

Book Review

Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

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Author: **Daniel H. Pink**

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Daniel Pink is no stranger to the New York Times best-seller list, and his latest book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, is no exception. Pink does a masterful job of condensing empirical research from Edward Deci (Professor of Psychology at the University of Rochester), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Professor of Psychology at Claremont Graduate University), Harry Harlow (Professor of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin), and others into an interesting and readable book about intrinsic motivation. Pink points out the mistake of using external rewards like money and shows how the use of these rewards leads to less of the desired behavior once the reward has been removed. He stresses the need to develop autonomy, mastery, and purpose if one wants to create lasting change, or intrinsic motivation.

The book is 242 pages. Following the introduction, it is divided into three parts: A New Operating System (3 chapters), The Three Elements (3 chapters), and The Type I Toolkit (7 sections). The book concludes with a chapter by chapter recap, glossary, discussion guide conversation starters, and links to on-line resources for more information including a quarterly newsletter and an intrinsic motivation assessment.

Part One: A New Operating System

Chapter 1: The Rise and Fall of Motivation 2.0

The first chapter of the book focuses on what Pink calls the operating system of Motivation 2.0. In this chapter, Pink describes how human motivation has evolved from survival mode (Motivation 1.0) to external rewards and

punishments (Motivation 2.0). Motivation 2.0 worked well during the industrial revolution when labor was treated like an input and to get more output you rewarded certain behaviors and punished others. As economies grew more complex and people had to learn more sophisticated skills, the old methods of carrots and sticks became less reliable. Pink cites research from Abraham Maslow (psychologist who developed the hierarchy of needs pyramid), Frederick Herzberg (management professor who focused on factors related to employee motivation), and W. Edwards Deming (management consultant who helped Japanese manufacturers improve quality by focusing on continual improvement) to suggest additional factors that needed to be considered when trying to motivate workers. Pink argues that we need an upgrade from Motivation 2.0, because it is becoming incompatible with “how we *organize* what we do; how we *think about* what we do; and how we *do* what we do” (p. 20).

Pink points to Wikipedia and Firefox as examples of open-source design that utilize volunteers instead of employees. Why would people volunteer to work? Because they have an intrinsic motivation for the task, they experience a state of “flow” when working on these projects. Pink refers to behavioral economics as changing the way we think about human economic behavior. Since routine work can be easily outsourced, most job growth in this country is coming from creative, artistic, and empathic endeavors, and these require greater intrinsic motivation. Therefore, companies need to allow their employees more flexibility in how they do their work, like telecommuting from home.

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Chapter 2: Seven Reasons Carrots and Sticks (Often) Don't Work

Pink summarizes Motivation 2.0 as having two ideas: “rewarding an activity will get you more of it, and punishing an activity will get you less of it” (p. 34). He goes on to explain that the opposite is often true. Rewards can lead to decreased motivation, and punishments can often lead to increased negative behavior. Pink cites the empirical research of Edward Deci (1969) with Soma puzzles. Soma puzzles use three dimensional block shapes (similar to those in the game Tetris) that can be combined in different ways to create objects, like a dog or an airplane. Deci found that subjects who were given cash rewards to solve Soma puzzles spent significantly less of their free time playing with them after the cash incentive had been removed. The reward acted like a stimulant in the short term increasing interest and activity level, but once removed, led to a significant decrease in long-term intrinsic interest in the activity. Other examples may make this tendency clearer. Pink cites empirical research which suggests that paying children for drawing, an activity they were already doing in their free time, leads to decreased time spent drawing in the future when the incentive was removed. What had happened was that the activity changed from play into work.

If you are a parent, have you ever had the experience of asking a child to do something only to hear them ask “how much will I get paid to do it?” Once a reward system has been introduced, like paying children to do chores, the reward needs to remain for people to continue to perform the task. A closer look at punishments finds behavior change opposite of what was expected. Pink cites an Israeli day care study that showed when fines were imposed to punish the parents who pick up their children late, the number of occurrences increased. The fine moved parents from a moral obligation to treat the teachers fairly (intrinsic motivation) to a purchase transaction, I can buy more time if I need it (extrinsic motivation). The chapter ends with the seven deadly flaws of carrots and sticks:

- They can extinguish intrinsic motivation.
- They can diminish performance.
- They can crush creativity.
- They can crowd out good behavior.
- They can encourage cheating, shortcuts, and unethical behavior.
- They can become addictive.
- They can foster short-term thinking.

Chapter 2A: ... and the Special Circumstances When They Do

In this chapter, Pink covers the types of jobs that would benefit from extrinsic reward motivators and how to avoid the seven deadly flaws of extrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards are best utilized when a job is routine and repetitive, but before a reward can be effective, wages must be adequate and fair. Pink offers three suggestions to increase success when using extrinsic rewards:

- Offer a rationale for why the task is necessary.
- Acknowledge that the task is boring.
- Allow people to complete the task in their own way.

The use of extrinsic rewards increase the speed of activity and sharpens the focus, but dampens creativity. Therefore, Pink suggests moving rewards from “if-then” to “now-that” rewards. Now that the project is done and was so successful, let’s celebrate. He also suggests the use of praise and positive feedback rather than cash and trophies. When providing positive feedback, make sure it is specific and state what exactly made this work exceptional.

Chapter 3: Type I and Type X

Pink gives a brief explanation of self-determination theory that was developed by Deci and Ryan in the late 1970s. Self-determination theory indicates that people have an inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. Pink also provides a brief recap of Type A (driving) and B (relaxed) personality traits of Meyer Friedman and Theory X (people will only work if they are forced) and Y (work can be fun and rewarding) management practices of Douglas McGregor to use as a springboard to introduce his concept of Type I and Type X behaviors. Type I behavior is fueled by intrinsic drives or motivation, and Type X behavior is fueled by extrinsic drives or motivation. For example, the habit of saving money can be either forced upon a person (extrinsic motivation) or can be something they enjoy doing to see how fast the balance grows over time (intrinsic motivation). Pink goes on to stress the need to develop Type I behavior both as individuals and corporations. He concludes that developing Type I behaviors will lead to the development of the Motivation 3.0 operating system that will drive human interactions and business practices in the future.

Part Two: The Three Elements

Chapter 4: Autonomy

The second part of the book discusses the three elements of internal motivation: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. In

this part, Pink discusses how each element is essential for one to create intrinsic motivation. In chapter 4, Pink defines autonomy as being able to control the task (what they do), time (when the work is done), team (who they do the work with), and technique (how the work is done). People who have autonomy are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation for their work. Pink says that people have an innate desire to be autonomous and self-directed, and giving employees autonomy will lead to increased productivity and outperforming of the competition.

Chapter 5: Mastery

Mastery refers to the ongoing pursuit towards perfection in a task. It is an asymptote, meaning it can only be approached but can never be fully attained. Pink says “Mastery begins with ‘flow’ – optimal experiences when the challenges we face are exquisitely matched to our abilities” (p. 222). Mastery is also a mindset. The mastery mindset focuses on the learning process, competing against oneself, striving to do better, or learning more. The opposite is performance based outcomes: I will get an A in this class, I will perform well on this test, etc. One must see oneself as having the capacity to improve. Mastery requires continued effort over a long period of time. Mastery is never fully achieved but only approached. The mastery mindset is essential to cultivate intrinsic motivation.

Chapter 6: Purpose

Purpose refers to doing something that matters to you, doing it well, and doing it in the cause of something larger than yourself. Pink foresees a time when companies will include purpose maximization along with profit maximization as guiding principles. He argues that humans naturally seek purpose in their work, and those companies who provide this sense of purpose to their employees will have a competitive advantage. He cites a growing list of companies, like TOMS Shoes, that have altruistic goals as well as other business objectives. At TOMS, for every pair of shoes sold in the United States, it donates a pair of new shoes to a child in a developing country. Pink indicates that, as the Baby Boomers age, they will seek a greater sense of purpose with the time they have left. Therefore, they will be drawn to organizations that can provide them with a greater sense of purpose.

Part Three: The Type I Toolkit

The final part of the book provides a toolkit of resources for people who are interested in developing intrinsic motivation: what Pink refers to as Type I behavior. The author provides nine strategies to awaken intrinsic motivation.

The suggestions are very brief, averaging about two paragraphs in length. The brevity of the suggestions makes it hard to get a sense of how following these suggestions will build intrinsic motivation. They would have been more compelling if they were supported by a brief review of any supporting empirical research underlying the recommendations. The author also provides nine ways to improve the workplace. This section of the book parallels the suggestions for individuals in being a little too brief to deliver a compelling message.

There is a section on compensation that is little more than common sense and generic platitudes. You do not get the feeling that the author has ever had to devise a compensation structure for a business or appreciates the work required to make a compensation system fair. The next section offers advice to parents and educators on how to nurture the intrinsic motivation of the children with whom they have been entrusted. The suggestions range from having children develop learning goals at the start of the semester and then performing a self-assessment at the end of the semester to making sure students have autonomy over how homework is done, and understand the purpose behind the assignment. Another suggestion is separating children’s chores and children’s allowance. However, the author does not provide any suggestions for how to break the cycle for parents who already have established a pattern of paying for chores.

Pink includes a suggested reading list of 15 essential books for cultivating a Type I life. They ranged from obvious titles on the subject, like *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi; *Why We Do What We Do: Understanding Self-Motivation* by Edward Deci; *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A’s and Praise and Other Bribes* by Alfie Kohn; and *Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell. Examples of titles I did not expect to see include: *Then We Came to the End* by Joshua Ferris; *Once a Runner* by John L. Parker Jr.; and *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. For example, *Then We Came to the End* is a fictional novel about a Chicago ad agency where people are worried about being fired. Pink explains his rationale for including the book by saying it highlights the demoralizing effects of working in a workplace that focuses only on extrinsic motivation. I agree it is possible to learn by studying the opposite, but I am not sure that I agree with the author’s assertion that it is an essential book for cultivating intrinsic motivation.

Pink provides a short list of seven business thinkers who he feels embrace the Type I thinking. The list includes Douglas McGregor (MIT professor who developed Theory X and Theory Y approaches to management), Peter Drucker (popular author of 41 books on management), W. Edwards Deming (management consultant who helped Japanese manufacturers improve quality by focusing on continual improvement), Frederick Herzberg (management professor who focused on employee motivation and developed motivation-hygiene theory), Jim Collins (former Stanford professor, now popular business author who wrote *Built to Last*, *Good to Great*, and *How the Mighty Fall*), Cali Ressler (former Human Resources professional at Best Buy who developed the Results Only Work Environment), and Gary Hamel (professor at the London Business School, leading expert on business strategy).

Pink provides a brief explanation for why each was chosen and the insight they provide to intrinsic motivation. He concludes the toolkit with four tips for getting and staying motivated to exercise. The tips are: set your own goals, ditch the treadmill, keep mastery in mind, and reward yourself the right way. For example, he stresses that people need to stay away from “if-then” rewards, such as “If I exercise four times this week, then I’ll buy myself a new shirt” (p. 217), because they decrease the intrinsic motivation you might have to exercise. Finally, Pink provides a free on-line assessment link that will determine if your behaviors are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. The online assessment consists of 30 short questions that are answered on a 5-point Likert scale. The assessment takes about 10 minutes to complete and tells you if your behavior is mostly intrinsic or extrinsic. If your score is mostly intrinsic, no further suggestions are made; however, if your score is mostly extrinsic, a couple of short suggestions are given.

The Type I toolkit is useful for idea generation and to get you thinking about intrinsic motivation, but it is clearly not a how to guide for implementation. It offers some good gems to think about, but you will have to do a lot of your own work to figure out how to apply the suggestions into a

daily routine. However, the process of figuring out how to apply the toolkit ideas will create a greater ownership to the idea, and maybe that is what the author intended with this section of his book.

Recommendations

Drive is essential to anyone who is interested in behavioral change. The insights on internal motivation need to be discussed openly to inform counselors and change agents on the best ways of creating lasting change in those we serve. As educators, we can deemphasize the bribes of free food and childcare and emphasize more of the intrinsic motivation factors of learning something new, having fun while learning a new skill, and the social aspect of learning. For example, in our promotion of extension programs, we could focus on the joy that comes from meeting with people who have similar interests and the wisdom that can be gained by hearing others’ life experiences when facing financial difficulties. We also need to be flexible in how our message is presented and where and when it is presented. Supporting a person’s innate desire to learn and change should be our primary purpose. I encourage you to obtain a copy of the book and read it to better inform yourself on intrinsic motivation.

The concepts discussed in *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, have reinforced my desire to utilize life’s experience in the programs I develop. Our students come with a wide array of experiences and an innate desire to learn and change. Rather than being controlling and telling the students what they need to know, I desire to listen to their experiences and have them teach one another by sharing stories and experiences. Instead of being seen as a teacher who has all the right answers, I want to be viewed as a facilitator who makes sure everyone gets a chance to participate. Our students need to help set the agenda about what topics are covered and in how much detail we delve into those topics. The learning process should be relevant and fun. Creative use of games, activities, and play can bring out the intrinsically motivated child in each of us and help us share some of life’s most important skills.