

# I AM ARTIST CURRICULUM KIT

## **A Personal Letter from Erik Wahl,**

Let me begin by saying thank you for stepping into this leadership role and partnering with me for this exciting *I Am Artist* program. It may seem like a daunting task to help your employees, or co-workers uncover the Artists they have buried deep within themselves, but I promise to be there with you every step of the way, in each and every exercise. And don't worry if you haven't re-discovered your own inner Artist yet! It's not a problem. Unlike teaching a class, or leading a typical training session, you don't have to have everything figured out before you begin. That's the fun of it! You get to work along with everyone else to find the Artist within.

One of the key decisions you'll have to make as the Leader of this project is how much your fellow Artists will be asked to share from their personal workbooks. Obviously, I think every office is full of Artists, just waiting for opportunities to create new ideas and masterpieces. And since your company's brought me in to speak, either live, or on this DVD, they think so too. So do your best to create an Artist-friendly atmosphere during these workshops. Ask everyone to leave their inner art critic at the door and get ready to play.

So get out your Crayola crayons, the box of 64 of course, and meet me in the conference room! Keep me posted on what you discover about yourself, your Art, and how that artistry is going to make a difference in your company. You can find me at [facebook.com/iamerikwahl](https://www.facebook.com/iamerikwahl), or tweet me at [twitter.com/erikwahl](https://twitter.com/erikwahl).

Keep Digging,

*Erik*

## Welcome Facilitator!

We are thrilled that you are here to lead your department through the *I Am Artist* workshops. Based on the resounding success of Erik's *Art of Vision* keynote address, we've developed these resources to help individuals and corporations further discover their untapped creative potential.

Although you don't need to be an Artist to lead these workshops, as with any new task, it will help if you are prepared. We have tried to address most of the major questions or concerns you might have about how to structure the *I Am Artist* workshops for your group, including time frame, meeting structure, and tips for each exercise, especially if your group is struggling to execute on their creative vision. We've even included some ideas about how you can keep the artistic vision present, after the series of group meetings has ended.

We would suggest that you give yourself some time before your first meeting to preview the *I Am Artist* film, peruse the workbook, concentrating specifically on the introductory pages 1-5 and collect whatever materials you think you might need. We have found that the greater access we give people to art supplies, the more creative they become. To that end, we would suggest you provide crayons, colored pencils, pens with multi-colored ink, pencils and erasers at every meeting. Towards the end of the workbook, you may also want to provide some kind of moldable material, poster boards and markers, but we will let you know in each lesson plan what additional materials would be helpful.

The ideal location for these workshops is a conference room with a large television to view the *I Am Artist* film, and enough table space for each participant to work. A white board, or other space for group writing and brainstorming could also be helpful. Although the film may be viewed by a large group, we suggest no more than 20 people attend each workshop, to allow for small group discussion and idea generation. Finally, each workshop, or series of exercises, can be completed in about 1 hour, but if serious creativity is taking place, we say, let it roll! After reading over the materials, if you still have any questions, please contact us at [tmoffitt@theartofvision.com](mailto:tmoffitt@theartofvision.com).

## Declaration of Artistic Collaboration

We have offered 2 scripts for your consideration as you begin this journey...

### ***Script One:***

We, the undersigned, do solemnly swear to take art seriously.

We pledge to be playful, imaginative and engaged while creating our own art.

We promise to discover our inner Artist, not unleash our inner Art Critic.

We further pledge to be supportive of our fellow Artists. We will not laugh at, comment on, or critique what they have created.

We will not ask, "What's that supposed to be?" even if we are genuinely curious. The question itself is insulting.

During group projects, we will put forth our best effort. We believe that an Artist sees every circumstance, every medium, and every assignment as a new opportunity to create an original, innovative work of genius.

We will not hold it against our "teacher" for making us play silly games, draw pictures, or hold up our artwork for others to see. He (or she) is simply doing his (or her) job and trying to find the Artist within as well.

In all of this, we promise to do our best.

Sincerely,

US!

***Script Two:***

We are a group. We are a family. We are a tribe of Artists.

We are striving to become better.

We are waging a battle for our artistic souls. The doubters, the critics, the sarcastic voices in our head are telling us to give up before we even begin. We hear their mocking voices, telling us that if we dig, we will only find more dirt.

But we will fight back. We will pick up our crayons, our pencils, and our clay to color, create and contribute to the creative genius of our corporate world.

We will outwit, outplay, and outlast. The Artists within us will win.

We will be loyal to our tribe and to our leader. We will not mock, belittle, or criticize other's attempts to express themselves creatively in art, word, or deed. To do so is to betray our tribe and everything we stand for. We are better than that.

Our tribe has spoken!

# Session One

## Warm Up:

- 1) If the group has seen Erik speak recently, which is the ideal scenario, lead a group discussion about his message. What was their favorite painting, or video? What do they recall from the presentation? The point of this discussion is to get the group re-awakened to Erik's point of view – that opening up our minds to creative possibilities can ultimately lead to much better results, in every area of our lives.
- 2) If you want to continue to put the group at ease, **or** your group has not seen Erik speak, generate some interest around the arts and artistic expression. Some 'icebreaker' activities could include:
  - a. Name your favorite artist and why.
  - b. If you could choose to one medium of art to excel in, what would it be and why? Some possibilities include music, painting, sculpture, drawing, architecture, written word, etc.
  - c. Play a group game of Pictionary, or Cranium.
- 3) Explain the purpose of the *I Am Artist* workshops. They are intended to take Erik's message from a corporate to an individual level, from the theoretical to the practical. You are no longer just talking about an Artist's way of looking at the world, but have an opportunity to experience it for yourselves. In turn, individuals will be able to bring their increased creativity back to the corporate setting.
- 4) After everyone is warmed up to the idea that thinking artistically is not scary, or even slightly unacceptable at your place of business, watch the *I Am Artist* film together.

## The Creative Process:

- 1) Hand out the *I Am Artist* black boxes to each individual.
- 2) Give the group a few minutes to look at their workbooks and begin on page 1.
- 3) Everyone should follow the directions, grab a crayon and put their name in the inside cover. Set a good example and do it yourself as well!

- 4) **Group:** Read the welcome letter on page 2 from Erik as a group.
- 5) **Individual:** *Who Are You?* Allow 5-10 minutes for completion.
- 6) **Group:** *What is Your Art?* Read this page out loud and decide as a group what you will be calling your Art for the course of these workshops. For some groups, this will be an obvious choice, but for others, you may have to find a unifying concept.
- 7) **Individual:** *Your Artist Declaration.* After each individual has read and signed the declaration, feel free to ask them to read it out loud together.

### **Additional Tips and Tricks:**

- 1) In your welcome letter from Erik, he asks you to help keep the art critics at the door. One fun way to impart this idea to the group is to have everyone create and sign a group *Declaration of Art* before leaving this first session. How can they each become a synergistic part of this creative process? How can they find a way to translate the message of the individual *Artist Declaration* to a group dynamic? You can put this declaration on poster board and have it hanging at each meeting, or type it up and email it to everyone, with their names listed at the bottom, just like the real Declaration of Independence, without the calligraphy.
- 2) Have an *Artist Declaration* prepared ahead of time for everyone to sign at the first session. Go to [Theartofvision.com/IAmArtist](http://Theartofvision.com/IAmArtist) for ideas.
- 3) If your group completes this first session quickly and seems truly engaged in the material, then feel free to combine Sessions One and Two.
- 4) **Materials:** Pens and crayons, potentially a poster board and markers for the *Artist Declaration*

## Session Two

### Warm Up:

- 1) If you sense any artistic reluctance on the part of your group, don't be afraid to start with a warm up again. Ask another question about the art they've seen, created or admire the most. Pull out the Pictionary game again. Just spend 5-10 minutes having fun. If you want to skip ahead, the first exercise in the *I Am Artist* workbook should help.

### The Creative Process:

- 1) **Group or Individual:** *Mental Gymnastics*. You can foster a fun, or competitive spirit with this exercise. You can have a prize for the most right answers, or the first individual, or group done with all correct answers. The point is to get their synapses firing! It helps if you ban smart phones for this challenge!
- 2) **Group:** *Am I Really an Artist?* Read page 11 out loud and then go on to Exercise 2.
- 3) **Individual:** *Forever Young*. Allow at least 10 minutes for everyone to wander back in their minds to their childhood and to express themselves creatively.
  - a. **Tip:** If they seem stuck, suggest that they spend 1 page writing down some of the silly, fun things they did as a child and the next two pages illustrating a couple of those activities.
  - b. **Potential group discussion:** Share one of the things you liked to do as a child and how it relates to what you do today with this company. Can you connect the dots?
- 4) **Group:** *Artist or Art Critic?* Read page 17 out loud before moving on to Exercise 3.
- 5) **Individual:** *Comic Therapy*. Allow 10-15 minutes for completion.
  - a. **Potential group discussion:** Before your group begins their individual comics, have everyone share at least one sensation that they recorded on page 18 that brings back childhood memories. If everyone is participating and enjoying the conversation, relax and

let them stay there for a little while. There's no need to rush it!  
These conversations are essential for the creative spirit.

- b. **Tip:** If group members seem to have difficulty locating the moment in time when they no longer felt like they were allowed to be an Artist, have them consider the general feeling, or the age when they no longer felt good about what they were creating. You could also ask them to think of a moment, or an age when they lost self-confidence in general. Have them illustrate a representation of that time in their life.
  - c. **Tip:** If someone isn't a fan of comics, suggest that they try to complete at least one panel on how an artistic experience didn't go well, and one panel trying to reframe it.
  - d. **Potential group discussion:** Open up the space for people to share their comic strips, the moment when their artist got put "6 feet under." Did recreating the experience make it any easier for the artist within them fight his or her way back up?
- 6) **Individual:** *Dear Me*. Allow at least 5-10 minutes for this exercise.
- a. **Tip:** Be patient while people think about what they want to say to their youthful selves. Sometimes it takes a while to get started. However, if someone seems to genuinely have writer's block, you might suggest that they start with a) 3 things they loved about themselves back then; b) 3 pieces of advice, or words of encouragement they would like to impart to their younger selves, or c) some ways they would like to bring the best part of their younger selves to their present life.

### **Additional Tips and Tricks:**

- 1) Remember, don't make anyone share something they aren't comfortable with. That's the quickest way to kill the artistic spirit! However, encourage the more reticent group members to join in on the easier opportunities, so they can contribute to the synergy of the group.
- 2) You may experience a wide range of enthusiasm from your audience during this session. Some people will be eager to return to their childhoods, while others have seemingly blocked every memory of it! Try



not to worry. It happens every time. You can relax knowing that the next session concentrates on the present and future!

3) **Materials:** Pens, pencils, erasers, colored pencils and/or crayons

## Session Three

### Warm Up:

- 1) If you sense any artistic reluctance on the part of your group, don't be afraid to start with a warm up again. Ask another question about the art they've seen, created or admire. Pull out the Pictionary game again. Just spend 5-10 minutes having fun. If you want to skip ahead, the first exercise in the *I Am Artist* workbook should help.

### The Creative Process

- 1) **Group:** *You are an Artist.* Read page 27 of the workbook out loud and get ready to work with a few different artistic mediums.
- 2) **Individual:** *Haiku What You Do!* Allow 15 minutes to complete this exercise with a pencil, or a pen.
  - a. **Tip:** You can complete this exercise in two steps, allowing for group discussion between each step.
  - b. **Tip:** Challenge your group to write haikus with different tones: funny, serious, abstract, or using natural, or urban imagery.
  - c. **Potential group discussion:** Ask everyone to share one of their haikus, or put them in small groups to write a few together.
  - d. **Artistic display:** Vote on the haiku that best expresses the group's art and put it up on display around the office for inspiration.
- 3) **Group:** *What are Your Artistic Tools?* This can be done in a whole group setting, or in small groups that come to form a larger group. Allow at least 20 minutes.
  - a. **For group discussion and activity:** Break it into two steps. As a large group, brainstorm what tools you all use in common. In groups of 3 or 4, have each team create a tool belt, or painter's palette that your department, or company could use. Share the illustrations with the larger group.
  - b. **Tip:** Offer a prize for the most innovative tools, or uses for them.
  - c. **Artistic display:** Could you have the tool belt, or palette brought to life by your design department? Could you put it up in the office for inspiration?

- d. **Tip:** Remind everyone that they can also create their own list of artistic tools that they bring to the job as well and illustrate it in the workbook.
- 4) **Individual:** *What Goes on your Fridge?* Allow at least 10 minutes for group members to complete this exercise individually.
- a. **Tip:** Encourage them to use color, and to create something their mother really would be proud to put up on her refrigerator door!
  - b. **Tip:** Suggest that they use one page for work accomplishments, one page for personal achievements, and one just for fun.
  - c. **Tip:** See if they can create a straight-A report card for one of their fridge doors. What 'classes' would they be acing?
  - d. **Potential group discussion:** Ask everyone to share their 'work fridge' if they feel comfortable doing so and open it up to their other 'fridges' if you'd like as well.

### **Additional Tips and Tricks:**

- 1) Try to remember yourself, and remind everyone else that you are here to inspire Artists, not art critics. Make sure the environment is fun, playful and respectful at all times.
- 2) If your company doesn't believe in 'prizes' for artistic accomplishment, I can understand that, but make sure that you are encouraging, supporting and applauding everyone who is making an effort to 'dig up' their inner Artist.
- 3) **Materials:** pens, pencils, crayons or markers, poster board if desired for Exercise 6.

## Session Four

### Warm Up:

- 1) Because there are so many great exercises in this final session, we suggest that you jump right in. Start on page 39, by reading, *Traditional and Everyday Artists* as a group and move right on to Exercise 8, *Who is Your Muse?* Although you can read the text on page 40 as a group, let each individual complete the activity on their own. No group discussion is needed, but if you want to offer them the opportunity to share, feel free.
- 2) As a potential group activity, brainstorm an idea for your company's muse. Who is your company working for? Who inspires the company, or your department to excellence? Who draws out your department's very best work? Was there a muse for the original founder of your company? Can that person still inspire your work today?

### The Creative Process

- 1) **Individual, then Group:** *Lights, Camera, Action*. Depending on your time constraints and your group's interest level, this activity can be completed in 10 minutes, or it could go on forever! You are going to have to be the judge of how far, or how fast this exercise goes.
  - a. **Tip:** Begin by asking each individual to sketch out their own movie plot, summary, or poster. You can steer them towards having the film be based on their work with your company, or you can just let them play in their imaginations. This is a great way to have individuals tap into their alter-egos, the heroes and heroines they have waiting inside of them.
  - b. **For small group activity and discussion:** When they are warmed up after their individual activity, have them break into groups of 4 or 5 and create a plot synopsis and/or poster for a movie that takes place in the office. Have each small group share their literary and artistic creations in the larger group and get ready to be entertained.
  - c. **Tip:** Need inspiration, or an example? How about an ICU nurse, as the head of a nurse gang, akin to Charlie's Angels, who goes

around the hospital and fights germs with weapons of mass protection? Or a mild-mannered salesman meets his soul mate while stuck in the elevator that's always broken in your building. He listens to the crazy advice of his office mates, but will he ever get the girl? Go to [www.theartofvision.com/iamartist](http://www.theartofvision.com/iamartist) to see Erik's movie plot.

- 2) **Individual, then Group:** *You Deserve an Award*. Allow 10 minutes for individuals to create their own awards and then open it up to group discussion and creativity time.
  - a. **Tip:** Encourage your group to think as wildly and creatively as they can during this exercise. What award would be really meaningful to them as individuals, personally and/or professionally? What symbols do they see as significant to their work or personal accomplishments?
  - b. **For group work:** What are the truly heroic, or significant acts that take place in your department, or company? What awards would really mean something to the individuals in this group? Break into small groups and draw, sculpt, or collage some of the awards that were discussed in the large group, or create their own if they are inspired.
  - c. **For artistic display:** Put the awards on display throughout the office, or take one of the most popular awards from this exercise and *have it made in some way*. Begin handing this award out on a weekly, or monthly basis. It is a great way to affirm the Artist inside your employees, and their award-winning work.
- 3) **Individual, then group:** Final Exercise/ Wrap Up of the *I Am Artist* Series. *Your First Artist Statement*. This shouldn't take too long for your group to complete the Mad Libs-style exercise. However, we hope you will take the time to have each member of the group share their statement proudly.

### **Additional Tips and Tricks:**

- 1) This session may require more than one hour. If you feel that you will not be able to complete all of the exercises, you can complete those that you

feel would be most beneficial, or we recommend that you split this final session into two meetings if you can't go longer than 1 hour.

- 2) When the last member of the group completes their Artist Statement and says, "I am Artist", break out in cheers and throw a bunch of confetti in the air. Seriously, have a party! That's what an Artist would do. Celebrate all of your accomplishments, your creativity and your bravery for moving beyond your inner critic and on towards center stage! You are all Artists!
- 3) If you can't bring yourself to make a mess with confetti, then at the very least commemorate the end of this artistic journey by acknowledging the efforts of your group to uncover the Artists within themselves.
- 4) **Materials:** pens, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, markers, poster board, Sculpey or clay and other decorating accessories.

## The Office Mona Lisa

In the *I Am Artist* film, Erik creates a portrait of the Mona Lisa, using soil as his medium. He is digging deep to find the Artist within himself, while he inspires others to do so as well. This companion workbook as well as the group sessions offer the same challenge to your staff: find the Artist within and bring that creative energy to the workplace.

Included with this packet is an 8x11 image of Erik's Mona Lisa. It is our small gift to say, "Thank you" for facilitating these sessions. We hope it serves as a reminder of the work you've done and will hopefully continue do to bring the Artist within you to life. Visual reminders can help us recall who we want to be, and what we can accomplish.

We hope that you have displayed some of the original works of art your group has created over the course of these sessions. Our final challenge is for your group to create your own *Office Mona Lisa*. Buy a large canvas, bring it to the group and keep that creative process going. What masterpiece has your group created through these *I Am Artist* sessions? How can you express that vision?

Whether you decide to create a unified work of art, or a kaleidoscope of individual pieces, it should symbolize your group's new perspective. They could write, paint, or illustrate how they see differently now that they recognize the Artists within. Be creative and if you need some ideas, check out a few previously created *I Am Artist* works of art at [www.theartofvision.com/iamartist](http://www.theartofvision.com/iamartist). We hope you will send us a photo of your *Office Mona Lisa* to add to our collection. We hope to have a full gallery someday!