



## **Bridging the worlds of business and art**

**Paul Delean, Postmedia News**

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Artists and business leaders used to be widely perceived as polar opposites.

In today's world, however, the corporate managers most likely to prosper are those who conduct themselves more like artists, innovating and responding quickly to stimulus.

That's the contention of McGill University professor Nancy Adler who, in addition to teaching at the Desautels Faculty of Management, is an accomplished painter whose first local solo show will open to the public next month at Galerie MX.

The interactive exhibit, titled Reality in Translation, Going Beyond the Dehydrated Language of Management, combines words and paintings.

Adler said one of her objectives as a teacher is "outing the humanity" of her MBA students. Many still arrive ready to adhere to the stereotype of what a professional should be -- hard-nosed, hierarchical, focused on the bottom line and/or stock price.

Actors, dancers and musicians -- performing as ensembles -- have developed team-based collaborative skills to a much greater extent than have most managers.

These days, though, it takes a more responsive, empathetic leader to get the best out of a team and inspire and encourage the sort of continuous innovation needed to sustain companies in a competitive global economy. Employing an artistic mindset can be part of the solution.

"Actors, dancers and musicians -- performing as ensembles -- have developed team-based collaborative skills to a much greater extent than have most managers," Adler noted in a much-cited 2006 paper, *The Arts & Leadership: Now That We Can Do Anything, What Will We Do?*

Adler said companies -- and management schools -- are starting to get the message. That's why they're calling on people like improv specialist Rob Nickerson, an alumnus of

the famed comedy review Second City, for coaching sessions aimed at getting employees to work more collaboratively.

The respect for artists and their methods from managers today is in stark contrast to the old divide, Adler said.

"People used to talk about the two solitudes. Many business people viewed artists as leeches on society, and artists viewed the business people as Neanderthals, with no taste or sophistication, caring only about the bottom line."

Adler said one of the goals of her exhibition is to get people to pause, step back and reflect, "so they can reconnect with what's really important to them."

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