Book Review

DRIVE: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

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Daniel Pink, already a well-known New York Times bestselling author with his *Whole New Mind* (2006), published *Drive* in 2009. I bought both soon after they came out, but regretfully did not get around to reading them until recently. After reading them, I quickly bought them in Japanese and gave copies to the highest manager/mover of our university, which I deem a good investment for everybody's future. That's how serious I am about these books.

Drive narrates an entertaining and insightful overview of our evolving drives as humans, our resistance to change, and a glimpse at "the surprising truth about what motivates us." *The Whole New Mind* describes a social anthropological and psycho-physiological turn to the right hemisphere in which we generally perceive the big pictures, recognize patterns, and are more empathetic, in contrast to the detail-focus of the left hemisphere. Pink's thesis is that the work of the left brain has become less important due to abundance, automation, and the out-sourcing to Asia of simple left-brain type jobs (telephone call centers in India, for example). I will focus on *Drive* for now, but both books are very much worth a read and very popular among progressive business managers.

Drive is divided into three parts: A New Operating System, The Three

Elements, and The Type I (for *intrinsic*) Tool Kit. In Part One, the four chapters present the analogy of computer operating systems to understand our Motivation Operating Systems. System 1.0 was originally our physiological drives, then came the carrot and the stick (rewards and punishment) as system 2.0, which most of the world assumes we still use. But actually many humans have moved on, and we need to update our understanding to the 3.0 system that really moves many of us, in which autonomy, mastery, and purpose are more important to us.

Chapter 1 describes the rise and fall of rewards and punishment in system 2.0. Apparently, due to Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology (1954) there was some effort in businesses to revise Motivation 2.0, but according to Pink it only improved to 2.1 (p. 20). It was modest. But now he thinks we need a paradigm shift, or in his words it is time for "a full-scale upgrade" to Motivation 3.0 that many OECD countries are partially realizing already.

Chapter 2 looks at seven reasons that carrots and sticks (often) don't work and can sometimes "achieve precisely the opposite of their intended aims" (p. 35); that is, as research shows, they can transform an "interesting task into a drudge. They can turn play into work. And by diminishing intrinsic motivation they can send performance, creativity, and even upstanding behavior toppling like dominoes" (p. 37). Pink's recap at the end of the chapter summarizes these "seven deadly flaws," saying that carrots and sticks can extinguish intrinsic motivation; diminish performance; crush creativity; crowd out good behavior; encourage cheating, shortcuts, and unethical behavior; become addictive; and foster short term thinking (p. 59)—much of what one might say is wrong with the present education systems dominant in many countries. These are certainly not new ideas to de-motivation researchers in Japan, but they add research evidence culled from other shores to condemn the sterile testing, learning, and working environments that many of our students experience. While businesses here are crying out for creativity in the workplace, they also still seem to want mostly inexperienced workers who have not studied abroad and who are fresh and malleable meat for the grinder to shape as required.

As Pink notes in Chapter 2A, Motivation 2.0 still works in some cases

when we are doing mechanical tasks that require little thinking and creativity and are not intrinsically motivating. If at all possible, though, we should try to increase the task's challenge or variety, make it less routine, or connect it to a larger purpose, all of which would make it less mechanical. If these are not possible, then use rewards, along with the following three strategies: 1) offer a rationale for why the task is necessary, 2) acknowledge the task is boring, and 3) allow people to complete the task their own way.

Chapter 3 introduces Type X and Type I, using the analogy many of you may be familiar with—Type A and B personalities. (Type As are very competitive and stressed-out over-achievers. Type Bs are relaxed and laid back. Type A is a recipe for heart disease.) Pink describes Type X behavior as extrinsically motivated and Type I as intrinsically motivated. Type X behavior occurs in people who have been conditioned to respond mostly to carrots and sticks (for example, when you ask children if they want to play a game and they ask, "What will you give me if I play?", or when students ask, "Will this be on the test?" they have been conditioned by external rewards; cf. Kohn, 1993). With Type I behavior, people are more interested in the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. Pink insists that "Type I behavior is made, not born," (p. 78) and it "almost always out performs Type X's in the long run" (p. 79). It does not "disdain money or recognition" (p. 79), but rather sees them as feedback rather than goals. "Type I behavior is a renewable resource" and "promotes greater physical and mental well-being" (p. 80). Pink summarizes by saying, "Ultimately, Type I behavior depends on three nutrients: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Type I behavior is self-directed. It is devoted to becoming better and better at something that matters. And it connects that quest for excellence to a larger purpose." (pp. 80-81)

As Pink notes:

Some people might dismiss notions like these as gooey and idealistic, but the science says otherwise. The science confirms that this sort of behavior is essential to being human—and that now, in a rapidly changing economy, it is also critical for professional, personal, and organizational success of any kind. (p. 81)

Then he says we have a choice; we can cling to an old view of carrots and sticks or listen to the research and pull ourselves "into the twenty-first century, and craft a new operating system to help ourselves, our companies, and our world work a little better" (p. 81). Businesses should encourage this first to be done in schools so it would be easy to continue with in the workplace. In Japan, revising the job recruitment system is an obvious step in the right direction, however we are going against the grain of tradition and convention that implicitly holds that the main job of university education is not education but placing students securely in a job. See this YouTube video (The Real Voice of Japanese Students 2: GO STUDY ABROAD!) about study abroad to get a clearer picture of the situation: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9CYaUhqEdw.

Part Two delves into the three "nutrients": autonomy, mastery and purpose. In the autonomy chapter, Pink describes companies' success with ROWE (results-only work environment) in which workers show up when they want and stay as long as they want to get their jobs done well. In such an environment management is less about making sure people are in their places and more about creating conditions for people to do their best work—and this is augmented by their autonomy. Pink quotes CEO Jeff Gunther at Meddius as saying, "My dad's generation views human beings as human resources… For me, it's partnership between me and the employees. They are not resources. They're partners." (pp. 87-88)

Pink is critical of "management" which he says has not changed much in a hundred years. He says, "Its central ethic remains control; its chief tools remain extrinsic motivators. That leaves it largely out of sync with the non-routine, right-brain abilities on which many of the world's economies now depend" (p. 88). He explains that "if at age fourteen or forty-three, we're passive and inert, that's not because it's our nature. It's because something flipped our default setting" (p. 89). Pink bases much of his argument on Deci and Ryan's (2006) well-researched Self Determination Theory and the subsequent research in businesses:

…researchers at Cornell University studied 320 small businesses, half of

which granted workers autonomy, the other half relying on top-down direction. The businesses that offered autonomy grew at four times the rate of the control-ordered firms and had one-third the turnover (p. 91).

The second half of the chapter deals with four essentials of autonomy, that is, control over task, time, technique, and team. When people experience these, they are more motivated and do better work.

"Mastery" is somewhat of a misnomer for me. What Pink describes is seeking mastery and enjoying the challenge of continual improvement. There is no end point at which we have become the best possible. There is always more we can do. The magic is in the challenge.

When writing of purpose, Pink paints an even better altruistic picture saying,

> Autonomous people working toward mastery perform at very high levels. But those who do so in the service of some greater objective can achieve even more. The most deeply motivated people, not to mention those who are most productive and satisfied, hitch their desires to a cause larger than themselves. (p. 133)

Here he notes how research is showing staggering levels of worker disengagement (due to over-managing) and, at the same time, an equally sharp rise in volunteerism. "These diverging lines—compensated engagement going down, uncompensated effort going up—suggest that volunteer work is nourishing people in ways that paid work simply is not" (p. 134). Pink tells the story that after the economy crash in 2009 some second-year Harvard MBA students decided they needed a Hippocratic oath for business grads aimed at helping the world, rather than just their pockets. Max Anderson, one of the student founders, said,

> My hope is that at our 25th reunion our class will not be known for how much money we made or how much money we gave back to the school, but for how the world was a better place as a result of our leadership. (p. 138)

Pink ends Chapter 6 stressing the importance of purpose over profit. One way of looking at employee purposeful affiliation is the way they use words,

when they talk of the company in "we" terms or "they" terms, for example. As a humanistic writer conscious of the power of words, he writes, "Humanize what people say and you may well humanize what they do" (p. 139). Purpose can also be seen in how companies altruistically give back to society and whether workers have some say in what charities they give to.

The conundrum of satisfaction, as related in interviews with Deci and Ryan, is that "satisfaction depends not merely on having goals, but on having the right goals"(p. 143); having mere profit goals "can lead sensible people down self-destructive paths" (p. 143).

Part Three contains "The Type I Toolkit" which acts as a pragmatic workbook for those seeking to change things through immediately taking actions. It starts out with the "Nine strategies for awakening your motivation", "Nine ways to improve your company, office, or group", and "The zen of compensation." He goes on to suggest to us "Paying people the type I way", "Nine ideas for helping our kids", "Fifteen essential books", and "Six business gurus who get it." And he ends this part by describing "Four tips for getting and staying motivated to exercise", "The recap", "The glossary", and "Twenty conversation starters to keep you thinking and talking."

"The central idea of the book is the mismatch between what science knows and what business does," (p. 145) which could easily be applied to education and other areas of our lives. While Pink cites most of the well-read books in my personal library (and many more), he does it with a unifying panoramic view that connects them well. While his metaphor of the computer operating system may make some humanists cringe with comparing ourselves once again to computers, it is a light-hearted analogy that actually works well, and implies that, while we influence others to a great extent, it is "we" who control the system upgrades or not. And while we can make incremental changes, we are also able to change complete systems at times.

I personally think Pink could have built more explicitly on Maslow's hierarchy to help readers grasp more (my learning style preference for diagrams, perhaps). There is also the social question of bringing the third world up to altruistic purposefulness. Last year, in Indonesia I had a breakfast conversation

with a UN forestry administrator who was trying to persuade the government, unsuccessfully, to cut back on its CO2 emissions. He made me think of whole cultures within the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy that are still concerned with day-to-day survival, rather than meaningful self-fulfillment. Perhaps the most meaningful thing we can do, once we are attracted to meaningfulness, is to help others less fortunate than ourselves to escape from the lower levels of survival and basic needs, to lead more meaningful purposeful lives themselves (see Hans Rosling's recorded presentation on TED.com on this). This is what we might call "altruistic agency."

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