

2015

Unmasking Business Success

Executive Perceptions of Arts
Engagement and Workforce Skills

THEATRE FORWARD

WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON THE WORKFORCE OF EDUCATING THROUGH THE ARTS?

Many executives believe that arts education and engagement throughout life significantly improve workforce skills and have contributed to their own career success. Our research – the first that specifically studied the role of arts engagement on workforce skills – shows that executives believe there is a strong connection between one’s arts education and his or her potential for professional success. Therefore, to deprive students access to arts-related skills may also deprive them of workforce skills. When access to arts education is not available to all students, this skills gap becomes an opportunity gap as well.

To deprive students access to arts related skills may also deprive them of workforce skills.

However, even some who attribute their success to their arts experiences do not immediately grasp the overall significance of this connection. This perception gap helps to explain why educating through the arts is often considered optional and is often the first form of education that is cut when budget and policy pressures arise.

If this connection continues to go unrecognized, the schools and organizations responsible for providing arts education will not receive the attention and support necessary to sustain their services.

Consider your own experiences: How did you get where you are? What role did the arts play in your own career? Do you work well collaboratively and speak with ease in public? Did you learn how to receive feedback, develop focus, accountability or problem solving skills by rehearsing a play, by playing an instrument or by studying or engaging in another arts discipline?

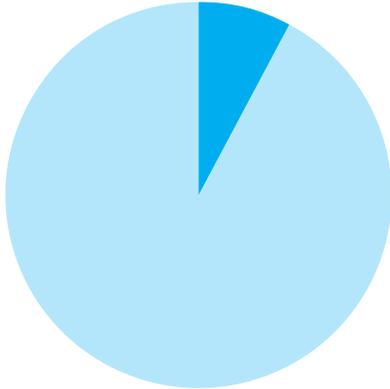
These findings call for action to provide equal access and opportunity to the arts for all students to prepare them to succeed in the workforce. **Theatre Forward, in collaboration with companies, policy makers, arts organizations and educators, is working to help ensure that every student has the access and opportunity to engage with the arts, thereby building a stronger workforce.**

We welcome your engagement and invite you to contact us at www.theatreforward.org/success.

ATTITUDES TOWARD WORKFORCE PREPAREDNESS

Hiring executives perceive a serious shortfall in 21st century skills. They find the major cause of this unpreparedness to be the lack of soft skills (communication skills, organizational skills and personal habits that impact relationships with other people). This negative perception of preparedness among young people entering the workforce is widespread, and exists among the respondents regardless of title, size of the company, and type of staff hired.

A staggering 92% of business executives feel young people are not well prepared to enter the workforce and be successful.



ONLY 8% PREPARED

Only a small percentage of executives who believe young people **have** strong skills in the following categories:

CONFIDENCE	34%
CREATIVITY	28%
RISK TAKING	20%
ABILITY TO WORK WITH OTHERS	17%
ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS	10%
PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS	10%
PERSEVERANCE	9%
FOCUS	9%
VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS	9%
STRONG WORK ETHIC	9%
PROFESSIONALISM	9%
NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS	8%
ABILITY TO RECEIVE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK	8%
WRITING SKILLS	8%
ACCOUNTABILITY	8%
ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS	7%
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	5%
LEADERSHIP	4%

Arts education can help prepare young people for all kinds of jobs across all industries.

56%
OF EXECUTIVES

SAY THE ARTS CAN DEVELOP SKILLS VALUABLE IN JOBS OUTSIDE OF THE CREATIVE SECTOR.

.....

45% OF EXECUTIVES

SAY DEFICIENCIES EXIST IN MANAGERIAL/CLERICAL AND MANUFACTURING/TRADE BASED JOBS.

.....

40% OF EXECUTIVES

SAY THAT DEFICIENCIES IN 21ST CENTURY SKILLS EXIST REGARDLESS OF TYPE OF POSITION, DEGREE ACHIEVED OR WORK EXPERIENCE.

.....

39% OF EXECUTIVES

SAY DEFICIENCIES EXIST WHETHER THE CANDIDATE HAS A BACHELOR'S OR MASTER'S DEGREE.

.....

38% OF EXECUTIVES

SAY THE DEFICIENCIES EXIST AMONG CANDIDATES FILLING ENTRY LEVEL AND HIGHER POSITIONS.

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ARTS ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVITIES CAN HELP DEVELOP WORKFORCE SKILLS

While the arts do not come to mind immediately as a solution to addressing workforce preparedness, when asked directly more than half of executives said that participating in the arts in school can improve skills needed for success in business.

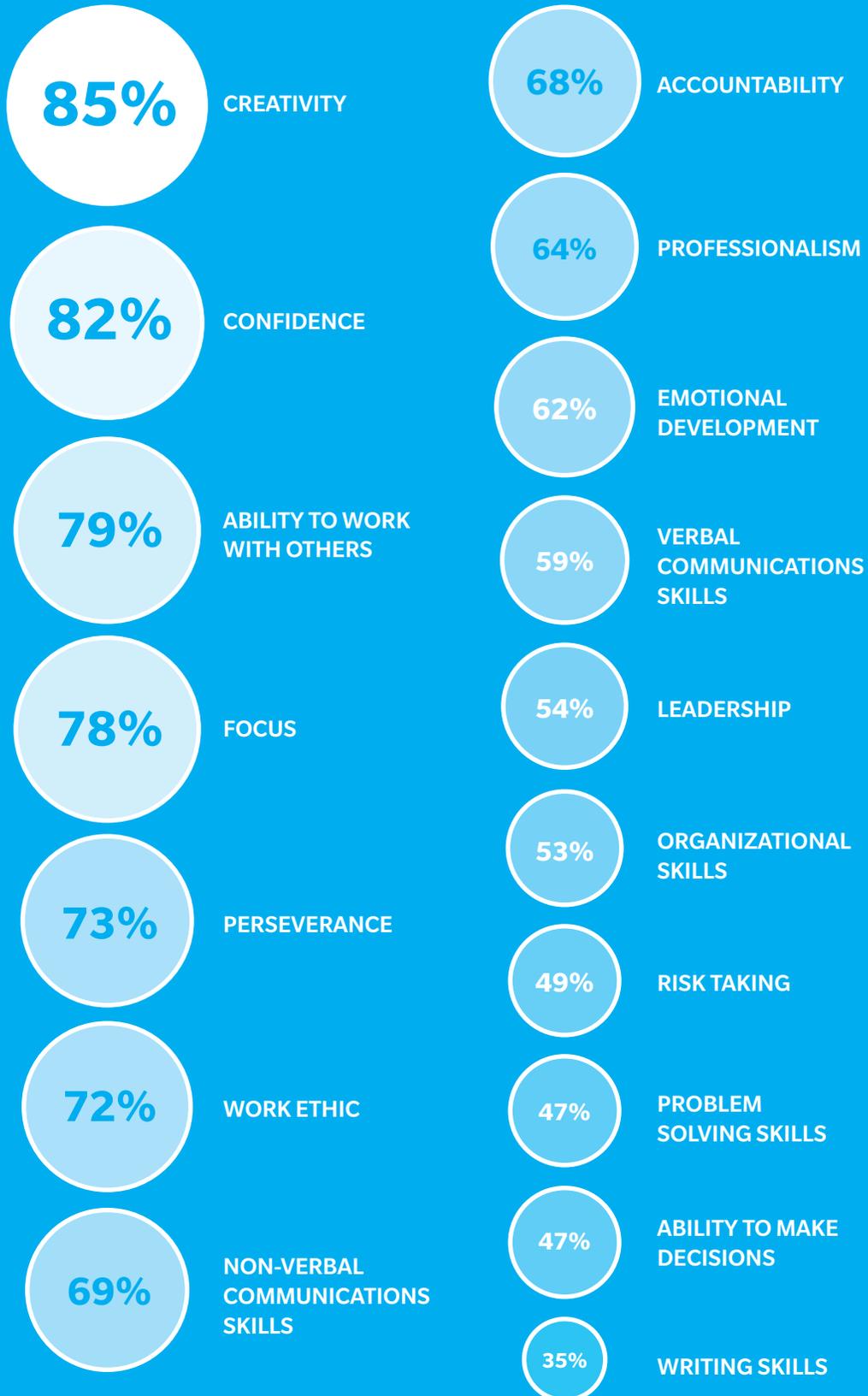
8%

UNPROMPTED ONLY 8% OF EXECUTIVES THINK THAT ARTS EXPOSURE IN SCHOOL MIGHT HELP DEVELOP WORKPLACE SKILLS.

58%

WHEN DIRECTLY ASKED WHETHER PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS IN SCHOOL CAN DEVELOP SKILLS USEFUL IN THE WORKPLACE, OVER HALF OF THE RESPONDENTS (58%) ANSWERED POSITIVELY.

PERCENTAGE OF EXECUTIVES WHO SAY THAT EXPOSURE TO THE ARTS CAN SIGNIFICANTLY DEVELOP THESE SKILLS CURRENTLY LACKING IN THE WORKPLACE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE.



PERSONAL ARTS ENGAGEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON EXECUTIVES

A surprisingly high number of executives connect their arts experience to their success in business. They feel the positive effects beyond their skills training, but also attribute to it a positive impact on their life and the type of person they are at work.



89%

of executives participated in the arts in some way while in school (performed in theatre, played an instrument, danced etc.).

This high participation rate suggests a strong relationship between educating through the arts and success in business.

- 47% OF EXECUTIVES SAY PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR CAREER SUCCESS.
- 46% SAY PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS DEVELOPED SKILLS THEY USE IN THEIR JOB.
- 42% SAY ATTENDING ARTS EVENTS SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTS THE TYPE OF PERSON THEY ARE AT WORK.
- 33% SAY ATTENDING ARTS EVENTS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THEIR COMMITMENT TO WORK AND CAREER.

Executives noted the significant impact of the arts on their lives.

- 58% SAY ATTENDING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS STRONGLY IMPACTS THE TYPE OF PERSON THEY ARE.
- 58% SAY ATTENDING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS STRONGLY IMPACTS THEM AS AN INDIVIDUAL.
- 47% SAY ATTENDING AND PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS STRONGLY IMPACTS THEIR COMPASSION TOWARDS OTHERS.



ATTITUDES TOWARD SUPPORTING THE ARTS AND ARTS EDUCATION

The research also considered ways employers can help address the skills gaps they perceive. Despite believing arts education improves workforce skills, few executives believe it is the role of business to directly support expanded access to arts skills. Most feel that arts organizations are not communicating the benefits of these skills to them as employers.

- Despite making this connection between arts exposure in school and business success, only a small number (22%) think this justifies their business supporting the arts and arts education.
- Only 10% say arts organizations do a good job in educating businesses about the benefits of the arts in the workplace.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Through a grant from **The Schloss Family Foundation** we contracted with Shugoll Research to explore the role of arts education in workforce development as perceived by those who hire and develop staff.

The research was conducted in two phases:

Phase 1 qualitative research consisted of sixteen, 20-minute in-depth telephone interviews with twelve Human Resources Directors and four Arts Educators to solicit preliminary views on the topic. Results were used to develop questions for the quantitative phase.

Phase 2 quantitative research consisted of online surveys of 200 corporate managers and executives to assess past personal experience with arts education, the role it played in their professional development and achievement, their view of its importance for employees as a whole, and what arts education could contribute to workforce development.

Respondents were required to be full-time employees with hiring authority in organizations with revenues exceeding \$2 million. They reflected a broad range of geographic, business sector and responsibility levels (excluding market research); 17% were C-Suite executives of their companies. Questions addressed arts engagement in general without regard to discipline, except some specific theatre questions.

ABOUT THEATRE FORWARD

Theatre Forward is devoted to advancing the American theatre and its communities by providing funding and other resources to the country's leading nonprofit theatres. Through this network of regional theatres and funders, partnerships for artistic, education and other programs are incubated, tested and disseminated. From its base in New York, Theatre Forward aims to increase access and opportunity for all to experience theatre that builds community and sets the stage for individual achievement by advancing strong theatre and educating through theatre.

**For more information or to download the report
please visit www.theatreforward.org/success**

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