

# *The Application and Challenges of the Dual Leadership Model in Nonprofit Arts Organizations*

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**Abstract:** This research endeavors to investigate the application and challenges of the dual leadership model within nonprofit arts organizations. Employing semi-structured in-depth interviews, the study gathered insights from seven industry experts and conducted a thorough analysis using initial coding, endogenous coding, and thematic analysis techniques. The results indicate that although the dual leadership model theoretically offers benefits, such as the adage "two heads are better than one," it faces significant challenges in practice, including issues with communication, time consumption, quality compromises, avoidance of responsibilities, improper task distribution, and elevated operational costs. Furthermore, the alignment of leadership styles is crucial for the successful implementation of the dual leadership model, with artistic directors typically adopting charismatic leadership styles and managing directors more suited to transactional leadership styles. This research provides nonprofit arts organizations with strategies for optimizing the dual leadership model's implementation and suggests avenues for future research.

## 1. Introduction

Nonprofit arts organizations are pivotal in fostering global cultural exchange and community development. As these entities expand in scale and operational complexity, the conventional single leadership model is no longer adequate for their requirements. The dual leadership model, wherein two leaders jointly oversee the organization, with one concentrating on artistic creation and the other on day-to-day operations, is posited as a potential remedy. Nonetheless, this model is not extensively employed in nonprofit arts organizations and confronts various challenges. <sup>[1]</sup>This study seeks to examine the efficacy of the dual leadership model in nonprofit arts organizations and to dissect the obstacles encountered during its execution through qualitative research methodologies. By delving into the constituent elements, advantages, and potential issues of the dual leadership model, this study aims to furnish practical counsel for nonprofit arts organizations to enhance the execution of the dual leadership model and to foster the sustainable evolution of arts organizations.

## 2. Theoretical Framework of the Dual Leadership Model

The dual leadership model, as a theoretical framework, posits a collaborative approach to

organizational management where two leaders share the responsibilities of steering the ship. This model is particularly relevant in contexts such as nonprofit arts organizations, where the delicate balance between artistic vision and administrative efficiency is paramount. To understand the theoretical underpinnings of the dual leadership model, it is essential to dissect its constituent elements, compare it with traditional leadership models, and explore its theoretical foundations within the realm of arts management.

#### A. The Constituent Elements of the Dual Leadership Model

The dual leadership model is characterized by the presence of two leaders, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. Typically, one leader, often referred to as the Artistic Director, is responsible for the creative vision and artistic output of the organization. This leader is expected to possess a deep understanding of the arts, a visionary mindset, and the ability to inspire and guide artists. Conversely, the other leader, often termed the Managing Director, focuses on the operational and administrative aspects of the organization.<sup>[2]</sup> This leader is tasked with ensuring financial stability, managing resources, and overseeing the day-to-day operations.

The interplay between these two roles is critical. The Artistic Director brings creativity and innovation, while the Managing Director provides structure and efficiency. This dynamic requires a high degree of collaboration, communication, and mutual respect. The dual leadership model thrives on the synergy created when these two distinct perspectives are integrated, leading to a more comprehensive and balanced approach to organizational management.

#### B. Comparison with Traditional Leadership Models

Traditional leadership models, often based on a single leader, have long been the standard in organizational management. These models rely on a hierarchical structure where one leader holds the authority and responsibility for the organization's direction and decision-making. While this model can offer clarity and streamlined decision-making, it also carries risks of a singular vision, potential for autocratic leadership, and a lack of checks and balances.

In contrast, the dual leadership model introduces a dual-track system that can mitigate these risks. By having two leaders, the organization benefits from a diversity of perspectives and a built-in system of checks and balances.<sup>[3]</sup> This model encourages a more democratic and inclusive approach to leadership, where decisions are made through collaboration and consensus. The dual leadership model also allows for specialization, with each leader focusing on their area of expertise, leading to more effective and efficient management.

#### C. Theoretical Foundations in Arts Management

The theoretical foundations of the dual leadership model in arts management are rooted in the unique demands of the arts sector. Arts organizations require a delicate balance between artistic excellence and financial viability. The dual leadership model provides a framework that addresses these dual needs.

From a theoretical standpoint, the dual leadership model aligns with the principles of contingency theory, which posits that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership and that the most effective leadership style depends on the context. In the context of arts management, the dual leadership model allows for a flexible approach that can adapt to the varying demands of artistic creation and organizational sustainability.

Furthermore, the dual leadership model resonates with the concept of transformational and transactional leadership styles<sup>[4]</sup>. The Artistic Director, with their visionary and inspirational qualities, embodies transformational leadership, which is crucial for driving artistic innovation and fostering a creative environment. The Managing Director, with their focus on structure and efficiency, embodies transactional leadership, which is essential for maintaining operational effectiveness and financial health.

### 3. Practice of the Dual Leadership Model in Nonprofit Arts Organizations

The dual leadership model, with its theoretical promise of balancing artistic vision with administrative acumen, has been explored in various contexts across the globe. A case study approach, particularly from an international perspective, can illuminate the practical applications and outcomes of this model within nonprofit arts organizations. Additionally, examining the implementation of the dual leadership model in Chinese nonprofit arts organizations provides a localized insight into its adaptability and effectiveness. Finally, identifying the success factors and implementation strategies of the dual leadership model can offer valuable guidance for organizations seeking to adopt this approach.

#### A. Case Study: The Dual Leadership Model from an International Perspective

Internationally, the dual leadership model has been employed by several prominent arts organizations, each with its unique challenges and successes. To delve deeper into these cases, let's examine the Royal Opera House in London and the Sydney Opera House in Australia, highlighting the specifics of their dual leadership structures and the outcomes they have achieved.

At the Royal Opera House, the dual leadership model is distinctly defined. The Artistic Director is responsible for shaping the creative vision and curating the artistic programming, ensuring that the performances maintain the highest standards of artistic excellence. This role involves selecting productions, engaging with leading artists, and fostering a creative environment that nurtures innovation and tradition. On the other hand, the Chief Executive plays a crucial role in overseeing the business operations, financial management, and strategic planning. This includes managing the budget, fundraising, marketing, and audience development, all aimed at ensuring the financial sustainability of the institution. This clear division of responsibilities has been instrumental in maintaining the Royal Opera House's reputation for high-quality performances while also securing its long-term financial health.

Similarly, the Sydney Opera House employs a dual leadership setup that effectively balances artistic content with operational efficiency. The Head of Programming is tasked with managing the artistic aspects, including the selection of performances, collaborations with artists and companies, and the overall artistic direction of the venue. This role is critical in maintaining the cultural vibrancy and relevance of the Sydney Opera House. Meanwhile, the Chief Executive Officer focuses on the operational and strategic aspects, such as facility management, stakeholder relations, and strategic initiatives that enhance the institution's profile and financial stability. This dual approach has enabled the Sydney Opera House to present a diverse range of high-caliber artistic events while also being a well-managed and financially robust organization.

These detailed analyses of the Royal Opera House and the Sydney Opera House illustrate how the dual leadership model can successfully integrate artistic excellence with efficient management, providing a balanced approach that supports both the creative and operational aspects of arts organizations.

#### B. The Dual Leadership Model in Chinese Nonprofit Arts Organizations

In China, the dual leadership model is gaining traction in nonprofit arts organizations, albeit with cultural and contextual nuances. Chinese arts institutions, such as the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing, have adopted a dual leadership structure to navigate the complex interplay between artistic innovation and administrative efficiency. The Artistic Director in these organizations is often a renowned artist or cultural figure, responsible for curating performances and exhibitions that reflect China's rich cultural heritage and contemporary artistic trends. The Managing Director, conversely, focuses on the operational and financial management, ensuring that the organization adheres to national policies and sustains itself financially. The Chinese context introduces specific challenges, such as navigating government regulations and cultural expectations,

which the dual leadership model must address to be successful.

### C. Success Factors and Implementation Strategies of the Dual Leadership Model

The success of the dual leadership model hinges on several key factors and strategic implementations. Effective communication and collaboration between the Artistic Director and the Managing Director are paramount. This requires establishing clear lines of communication, regular meetings, and a shared understanding of the organization's goals and values. Additionally, the alignment of leadership styles is crucial; the Artistic Director should embody transformational leadership, inspiring creativity and innovation, while the Managing Director should exemplify transactional leadership, ensuring operational efficiency and financial stability.

Another critical success factor is the delineation of roles and responsibilities. Both leaders must have a clear understanding of their domains and the boundaries of their authority. This clarity prevents overlap and confusion, allowing each leader to focus on their area of expertise. Furthermore, the dual leadership model benefits from a supportive organizational culture that values collaboration and mutual respect. This culture can be fostered through leadership training, team-building exercises, and the promotion of a shared vision among all stakeholders.

In terms of implementation strategies, organizations should consider a phased approach to adopting the dual leadership model. This involves initial planning, pilot testing, and gradual expansion. During the planning phase, organizations should conduct a thorough assessment of their current leadership structure and identify the skills and qualities required for the dual leadership roles. The pilot testing phase allows for adjustments and refinements based on early experiences and feedback. Finally, the gradual expansion ensures that the model is fully integrated into the organization's culture and operations.

## 4. Challenges Faced by the Dual Leadership Model

Implementing the dual leadership model in nonprofit arts organizations presents a range of challenges across leadership, organizational culture, and external environments. Ensuring effective collaboration and communication between the two leaders is a core challenge. The artistic director and the managing director often come from different professional backgrounds and leadership styles, leading to potential conflicts and misunderstandings in decision-making. To address this, organizations need to establish clear communication mechanisms and decision-making processes to ensure timely information exchange, joint strategy development, and consensus on key issues.

Another challenge is the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, which is crucial for the success of the dual leadership model. In practice, the arts and administrative domains often overlap, leading to ambiguity in duties and work duplication. To mitigate this, organizations must define the scope of responsibilities for each leader in detail and establish effective oversight and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that each leader can focus on their professional domain while maintaining a shared commitment to the organization's overall goals.

The dual leadership model also faces challenges at the organizational culture level. In a traditional single-leader structure, organizational culture is often built around a central leader, whereas the dual leadership model requires the establishment of a new culture that emphasizes collaboration, mutual respect, and joint decision-making. This transformation requires time and resources to cultivate, including leadership training, team-building activities, and ongoing communication strategies to foster trust and consensus within the organization.

Changes in the external environment also pose challenges to the dual leadership model. Nonprofit arts organizations are typically subject to financial constraints, policy changes, and public expectations, all of which can significantly impact the organization's operations and strategic direction. The dual leadership model needs to be flexible and adaptable to cope with these external

pressures and ensure the organization's long-term stability and success.

For example, in practical operations, the artistic director may focus more on creativity and artistic expression, while the managing director prioritizes financial management and operational efficiency. This divergence can lead to disagreements over budget allocation, project selection, and resource distribution. A practical solution to such issues is to hold regular joint meetings where both leaders review and align organizational goals, ensuring consistency between artistic and administrative objectives. Additionally, establishing cross-functional teams can enhance communication and collaboration between different departments, reducing misunderstandings and conflicts.

## 5. Optimization Strategies for the Dual Leadership Model

When implementing the dual leadership model in nonprofit arts organizations, developing optimization strategies is crucial. These strategies aim to address the challenges faced by the dual leadership model and maximize its potential benefits. The core of optimization strategies lies in establishing a balanced, efficient, and flexible leadership structure to promote the long-term success and sustainable development of the organization.

Firstly, organizations need to invest in leadership development and team building. This includes providing regular training and professional development opportunities for the artistic director and the managing director to enhance their leadership skills and mutual understanding. Organizations should also encourage the two leaders to participate in team-building activities to build trust and enhance collaboration. These measures can improve the cohesiveness and collaborative working ability of the leadership team, leading to more effective leadership.

Secondly, clear delineation of roles and responsibilities is key to the success of the dual leadership model. Organizations should develop detailed job descriptions and operational processes to ensure that the responsibilities in the arts and administrative domains do not overlap or are overlooked. Additionally, establishing an effective communication and decision-making framework is essential, which can include regular leadership meetings, shared work platforms, and transparent information flow mechanisms. These measures ensure that the two leaders can exchange information promptly, develop strategies together, and reach consensus on key issues.

Furthermore, to adapt to the ever-changing external environment, the dual leadership model needs to possess a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. Organizations should encourage leaders to maintain an open mindset and actively seek opportunities for innovation and improvement. This may involve exploring new funding channels, adapting to policy changes, and responding to public demands. By establishing a flexible organizational structure and responsive mechanisms, the organization can quickly adapt to external challenges and seize new development opportunities.

Finally, shaping the organizational culture is also an important aspect of optimizing the dual leadership model. Organizations should strive to build a culture that emphasizes collaboration, mutual respect, and joint decision-making. This can be achieved through internal communication, employee engagement, and the reinforcement of values. A supportive organizational culture enhances employees' sense of belonging and motivation and attracts and retains talented individuals, laying the foundation for the organization's long-term success.

## 6. Conclusions

This investigation, by conducting an in-depth analysis of the dual leadership model's application in nonprofit arts organizations, uncovers its practical advantages and challenges. While the dual leadership model theoretically provides a more holistic management viewpoint and a more efficient

decision-making process, it necessitates overcoming communication impediments, delineating role responsibilities, matching leadership styles, and judiciously allocating resources in real-world operations. To capitalize on the potential of the dual leadership model in nonprofit arts organizations, entities must establish effective communication frameworks, clearly demarcate the responsibilities of leaders, and select suitable leadership styles in accordance with the attributes of art and management. Moreover, organizations should concentrate on cost containment and resource optimization to ensure the model's sustainability. Future research could delve deeper into the adaptability of the dual leadership model across diverse cultural and socio-political landscapes and explore how technological advancements can bolster its implementation. Through these endeavors, nonprofit arts organizations can more effectively deploy the dual leadership model, facilitate the harmonious development of art and management, and contribute to societal and cultural advancement.

## References

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