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Intersecting the Philosophy of Management as a Liberal Art with the Insights of Dan Solin

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For over a decade, Dan Solin's wisdom has shaped my understanding of management philosophy profoundly. Dan Solin, celebrated for his bestselling 'Smartest' series on investing and his widely read work 'The Smartest Sales Book You'll Ever Read' and 'Ask: How to Relate to Anyone', connects with readers weekly through his blog on Advisor Perspectives, drawing in a devoted audience. His background as a securities attorney, along with his academic path through Johns Hopkins University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, underscores his expertise.

I've personally drawn a great deal from Solin's focus on the human side of business — it's redefined how I see leadership and the way we connect with others. He champions the idea that it's not just what we say but how we listen and empathize that forges strong relationships and drives successful enterprises. Solin's approach echoes the human-centric principles of Management as a Liberal Art (MLA), a concept promoted by Peter Drucker that suggests management is more art than science, calling for a profound engagement with personal relationships.

I am convinced that merging Solin's insights with the MLA philosophy can guide us toward more effective, reflective, and compassionate management methods. In the article that follows, I'll delve into how Solin's writings harmonize with MLA's values.



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Emphasizing Human Interactions and Development

Both Drucker and Solin recognize the significance of human development and interactions within organizations. In Solin's work, the recurring theme is the emphasis on understanding and empathizing with others rather than simply imposing one's own viewpoints. A hallmark of Solin's philosophy is the power of asking questions. Moreover, Solin advises managers to guide change with empathy and understanding, acknowledging the impact on individuals. This method aligns with MLA's view of management as an art that requires practice, reflection, and the pursuit of knowledge. By asking questions, managers can elicit deeper insights and foster a culture of curiosity and continuous learning, which is at the core of MLA.

Managing Change and Leading by Example

Dan Solin's forward-thinking approaches, especially his pioneering use of artificial intelligence for small businesses and financial advisors, aligns well with the ethos of Management as a Liberal Art (MLA). Solin offers practical, actionable advice, making complex technology approachable for his readers. Similarly, MLA, as conceptualized by Peter Drucker, stresses the importance of anticipating and navigating change — a skill ever so crucial in today's dynamic business landscape. Solin's writing emphasizes the practical application of knowledge, resonating with Drucker's belief that true wisdom in management emerges from an integrated understanding of our experiences, leading with both discernment and insight.



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Transdisciplinary Perspective and Holistic Understanding

Solin's work on avoiding the heuristics trap and naïve realism echoes MLA's transdisciplinary perspective. Drucker believed that a manager should not rely solely on a single framework or heuristic but should integrate knowledge from various disciplines. Drucker's notion that management is both a liberal art and a practice suggests that effective managers blend empathy and analysis to make well-rounded decisions. Solin's advocacy for a broad-based approach to understanding others reinforces this principle, highlighting the importance of a holistic understanding in management.

Encouraging Self-Reflection and Growth

MLA posits that self-reflection and personal growth are central to effective management. Solin's writings often touch on the benefits of self-awareness and the pursuit of personal development, paralleling the MLA belief in the necessity of continuous learning and the cultivation of self-knowledge for managers. Solin's reflections on the impact of our actions and advice demonstrate an acute awareness of ethical responsibility—a key component of MLA. Solin emphasizes that financial advisors (as well as managers) should be cognizant of how their interactions affect their clients, teams, and the larger community, advocating for responsible action and ethical management in line with MLA's ethos.

Conclusion

Dan Solin's writings provide a rich resource of present practical, everyday applications of the broader and more philosophical principles of Management as a Liberal Art. His focus on



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empathetic communication, ethical decision-making, and continuous personal and professional growth offers a nuanced take on the MLA framework, exemplifying how management is not just a business function but a holistic and humane pursuit.

Solin's work and Drucker's MLA together provide a roadmap for managers who aspire to lead not only with competence but with wisdom, empathy, and a deep understanding of the multifaceted human experience within organizations. They teach us that to manage effectively is to navigate the delicate balance of advancing organizational goals while fostering an environment where individuals can pursue meaningful development and contribute to the larger societal good.