

Creativity for the new economy

For professor and journalist Richard Florida, the most restless people in the planet are building a new world. In this new world, excessive consumption and unrestrained use of natural resources are replaced by continual innovation. In this exclusive interview to **Mundo Corporativo**, he explains why creativity, innovation, and human development are crucial to keep thriving in the economy of the future.

By Leandro Beguoci, in New York

Credit: Jamie Hogge



Richard Florida: in each moment of collapse it is possible to learn that there are new needs and possibilities

The grandfather was a farmer upstate. The father was a metalworker in the state capital. The son studied design and works with technology at home, but with customers in the different parts of the globe. The grandfather lived from what planted. The father owns a car and a house, and has cable TV. The son does not have a car – he has gadgets and air miles.

These are characteristics of several families nowadays around the world. The differences, around the table, during a Sunday family lunch, do not show only generation gaps but a deep change in both society and the economy. Today's world was shaped by subsistence farming and manufacturing productivity. In recent years, however, the world has been changing into more colorful, restless, sometimes hard to understand shapes. We are entering the age of creativity.

This is the theory defended by Richard Florida, professor at the University of Toronto, Canada, and the New York University, United States. In this exclusive interview to **Mundo Corporativo**, Florida explains why we need to invest more in human capital. According to Florida, without individual creativity there is no way to ensure the future of next generations. It is creativity that will create new paths, many of which we even can hardly picture. In addition to being a professor in two internationally renowned institutions, Florida is also a journalist. He is the senior editor of one of the most important US magazines, *The Atlantic*, and cofounder of City Lab, a major global website on cities and creative economy. In his analyses, he couples academic discipline, connection to “real life”, and a passion for ideas capable of transforming and improving the world where we live. Results come in the form of very interesting concepts, as those he talks about in the interview below, conducted in New York, where he lives.

What is the role of creative economy today, in a world that lacks both skilled people and natural and, sometimes, financial resources?

Creative economy is teaching us a crucial lesson. We need to focus on the kind of economic growth that makes full use of human abilities and brings a deeper meaning to our lives. We cannot merely focus on consumption and have more stuff at home. As I wrote on my book “The Rise of the Creative Class, Revisited”, we need to get beyond the idea

that growth per se is a good thing. More output is not a good in and of itself. Frankly, that idea is a holdover from the industrial era. It no longer holds true in an age where innovation, creativity, and human potential drive the economy.

How can creative economy help businesses in times of crisis?

During moment of collapse, especially in the recent cases of economic crisis –which I like to call grand reset, something like starting all over again – we are learning new needs and possibilities. We need to focus on creativity, innovation, and human development to ensure economic prosperity on the future. As I have written in my previous book ‘The Rise of the Creative Class’, I still believe that every human being is a creative being. Economic growth is driven by creativity. Thus, if we want to increase economic growth, we have to foster each person's creativity. This should be the only focus of every economic development effort henceforth. For the first time in human history, the core logic of our economy states that development should be based on growth and the use of human creative abilities. The great challenge of our era is to find ways to boost creativity of individuals.

Which are the greatest challenges for the creation of skilled human capital?

To develop a creative compact, a creative unit, entailing everything. This goes from investing in our creative human capital as the only real capital we have, to a new approach to education and learning. It is a new way of thinking. We need to recommit our economy to innovation and our society to openness and diversity. We need to knit a new social safety net for the truly disadvantaged. This means that we have to put human capital development in our cities, communities and organizations first. With it there is no future.

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How can businesses contribute to the creation of creative societies?

Michael Porter [*a Harvard professor and one of the top world specialists in strategy and competitive advantages*] was right when he wrote that we have to create shared value among the private sector and the communities. This means creating a relationship between two areas to face a community's challenges, seizing the advantages and the assets of local businesses and several other initiatives. It also means that we have to build from the bottom up, focused on creating an ecosystem that promotes innovation and creativity.

How can creative economies reinvent the use of natural resources, including energy?

With the rise of the creative classes and the urban revolutions, we are already seeing the impact in the way we consume energy and in development. We have so many evidences that I am even writing a new book on this growth model. When we look to the future, we have to invest in an urban growth model that is going to help people and ideas throughout our cities, and also from city to city, in a very efficient and sustainable way.

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How to transform an urban-industrial center in a creative city?

For me, this issue talks us back to the three “Ts” of economic development, which I have explained in the ‘The Rise of a Creative Class’. They form a comprehensive strategy for organizations, cities, regions, and countries that wish to compete and prosper in a creative age. This first “T” is talent. Talented people are the driving force behind any effective economic strategy. We live in a more mobile age than ever. People, specially the most creative talents, move a lot. The ability of a community to attract and retain the best talents is a defining step of the creative age. The second “T” is technology. Technology and innovation are critical components of a community or an organization. They allow those communities and organizations to boost economic growth. To be successful, communities and organizations must have ways to transform research, ideas and innovation into marketable, sustainable products. Universities are key to key to do that. They are a very import hub for a creative age. Finally, the last “T” is tolerance. Economic prosperity is based on cultural, business, civic, scientific, and artistic creativity. Creative workers, with those talents, need communities, organizations and coworkers open to new ideas and different people. Places receptive to immigration, alternative life styles, and new visions about status and power will get even stronger during the creative age. ●

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