

Why we need to bridge the gap between art and commerce

By Matt Jackson



Earlier this year Apple bought Emotient, an Artificial Intelligence start-up which sells software that has the ability to read your emotions by capturing images of changes to your facial expressions. Given how much commerce is conducted through mobile devices that have the ability to record our expressions you can see the appeal to Apple.

Through the work of start ups like Emotient and its predecessor, Affectiva, computers now have the ability to measure changes in the way we feel faster than the human eye can see. Brands like Apple, X-box, Unilever and Facebook are using it to enrich their customers' experience. The ability to accurately measure how people in an organisation are being affected

by their work environment is also desirable to large corporates who spend huge budgets on improving their culture without a reliable feedback system to tell them if it was effective.

As business's appetite for learning to master the way people affect and are affected by others who better to learn from than those who have

made it their purpose in life - artists? For too long art and commerce have been seen as opposing forces when they in fact have so much to benefit from each other.

We founded affectors in 2013 and built a client list of leading brands who identified the advantages of tuning into affect early. The affectors have collaborated with neuroscientists, biomedical engineers and visual artists to train the Starlight Children's Foundation to become more agile minded and be able to maintain their cognitive energy (crucial skills when you consider that a team of 11 imagine and grant 500 wishes to children all over Australia every year).

We taught all 80 of the Sydney BridgeClimb guides how to make memories through language by drawing on the methods of poetry, songwriting and storytelling. We do a lot of presentation and pitch training for the innovation labs inside the big banks as they realise investors have shrinking attention spans and performing artists know how to arrest attention when we need to.

Today's educational institutions are also under pressure to become

more agile minded and inclusive of diversity. We are enjoying working with the University of Sydney on how negotiations can be conducted more intuitively once people become self aware of how they are being affected by and are affecting others.

Adobe has been a client of affectors since we launched. They are now ranked 87 in Fortune's top 100 Best Places to Work worldwide which is testament to the positive affect they have on their employees. That they achieved this whilst changing their entire business model over the last 3 years and posted year on year financial growth while doing it blows the mind.

"Creativity must have a place at the table. Art and Commerce as a partnership are at the core of the affectors, it is where they were conceived from and they can help you to transform how you successfully take your business forward into the era of experience".
Clare Cahill
Creative Cloud Marketing Manager
- APAC
Adobe

What is needed to create advantage goes deeper and beyond the trading

of artefacts and skills. It is the habitual sharing of interdisciplinary ways of thinking that empowers companies to innovate.

Community minded entrepreneurs and artists working with interactive technology are much closer on the commerce / arts spectrum than the tired stereotypes of the corporate tycoon in the corner office and the oil painter in the garret. What separates these modern archetypes from their isolated predecessors is their ability to empathise with others, intuit people's thoughts and feelings in real time, be comfortable with ambiguity and adapt quickly to build communities by creating experiences that enhance the human spirit rather than suppress it. These are today's Da Vinci's.

The polymaths that are looking at the complex challenges we face in business, health, community and environmentally as multifaceted problems that require a diverse range of perspectives and perseverance to be solved. These are the bridge builders.



Matt Jackson is the founder of *affectors.com* and the author of *The Age of Affect*, released May 2016 through Richmond Publishing