

**THE VITRUVIAN DRUCKER AND HIS CAMERA:
A MAGNUM OPUS FOR MANAGERS**

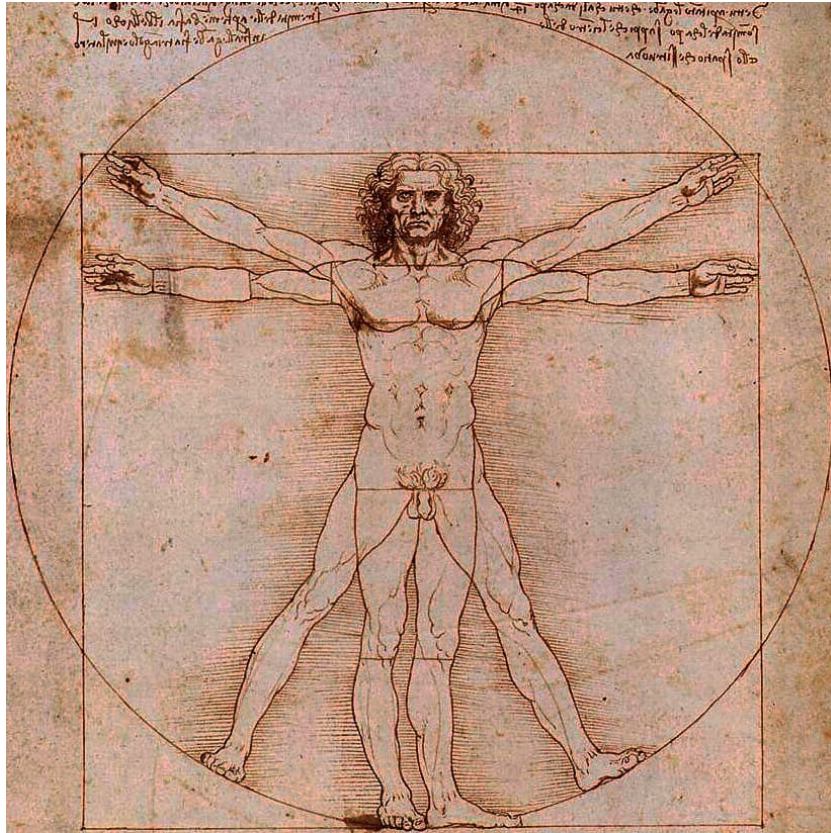


Figure 1: The Vitruvian Man. ^[1]

“Every art should become science, and every science should become art.”

- Friedrich von Schlegel ^[2]

Yesterday, I had a dream. Swimming through the sands of time, and eventually washed ashore by the vehement currents, I lay paralyzed in a land whose sands were so dusty they had emblazoned the atmosphere sepia. My sporadic attempts to regain self-consciousness were abruptly disrupted by the deafening sounds of hurtling feet and whips. I recognized this from childhood stories my grandmother told me! I was in Egypt, witnessing the building of the Great Pyramid - a monument which I have found most intriguing, and while the slaves were at the apogee of construction, here I lay, attempting to understand how the coalescence of two distinct spheres - art and science - had resulted in such a panoply of bricks and mortar. ^[3]

A metal box fell from the sky a few inches before my head. Subsumed in this box was a small, watch-like object with a knob, and a piece of paper with a note which read, “This is a time machine. Use it to find answers to your questions.” Without contemplation, I turned the knob and was sequestered to 1308 A.D., where I found Dante being led by Virgil on a journey through Inferno. I knew because I had read *The Divine Comedy* ^[4] a few days ago, and my memory was filled with the lucid pictures Dante so excellently painted. At the Ninth Circle - the deepest circle - of Inferno (or Hell) was the Devil, waist-deep in ice, constantly flapping his behemoth wings in an attempt to break free, and simultaneously doing his job by preventing his “three worst sinners of all time” - Brutus, Judas, and Cassius ^[4] - from escaping, due to the gusts of wind emanating from his flapping wings.

The Definition

Following this experience, I turned that knob several times - I was literally waltzing through history to find connections between art and science that led to countless achievements and successes, and three were most striking, in my judgement: the Vitruvian Man drawn by Leonardo da Vinci, ^[5] a man so befuddled by nature and so preoccupied with his work that all attempts to befriend him were futile; the more recent Managerial Man, Peter Drucker; and the camera. The Vitruvian Man, the man of perfect proportions, remains an epitome of the beautiful, long-lost intersect between arts and science that can result in extreme levels of success when applied, and a synergy between these three most striking connections - the trinity I call “The Vitruvian Drucker and His Camera” - stands as the quintessence of both the Renaissance Man and the manager, and **is** the Renaissance Manager.

The Separation

In his paper “Science and Art: Separated by a Common Language?” Jonathan Ashley-Smith ^[6] recounts the unfortunate narrative, and the turn of events which culminated in the separation of these two fields. The Renaissance period was marked with this communication of numerous genres of knowledge - summarized into art, architecture, engineering, and science - to all people, in efforts to achieve what he calls the “Universal Polymathy. ^[6] The 19th Century saw the disastrous integration-to-separation trend with such events as the dissociation of the South Kensington Museum to two separate museums, one of art and the other of science, and the subsequent restructuring of academic curricula making it nearly

impossible to acquire the ‘Renaissance’ knowledge.^[6] To complement this, Mortimer J. Adler^[7] wrote of the medieval age, wherein students were supposed to acquire proficiency in the liberal arts, which were a solved jigsaw of what we currently consider sciences and arts - grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy - before advancing to higher levels of learning.

The Human Condition

Currently, there are a plethora of laudable arguments from both sides as to whether this separation has brought more good than harm. One may argue that our failing to excel even in specialization is proof that integration would be counter-productive in the 21st Century. However, the veracity of this statement can be tested on a pair of scales. Though Leonardo da Vinci excelled in varying fields - I cannot say whether he achieved this with ease or not - he was not the only man on Earth during the Renaissance period. More so, he was not the only polymath.^[8] The Renaissance emerged as a result of the increase in problems requiring solutions daily, the sparks of creativity which co-opted these honourable polymaths to dedicate their lives to solving these problems for the common good, and the unconscious agreement by these men to solve these problems, fuelled by their interest in and intrigue by nature. What we have failed to realize is that this separation has caused a neural imbalance - more focus on the brain’s left hemisphere for the scientific, and more focus on the right hemisphere for the artistic - which has in turn caused a decrease in problem-solving and productivity, both in business and in life. Realizing this neural imbalance and acknowledging the extreme importance of the polymath in human existence, and more specifically in management, Peter Drucker opined that successful innovators, and of course successful managers, “use both the right side and the left side of their brains.” On these foundations, I stand and dare say that the 21st Century polymath is a human of diverse knowledge - both artistic and scientific knowledge, who is able to connect these knowledge dots to solve organizational and otherwise problems, and who is able to achieve “transformational leadership” and successful management. The 21st Century polymath is the Renaissance Manager - the Vitruvian Drucker.

Vitruvius’s Theory of Architecture: The Renaissance Manager

Marcus Vitruvius, the architect who inspired da Vinci’s drawing, and whom it was named after, believed that an architect should focus on three central themes when preparing a design for a building: *firmitas* (strength), *utilitas* (functionality), and *venustas* (beauty).^[9]

His belief that universal laws of proportion and symmetry formed the basis of nature's designs was subliminally adopted by Drucker, who in a plethora of books discussed how managers should focus on these three central themes in building lasting organizations.

Strength

“Indeed, the specific job of the manager is to make the strengths of people productive and their weaknesses irrelevant.”

- Peter F. Drucker ^[10]

Drucker understood perfectly that organizations are composed of people and not things, and this understanding spurred him to success. He emphasized personality and temperament as integral, inevitable attributes of people. He encouraged community and teams, relationships and communications, shared vision and conflict, because he believed that a disproportion of any of these would imply a weak foundation. Most importantly, he advocated for the thrill of achievement and the enjoyment of human diversity, because unlike an architect's inanimate structure, a manager's structure - his organization - **can** and **should** grow stronger. Thus, the Renaissance Manager focuses not only on the science of the organization - the throughput time, customer statistics and key metrics, optimization and linear programming to decrease cost and increase profit, quality control, etc - but also on the art of the organization - that is, the people. And a balance between these is what sustains and eventually grows an organization.

Functionality

“To be effective is the job of the executive.”

- Peter F. Drucker

Drucker believed that functionality in an organization - that is, its capability of serving a purpose well - is dependent most especially on the manager. This element calls to mind the inverted pyramid organizational structure, ^[12] which places the manager at the bottom and every other person above him, such that there is a focus shift from gratifying the manager to gratifying the customer, which of course is the function of the organization. Thus, like Jesus Christ, the Renaissance Manager is the one “who has not come to be served, but to serve” and to scientifically and artistically dedicate his time, talents, and resources to maintaining and increasing the functionality of the organization.

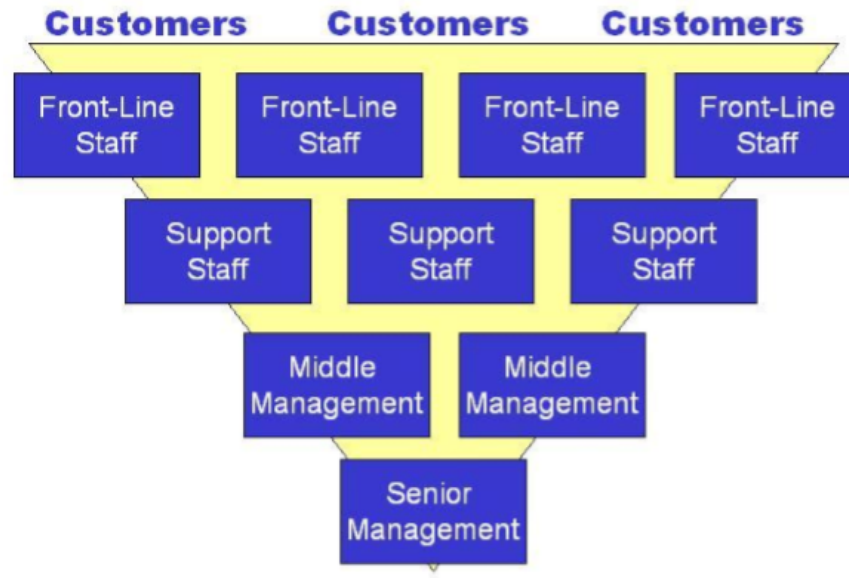


Figure 2: The Inverted Pyramid Organizational Structure ^[12]

Beauty

Drucker preached “The Knowledge Society,” coined the term “Knowledge Worker”, and emphasized knowledge as the aesthetic of any organization. To connect this perspective to his human-centred approach to management, he wrote: “Knowledge is always embodied in a person; carried by a person; created, augmented, or improved by a person; applied by a person; taught and passed on by a person; used or misused by a person. The shift to the knowledge society therefore puts the person in the centre.” ^[9] Following his logic, and based on my experiences, it becomes pertinent to note that the most prominent and most prevalent factor ridding organizations of this aesthetic is the “arrogance of the learned - that degenerative disease which destroys knowledge and deprives it of beauty and effectiveness.” ^[11] Hence, the Renaissance Manager - the Vitruvian Drucker - is one who synthesizes the science of knowledge with the art of humility and willingness to increase his knowledge, to build the “Renaissance Organization” which shall be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Vitruvian Drucker’s Camera: The Renaissance Organization

“If a man has a tent made of linen, of which the apertures have all been stopped up, and it be twelve cubits across and twelve in depth, he will be able to throw himself down from any

great height without sustaining injury.” Leonardo’s work on the parachute is particularly amazing. No one was yet able to fly, and he designed a means for safely exiting a flying machine. And incredibly, Leonardo’s proportions for a parachute were the only ones that actually work.” ^[13]

Of all electronic devices, why did I choose the camera, you may ask? Why not the mobile phone (which of course, has a camera)? Or any other electronic device? Well, I believe the camera comes closest to the Renaissance Organization. In photography, the process of visualization requires learning to see as the camera sees. According to Adams Ansel, ^[14] once the processes are understood, a photographer can anticipate, as he/she views the subject, the transformations that occur in each stage of the sequence. And by that, the final artefact is created, and the photographer communicates via that artefact to the public, who then develop their own ideas initiated by the respective artefact. Three things are well worth noting in Adams’s explanation: first, the photographer - the Vitruvian Drucker in this case - masters the science and art of the camera; he understands the exposure, bokeh, lighting, ISO, and other photographic features, and he also understands the object or person to be captured. Second, the photographer controls the camera, and not the other way around - and this is exactly why I fled from the opinion that the mobile phone epitomizes the art-science intersect in relation to an organization. The Vitruvian Drucker understands perfectly that though he sits at the bottom of the inverted pyramid shown earlier, he controls the affairs of the organization. Third, the creation of the final artefact - in this case, the delivery of the product or service by the Renaissance Organization under the Vitruvian Drucker - ignites a chain-reaction of innovation and idea generation, leading to an increase in problem-solving and productivity. The basis of all these remains the combination of art and science.

The Renaissance ‘Me’

Currently a student of mechanical engineering, I have always been an avid reader - especially of books not related to my course of study. A few days ago, I came across a statement which not only elated me, but nullified all inherent discouragements to my voracious reading:

“Outstanding leaders and thinkers often get their best insights by reading outside their primary fields.”

- Jim Collins ^[15]

I have always believed that the more knowledge one has, the more dots he/she can connect, the more creative he/she is, and the more problems he/she can solve. And this was not only reassuring, but also motivating. One of my hobbies is User Interface/User Experience Design (UI/UX Design, which I also get paid for doing) because it stretches my creativity beyond preconceived limits and makes me want to garner more theoretical and experiential knowledge. It is axiomatic in the design world that the proficient designer is one who can apply his/her knowledge of art, mathematics, science, and psychology to create problem-solving products. I cannot say yet whether I have attained this proficiency or not, but I can say I am on the right path. And the Vitruvian Drucker stands before me as a standard, as a goal to be met.

Recently, I won an essay contest organized by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of my country. That experience exposed me to the world of human resources management, and increased my interest in Peter Drucker and the Global Peter Drucker Forum. While John Keynes and his contemporary economists focused on commodities as key economic drivers, Drucker started the anthropocentric, knowledge-based revolution. In my opinion, even if academic curricula globally do not reverse to the Renaissance, Drucker's thoughts on humanity should be inculcated in the hearts and minds of students of different levels and specializations of learning. Maybe, just maybe in addition to building the Renaissance Organization, we would also build the Renaissance Society - one where human respect and harmony is evident.

Yesterday, I had a dream. But before I was jolted back to reality by the claps of thunder accompanying the rain which had begun falling, I followed Dante and Virgil to *Paradiso* (or Paradise). There, I found Vitruvius and Peter Drucker, sitting beside Leonardo da Vinci who was now attempting to finish all his unfinished works. And as I drew closer, Old Man Drucker's face beamed with smiles, as he said: "Well done, my son. You have found the answer. Now, communicate it to the rest of the world."

Managers, the floor is yours.

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