', whereas other more 'frivolous' activities, such as art, are regarded as a waste of time."*

The idea was to use the company's different products, such as textiles, Christmas decorations, shoes, handbags, handkerchiefs, sheets, lingerie, etc. to make the work of art. It was decided to invite each member of staff to contribute a piece of cloth that had a sentimental value to him or her, and to find out what has become of that material today. Is it manufactured? Who supplies it? What is it made from? *"This is a way of linking the intimate and the infinite, of building a bridge between Belgium and the other side of the world."*

Els Opsomer's proposal was accepted by Michel Delfosse and was presented to the employees. Their involvement with the project was tangible right from the start. Their willingness to join in was considerable, although their own creative contribution during the initial meetings was very limited. The artist explained her feelings in an e-mail to Delfosse just a few days after the project had begun: *"To come back to my last visit to Promo Fashion for a moment: the atmosphere was good this time and people were curious, but they were still too reserved. It was almost like they were saying: 'let's just wait and see before we commit'. This is logical in a way, since most people's first concern is their work. I wonder what the best method would be to get the best or the most satisfactory results. Your company evokes countless images in my mind and touches many different emotional chords. I'm really enthusiastic about making something, doing something. But the question is: how do I involve the others? The staff feels inhibited. They often think that their remarks aren't relevant. But as we all know, big ideas are often hidden in small words."*

They decided to make a website to communicate with the staff and to keep a diary of the project. The physical presence of the artist in the company was clearly a requirement. She was given a place to work close to the staff, where she could be seen and heard. Some of the staff even took turns to help her with the artwork, a development which Opsomer was keen to encourage.

But things did not go as well as had been hoped. Some had imagined that 'joining in with the project' would be more than just helping out with the sewing on a couple of afternoons. For others, the whole business was just a silly waste of time that stopped you from getting on with your own work. There was gossip. Friction arose. Michel Delfosse and Els Opsomer both recognised the importance of these tensions and agreed that they needed to be taken seriously. In consultation with Arteconomy in its role as a process coach, Delfosse decided to organise an anonymous survey of the people involved in the project, in order to find out precisely what the problems were.

The survey was followed by a meeting to discuss the results. This meeting made it clear that the employees were not really enjoying the project. They liked contributing to the artwork and they were interested in the basic idea, but they didn't feel sufficiently involved. They felt that their role was too passive, like workers on a production line who were merely carrying out a predetermined task. They wanted more influence. Their main complaint was that they couldn't really be creative because everything "had to be done how the artist wanted". Their creativity was bridled. They had the impression that it had been decided in advance that they were going to make a dragon, like it or not. Even most of the details had been taken out of their hands. In short, 'their' project had been hijacked!

This was an interesting discovery for Delfosse and Opsomer. It was a very different reaction than at the beginning of the project, when the manager and the artist both felt that the employees were not too concerned about their own influence and were not very articulate in expressing their wishes. However, by being involved in the artwork in a passive manner, their behaviour and opinions gradually began to change. Their interest was stimulated, even to the point of friction. The staff now discovered that they did want to have a say. They had ideas about the concept behind the artwork and they wanted to express these ideas. This led to renewed commitment towards the project. More significantly, the employees saw the importance of making their own contribution – which was precisely the intention behind the entire venture.

Michel Delfosse described it as follows: *"Following further consultation, we finally decided that we did want to carry on working on the dragon, notwithstanding all the frustrations and the conflicts. But the most important thing for me was that I could see that the demand for influence, consultation and responsibility had grown among my employees, precisely because of the frustrations which they had experienced through working on the project. Something was brewing. Perhaps we did decide a bit too quickly in the beginning what we were going to make, but nobody seemed too concerned at the time. This is no longer the case – and that is a very positive development. Unlike before, the staff now dares to question things and consider them more carefully. The project might not have resulted in major 'business' developments and personal changes, but nonetheless there is a growing need for involvement throughout the company, and an understanding of its importance and value."*

CHANGE, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION: THE TRIANGULAR MINDSET

We live in a time of change. In the years ahead, most companies will be forced to look closely at the way they run their business. The truly smart entrepreneurs will seek to link this inevitable change process to the values of creativity and innovation. This critical triangle – change-creativity-innovation – will need to become embedded in the mindset of every company and every employee. The three elements are inter-dependent: miss out one element, and the other two will be meaningless.

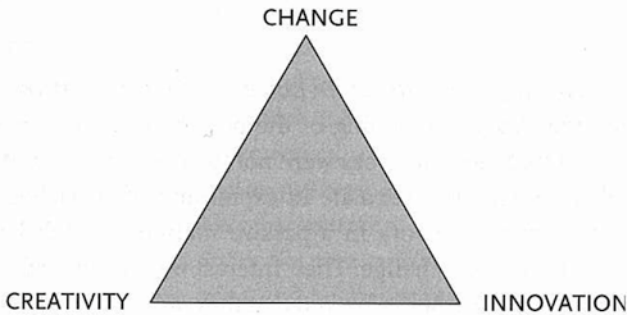


Figure 1 - The triangular mindset for change

There are two possible approaches to creating such a triangular change mindset: there is the pre-programmed approach and the branching approach.

In the pre-programmed approach, the direction to be followed is set down in advance by management. The path is mapped out and imposed from above or outside. This is very much a top-down approach. The role of the employees is limited to the accurate (and obedient) implementation of the change trajectory. In contrast, the branching approach makes use of impulses which operate from the bottom up. With this approach, employees have the opportunity and the autonomy to direct the change process through their own actions and decisions. The role of 'external' third parties (top management or consultants) is restricted to the coaching of employees rather than imposing the way things should happen. It will come as no surprise to learn that Arteconomy believes in this second approach.

Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. Pre-programming is initially easier to implement and control. This strategy is consequently recommended when there is insufficient time to adopt a more discursive

approach; for example, in crisis situations. When your ship is sinking fast, you need to take firm, effective and – above all – prompt action. Your crew needs to be briefed and told what to do. Participative decision-making would only slow things down and allow the ship to sink even lower in the water.

The problem with pre-programming is that your organisation may slide into a rules-dominated mindset, where everything is done ‘by the book’, instead of allowing a dynamic change process to unfold, which is better oriented towards the product, the customer or the market. It is also questionable to what extent an imposed structure will actually be implemented on the shop floor. This approach may give managers a false sense of control.

In addition, pre-programming may result in what is now known as a ‘bureaucrazy’. The risk in a ‘bureaucrazy’ is that the models imposed from above will gradually develop an ‘imagined’ life of their own (espoused theory), in co-existence with ‘real’ life on the ground (enacted reality). This leads to ‘double organisations’, where people on the one hand serve the ‘system’ in order to oblige their managers (espoused theory), whilst on the other hand doing exactly what they please (enacted reality).

A branching strategy has the major advantage that the change triangle is experienced and supported from within. This strategy requires more time than pre-programming before tangible results become visible, which means that the sense of control from above is initially much less. Ultimately, however, the beneficial effects will manifest themselves more quickly on the shop floor. Characteristic of this approach is the direct involvement of the employees. They determine what happens, when it happens and how it happens, which narrows the gulf between boardroom theory and shop-floor reality. Since the branching strategy foresees a process of continual development, a culture of learning from mistakes is vitally important. This means that each mistake is the starting point for a new learning process. This benefits the growth and development of the company, and creates a real change mindset based on creativity and innovation. This is crucial for the anchoring of change in the long term.

Yet branching can also have its drawbacks. Sometimes, internal creative ideas are insufficiently fed by innovations from the outside world. In other circumstances, branching may lead to ‘ad-hocrazy’. In an ad-hocrazy, unrestricted voluntarism risks turning into undirected change, resulting in an aimless chaos in which no form of overarching goal-orientation is present. In this respect, Arteconomy is the exception which proves the rule. It is one of the few

companies in Belgium that simultaneously illustrates originality and process development from within.

A good change process begins with a conscious decision about the best approach to take (see Table 1). Not infrequently, the extreme variants of each strategy (bureaucrazy and ad-hocrazy) will lead companies onto the slippery slope of 'change for change's sake'. This must be avoided at all costs. In practice, about 70 to 80% of organisations opt for the pre-programming approach. In particular, a lack of time for proper consultation and the need to feel in control makes this the preferred option with the majority of managers. Even so, branching can often lead to more constructive results in the long term.

Table 1 · Two ways of creating the triangular change mindset

	<i>Pre-programming</i>	<i>Branching</i>
Goal	Structured intervention	Continual adjustment
How	Strong blueprint imposed top-down	A learning process developed bottom-up
Time dimension	Short-term process, with positive effects on a few specifically determined economic parameters	Long-term process, ensuring a capacity for continual learning
Learning potential	Follow, measure and adjust in accordance with a predetermined model	Learn from mistakes and adjust according to the concrete situation
Key players	Senior management takes the initiative and intervenes; the project team implements; the base follows	The base suggests and initiates; the project team discusses and implements; senior management coaches
Added value	Coherent approach, which very quickly becomes a formal frame of reference	Close correlation to 'moments of truth'
Possible pitfall	Focus on serving models that are divorced from 'moments of truth' (bureaucrazy)	A wild growth of initiatives with a consequent dilution of vision, lack of overarching goals and proliferation of processes (ad-hocrazy)

RIGHT DIRECTED THINKING

In recent management literature, the stimulation of innovation and creative abilities has been increasingly linked to artists (4). It is certainly true that creativity requires us to be able to step outside of our stereotypical conceptions, and it is equally true that art is one of the most pressing invitations to do precisely that. Many artists are 'unusual' people, people who think differently from most managers and employees. As such, they are a unique resource, and one which can teach us to look at things in a radical new way. Art invites us to find expression for what we are really feeling and thinking. If we can apply this same principle in our work environment, the potential benefits to companies are enormous.

This is the basic principle on which Arteconomy is based. Arteconomy stimulates creativity and innovation inside companies by exploiting the field of tension between economic activity and art. Even so, Julie Vandembroucke remains realistic about the problems. *"The relationship between art and the economy is vulnerable in three areas. First and foremost, its success is highly dependent on the vision and commitment of the entrepreneur. Secondly, it is difficult to measure the effect of Arteconomy in a quantitative way. You can certainly note qualitative effects, but in my experience this still meets with a lot of resistance from the business community. Finally, a heavy weight of responsibility rests on the shoulders of the intermediary, the artist or the process coach who creates the art-economy link. There needs to be clarity of purpose about what we are trying to achieve. If, for example, the joint project is commercially inspired, I think that the artist's autonomy is in greater danger than when the project originates from an intermediary, who is primarily concerned to promote cross-pollination between the world of art and the world of economics."*

A number of projects have already been completed under the Arteconomy banner; others are still in progress and yet more are waiting to begin. The merit of this unique approach is that it deals with the problem of developing a creative attitude inside business in an original way. Whereas the professional literature usually limits itself to a passionate plea for 'more creativity', Arteconomy offers a very concrete gateway to success. As Philip Maertens, former director of Siemens Automation & Drives recently put it: *"If I had to summarise the effect of Arteconomy, I would say that their art projects offer a major added value by stimulating entrepreneurs and companies to reflect on what they are doing and how they are doing it. The projects provide a creative foundation, with the artist in the position of role model. This means that the lessons learned from the projects can help us in the future, when we are trying to ensure a creative foundation during other*

change projects involving employees. Arteconomy sends out a clear message to these employees: 'here you are allowed to think differently for once; here you can try out something crazy, if you want; here there is room for unconventional thinking.' I call this the 'red carpet' effect, in the sense that it creates a platform for later changes."

And what does the future hold for Arteconomy? In July 2010 Julie Vandenberg confirmed that the unique approach of Arteconomy is still very much appreciated by those companies who are prepared to accept the risk of a collaborative project. She reiterated that the Arteconomy philosophy is at its best in no-nonsense environments, where managers genuinely wish to install the new change triangle in their company thinking and where employees enjoy real autonomy to make a positive and continuous contribution to the improvement of products and services. This means that the Arteconomy method is perhaps easier to apply in smaller companies, but bigger concerns can also benefit, providing they resist the temptation to over-structure, which can impede the development of a branching strategy. If they can do this, then the future is looking bright – for all of us.

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NOTES

(1) 'Vzw' is a Dutch acronym meaning 'vereniging zonder winstoogmerk' and is used to denote a non-profit making organisation. The quotes are based on various interviews with Julie Vandenbroucke.

(2) The quotations from other stakeholders are based upon in-depth interviews held in 2008 and 2009, during the writing of the Arteconomy case study.

(3) For more information, please see Van den Broeck, H., Cools, E. and Maenhout, T. (2008).

(4) For example, see the book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) by Richard Florida.