

Viewpoints

In economic strategies don't forget to attract creative individuals

Top of Utah Voices



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Michael Vaughan

Commentary

to something unique, they mortgaged their home and started Cannonball Musical Instruments. Sheryl is now the CEO and the driving force for the Utah company, and Cannonball's saxophones and trumpets are used by professional musicians around the world.

In Ogden, Ray Kimber is an archetype of the "creative class" Florida describes in his book. Ray Kimber's company, Kimber Kable, has been making state-of-the-art speaker cable for nearly three decades. His company heatshrink.com provides a comprehensive line of heat shrink tubing used by manufacturers around the world. New loudspeaker technologies are being brought to the market through his company DiAural. Ray has also designed a system called the IsoMike Baffle which does a far better job of recording live performances.

WSU's Browning Center is equipped with an IsoMike, and Ray has been using the auditorium for test recordings. Performing artists, such as the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, who have performed at WSU's Browning Center, have been thrilled by Ray's IsoMike technology.

Both Sheryl and Ray are closely connected to WSU, and our university benefits greatly from its association with

folks like them. Universities are perhaps the most visible arena where the cultivation of arts and culture and the promotion of economic development through more traditional activities flourish. Universities increasingly fill two important roles: driving

investment in research and development, and creating a cultural center. All of the communities that rank highly on Florida's creativity list have long-established and respected universities.

Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) equates talent with the

wealth of the 21st century. Whether the talent is found in entrepreneurs, scientists, musicians, writers, actors or poets, universities are uniquely positioned to serve as a wellspring for talent and creativity that will improve their communities.

In autumn 2004, the noted poet Robert Dana visited Weber State University and conducted a workshop for WSU students. Energized by Dana's visit, eight students continued to meet on Tuesday mornings under the watchful direction of professor Brad Roghaar. Their hard work and mutual support produced a book of poetry titled "Voices From the Second Floor."

While their intent was to refine their voices as poets, in the long term, these students may do more to stimulate the Top of Utah economy than the latest strategies for urban redevelopment. Come again?

In his popular book, "The Rise of the Creative Class," Richard Florida maintains that as regions have shifted to knowledge-based economies, creativity has become the key ingredient for economic growth and prosperity.

In the view of Florida, companies and jobs locate where they can find creative and talented workers. In the future, cities will compete to attract the most creative workers. Those that succeed in attracting creative people will also attract jobs and economic growth.

What attracts talented and creative people? To get the answer you could read Florida's book, which I recommend. You could also ask yourself, "What do creative people enjoy?" The book and your own intuition are likely to lead you to similar answers.

Creative people crave creative stimulation. Communities that attract creative people are culturally rich, offering an eclectic menu of contemporary music, theater, symphony, galleries and museums. Creative people also like to meet and interact with other creative people, so they are drawn to communities with restaurants, cafes, coffee shops and other

meeting places.

Florida has his critics, and his theories have yet to be assessed through rigorous empirical research. However, there does seem to be an intuitive link between a vibrant cultural community and economic development. Austin, Texas, had an active music scene before Dell Computer made Austin its corporate headquarters. The Beat Generation gravitated to San Francisco more than a decade before the birth of Intel, Apple Computer and the other hallmarks of Silicon Valley. (According to Florida's ranking, the top five cities for creativity are San Francisco, Austin, San Diego, Boston and Seattle.)

Advocates for the arts have seized upon Florida's theories to support increased funding for arts and culture. Is there evidence that investing in the arts could produce economic returns? Consider two examples from the Top of Utah.

Sheryl Laukat studied saxophone at Weber State and she graduated with a music-education degree. After graduating, she served as the band director for Millcreek Junior High in Bountiful. She met Tevis, a fellow musician, in 1982 and they soon married. One day they were experimenting with altering the air flow and changing the acoustical properties of vintage musical instruments. Convinced that divine inspiration had led them

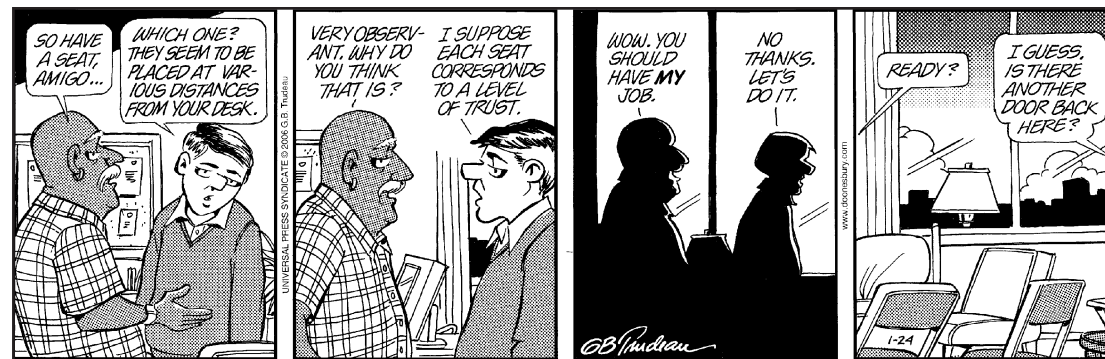
MALLARD FILLMORE

By Bruce Tinsley



DOONESBURY

By Garry Trudeau



A RATE