

BOOK REVIEW

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“Drive – The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us”, by Daniel H. Pink

The Author

Daniel H. Pink is the author of several provocative, bestselling books about business, work, and behaviour. His books have been translated into 34 languages and have sold more than two million copies.

Before venturing out on his own, Pink worked in several positions in politics and government. He served as chief speechwriter to U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

Pink is a frequent contributor to business magazines in the U.S. and a business trend analyst for several U.S. TV stations.

- In “Drive”, he reveals the three elements of true motivation:
- Autonomy – the desire to direct our own lives
- Mastery – the urge to get better at something that matters
- Purpose – the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves
- In 2013, Thinkers 50 named Pink one of the top 15 business thinkers in the world.

The Book

In his book, Pink makes the case that business management and leadership haven’t caught up with what science knows: the best way to motivate people is not with

rewards like money, but rather to address the deeply known human need to direct our own lives, to learn and to create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world. This will lead to high performance and satisfaction at work, school, and at home.

Pink states that societies, like computers, have operating systems – a set of mostly invisible instructions and protocols on which everything runs. The first human operating system – call it Motivation 1.0 – was all about survival. Its successor, Motivation 2.0, was built around external rewards and punishments. That worked fine for routine twentieth-century tasks. But in the twenty-first century, Motivation 2.0 is proving incompatible with how we organize what we do, how we think about and what we do, and how we do what we do. We need an upgrade.

While Motivation 2.0 required compliance, Motivation 3.0 demands engagement. Only engagement can produce mastery – becoming better at something that matters. Motivation 2.0 centered on profit maximization. Motivation 3.0 doesn't reject profits, but it places equal emphasis on purpose maximization.

Wealth maximization lacks the power to fully mobilize human energies. Human beings are purpose seekers. In the U.S., there is a sharp rise in recent years in volunteerism. That is because volunteer work is nourishing people in ways that paid work simply is not.

Science shows that the secret to high performance isn't our biological drive or our reward-and-punishment drive, but our deep-seated desire to direct our own lives, to extend and expand our abilities, and to live a life of purpose.

Pink cites management guru Gary Hamel: "The goals of management are usually described in words like efficiency, advantage, value, superiority, focus, and

differentiation. Important as these objectives are, they lack the power to rouse human hearts. Business leaders must find ways to infuse mundane business activities with deeper soul-stirring ideals, such as honour, truth, love, justice, and beauty. Humanize what people say and you may well humanize what they do.”

When trying to find purpose to navigate your life and to discover your true motivation, Pink recommends to ask a big, powerful and inspiring question: “What’s your sentence?”

In his book, Pink tells a little story:

“In 1962, Clare Boothe Luce, one of the first woman to serve in the U.S. Congress, offered some advice to President John F. Kennedy. “A great man”, she told him, “is one sentence.” Abraham Lincoln’s sentence was: “He preserved the union and freed the slaves.” Franklin Roosevelt’s was: “He lifted us out of a great depression and helped us win a world war.” Luce feared that Kennedy’s attention was so splintered among different priorities that his sentence risked becoming a muddled paragraph.”

One way to orient your life toward greater purpose is to think about what is your sentence.

In order to make that sentence come alive and to create motivation that lasts, Pink recommends to ask yourself a small question every night when you go to bed: “Were you better today than you were yesterday?”

Pink makes it clear that we should not expect to answer yes every day. But if you ask that question tonight and the answer is no, you are more likely to get up tomorrow and hustle to ensure that it’s a yes by bedtime. Success at anything, be it professional or personal, takes intention, diligence and discipline. Improvement is mainly incremental.

Each day is part of the journey. And it is through self-reflection that we will know where we stand and how to chart our course.

Watch this short 2 minutes video on Vimeo to hear Daniel Pink's story of the two questions: <https://vimeo.com/8480171>

At the end of his book, Pink goes with the sign of the times and provides us with a Twitter summary of his book:

“Carrots & sticks are so last century. Drive says for 21st century work, we need to upgrade to autonomy, mastery & purpose.”

Conclusion

I highly recommend not only to read Pink's book, but also to look at your company in order to address the possibly existing mismatch between what science knows and what business does. Management isn't about walking around and seeing if people are in their offices. It's about creating conditions for people to do their best work.

You can also watch Daniel Pink's 18 minutes You Tube – TED talk titled “The Puzzle of Motivation” here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrkrvAUbU9Y>

Reference

Pink, D. H. (2009). Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.