

BOOK REVIEW – “DRIVE – THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES US” BY DANIEL H. PINK

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Does your company reward you based on the “carrot and stick” approach? Most companies still do, offering goodies and threats to compel good performance. Daniel H. Pink wondered if that were really the best motivators, especially for knowledge workers. Using scientific studies as well as observation, Pink concludes that what “everyone knows” should be challenged.

It began with monkeys in a study by Harry Harlow, professor of psychology. He had a plan to test the monkeys’ ability to solve a simple puzzle, but he began by putting the puzzle in the cage. Without any prodding, the monkeys began to play and became very good at the challenge. Until then, the only motivators (drives) known were biological (hunger, thirst and sex) and reward/punishment. The monkeys weren’t driven by either. He postulated that there was a third drive – an intrinsic reward in simply solving the task. A later study by Edward Deci had people solving a puzzle where they had to assemble blocks to match a picture. He varied between offering a reward and not. Money had an interesting effect – it motivated people to get started, but completely eliminated the intrinsic effect. Once money was not paid out, people lost interest.

Pink postulates that a new motivation is in play. The clear example was the difference in the result between Microsoft’s Encarta encyclopedia and Wikipedia. Microsoft paid experts a lot of money to write the first. Volunteers continue to freely update and keep accurate the free encyclopedia. As he worked through his theory, he began to realize that what mattered were: autonomy, mastery and purpose. The degree of autonomy can vary, but the more you offer, the more you get. There are currently a number of companies (i.e., Google) that give people X% of work time to create whatever they want. The results could not be duplicated any other way. Mastery gets into what Csikszentmihalyi dubbed “flow” – the optimal point between order and disorder which turns work into pleasure. Purpose

is the third aspect that underlies the other two. The thing you are becoming more masterful at and which you have autonomy over has to matter to you. Increasingly, people are seeing this to be a core need, no matter what your profession.

Of course, people need to be paid fairly and feel they can live their lives as they wish. But after that bottom line is met, the other motivators are far more powerful. Pink finishes the book with tools to help workplaces reinvent themselves into what he terms Motivation 3.0. He melds theory with practice, so you can immediately go out and begin to practice what you have learned. Many people after reading this want to buy a copy for a management retreat – and that’s a great way to start. Get your company talking about these ideas and you may be able to make your job so much better.