



Author Richard Florida describes the rise of a new social class in his 2002 bestseller

The Rise of the Creative Class

Author says technology, talent and tolerance are keys to vibrant cities

BY KAREN IMAS

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merican cities are ever evolving. Yesterday's booming industrial centers such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Detroit show declining populations and flat line economies while new hubs like Austin, Seattle, Boston and San Francisco are economic and cultural hotbeds.

In his 2002 bestseller, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida ascribes this phenomenon to the rise of a new social class, the creative class. Through a combination of anecdotes, sociological statistics, psychology and research he explains that this trend is fundamentally changing the way we live, work and play. Moreover, it is shifting populations from certain regions

of the country to others.

Florida reports that some 38 million Americans, or 30 percent of the national workforce, belong to this class. He considers a member anyone whose work function is to produce new ideas, new technology or new creative content. The creative class includes people in engineering and science, architecture and design, education, music, arts and entertainment. A second tier includes "creative professionals" who work in business and finance, health care, law and other related fields. These individuals engage in complicated problem solving that is characterized by a great deal of independent judgment and that requires high levels of education or intellectual capital.

Members of this class tend to pursue careers horizontally rather than vertically, particularly information technology workers, according to Florida. Talented individuals are willing to take more risks as the economic infrastructure in many cities is no longer built around a few big corporations that provide most of the employment. In addition, the creative class prefers the no-collar workplace which artists, professors and scientists have long used – the sort that allows for more self-management and autonomy, but also elicits creativity and open discussion.

Many members of the creative class, such as high-tech workers, are relatively well paid, but compensation is not the only factor that determines their job satisfaction. Creative people, Florida writes, “want challenging work and the ability to do their jobs flexibly, desire professional development to expand their horizons, stimulating colleagues and managers to work with, and a culture in which the person feels at home ... people want to be themselves at work, not a second identity.”

Location is deemed important because members of the creative class are “highly mobile” and will look for “people climate” just as much as “business climate.” Florida cites an *Information Week* survey which found that 20 percent of respondents said geographic location of work and commute was important, ranking ahead of potential for promotion and bonus opportunities.

The 3T's

Florida explains that cities which succeed in luring such individuals are meccas of technology, tolerance and talent, otherwise known as the 3T's.

“To attract creative people, generate innovation and stimulate economic growth, a place must have all three,” he writes. Thus communities must be technically wired, arts-oriented, and gay-friendly. This will draw the people and corporations will follow the talent, not vice versa.

For politicians to successfully create an environment attractive to this pool requires more than just attracting companies or clusters of industries, but providing social, economic and cultural incentives that would entice individuals and companies to enter and stay in the community.

Florida, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, uses Pittsburgh, his home base, as the model for what is not working. The city is pursuing hopelessly antiquated

strategies such as the development of convention centers, mega-retail complexes, sports stadiums and other high-profile real-estate projects. Lycos, owner of a powerful search-engine technology that came out of Carnegie Mellon University, left Pittsburgh for Boston.

The 3T's are not necessarily a novel approach to economic development – New York and Chicago realized creativity was an economic force early in the 20th century. Florida explains that even traditional sectors like agriculture and industry value creativity by rewarding improved and efficient methods. The phenomenon particularly came to bloom in the 1980s and 1990s with the growth of high-tech corridors like California's Silicon Valley and North Carolina's Research Triangle Park.

Call to action

While the 3T's may seem like common sense to some, Florida points out that many regions are not successfully combining these elements. Underlying his story of the creative class is a call to action for government officials and civic leaders to embrace this group into the mainstream of politics and society.

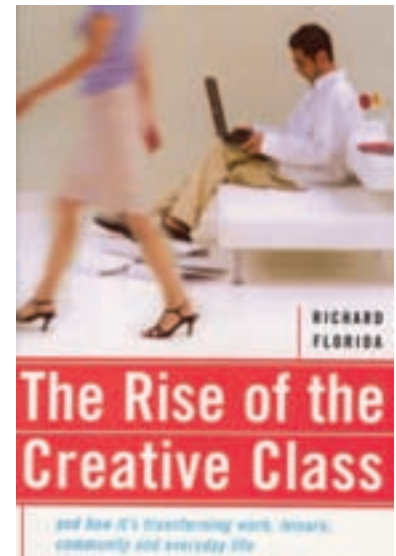
Why value creativity now more than before? The answer is economics. As talented young people leave certain cities for others, they contribute to knowledge-based economies wherever they settle down. Florida developed a statistical index to rank the most creative cities. Among large cities, San Francisco, Austin and San Diego – where certain lifestyle options make it easier to attract top managerial and technical talent – take top prize.

Some state and local governments are taking notice. Florida has been invited to address governors, mayors and various state organizations including the Regional Plan Association, The Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference and the New Hampshire Business Committee for the Arts.

During his 2004 State of the State Address, Maine Gov. John Baldacci mentioned “The Creative Economy” as an important focus for his state. Baldacci will host a conference in May in Lewiston to discuss strategies to help innovative workers grow Maine's economy, add arts and culture, and revitalize downtowns.

Another current incarnation of Florida's message can be seen in Cincinnati, where civic activists are campaigning door-to-

door to repeal Article 12 of the city's charter – the article that forbids the city from passing anti-discrimination legislation that would apply to gays and lesbians. Executives at Procter and Gamble, headquartered in Cincinnati, are advocating for the repeal because the article is a deterrent to nurturing a diverse and talented workforce.



In simple terms, diversity is the breeding ground of creativity. This refers to cultural diversity, openness to immigrants, and supporting the entrepreneurial spirit. In addition, the creative class seeks diverse opportunities for life experiences, including recreation, culture and entertainment, and varied night life.

Florida does leave some questions unanswered. One disturbing insight in the book that lawmakers might take note of is that members of the creative class are beginning to segregate themselves geographically from members of the service class and working class. Gentrification of areas that the creative class occupies can drive up rents and drive out other residents, often immigrants and minorities.

While Florida's theories are not fool-proof, the work ethic and industriousness of the creative class can not be underestimated. It has brought growth to today's economic centers – San Francisco, Austin and Seattle – and is putting new centers – such as Boulder, Santa Fe and Portland – on the map as economic and cultural hubs.

— Karen Imas is publications manager for The Council of State Governments Eastern Regional Conference.

Creativity rankings – Large cities

Top 10	Bottom 10
1. San Francisco	49. Memphis
2. Austin	48. Norfolk, VA
3. San Diego	47. Las Vegas
4. Boston	46. Buffalo
5. Seattle	45. Louisville
6. Chapel Hill	44. Grand Rapids
7. Houston	43. Oklahoma City
8. Washington	42. New Orleans
9. New York	41. Greensboro
10. Dallas	40. Providence
10. Minneapolis	