The Power of Cultural Learning

Welcome to the Report
Skills 2023 – The Power of Cultural Learning
For the second consecutive year, we are proud to present the Skills Report, with the aim of sharing relevant and future-oriented insights into learning within the cultural sector. Last year's report received an incredibly positive response and has served as a source to highlight issues related to future competency needs within the cultural sector. It has also been used by organisations as a foundation for environmental analyses and strategic decision-making. With a constant ambition to renew and expand the report year after year, we endeavour to present new insights regarding the field of competence development.

We are convinced that learning is a powerful resource for cultural organisations. By maintaining an open attitude towards changes in the outside world and continually deepening and expanding employee skills, we can maintain high quality operations and create sustainable organisations.

In this year's report, we present five learning concepts for cultural organisations. We hope that these five will serve as a catalyst to generate new ideas as well as concrete tools for leaders and organisations, with a focus on creating better conditions for learning, both within our organisations and for freelance cultural workers.

We would like to extend a warm thank you to all the interviewees who participated in this project. It is thanks to your generous commitment that this report was made possible. Your participation contributes to the cultural sectors' role in creating more viable organisations that are equipped for the future.

We are grateful and delighted to have had the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion. Do not hesitate to contact us if you wish to continue the discussion or if you have any questions.

Thank you!

About the report

The information and insights that appear in the Skills 2023 report are based on, amongst other things, an analysis of existing research and literature in the field. In order to deepen and expand upon these insights, nine in-depth interviews with experts, researchers, professional practitioners, and leaders in the cultural sector were also conducted. The interviews were conducted from January to March 2023.

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to create a deeper understanding of how different actors think and make decisions about cultural sector learning. A list of all those interviewed appears below. We have restricted ourselves to the following areas within the cultural sector: performing arts, audiovisual media, music, and visual arts and design.

Malte Forsell, Line Producer, audiovisual media
Anders Larsson, Lecturer at Stockholm University of the Arts, a specialist in technical theatre coordination and a freelance lighting designer
Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content, audiovisual media
Ulla Lidholm, Ensemble Manager, performing arts
Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive, audiovisual media
Kim Simon Phipps, Conductor and Artistic Director
Viveka Fonsmark, HR Manager, performing arts
Robert Johansson, licensed Psychologist and Associate Professor of Psychology at Stockholm University; Co-PI of the research project "Artificial Actors: Directable digital humans based on psychological models of relational reasoning"
Anna Kiefer, Chief Operating Officer at Digital Futures, Sweden's largest initiative for research into digital transformation

The report is written by Sofia Rasmussen, CEO of the analysis company **Rasmussen Analysis**, and commissioned by **Kulturakademin**.

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The Power of Cultural Learning

Learning is a cornerstone of human development, and this is especially evident in the workplace. When young people choose where to work, the opportunity for development and learning is highly valued. The desire to grow as individuals and evolve through work is not exclusive to the younger generation; it is a universal human need, creating meaning in life for many. This is why cultural organisations need to provide people with the right conditions to continually learn, evolve, and thrive. In failing to do so, the industry will become imbalanced and, ultimately, depleted of valuable competence.

Today's shortage of skills can already be described as a ticking time bomb in certain cultural professions. Employers across Europe report a significant shortage of technical skills, especially in performing arts and audiovisual media. Without the necessary skills, the cultural sector cannot survive. It is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot afford to waste the competence that already exists. Cultural organisations can no longer expect talented people to automatically seek them out; they must take serious measures to increase their attractiveness as employers, and broaden their competence base.

One of the key messages coming out of this report, is that learning attracts competence. Organisations that choose to make continuous learning one of their guiding principles will have an advantage in the competition for talent. When learning becomes a core value that permeates everyday work, it will also be seen how partly prestige-driven and closed organisational cultures can transform into open, dynamic, and communicative ones. It is high time to embrace learning within our organisations and understand all that we can offer to our existing and potential employees.

Time to Accelerate Learning

"As a college within the arts, we are naturally grounded in artistic work, and a lot needs to be fitted in during the three years of a bachelor's degree. We are good at demonstrating principles and comprehensive ideas, and thinking outside the box. But to acquire the specialised knowledge needed for today's working life — to handle what's inside the box — one must always be prepared to continuously develop one's competence."
– Anders Larsson, Lecturer, Stockholm University of the Arts

Higher education has a tough mission today. There is not enough time for all the education needed for professional life. With ever-increasing demands for specialised knowledge, we, as individuals, need to be prepared to continuously develop our skills throughout our careers in order to remain relevant in the workplace. Technological development is advancing at a rapid pace. Humanity is currently experiencing an unprecedented AI breakthrough. Every month, hundreds of new, easily accessible tools in generative AI are launched, and the media is flooded with news articles on the subject. The reason for this breakthrough is a creation of synergies brought about through the sudden convergence of several advancements in different development areas. The simultaneous abundant availability of cloud services, massive amounts of internet data used for training large language models (LLM), and neural networks development, has enabled the wave of generative AI that is now sweeping over us. One can only wonder about how new convergences of research progress may affect us in the future.

In fact, the World Economic Forum declared almost a decade ago that we were on the brink of a new industrial revolution. The fourth industrial revolution would fundamentally change our way of working and living, through the interaction of nanotechnology, brain research, mobile networks, and artificial intelligence. The changes would occur at a speed and strength such as we have never before witnessed.

Today, we can ascertain that the consequences of this revolution for organisations are complex and multifaceted. Performing arts is an example of an industry evolving rapidly as a result of new technology. The industry increasingly demands specialised expertise for functions that occur behind and around the stage. Stage technicians need to be able to handle new tools and combinations of a variety of digital tools and production processes, at an ever-faster pace.

A year ago, the OECD stated that 1.1 billion jobs could be radically transformed by new technology in the coming decade. Considering the new wave of technology that has occurred since then, that estimate may need to be increased. While Statistics Sweden (SCB) had shown that employees in Sweden only spent on average 11 hours per year on formal training, in 2020 the World Economic Forum estimated that a whole 25 days of skills development would be needed each year just to keep

abreast of developments. New technologies have shed light on the accelerated need for continuous and lifelong learning. Organisations need to not only offer their employees upskilling and reskilling but also make learning a core value that permeates their entire organisational culture.

"The increasing use of AI and other technologies to improve the streaming experience is a hugely important development for us in the streaming industry. It affects learning conditions, not only technically, but also in terms of content – what we see on the screen when we watch. There is an increased need for technical competence in areas such as machine learning, data analysis, and programming. I also see an increase in competition, which makes it even more important to improve our product range and provide unique and innovative solutions. This requires that our employees have a broader set of skills and competencies than before."
– Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content

Lifelong Learning Prolongs Life
Today, we know that lifelong learning has a tremendous impact on individuals' well-being and health. The societal economic benefits are also well-studied. It is widely established that a well-educated population capable of performing skilled tasks in the workforce and advancing research is one of the key conditions for increased economic prosperity in a country.

   Beyond the economic benefits of learning, we also see social, emotional, and physical gains. Learning is positive for health and lifespan. One year of formal learning can extend someone's life by half a year. Learning can help delay symptoms of conditions such as Alzheimer's. Learning to play a new instrument can delay cognitive decline, and acquiring new skills later in life is associated with improved memory. Being open and inquisitive also has significant personal and professional advantages.

Organisations Need Learning in Order to Survive

"The external environment requires us to constantly learn more and evolve. Fortunately, the demands on employers and providers are increasing. As we become a larger and more professional industry that impacts more people, what is expected of us becomes clearer. It involves everything from occupational health and safety legislation to pure HR – how we take care of our personnel and how we get people to want to work with this at all. The lack of competence today is enormous."
– Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive

Today, every organisation within the cultural sector operates in a complex arena. Due to operating in a digital and global market, there is an increasing demand for organisations to have knowledge of advanced legal,

economic, and HR-related issues. This, in turn, has led to an increased demand for specialised skills. As, for example, the audiovisual industry grows, the demand for employers with increased competence also grows. Taking care of personnel, having knowledge about legislation, and offering continuous learning to employees are all part of this increased competence. Additionally, we see new demands from employees and consumers who are accustomed to a hybrid work-life where flexibility and customised products are hygiene factors.

All these factors create an increased complexity that needs to be addressed by employers and organisations. It is not surprising that the demands for organisational learning are increasing as a result.

The Importance of Being an Attractive Employer – Even Towards Freelancers

"Ten years ago, people would be overjoyed if you called and offered them a job. Now, it's not uncommon to hear in response: okay, interesting, I received four other offers yesterday, but I'll think about it... This places higher demands on the employer to appear genuinely knowledgeable and honest and to be able to provide a good workplace."
– Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive

"We currently struggle to attract technical expertise to our operations. Not everyone is aware that you can work with technology, programming, lighting, and sound in the opera world. Lighting technology today is increasingly programmed."
– Viveka Fonsmark, HR Manager

The current and future labour shortage places significant demands on employers to strengthen their attractiveness, and continuous learning plays a key role in this. According to various studies, opportunities for learning, developing in one's professional role, and personal growth, are ranked as some of the most important aspects for talented people when choosing where to work. In the highly developed freelance culture that is often found in the cultural industries, employers also need to consider strengthening their employer brand for freelancers. People are drawn to workplaces where they are treated well and can contribute to the organisation's learning.

An important element in being attractive is to show genuine curiosity about how, as an employer, one can improve in welcoming freelancers. This involves gathering knowledge and feedback from freelancers to a greater extent, learning from the feedback, and thus becoming a better employer, in order to enhance one's brand. An organisation and its leadership miss out on a fantastic source of learning and development by not taking advantage of freelancers' feedback. Many employers offer skills development to employees but not to freelancers hired for individual

projects. Here, a re-evaluation might be necessary. Not only can an employer increase its attractiveness to freelancers but they can also contribute to a more competent and updated freelance pool.

Cultural Experts Always Deepen their Craftsmanship
It is said that everything is moving faster, that what we learn is becoming obsolete more quickly due to new technology and the automation of tasks. Generally, the lifespan of knowledge has been shortened. However, professionals in the cultural field rarely agree that the lifespan of knowledge has become shorter, at least not when it comes to skills such as acting, the craft of writing scripts or making films and TV, playing musical instruments, or other activities that use artistic creation.

"Our musicians and singers can be compared to elite athletes. To become excellent, it requires an extremely high level of personal responsibility. The learning process takes longer compared to many other skills, and many hours of practice follow in order to maintain level and progress. These skills do not become obsolete. Musicians are often five or six years old when they begin their profession, without realising it at the time. Musicians are experts who constantly deepen their skills."
– Viveka Fonsmark, HR Manager

"The fundamentals have not changed. Actors must find their voice, body, and their way of performing. These skills do not change and do not become obsolete. But certainly, there has been more focus on, for example, film, TV, radio, audiobooks, and new technology. There may be a need for new skills in those areas, and of course, there is always a need for skills development to keep one's instrument in shape."
– Ulla Lidholm, Ensemble Manager

"The way one communicates is different, but the craftsmanship has not changed much. Of course, new areas have appeared in film and TV as well as new technical tools, but it has more to do with the process. The technology has changed, but the foundation remains the same. The skills required on a film or TV set are roughly the same as they have always been."
– Malte Forsell, Line Producer

Craftsmanship does not become obsolete but it needs to be maintained and refined through continuous, purposeful practice. If one works in an area where there is room to reach an extremely high level of practice and where the top practitioners distinguish themselves significantly from the large mass of practitioners, as in music, dance, or sports, guided and targeted practice is often required. This involves activities that constantly challenge current abilities and take practitioners beyond their comfort zone. Even if some knowledge becomes obsolete, it still has its place

within that area of accumulated knowledge (both outdated and current) that can be of great significance when working.

However, there are other cultural areas where skills can quickly become outdated. Stage technician professions provide a good example. Most senior lighting technicians, for example, studied analogue lighting during their training. Today, they need to control large digital networks that hold all the information. What was learnt during basic training can, of course, still be beneficial, for example when knowing about the history behind the methods of today. However, it is not necessary in order to be able to handle today's tools.

"In today's education, we sometimes mention the history behind new technology as an expansion of context – this is how it used to be. But those entering education today do not always need to know the history."
– Anders Larsson, Assistant Lecturer, Stockholm University of the Arts

There is even an increase of technical tools and requirements for those cultural practitioners whose craftsmanship skills remain central. For example, in the orchestral world:

"There are many more tools in the profession today, and the younger generation works a lot more with music software. I work with a piano and scores. Many of my younger colleagues, on the other hand, study scores via computer, record themselves, and then look at the results. This affects expectations on conductors because there are more technical aspects to consider."
– Kim Simon Phipps, Conductor and Artistic Director

The most important thing is that cultural organisations need to provide and encourage various types of learning in many different areas, all of which have different prerequisites. Therefore, it is important to first establish a foundation for long-term and sustainable learning within our organisations.

Five Arts of Learning for Cultural Organisations
We hope the message is clear: cultural organisations have a lot to gain by integrating continuous learning into their operations. To succeed, both a holistic approach and genuine leadership commitment are required. Based on the in-depth interviews we have conducted and research done in the field, we have identified five Arts of Cultural Learning for cultural organisations:

The Art of Creating a Culture of Learning
The Art of Directing Learning
The Art of Laying the Foundations for Dynamic Learning
The Art of Broadening the Skills Base
The Art of Dancing with AI

#1

CULTURAL LEARNING ONE

THE ART OF CREATING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

01. Cultural Learning One: The Art of Creating a Culture of Learning

Lifelong learning is largely an individual responsibility. However, an organisation functions like any ecological ecosystem – either it grows, or the system dies. Organisations grow when their employees learn new things. An organisation that wants to evolve must create an ecosystem that supports learning individuals. The first step on this journey is for the organisation to analyse itself, to look at its own organisational culture.

It Must Come From the Top

Top management making a decision about the key role of learning in the organisation, is a prerequisite for creating an ecosystem of learning. Without such a decision, it is challenging for employees to prioritise learning in their daily lives. It requires top management to signal that employee learning is a valuable asset for the organisation, and it requires leadership to lead and demonstrate via concrete actions that it is serious about what it proposes.

"If you want a culture of learning, it's important that top management is clear that it's a crucial part of the company's vision. Learning should be integrated into the organisational culture, and it should be evident that we are interested. Inclusion is about wanting to learn new things. To create that kind of culture, it must come from the top. You have to practice what you preach. There need to be confident managers and owners saying: it's worth it."
– Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive

"Theatres need to encourage their staff to develop their skills and send them off to various fairs and events that benefit learning. Maybe you shouldn't schedule three premieres on those particular days. Theatres need to take care of their staff and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their skills."
– Anders Larsson, Assistant Lecturer, Stockholm University of the Arts

Psychological Safety a Prerequisite for Learning
Today, most companies and organisations are aware that their primary competitive advantage lies in the ability of their employees to think, experiment and innovate. This is especially true in the creative industries, where the core of the business involves creation and craftsmanship. Research clearly shows that a prerequisite for performance and the ability to learn at work is that the organisation is permeated with psychological safety, in other words an environment where employees are not hindered by fear of social reprisal. Psychological safety enables employees to dare to share their ideas and concerns, ask questions, seek help, and expose ignorance, without fear of being belittled, punished, or socially humiliated.

Psychological safety, however, does not mean that employees are always comfortable, calm or never face criticism. On the contrary, learning benefits when safety is combined with high performance expectations for employees. (10)

In some organisations, psychological safety is more crucial than in others. For example, the consequences can be devastating if a nurse does not dare to express doubt or criticism of a respected doctor's decision regarding a patient's care, for fear of being humiliated or socially punished. Even within the cultural sector, silence can be a matter of life or death. Performing arts and the film industry are often associated with risks, as illustrated by the quote below.

"People on stage stand underneath hanging loads. In other professional situations, that wouldn't be allowed. Dock workers have to wear a helmet. On stage, working under a hanging load without a helmet can be allowed because of stringent working methods. Nothing should be able to fall down."
– Anders Larsson, Assistant Lecturer, Stockholm University of the Arts

So far, Sweden has been spared any serious accidents, but such incidents have occurred internationally. Everything depends on productions working safely, following their working methods, and employees daring to share criticism or potential concerns. Psychological safety where people can learn, communicate openly, and dare to ask questions, is a crucial part of safety.

Fear Leads to Silence
Psychological safety is the opposite of social fear. Neuroscience research shows that fear limits people's ability to both learn and collaborate. Fear restricts those resources of the brain that manage working memory and the processing of new information. Moreover, fear hampers problem-solving skills and the ability to be creative.

There is a difference between playing to win and playing not to lose. If we want to take the chance to win, we need to take the risk of losing. This is especially true in organisations. In our organisational cultures, we need to minimise the fear of losing and instead invest in an openness where all ideas and concerns can be raised and discussed. If fear takes hold in an organisational culture, it often leads to silence. In some contexts, being silent can be perceived as a self-preservation instinct, but it is, of course, devastating for creativity and mental health.

A lot of research shows that an open and communicative organisational culture benefits results, performance and quality, and it is precisely such a culture that makes it possible to play to win instead of playing not to lose.

"To make art, one must experiment over and over again. If all experiments succeed, they are not experiments. The problem with institutional music-making, as opposed to working with a free group, is that it is not allowed to fail. A watertight Mahler symphony must be delivered on Thursday evening. That's the goal when you start working on Monday. It is incredibly inhibiting, and artistically, it is harder to push things as far as you would want."
– Kim Simon Phipps, Conductor and Artistic Director

Learning from Failure

"What are your biggest fuck-ups? I think that's a good interview question when recruiting a new manager."
– Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive

"One should be a bit suspicious of those who never make mistakes. When I lead a choir, someone might make a mistake and sing out loud right in the middle of a break. That's good! Then I know it's a person who takes initiative and doesn't just sing half a second after everyone else."
– Kim Simon Phipps, Conductor and Artistic Director

In society, failures are rarely rewarded. Failures are something we usually hide away and prefer not to talk about. We move on and strive to succeed the next time. In a worst-case scenario, we don't even make an effort to evaluate the failure or learn from it; instead, we bury the experience as quickly as possible in order to forget it.

Thomas A. Edison said: "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." His words indicate that failures are an essential part of creation and innovation. There is sometimes a concern that a generous allowance for failures in an organisation could lead to a too lax attitude towards standards and performance. This is not true. In a culture where acknowledging failures feels safe, it also becomes possible to learn from them. Unfortunately, we often see the opposite in our organisations. Due to operating in an uncertain, rapidly changing and competitive market, we

try to promote predictability and efficiency. Failures then become a sign of incompetence. At the same time, we know that most professionals in cultural activities constantly want to reach new levels with their art, find unique expressions, and make an impact. For this to be possible, learning from failure needs to be encouraged and admired. According to research, it is more beneficial to aim to promote rapid learning than to counteract any kind of failure.

To learn from failure, a structure for evaluating it is also needed. We need analyses that go beyond superficial explanations such as "we didn't follow our procedures" or "it was due to the human factor". It is the task of leadership to ensure that learning from failure happens systematically.

The Value of Failing Intelligently
Of course, there are types of failure that should not be accepted, such as when a mistake occurs because someone deliberately ignores one of the organisation's values or breaks one of its rules.

"Some mistakes you cannot make. If you are responsible for a person who is supposed to fly on stage, for example, in a Peter Pan performance, that person must not be able to fall. Internationally, such things have happened. In Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas, an artist fell down to their death. These things happen."
– Anders Larsson, Assistant Lecturer, Stockholm University of the Arts

"Some mistakes we cannot accept. However, research shows that organisational cultures characterised by the constant finding of scapegoats and the blaming of specific individuals for various failures, provide poorer conditions for long-term learning. The primary task of leaders is to find out what led to something going wrong and how to avoid the same thing happening in the future, rather than pointing fingers at the person who made the mistake."

In research, distinctions are made between different types of failure. (12)

1. Simple failures (mistakes)
2. Complex failures (accidents)
3. Intelligent failures (discoveries)

Simple failures relate to something going wrong, even though we know how to do it correctly. Complex failures are described as a failure resulting from a group of factors interacting in a new way, and that couldn't have been predicted, despite understanding the context. Intelligent failures are unwelcome outcomes of thoughtful experimentation in a new area. For something to be considered an intelligent failure, the result must still be informative for us, and we must learn something important from it. The cost and impact of the failure itself should not be too great. Any risks

should have been evaluated in advance, and even though we did not get the result we desired, we have learnt something else from it. According to research, we should try to avoid simple and complex failures, but depending on the type of business we are in, it can be valuable to welcome intelligent failures. We may even need leadership that clearly communicates the need for more intelligent failures, not fewer. It is important to remember however, that there is always the need to learn from failures in order for them to be valuable to us.

Remove Prestige and Anxiety

"Unfortunately, our industry is anxious. There's a feeling of "you're only as good as your last match". Working in a freelance industry creates anxiety and hierarchies; you think that if you complain, you won't get jobs. You put yourself in a situation where you think you can't change anything, it's not worth it, and soon it's over anyway. You don't celebrate your failures. It's something you should do more."
– Malte Forsell, Line Producer

It can be tough to learn from mistakes in a freelance environment because it tends to be characterised by a certain anxiety. Many freelancers feel they can't afford or have the space to fail, as they constantly have to prove their worth. This leads to a culture where failures are sometimes hidden rather than openly discussed as part of a learning process. Leadership can counteract this by actively creating openness and by communicating that the sharing of experiences is welcomed, both positive and negative. Conducting structured conversations with team members aimed at evaluating projects and analysing different mistakes without blame is an example of an effective measure. Instead of blaming people, these conversations can focus on the collective brainstorming of creative solutions and the proposing of how to move forwards in order to avoid making the same mistakes again.

Leadership that Leads Successfully
Everything comes down to the words and actions signalled by leadership to employees and freelancers, because it is leadership that has the greater responsibility to create psychological safety in an organisation.
    Therefore, we will now take a closer look at the importance of leadership for learning in cultural organisations.

#2

CULTURAL LEARNING TWO:

THE ART OF DIRECTING LEARNING

02. Cultural Learning Two: The Art of Directing Learning

The responsibility of creating a culture of learning in our organisations lies with leadership. Leaders have the opportunity to show the way in terms of openness and humility, and they cannot demand anything from employees that they do not adhere to themselves. If a leader needs to always appear perfect and never admit a mistake, it will influence the organisational culture and hinder learning. To achieve a genuine culture of learning in an organisation, brave and inclusive leaders are required who understand when it is time to challenge employees and introduce them to new learning curves.

Humble Leadership to Promote Learning in Hierarchical Organisations

Many organisations in the performing arts are described as strictly hierarchical. This is where leadership needs to show by example and clearly invite openness, curiosity, and dialogue to all employees. A leader must be clear about their vision and expectations, while signalling humility. If leaders want employees to dare to ask questions, the leader must ask questions themselves and be genuinely interested in the answers. If leaders want employees to feel free to share ideas and concerns, they must, as early as possible, clearly articulate that all ideas are welcome.

"There is no contradiction between having a hierarchical organisation and prioritising learning. It's all about how secure you are as a leader – whether you, as a leader, can acknowledge mistakes and ask for help. In the world of dance, dancers are co-creators, and there is a lack of prestige in that relationship. In the opera world, it's more strict. People don't speak up to the director; they stay quiet and correct themselves. This can disrupt learning. But there doesn't have to be a contradiction between hierarchy and learning. If you can create a sense of security and psychological openness – then the hierarchy doesn't matter."
– Viveka Fonsmark, HR Manager

"For people in an organisation to be able to learn and develop, it's important to have a responsive and transparent leadership that starts with you as the leader, able to show humility and vulnerability in your leadership, being clear that mistakes happen at all levels. Everyone needs to learn. It starts with the leader, and it's about setting a good example that employees can follow."
– Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content

Why Do So Many Incompetent Men Become Leaders?

In some organisations, there is a fixation on leaders that exude strong self-confidence and possess convincing charisma. In fields like performing arts, there are numerous testimonies of leaders with strong egos and considerable charisma being favoured. This fixation on self-assurance is problematic. Organisational psychologist Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic's research indicates that we choose leaders based on confidence rather than competence. This is unfortunate because leaders often overestimate their own abilities. Confidence is not as crucial for effective leadership as we seem to believe. A certain amount of doubt about one's own abilities is actually beneficial. Having leaders who repeatedly overestimate or lie about their own capabilities can be devastating for an organisation.

In his book *Why Do So Many Incompetent Men Become Leaders?* Chamorro-Premuzic writes that it is considerably more common for male leaders to overestimate their abilities than female leaders. Humans, in general, are not adept at detecting incompetence. In fact, we are attracted to attributes that make leaders more incompetent: confidence rather than competence, charisma rather than humility, and narcissism rather than integrity. The researcher argues that if we want to help competent women (and competent men who don't fit the stereotype) take on leadership roles, we must start by making it more difficult for incompetent men to become leaders. (13)

What truly creates a healthy climate in an organisation is having leaders with good self-awareness. This means leaders who have a realistic self-assessment ability, are aware of both their strengths and weaknesses, understand how emotions affect them, and have an awareness of how they are perceived by others. Being able to acknowledge one's weaknesses and shortcomings to oneself and others is, in the long run, what builds genuine self-confidence.

To deepen their self-awareness as leaders, individuals need to engage in continuous learning, listen to feedback, and maintain curiosity. This mindset is likely to spread within an organisational culture and promote learning. (14)

The Importance of Inclusive Leadership

Without employees who genuinely feel included in the organisation, it becomes challenging to achieve true learning. It is only when individuals in

a team dare to express themselves and show who they are, even if they deviate from the norm, that genuine learning can occur among individuals.

So, what makes employees feel included? The short answer to that question is the quality of leadership. In fact, employees' experiences of being included can vary by up to seventy percentage points depending on how a leader behaves and communicates. (15)

It is also established in research that groups with significant cognitive diversity – a diversity of work styles, experiences, abilities, skills, and personalities – perform better, make higher-quality decisions, and are better at collaborating compared to groups with little cognitive diversity. (16) This correlation is easy to understand. With a greater variety of experiences, competencies, and personalities, the number of specialist knowledge and learning approaches in the group naturally broadens. But to succeed, leadership needs to possess a deep understanding of what is needed when leading diverse groups. In research, this type of leadership is commonly referred to as inclusive leadership.

In a study involving over 4,100 leaders, along with subsequent in-depth interviews with some of those leaders identified as highly inclusive, several inclusive leader traits were identified. (17) These were:

Genuine and visible commitment: The expression of authentic commitment to diversity, challenging the status quo, and making inclusion a personal priority.

Humility: An interest in feedback from others regarding their own weaknesses and blind spots; the creation of space for others to contribute; also, the awareness that they may be biased themselves, and that the organisation has shortcomings.

Curiosity about others: Demonstration of a deep curiosity by listening attentively to others without judgment and by constantly seeking to understand others' perspectives.

Cultural intelligence: A study showed that more than 89% of leaders largely lacked the ability to authentically connect with people different from themselves. (18) Inclusive leaders are aware of this, pay attention to others' experiences, and try to empathetically understand other people's perspectives.

Insight to encourage collaboration: The empowerment of team members, working to consistently strengthen psychological safety, and the encouragement of interaction among employees.

Security Combined with High Demands to Maximise Learning
For employees to continue developing, they need to be challenged and sometimes assigned tasks that push the boundaries of their abilities. To thrive in challenges, there must be a foundation of psychological safety. If we are expected to perform at our best without psychological safety, we end up in what researchers call the anxiety zone. In a workplace characterised by psychological safety but where employees are not challenged, they easily fall into a comfort zone that does not stimulate

learning. To learn and encourage development, we need to disrupt the order a bit, create friction, and sometimes venture into unknown waters. (19) To give employees the chance and confidence to take such developmental leaps, suitable leadership is crucial, with leaders who clearly communicate the demands and expectations they have for employees, and ensure that employees feel challenged, with the opportunity to unleash their full potential.

The Significance of Dissonance

Genuine learning is rarely frictionless. Viewing learning from a psychological and individual perspective, moments of dissonance in life can significantly boost learning. In her book "Livsutvecklingens psykologi" ("The Psychology of Life Development"), researcher and psychologist Kristina Elfhag writes that maturity and development ultimately involve understanding that life is more complex than we previously thought. We constantly interpret our surroundings, creating meaning and developing our own understanding of life. It is when new elements emerge, elements that do not fit into our interpretation of the world, that dissonance or crisis is created. We are then forced to reinterpret and understand existence as being more complex than we previously believed. There is a dissonance between our previous understanding of existence and the new information. Accelerated learning occurs, allowing us to take another step in our own development towards increased maturity and wisdom. (20)

Dissonance is one of the keys to development because when we suddenly realise that we did not have the complete picture before, it becomes impossible for us to return to self-deception. Such a developmental leap can be challenging, and we may face significant internal resistance. True learning is, as mentioned, rarely without friction.

Conscious Disruption can Aid Learning

Within an organisation, one can attempt to create instances of accelerated learning by consciously shaking up established work methods or reconsidering established organisational truths about what is the right and wrong approach. In this way, an intentional disruption or disturbance is created as a strategy in order to introduce employees to new learning curves. It could involve, for example, allowing employees or leaders to swap jobs for a day to deepen their understanding of how the different functions in the organisation depend on each other. Another suggestion is to introduce reverse mentoring, where young and inexperienced employees become mentors to the most experienced leaders. It could involve recruiting someone from a completely different industry with experiences that are not present in the organisation, or developing expertise in an area far from the core business but that is capable of generating different ideas and providing new inspiration.

In the example below, employees were given the task of trendspotting, not only on trends related to their own industry, but also on trends

happening outside of their own operations and that may not have an obvious and direct connection.

"In my team, we work with news hunters. Every month, a person is appointed to be our news anchor and follow industry trends, technological developments, and other trends in the streaming industry. But even to look at things beyond these, at global trends. It helps us conduct a comprehensive business-strategic analysis and not to just see what's happening in our own industry."
– Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content

#3

03. Cultural Learning Three:
The Art of Laying the Foundations for Dynamic Learning

There is a lot to gain from adopting a long-term approach to learning in our organisations. To avoid drowning in the wave of information that washes over us daily, we need to know where our learning is heading and make it possible to prioritise. At the same time, there should be an openness to new trends in the external environment. Long-term direction may need to be reconsidered if the outside world undergoes a radical change. An organisation with a dynamic approach to learning combines foresight with a readiness for new competence needs. Let's take a closer look at how this can be done.

A Long-Term Approach to Learning

In last year's Skills Report, we noted that it is not easy to be a long-term thinker in a short-term world. Long-term thinking can be harder. The opposite is easier to achieve, namely letting what currently demands our attention dictate how we spend our time. Day after day, year after year.

Thinking in the long term involves formulating an ambition that extends over a longer period. However, on the way to our goals, it is important to keep in mind that the outside world continues to change. Nothing is static. Our aspirations and goals may need to be reassessed, and we need to continue assessing both the outside world and ourselves in order to move in the desired direction. It is easier for leaders and employees to make daily decisions that benefit an organisation's long-term journey – saying yes to the right things and no to the irrelevant things – when working in an organisation that is clear about its vision and aspirations. This especially applies to learning. Long-term learning requires a different kind of conscious decision-making. We need to allocate time, prioritise, and choose to make it work.

Being Conscious of our Learning Goals

According to a 2019 survey, a total of over 300 billion dollars was invested globally and yearly in organisational learning. The majority of these learning initiatives did not have a particularly large measurable impact. (21) There can be several reasons for this, but a conceivable cause is that companies and organisations often lack a long-term vision for learning in the organisation.

We cannot possibly learn everything and therefore we need to choose and prioritise. Instead of viewing learning as a benefit for the individual development of employees, learning initiatives should be treated as an investment that will create value for the organisation for many years to come.

Therefore, we need to start by formulating a goal for learning. Is our goal to increase employee attentiveness to the annual employee survey? Is it to be able to offer an entirely new service or product by the end of the year? Is it to become so attractive as an employer that the number of candidates applying for advertised positions doubles in three years? Is it to increase ticket revenue? Or do we want to achieve a more professional and responsive leadership? Goals vary, of course, between different organisations and depending on the challenges organisations face.

Add it to the Calendar

Once the organisation's goals for learning have been established, they need to be integrated into everyday life. Instead of focusing on a few learning sessions per year, learning should be planned continuously and become a natural part of daily life. In concrete terms, a suitable amount of time needs to be allocated in our calendars. If it's not actively scheduled, it won't happen. Leaders are especially important here, as they can lead the way with their own behaviour.

"I have had an hour booked in my calendar every Friday afternoon for the past ten years, giving time for reflection. For one hour, I sit undisturbed and reflect on how the week has been, what I can do better, and what I can focus on in my leadership and well-being. Just like with any other learning, continuity is essential. Schedule time for it – otherwise, it's easy for it not to get done. That time is sacred, and it's booked a year in advance; nothing else can be scheduled during that time, and it hasn't been difficult to get people to respect that."
– Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content

Learning During Down Time

Artistic activities are often temporary, with temporary constellations and short periods of collaboration, rehearsals or filming, and with temporary leaders, colleagues, workplaces, stages, and institutions. Between these temporary assignments there is often down time.

A significant question for many organisations in the cultural sector is how to enable real learning between productions and projects. Before each production, entirely new conditions often apply, meaning professionals need to continuously learn new things. Evaluations are sometimes conducted following projects, and feedback is gathered more or less regularly from those involved in the projects. However, transforming insights from evaluations and feedback into real organisational learning can be a challenge.

"Things happen in every production that could have been avoided if we had approached them as learning experiences. It's not just about learning from mistakes. It's equally important to learn from our successes, how we solved different challenges. We will face similar challenges in new productions, and then we don't want to have to start from scratch again."
– Viveka Fonsmark, HR Manager

One of the problems with evaluations in an organisation, is not knowing how to transform feedback into actual learning or the adoption of new routines. This may be because individuals and organisations are often better at receiving feedback than using feedback. It's only when people practice turning insights from feedback into actions – and when they see how this improves performance and results – that they begin to believe in the value of feedback. (22)

For learning during down time to be possible, it needs to be clearly signalled from top management that constructive feedback is welcome and appreciated. This is because in a freelance industry, it is not easy to criticise your clients.

"Evaluations are important. For example, a production may have been extremely successful, with large audience turnouts and positive reviews, but the process leading up to the premiere may have been difficult. It can be challenging to criticise the production afterwards because of its success. That's why it's important to listen to what may have caused any problems during rehearsals."
– Ulla Lidholm: Ensemble Manager

Proactive and Reactive Learning

"In my industry, you need to be proactive – by trying to anticipate what's going to happen and having solutions ready ahead of time. Forward planning is important, but in our industry, with many rapid changes, this can be challenging. I think it's good to be inquisitive. Courses can be great for learning new tools, but it's also important to understand how to work with processes. In Scandinavia, production work is done in a certain way; in other countries, it may be done slightly differently. I try to learn from others as well as from my own mistakes."

– Malte Forsell, Line Producer

Reactive learning is an ongoing process. Simply by working, collaborating with others, and engaging in new projects, we engage in constant learning. But the question is whether reactive, more random learning is sufficient in a time when technological developments are changing the landscape so quickly. According to many professionals in the cultural sector, proactive learning has become increasingly important. Once skills shortages have become a reality in several industries, and once the need for new skills has already become noticeable, it might be too late to start searching for new competencies. By then, you are already at a disadvantage. At the same time, it is not possible to predict future needs with certainty. That is why it may be preferable to have a more dynamic approach.

Embracing Uncertainties Enables a Dynamic Approach to Learning
Research indicates that it can be more costly and inefficient to conduct large scale training based on future skills guesses than being purely reactive in learning. Without a crystal ball, attempts to predict future skills are more likely to result in misplaced investments. A more effective method is to establish the readiness to respond rapidly to changes in the external environment. (23)

To succeed in this, we need to embrace uncertainties, to be aware of trends in the external environment that can be uncertain – trends that can evolve in one direction or another. What uncertainties exist today? How might these trends affect what we need to learn in the future? All these considerations can make people more open to the need for new skills when the need arises.

Two Dimensions of Learning
By using these fundamental insights, a model can be created that illustrates the importance of combining long-term thinking with openness to build organisations with a sustainable approach to learning. In the model below, two axes represent these two dimensions. The horizontal axis illustrates the extent to which an organisation has a long-term approach to learning. In organisations with a long-term approach, there is a vision and clear direction that determines how leaders and employees prioritise, make decisions, and allocate their time. Training and learning are integrated into everyday life and scheduled in advance. Insights and lessons are shared and disseminated within the organisation, the learning constantly strengthening the organisation.

In organisations at the other end of the spectrum, there is a lack of vision for learning, and therefore no clear directive from which decisions regarding learning can be made. Leaders and employees get stuck being victims of the circumstances that affect them. When an urgent need for training arises, ad hoc efforts are made without ensuring that knowledge and lessons are subsequently spread and preserved in the organisation.

Temporary needs and demands dictate what the organisation spends time on, and the lessons are doomed to disappear as employees leave the organisation.

The vertical axis in the model extends from a culture of silence to a culture of openness. In an open culture, employees are not hindered by fear of social humiliation or punishment. Leadership encourages conversations, idea sharing, and the expression of concerns. This promotes not only learning but an openness to reconsider any vision and also change direction if needed. On the other end of the scale, we find organisational cultures permeated by prestige, silence, and blame. Here, employees do not feel free to speak openly, fearing social punishment. The organisation misses out on creative ideas and suggestions because employees are not willing to take the risks that openness can lead to. Leadership does not encourage shared learning but expects employees to perform without contributing their own ideas. In a culture of silence, it is risky to share a failure, and when mistakes happen, a scapegoat is quickly identified. This leads to employees keeping things to themselves, and the organisation misses out on crucial learning opportunities. Rigidity is created, making it difficult to change direction when needed.

Based on these Two Dimensions, Four Different Categories of Organisations Emerge.

The Bitter Organisation:
Organisations characterised by a culture of silence and a short-term approach to learning, breed bitterness. Here, employees keep quiet about their ideas and criticisms, causing the organisation to miss out on crucial learning opportunities. Due to a lack of a long-term direction in learning, employees find it challenging to know how best to utilise their time and resources. All this sets the stage for bitterness and eventually leads the organisation to either fail or undergo fundamental change.

The Frustrated Organisation:
In the frustrated organisation, there is a long-term approach to learning. There is a clear vision and defined goals for learning within the organisation. However, the organisation has failed to encourage genuine learning through the establishment of psychological safety and organisational openness. Hindered learning contributes to rigidity, preventing the organisation from being prepared for changes in the rapidly evolving world. When the organisation fails to achieve its set goals or cannot rethink and change direction when needed, frustration and a sense of powerlessness arise.

The Ineffective Organisation:
In the ineffective organisation, communication and openness are encouraged. Everyone is involved in decision-making and encouraged to

converse, contribute ideas, and provide criticism. However, since the organisation lacks a long-term approach to learning, there is no clear direction, making it difficult to prioritise among the vast array of knowledge available. Without a clear goal in learning, all new information becomes equally important, making it impossible to sort and prioritise. Despite the organisation's goodwill and openness, it gets stuck in perpetual discussions.

The Dynamic Organisation:
The dynamic organisation combines openness with a long-term approach to learning. The organisation ensures learning in between projects, and employees are encouraged to contribute creative ideas, express concerns, and provide constructive criticism. With clear leadership that encourages learning from failure, employees feel confident in sharing. When openness and environmental analysis permeate the organisation, it becomes clear when it's time to reassess goals and adapt to new information. In an organisation with a dynamic approach to learning, there is a readiness to quickly respond to environmental change, a willingness to embrace uncertainties, and a transparency that permeates the organisation. All of this enables people to be more open to new competency needs when they arise.

Six steps for creating a dynamic approach to learning within your organisation:
Make continuous learning a core value in the organisation, and ensure that top leadership clearly communicates this to both permanent and freelance staff.

Establish a long-term vision for learning, and clearly explain the benefits. Where do we want to go with our learning, and why?

Educate leadership on creating psychological safety and inclusive leadership within the organisation.

Incorporate learning into the calendar. Encourage employees to allocate time for both formal and structured learning initiatives (such as courses, mentorship, and other training) as well as time for reflection and environmental analysis.

Ensure that insights and lessons are shared and preserved in a structured manner within the organisation. This can be done by providing mentors to employees, having the employer recognise and celebrate successes, introducing cross-unit meetings and networks for the promotion of knowledge transfer, or having the employer regularly collect creative ideas from all employees.

Ensure that everyone involved in a project participates in its evaluation. Practice transforming insights from feedback into actual learning within the organisation as well as into new routines where needed.

#4

THE ART OF BROADENING THE SKILLS BASE

CULTURAL LEARNING FOUR:

04. Cultural Learning Four: The Art of Broadening the Skills Base

The shortage of skills in Sweden is acute. In fact, the skills shortage poses one of the greatest threats to corporate growth, the ability of the welfare sector to meet future challenges, and the green transition in Sweden. (24) Even within the cultural sector, the need for new skills is enormous in certain areas. Fortunately, some solutions are already available, many of them involving expanding the skills base. If these are successful, they will also give learning in our organisations a significant boost.

A Skills Shortage in the Cultural Sector Calls for Thinking Outside of the Box.

"We need to broaden our recruitment base. We must address the capacity shortage. If we recruit more broadly, we can eventually relay stories that appeal to a broader audience, and win commercially. With a broader recruitment base, we will eventually create products that speak to the Sweden of today."
– Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive

How can we address skills supply challenges within the cultural industries? Naturally, one answer is to make both education and employers more appealing in order to attract competent individuals to the industry. Another necessary measure is to broaden the view about which skills are considered suitable within the cultural sector. Only 34% of leaders in Sweden feel that employers are good enough at utilising the entire skills pool when recruiting new employees. (25) Two thirds of employers are, therefore, not being effective in leveraging the skills pool – even during a time of acute skills shortage.

For example, should it be necessary to have previous experience in the cultural sector in order to be considered for a job? Can one be too young or too old for a managerial position? Can we seek talent in entirely new and unfamiliar arenas? If we want to expand the skills base, we need to start by broadening our own view of what competence is and recognising potential in entirely new places. This also means genuinely embracing

diversity. As a bonus, this will create conditions for accelerated learning – for learning experiences that go beyond the conventional boundaries.

Diversity Boosts Learning in Our Organisations

A survey of over 800 leaders in the Swedish job market revealed a clear correlation between actively promoting diversity in the workplace and fostering a culture of strong organisational learning. Employers engaged in active diversity initiatives were more likely to undertake activities that promote learning. For example, it was three times more common for such employers to regularly gather creative ideas from all employees, and more than twice as common for them to have cross-functional meetings and networks that were perceived as promoting diversity, compared to those understood as having poor diversity practices.

The results demonstrated strong connections between active diversity efforts and a range of positive aspects, such as openness in organisational culture, responsiveness, learning, and a greater focus on innovation. The study also emphasised that significant demographic diversity – encompassing gender, age, foreign background, disabilities, and sexual orientation – is a good initial step to achieving positive learning aspects within an organisation. However, even more significant effects became apparent when demographic diversity was combined with a diversity of personalities, opinions, attitudes, skills, and experiences.

A Mix of Generations Facilitates Learning

"I learn a lot from my younger colleagues. I have the basics, but they have new tools and new ways to communicate. I work with people who are much younger than I am. They teach me a lot; they grew up with these new methods. In return, I can teach them from my mistakes. I can teach them to prioritise what is important and what is not important, and to take care of themselves. Experience can be useful in that way, but it's important to continue evolving."
– Malte Forsell, Line Producer

To address future skills shortages, it is likely we will need to work harder to eliminate the ageism that is prevalent in the Swedish job market. The demographics in Sweden are changing. By 2032, Sweden's population will exceed 11 million, with the over 80s age group growing the most. (26) Despite longer life expectancy and people being able to work longer, outdated notions about senior workers persist. For instance, one third of Swedish managers believe that seniority can be a legitimate reason to exclude a candidate in recruitment processes. Additionally, four out of ten managers express some hesitation about hiring a person in their sixties for a leadership position. The most common reason cited is concern about a lack of long-term commitment to the role. (27)

In reality, a mix of generations in the workplace is beneficial for learning. One advantage is an increased diversity of perspectives and experiences, and which can lead to greater creativity. Senior employees can contribute valuable knowledge and experience accumulated over a longer period, while younger individuals may have specialised expertise in new technology and trends. However, for knowledge and insights to be preserved within the organisation and transferred from older to younger generations, a structured and systematic approach to sharing knowledge and experience is necessary. This doesn't happen automatically. Mentorship programmes are a good example of structured knowledge transfer.

"We work strategically with active mentorship, where we partly connect in traditional ways, pairing a younger person with an older one within the same or different niches. But I have also personally invested a lot in peer-to-peer networking, where you can network and learn from others doing similar things in related industries."
– Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content

Diversity Demands More from Leadership
The positive effects of diversity on creativity, innovation, and economic profitability are well-known. However, research also indicates that diversity places higher demands on competent leadership in order for these effects to occur. Diversity doesn't automatically lead to increased efficiency. The more values, communication styles, and work approaches accommodated in a group, the more areas exist where friction or conflicts may arise. A study from Carnegie Mellon University showed that too little diversity in a group leads to stagnation, while too much diversity can create divisions that participants find challenging to handle. Unconscious biases may affect how individuals in the team collaborate. Up to a certain point, a group benefits from its diversity of perspectives, but without competent leadership, the challenges will outweigh the benefits. To harness the positive effects, such as accelerated learning among employees, leadership with a thorough knowledge of how to manage highly diverse groups is required. (28)

The Courage to Bet on Uncertain Cards
An important way to develop as a professional practitioner is to be entrusted with new roles and to take on more challenging tasks. This requires leaders to have the courage to take some risks. For example, actors are often cast based on their previous roles. This is understandable. Much is at stake in costly projects under time pressure, and using well-known names in leading roles is a safe bet for attracting an audience. However, one of the most crucial professional developments for actors is to have the opportunity to take on and grow through new and more

challenging roles. In other words, offering professional development to employees sometimes involves daring to bet on the uncertain.

"I have argued with theatre managers and directors to cast roles with actors they haven't always had on their roster. Many times, it has turned out well, but there have been instances where I fought for someone to get the role, and the results weren't as good. Nevertheless, the actor had the opportunity to be challenged and develop, contributing to a better work environment, and, in the long run, the theatre can gain a more competent and satisfied staff."
– Ulla Lidholm, Ensemble Manager

It can be risky to bet on the uncertain. However, in the long run, there are several benefits. More people have the potential to grow, and a better work environment is created, avoiding a breeding ground for bitterness among employees.

Betting on the uncertain can even mean investing in a candidate who has no experience in the industry. We trip ourselves up when we equate industry experience with competence. Cross-pollinating different industry experiences in our organisations can be advantageous for idea generation and creativity. Can we really afford to miss out on the vast candidate pool that exists outside of the cultural sector?

"It's not wrong to have a different background when entering the film industry. Many scriptwriters in the USA have a different profession as their foundation. All those who have created a lawyer series – these are lawyers who can write. And hospital series – they are doctors who can write. Robust knowledge from completely different fields adds value."
– Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive

The Art of Broadening the Competence Base
– Some Concrete Advice:
We have shown that a new and expanded view of competence is an effective method both to stimulate creativity and innovation and to meet the challenges of a growing competence shortage in the cultural sector. Below are five concrete measures that can be considered by employers wanting to broaden the competence base:

Seek competence in new arenas – Do not base recruitment requirements solely on the person who previously held the role; instead, try to look beyond familiar patterns. Can we search in completely different industries for the competence we need? Can we expand our networks for recruitment, hire recruitment consultants who are experts in diversity, or participate in recruitment diversity initiatives? Can we choose a person with a completely different educational background than we normally seek?

Invest in apprenticeship programmes, mentorship, and other internal training – One of the most common strategies for employers struggling to recruit the right competence is to hire individuals who do not fully match the requirements and offer internal training instead. Mentorship programmes and internal training initiatives can make it easier to accommodate candidates who do not meet 100% of the requirements at the time of recruitment. Apprenticeship programmes are another effective method to secure future competence in the organisation. For example, there are film worker apprenticeship programmes that currently offer employers the opportunity to bring in an apprentice who can become a future colleague. (29)

Abandon prejudices about older employees – It is time to reconsider our narrow perceptions of the age at which people thrive in the workforce. Today, we already see groups changing careers much later in life than ever before. Studies show that senior employees have greater motivation, more experience, and better overall judgement than those who are younger. (30) Utilising the entire competence pool, including the age-rich workforce, will be a prerequisite for meeting future needs.

Invest in inclusive leadership with thorough knowledge about how to lead diverse groups – Broadening the competence base means embracing diversity in our organisations. To retain the workforce and access all the benefits of diversity, knowledgeable leadership is required.

Rethink every step in the recruitment process – Be meticulous in the designing of applications. It is possible that styles of communication need to be adapted in order to appeal to a wider audience. Professionalise job interviews and seek candidates outside of your own networks. If you seek help from a recruitment partner, it is important to dare to set high standards and refuse to accept a shortlist of candidates who only have similar backgrounds."

#5

CULTURAL LEARNING FIVE:

THE ART OF DANCING WITH AI

Cultural Learning Five: The Art of Dancing with AI

Previously, researchers declared that we humans would be able to secure our relevance in the job market by cultivating deeply human abilities that are difficult to automate – such as creativity and emotional competence. However, with the new wave of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and DALL-E, more and more people have begun to question that belief. Several tasks previously considered uniquely human have suddenly become possible to automate, and many are questioning whether creativity might not be such a uniquely human ability after all. How can cultural organisations navigate this exciting and sometimes frightening development in AI?

In a Daze, We Observe a Whirlwind of Consequences

At the time of this report, it is challenging to comment on the developments that are happening in AI. Every day, we are inundated with new information. New innovations, platforms, and applications are being rapidly introduced. Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence that, by using machine-learning techniques, recognises patterns in existing data in order to create entirely new data with a similar style and structure. It is a technology capable of generating new texts, music, images, and illustrations based on information already available on the internet. Naturally, this new technology raises questions about the extent to which human cultural creativity can be replaced.

Humanity watches in bewilderment as new consequences of these developments become apparent to us. Physical museums for AI art are opening (31), photos generated by AI win international photo competitions (32), and articles where journalists ask questions to AI versions of well-known figures are presented as "exclusive interviews" in newspapers, even though the real person has not participated in any interview. (33) The increasing tendency of people to view chatbots as highly human conversational partners became evident when a Belgian father of two tragically took his own life after conversing with the chatbot "Eliza" for a few weeks. According to the family, the chatbot exacerbated the man's depression and reinforced his suicidal thoughts. (34) These examples

represent only a small fraction of the consequences we have witnessed so far, and they have already sparked new societal debates, investigations, and regulations regarding the use of AI.

Salvation or a Threat to Creative Individuals?
When asked about who will be unemployed first, the founder of Open AI, Greg Brockman, replied: "AI has so far proven to be better at writing poetry than performing physical labour." (35) This is precisely what terrifies many in the cultural sector right now. Suddenly, it is possible to use AI to imitate actors' voices and have voice generators narrate audiobooks. With easily accessible AI-based tools, we can generate an entire song's lyrics in just a few seconds, or compose songs with a simple sketch or idea as a starting point. AI-based technology allows us to change the language of film actors while ensuring that facial expressions match, make room for virtual actors on stage, translate entire texts, create designs or illustrations, and write journalistic articles. Moreover, the development is happening at a furious pace, and we do not know what will be possible in six months' time or a year.

With all of this achievable with AI, it is easy to understand why many in the cultural sector worry about not being able to make a living from their jobs. It is not only cultural practitioners who are concerned. At the end of March 2023, a petition was published by a large group of AI experts and leaders, including Elon Musk, calling on world leaders to pause the AI experiment to allow time for experts and politicians to evaluate the long-term consequences for humanity.

Dancing with AI

"All artists have probably experienced how creative it can be when working in a group. Something special happens. All these machines generating art, or ChatGPT – we can see them as team members we collaborate with. As if in a dance. The more I, as a human, interact with the machine, the better it becomes at generating relevant suggestions because it learns to adapt to my needs and tonality. I start, and the machine completes. It's a dance between me and the machine."
– Robert Johansson, licensed Psychologist and Associate Professor of Psychology, Stockholm University

How can we future-proof our organisations and ourselves in these times of intelligent machines and systems? One way to avoid being replaced by AI is to stay updated on its developments and to be the one to innovate with AI's help. Instead of wondering if our jobs will be replaced by AI, it might be more relevant to ask how we can use AI to evolve.

We could be inspired by the above quote and focus on learning to dance with AI – to collaborate with intelligent systems. We lead the dance, and AI systems respond by generating suggestions and ideas that we

sometimes reject, sometimes accept. To succeed, we need to continuously acquire knowledge about AI and adopt an inquisitive attitude towards developments in our organisations. We need to allow ourselves to experiment and occasionally fail. The pace of development is rapid, and no one knows where it will lead. Perhaps that is why a playful approach to learning about AI may be the most effective.

The Functions of AI in Cultural Organisations
How should a cultural sector organisation that wants to provide employees with appropriate lifelong learning conditions deal with the rapid development of AI? To answer such a complex question, it can be helpful to divide learning about AI into three areas, each one serving different functions.

1. AI as a tool for lifelong learning
2. AI as a tool for creation
3. AI as a tool for process development and data-driven analysis

1. AI as a Tool for Lifelong Learning
"Soon, AI will have the ability to be as good a teacher as anyone." This is how Microsoft founder Bill Gates expressed himself at a conference in early 2023. He referred to the development of chatbots and suggested that these will soon be capable of helping children learn to read and to provide feedback on their writing. The reason this is revolutionary is that currently most of the world's children cannot afford or get access to private tutors who can support them during their school years, especially not tutors who adapt to each individual child's developmental level and learning style, while remembering everything they have done and learnt before." (36)
Bill Gates's reasoning about using AI tools as teachers is similar to an idea long held in AI and learning research. The dream of being able to offer each school student a personal, lifelong teacher or mentor is actually what once inspired researchers to try to integrate AI into learning. What could humanity not achieve if every person had access to a private learning partner that could accompany them throughout life?

Today, personalised learning with the help of AI is already offered in the workplace. AI has the ability to tailor learning and customise content, structure, and pace to suit individual goals and preferences. For many companies, this is a strategy for retaining talent in an organisation. They offer AI-generated upskilling programmes that personalise learning and ensure an employee continues to be stimulated, challenged, and undergo personal development. According to UNESCO, AI's entry into the world of continuing education and training is expected to create a global market that is worth 6 billion dollars by 2024. (37)

In his statement, Bill Gates also touched upon the potential of chatbots to be a sounding board and conversation partner in learning. Asking questions is a prerequisite for human survival and an effective way to learn

something new. On average, a person asks 40,000 questions between the ages of two and five, which is the equivalent of about one question every 20 minutes, every day, for three years. (38) AI-generated chatbots will potentially make this learning method accessible to many more.

It is important to note, however, that the answers are currently not always reliable. There is often a lack of statement sources, and users should always seek other reliable sources to confirm the accuracy of information.

2. AI as a Tool for Creation

"The requirements for learning in creative and artistic professions differ from those in other professions because they concern the development and enhancing of creativity, which can be challenging to measure or assess. To create relevant and appreciated products, AI can help us along the way, but it is still a human hand that needs to add the first and final touches to it. We are the ones creating AI. You have the human at the beginning and the human at the end, with technology as an aid along the way."
– Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content

When digital tools were widely introduced in the cultural sphere, there was talk of a democratisation of culture. Ordinary people could suddenly sit at home and create music instead of having to pay for expensive studio time and hire musicians. Anyone could download apps to edit filmed material and create effects.

Since AI's entry into the cultural world, the discussion has shifted instead towards the risks or opportunities that arise when technology creates, culturally, entirely on its own. Everything created by AI is, of course, based on existing artistic works created by humans, but this has sparked a separate discussion about ethics and copyright. As of now, we do not know where the consequences of these discussions will lead.

The question many are now asking is whether AI, in the future, will be able to generate creativity beyond human capability. Regardless of how future developments unfold, we can already observe the daily launch of new AI tools that can assist creators with writing, graphic design, music composition, scriptwriting, audio and video editing, photo editing, and much more.

Learning about AI's Ethical Risks
Employers today have the opportunity to encourage employees to use various AI tools in their creative work and daily tasks. There is incredible potential here to enhance employees' learning. At the same time, it is important for an organisation to both identify and educate employees about the problems and ethical risks that AI can bring with it. One aspect involves the risks associated with copyright. Another aspect is the risk of

biased input data causing AI systems to generate biased, unethical, or completely incorrect responses.

Everything depends on the data that is fed into the systems. AI systems can have biases because people have biases. The algorithms may also have been trained on biased data. An example illustrating this is the AI model Norman created at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2018. Norman was specifically trained on data related to crimes, violence, and disturbing events, learning to make negative associations with images and words. The result was a model described as the world's first 'psychopath AI'. Norman turned into a generator of dark and disturbing responses to questions. The experiment was conducted to demonstrate how crucial training data specifics are when developing AI models, and to emphasise how important it is to be aware of the impact of training data on an AI model's behaviour and decision-making.

3. AI as a Tool for Process Development and Data-Driven Analysis

"AI may influence how other companies encounter our products in the future. Submitted manuscripts are likely to be analysed by AI. AI will quickly extract schematic plot points and provide the client with analysis and data. But I would argue that the core of our business is the passion and desire to tell a story, and that's where AI won't help us as much."
– Jan Blomgren, Senior Executive

AI algorithms can be used to analyse historical data and predict future behaviours or trends. For example, an organisation can use predictive analytics to forecast customer behaviour and market trends. This is something widely used in the streaming industry but could be applied more extensively even to the performing arts. By using AI for data-driven analysis, organisations can leverage large amounts of data in order to make better decisions, improve efficiency, and reduce costs.

"This may, among other things, affect the role of the executive producer. What kind of work will they need to focus on in the future? When we have technology that can suggest recording locations, and lists of suitable castings and crews, it removes parts of the administrative work that exists in certain roles. At the same time, it will make some roles unnecessary altogether. This is in its infancy right now, but it's important to understand the kind of revolution that is happening. Compare it with the industrial revolution where our bodies were relieved from physical labour. Now comes a revolution where our minds are relieved from work. We still don't know what the consequences will be for our employees and for the quality of the work."
– Azra Osmancevic, Head of Business Development Content

The challenges of implementing various AI systems across an organisation can be numerous. Introducing new technical solutions is not always popular, and a clear motivation from leadership showing the reasons for a specific measure, can be key. (39)

AI Tightens Up Requirements on People and Art

"In the performing arts, it's not realistic to think that all professions would disappear. Will we have robots manufacturing stage design? Perhaps. But someone still has to have thought about what needs to be manufactured. Once it's manufactured, it needs to be placed. Maybe it will be done in the future by a robot, but someone must have the ability to program it. Behind every technological change, there must be someone who has a desire to express something."
– Anders Larsson, Assistant Lecturer, Stockholm University of the Arts

In last year's Skills report, we noted that the philosophers of antiquity regarded work as a degrading activity that deprived humans of the opportunity to engage in what was truly important in life: thinking, philosophising, and the development of body and soul. Given the rapid development in generative AI, we can ask ourselves if the possibility of realising the ideals of antiquity has now arrived. The catch is that artistic creation is precisely the work that almost no one wants to be freed from. Instead, it's what many in the cultural sector want to be more engaged in.

In the cultural pages of the press, we are reminded almost daily of our fear of human creativity being replaced by smart machines, which are both cheaper and faster than humans. We also read about concerns that the quality is declining, as more editors are now forced to reduce large amounts of manuscripts that have been generated with the help of ChatGPT or similar programmes. (40)

But will creativity as a human driving force really be completely erased from the face of the Earth? Of course not. We should not underestimate the human need and drive to express oneself artistically or to engage in art that is produced by a human. However, a consequence of AI systems may be that higher demands are placed on us humans to be unique, original, and unpredictable in our artistic expressions. Because the predictable – the one built on the sum of all artistic expressions already produced – can be generated by AI with just the press of a button.

The Art of Not Being Predictable
Let us remember that today's AI-generated tools rarely produce entirely new insights. They provide a summary of the existing data, represent the wisdom of the crowd. While the wisdom of the crowd may be true, it is anything but original, and the very definition of creativity is to create something new and valuable. We can use chatbots to gain insight into how the masses think, but if we do nothing with these insights, we will become

increasingly predictable and continue to use the same loops of information and ideas.

AI tools can be used to provide information about what has already been done – what is predictable. Cultural practitioners could see their responses as a call to do something entirely different – something not yet done, and unique.

We can also reverse the argument and note that AI-generated systems can indeed generate entirely new insights. However, the point is that for new insights to emerge, it needs to happen in a meeting – or in a dance – with humans. It is through the human's initiation of the dance with AI that something entirely new can arise.

Just as it is argued that AI poses a threat to human creativity, the technology could be seen as the opposite – a call to us humans to be even more creative and less predictable. In the end, it could lead to art becoming even better, more original, and more human.

THOSE BEHIND THE REPORT

About Kulturakademin
Kulturakademin provides specialised and comprehensive competence development for professional activities, groups, and individuals in the performing arts, music, audiovisual media, and the visual arts and design, in the west of Sweden. Kulturakademin's owners are Film i Väst, Gothenburg Opera, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Folkteatern, Regionteater Väst, and Teater Halland.
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Rasmussen Analys assists companies and organisations gain insights into their environment and employees in order to enhance their employer competitiveness, develop leadership, and understand future requirements. The company provides customised quantitative and qualitative surveys, knowledge-based projects for change, and environmental and target audience analyses, lectures, and workshops. The founder and CEO, Sofia Rasmussen, is a frequently sought-after speaker on topics such as leadership, the work values of the younger generation, and the future job market.
www.rasmussenanalys.se

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