

**Final Research Paper**

**The Art of Leading Boldly**

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Communicate Like A Leader: Be the Message

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## **Creativity, Leadership, and the Art of Being Human**

Creativity isn't just an outlet, it's a necessity. From ancient cave paintings to modern street murals, human expression has always been a way to understand, connect, and adapt to the world around us. But creativity isn't confined to the arts; it's at the heart of great leadership. The most effective leaders think like artists, embracing uncertainty, inspiring innovation, and fostering emotional intelligence. Art, in particular, has a way of reaching places within us that words sometimes can't. Whether it's painting, music, or storytelling, creative expression allows us to process emotions, share our truths, and reimagine the world around us. In this paper, I will explore the powerful intersection of creativity and leadership, revealing how the art of leading is just that, an art.

### **The Innate Human Drive to Create**

Why do we create? The urge to make something, whether it's a painting, a poem, or a new way of thinking, is built into who we are. Creativity isn't just a talent reserved for artists; it's a fundamental part of being human. From the very beginning, creativity has been key to our survival. Early humans used it to invent tools, solve problems, and navigate an unpredictable world. Long before written language existed, people told stories through art, carving symbols into stone and painting on cave walls to communicate their experiences. There's something about the creative process that makes it easier to work through emotions. Colors, textures, movement, and sound offer a safe way to express feelings that might otherwise remain stuck inside. Neuroscience backs this up: creating art actually changes the brain, helping form new connections and reshape old patterns. This is especially powerful for those healing from trauma, as creativity allows people to reclaim their stories without being confined by painful memories.

But art isn't just about healing the individual, it strengthens communities, too. When people create together, they build trust, empathy, and a shared sense of purpose. Public art, in particular, has the power to transform spaces, spark conversations, and make sure voices that are often overlooked are not just heard, but seen.

### **Creativity as Leadership in Action**

At first glance, art and leadership might seem like separate worlds. But look closer, and you'll see they follow the same principles. Both require courage, adaptability, and the ability to turn vision into reality. Both demand that we embrace uncertainty, learn from failure, and find ways to communicate ideas that move people. Leadership, like art, is about process, not perfection. It's about being willing to experiment, listen, and grow. Great leaders, just like great artists, understand that creativity isn't about having all the answers. It's about staying open to new possibilities.

### **Frida Kahlo: A Blueprint for Creative Leadership**

Frida Kahlo wasn't just an artist; she was a force of nature. Through her paintings, she told stories that words couldn't capture, turning her own suffering into something deeply powerful and universally relatable. Her work wasn't just about art, it was about identity, resilience, and revolution; all key qualities of a leader. Despite a life filled with physical pain from childhood polio and a near-fatal bus accident, Kahlo refused to be defined by her suffering. Instead, she used it as fuel for her creativity, turning her struggles into breathtaking self-portraits that laid bare both her pain and her strength. She never shied away from the truth, painting with raw honesty about topics many avoided like disability, gender, politics, love, and loss. Kahlo's

authenticity was unwavering. She rejected societal norms, fully embraced by her heritage, and refused to conform to expectations of femininity or beauty. In doing so, she became a symbol of unapologetic self-expression, a lesson for leaders who want to lead with integrity and stand firmly in their truth.

Beyond her own experiences, she understood the power of storytelling, not just for herself, but as a tool for connection. Her paintings weren't just self-portraits; they were emotional landscapes that spoke to people across cultures and generations. She showed that art has the ability to communicate what words sometimes fail to express. Most of all, Kahlo was fearless. She didn't create for approval or validation; she created because she had something to say. Her work was deeply political, challenging oppression and advocating for the marginalized. Through her art, she became an activist, proving that creativity can be an act of resistance and a catalyst for change.

### ***Rainbow Community Arts Olympia: Leadership Through Creativity***

Nowhere is this connection between art and leadership clearer than in organizations like *Rainbow Community Arts Olympia*. This community-driven arts initiative in Washington embodies leadership not as a top-down structure, but as a shared, evolving process, one that prioritizes inclusion, collaboration, and social change. Rather than following a traditional hierarchy, *Rainbow Community Arts Olympia* operates with a democratic spirit. Artists from all backgrounds contribute to public art projects, ensuring that a diverse range of voices shape their work. Murals, storytelling initiatives, and cultural events are created with the community, not just for it. LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC artists play a central role, bringing their perspectives to the forefront in ways that are both personal and deeply connected to broader social movements.

Their leadership is rooted in vision and advocacy. Each project serves a purpose beyond aesthetics, whether it's *Migration of the Rainbow Wings*, which highlights themes of identity and movement, or *Water People of the Shore*, which uplifts Indigenous histories. Through these works, the organization doesn't just create art; it fosters dialogue, builds bridges, and empowers marginalized communities. This is leadership in its most dynamic form, not about control, but about empowerment. Leadership is decentralized, with different artists leading different projects, and community members directly involved in painting, storytelling, and decision-making. In this way, art becomes a means of shared ownership, a way for people to see their voices reflected in the spaces they live in. They can truly see what their intentions are.

Art has always played a role in shaping cultural and political movements. In the hands of a community, it becomes a form of democracy itself, an accessible, visual statement of who belongs, whose stories matter, and what kind of future we want to build. By placing public art in visible, everyday spaces, *Rainbow Community Arts Olympia* invites people into a conversation about identity, belonging, and justice. Their work challenges outdated narratives and replaces them with new ones, ones that are more inclusive, more representative, and more alive. Volunteers, organizers, and local residents all take part, making the creative process a shared experience rather than something confined to galleries or institutions. In a world where leadership often feels disconnected from the people it's meant to serve, this approach is a reminder that real leadership is about *doing*, about showing up, making space for others, and using creativity as a force for change.

### **Hummingbird Studio: Leadership through Inclusion**

*Hummingbird Studio* is more than just a place to make art, it's a space where creativity, connection, and community come together. There, everyone is welcome, no matter their age, ability, or experience. Art has the power to bring people closer, to heal, and to inspire, and we believe it should be accessible to all. That's why their studio is free, giving everyone the chance to express themselves and build friendships in a supportive, joyful environment.

*Hummingbird Studio* embodies a leadership style rooted in service, inclusion, and creativity, making it especially powerful for those who are often overlooked. At its core, this is servant leadership, putting the needs of the community first by ensuring that art is accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background. It's also inclusive leadership, creating a space where people who may face barriers elsewhere can express themselves freely and feel a true sense of belonging. But beyond that, it's creative leadership, recognizing that art isn't just about making things, but about self-discovery, healing, and connection. The leaders behind *Hummingbird Studio* don't just provide a space to create; they foster an environment where people can grow, build confidence, and find joy in both art and community. By leading with empathy and prioritizing human connection, they remove obstacles and open doors, proving that creativity isn't a privilege, it's something everyone deserves.

## **The Art of Leading Boldly**

Leadership isn't just about making decisions. It's an art. It's about seeing beyond what exists and imagining what could be. Does "looking at the big picture" sound familiar? That every brushstroke, every idea, every risk we take in leadership and creativity adds to something greater. It's about seeing beyond immediate challenges and recognizing how what we create today can

inspire, heal, and transform the world for generations to come. Like any creative process, it requires risk-taking, resilience, and a willingness to embrace imperfection.

To lead with creativity is to:

- Trust your voice; your perspective matters!
- Turn struggles into strengths; adversity can fuel transformation!
- Tell stories that resonate, because connection starts with meaning!
- Break outdated patterns; change begins with questioning the norm!
- Make creativity a part of leadership, because innovation requires imagination!
- Create fearlessly, because the world needs bold ideas, not just safe ones!

Concluding thought is that at its core, leadership is creativity in action. To create is to lead. To lead is to create. And both, when done with purpose, have the power to shape not just art, but the world itself.

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