

Book Review: Drive - The Surprising Truth About What Motivates US

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Summary

In *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel H. Pink begins that narrative of motivation by tracing its history from the times of the Industrial Revolution. During this time of industrial advancement, Pink writes that man needed to learn different ways to mass-produce materials and keep workers working. During this time and until Harlow's experiment, many people have accepted that the world runs on extrinsic motivation. In fact, the world was so swamped with the concept of extrinsic motivation that when Harlow's experiment with primates questioned the status quo, many people found it hard to believe, including Harlow himself, who eventually abandoned this research that began the journey toward intrinsic motivation. Daniel titled this belief that extrinsic motivation rules the world "Motivation 2.0." Motivation 2.0 believes in rewards and punishment. Motivation 2.0 believes that people work for rewards, such as a payment package and bonuses attached to their occupation or activity. However, when people fail to fulfill their duties, they must be punished to bring them back to the reality of their assignment. In Harlow's experiment, the primates resisted the two drivers of Motivation 2.0, leading to another driver, which Daniel terms Motivation 3.0. After examining various research, Pink argues that Motivation 2.0 is only effective for routine, straightforward tasks; however, any activity that requires creativity and is complex, he believes, calls for Motivation 3.0, which comprises intrinsic motivation—the third drive that Harlow uncovered in his experiment and that Deci formally named.

Unlike Motivation 2.0, Pink argues that Motivation 3.0 allows individuals to experience autonomy, mastery, and purpose, as people are driven to do something interesting, challenging, and absorbing. Motivation 2.0, on the other hand, hinders creativity, decreases performance,

taints intrinsic motivation, crowds out good behavior, and encourages shortcuts and unethical behavior. While Motivation 2.0 people can get things done faster, it is only for a short-term purpose, not a long-term one. Indeed, Pink argues that Motivation 2.0 has its merits and that it works for many different things; however, as stated earlier, it works best for simple, routine tasks where individuals are not required to master any skills or tap into their creativity to find an answer. In this regard, Motivation 2.0 has always worked because early generations worked and then went home; however, in modern society, more and more individuals are seeking more than a job; instead, they are in search of purpose, something that puts them in the flow of things. According to Pink, most people are no longer seeking external rewards as they did in prior years. They are now motivated by an internal desire to be a contributing member of their communities and society. When we make things about external rewards, Pink, through countless research examples, demonstrated that people's altruistic desires decline and hinder eventual success.

However, when people pursue their internal desires, Pink tends to succeed in the long term because they can face the challenges they encounter along the way. In fact, Pink elaborated that these people enjoy those challenges because they allow them to grow and develop their skills. These intrinsically motivated individuals are not necessarily afraid of failure and do not take shortcuts. While their success journey might take longer than someone stuck in the Motivation 2.0 phase, Motivation 3.0 individuals strive to the very end because they cultivate their skills and maintain an attitude that is not influenced by external rewards. Pink argues that Motivation 3.0 is the new drive that businesses, individuals, and others should adopt, as it has innate characteristics shared by all humans.

In chapter four, Pink discussed autonomy, the first element of motivation. Autonomy means employees can choose freely: how they work, when they work, what tasks they do, and

with whom they work. Traditional management sets rules and regulations to control employees; the result is compliance, not motivation. Daniel Pink shows that when people have freedom in the Four T's: task, time, technique, and team, they become more productive and creative. Examples like Google's 20 percent time, Zappos' flexible customer service, and Best Buy's ROWE system show that employees perform better when they focus on results rather than strict schedules. Research indicates that greater autonomy is associated with higher growth and lower turnover because people naturally want independence and responsibility.

In chapter 5, Pink (2009) focuses on mastery, the second element of motivation. Mastery is the desire to improve skills in something meaningful. Pink draws on the idea of flow from Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the feeling of time is different when a person focuses on an interesting activity. Flow happens when the challenge is neither easy nor hard. Pink introduced the three laws of mastery: it is a mindset (people believe they can develop skills), it is a pain (mastery requires long effort), and it is an asymptote (we can never reach perfect mastery). Pink said: "Mastery hurts. Sometimes it's not much fun. But that's not the problem, that's the solution" (p. 124). Companies that support flow through "Goldilocks tasks" or job crafting help employees feel more engaged rather than bored or stressed. Flow becomes essential for mental health and personal satisfaction.

In Chapter 6, Pink (2009) explains that purpose is the third element of motivation after autonomy and mastery. The purpose is to do something that matters to the world. Pink said: "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). Pink argues that motivation 2.0 focuses on profit and motivation 3.0 focuses on purpose; therefore, purpose does not eliminate profit; it organizes profit around meaning.

Many modern workers, including older adults and younger generations, look for meaning and want their work to help something bigger than themselves. Purpose also appears in company goals (mix profit with ethical goals), words (“purpose,” “greater good,” “sustainable”) (p. 138), and policies (pro-social spending or giving employees time to do meaningful tasks). Research from Self-Determination Theory shows that people who follow intrinsic goals, like growth, learning, and helping others, feel happier and less anxious than people who follow extrinsic goals like money or status. Pink (2009) ends by saying modern organizations must update their systems to match what science already knows: true motivation comes from autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Pink said: “The value of a life can be measured by one’s ability to affect the destiny of one less advantaged. Since death is an absolute certainty for everyone, the important variable is the quality of life one leads between the times of birth and death” (p. 140). Human beings naturally want to: Direct their own lives, improve their abilities, contribute to something larger. Pink said: “We’re designed to be active and engaged. And we know that the richest experiences in our lives aren’t when we’re clamoring for validation from others, but when we’re listening to our own voice, doing something that matters, doing it well, and doing it in the service of a cause larger than ourselves” (p. 146).

The Type I Toolkit for individuals is a guide that shows how people can utilize autonomy, mastery, and purpose to increase their intrinsic motivation. Pink (2009) listed nine strategies that help people to understand themselves to know what engage and motivate them. For example, he talks about doing a “flow test” (p. 153) to notice when we feel most concentrated, asking a “big question” to understand our purpose in life, and asking a “small question” every day to improve step by step. He also describes taking a creative break called a “Sagmeister” (p. 156), doing a self-performance review, using “oblique strategies” to solve mental blocks, and practicing with

intention to become better in our skills. Pink (2009) suggested tools that help people figure out what triggers their motivation. Pink encourages individuals to think about two simple but deep questions: “What gets you up in the morning?” and “What keeps you up at night?” (p. 160) These questions help us understand our real motivations and values. Another tool is creating a personal motivational poster that indicates important goals and reminders. These activities help a person look inside themselves and identify positive habits that support long-term motivation.

In the Type I Toolkit for organizations, Daniel Pink explains that an organization can become more motivated when it focuses on autonomy, mastery, and purpose instead of only control or external rewards. He gives many practical ideas, like starting a small version of “20 percent time” (p. 162) so employees can try their own projects, and using peer-to-peer “now that” rewards that feel more natural and supportive, because “Any employee who does something exceptional receives recognition from their peers within minutes” (p. 163). Pink (2009) also recommends checking how much freedom workers really have through an autonomy audit, and he says leaders should involve people in goal-setting, use less controlling language, and keep open office hours to build trust. In addition, he shows that a strong workplace needs a shared purpose, the use of “we” language. Pink asked: “Do employees refer to their company as “they” or as “we”?” (p. 166) to indicate if employees feel they are solo players or team players.

Reflection

Reflecting on Pink's words and the demonstration of these findings, which support the idea that Motivation 3.0 is the new drive many people seek and yearn for, it is entirely true that people are not only looking for paychecks or chasing opportunities; instead, they are seeking purpose. The pursuit of purpose is central to Motivation 3.0, meaning people are looking for ways to grow individually and contribute to society in ways people before them did not.

Reading this book, a few concepts have become clear and resonate especially as a special education teacher.

1. External Rewards Don't Create Lasting Motivation; They Undermine It

Pink argues that traditional rewards and punishments (prizes and consequences) may only work for short-term compliance but not for long-term learning. Extrinsic motivation may be the band-aid, but it does not heal the wound. Pink writes " 'when institutions – families, schools, businesses, and athletic teams, for example – focus on the short-term and opt for controlling people's behavior' they do considerable long-term damage" (Pg.37). In the short term, people will do what they need to receive the reward; however, the modification in the behavior does not last since students might not be fully immerse or interested in the actual goal they are just doing it because they have to not because they want to improve. In special education, this means students need to feel connected and valued —not just rewarded —to stay motivated.

2. Rewards and Punishment Often Treat People Like a Machine

Pink writes "it suggested that, in the end, humans beings aren't much different from livestock -that the way to get us moving in the right direction is dangling a crunchier carrot or wielding a sharper stick" (pg.18). Through rewarding certain behaviors and punishing, we assume that this will cause individuals to be motivated; however, this is not always true. It also assumes that the more you give someone, the more they will obey and follow the rules without questioning anything. Students may follow the classroom rules because they do not want their parents called; however, this does not mean they are invested. In fact, rewards and punishments modify their behavior so much that we limit their individual capabilities and restrict their talents.

3. *External "If-then" Rewards Can Reduce Intrinsic Interest*

"If-then" rewards modify behavior, and often, people in them have to lose their autonomy to fit within the organization's scope. When working with students, it means they might not be able to fully express their desires and struggles because they are limited in what they can contribute. Pink writes that "If-then' rewards require people to forfeit some of their autonomy. Like the gentlemen driving the carriages for money instead of for fun, they no longer controlling their lives. And that can spring a hole in the bottom of their motivation bucket, draining an activity of its enjoyment". (pg.36). When the enjoyment is removed, the intrinsic motivation disappears and this can be very devastating to student learning. In addition, this concept can prevent people and students from enjoying what life can give them because they are always waiting for the external force to move before they too can move.

4. *True Motivation Comes from Intrinsic Desires*

Pink writes that "for artists, scientist, inventors, school children, and the rest of us, intrinsic motivation- the drive to do something because it is interesting, challenging, and absorbing- is essential for high levels of creativity" (pg.45). Unlike 'if-then" rewards, allowing students the opportunity to tap into their skills where their failures are embraced rather than punished and their success is praised same way as their failures encourages to always keep on trying. In fact it allows them to consistently enjoy learning and see everything in their life as an opportunity to learn and grow.

5. *Autonomy, Mastery and Purpose are the New Drivers*

"Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives." (pg. 71). Pink argues that giving people ownership (autonomy), chances to improve (mastery), and

meaning (purpose) leads to higher motivation. This means that students should be given the opportunity to own their own learning, of course, with guided support but they need to be given a space when they are confident in their own learning.

6. *Reflection on a Business Thinker Jim Collins' Ideas*

A critical idea from Collins is that people are self-motivated if they are right for the work: “If you have the right people on the bus, they will be self-motivated” (Pink, 2009, p. 198). This is very important because leaders should foster an environment that supports intrinsic motivation, not force people. Another key point is leadership practices: “Lead with questions, not answers,” “Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion,” and “Build ‘red flag’ mechanisms” (Pink, 2009, p. 198). These ideas are critical because self-motivated employees will use autonomy effectively; they know what to do and when. And by asking employees questions, you invite them to find solutions, which is mastery; however, by providing them with solutions, they will comply but not grow. And encouraging debates means communicating purpose.

7. *Reflection on a Business Thinkers, Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson*

The most important idea in reading about Ressler and Thompson is Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE). This system gives workers full freedom: “Employees have the freedom to work any way they want” (Pink, 2009, p. 199). I think this idea is very important because autonomy can make people more motivated than control or fixed schedules. Another important point is focus on results, not activity: “People at all levels stop doing any activity that is a waste of their time, the customer’s time, or their company’s time” (Pink, 2009, p. 199). This shows that workers who have mastery can be more responsible and efficient if they know their work matters, in other words, if they know the purpose.

8. *Reflection on a Business Thinker, Gary Hamel*

The most important idea from Gary Hamel is that management is old technology and needs to change. Hamel says, “Most of the essential tools and techniques of modern management were invented by individuals born in the 19th century” (Pink, 2009, p. 200). I think this is very important because many organizations still use outdated rules and controls that prevent people from being creative or motivated. Another key point is that work must have real purpose: “To what end, and to whose benefit, are our employees being asked to give of themselves?” (Pink, 2009, p. 210). This shows that leaders must connect work to something meaningful and set a purpose, not just ask for effort. I also like this idea because there is room for improvement and potential research in management, since management scholars emerged in the 19th century.

9. *Reflection on The Type I Fitness Plan*

The most important ideas in the Type I Fitness Plan are autonomy, mastery, and purpose in exercise. I think these ideas are very important because they show motivation comes from inside, not only from rewards. Pink says, "Set your own goals. Don't accept some standardized, cookie-cutter exercise plan. Create one that's tailored to your needs and fitness level" (2009, p. 201), and this teaches me to choose what is really important. He also says, “Ditch the treadmill. Unless you really like treadmills, that is. If trudging to the gym feels like a dreary obligation, find a form of fitness you enjoy, that produces those intoxicating moments of flow.” (2009, p. 202), showing that enjoyment helps motivation continue for a long time. Mastery is also key: “By continually increasing the difficulty of what you take on, think Goldilocks, and setting more audacious challenges for yourself as time passes, you can renew that energy and stay motivated.” (2009, p. 202). These ideas help me understand how to stay motivated in work, study, and life.

Application

Upon reading, these are the three ways that the concepts learned can be applied into the classroom.

1. Giving my Student Choices and Voice When it Comes to Their Learning in the Classroom

This means that students could be given a choice board where they to choose how to complete assignments (e.g., draw, write, record, or act it out). In addition, involving students in setting their IEP or daily goals, giving them ownership of their progress. The hope is that this sense of control helps reduce anxiety and self-doubts while building self-determination.

2. Focusing on Growth Not Perfection

This means breaking big goals into smaller **steps** so students can experience frequent success. Providing immediate, positive feedback to reinforce effort and progress. Tracking progress visually (e.g., progress charts, graphs, or stickers that show growth over time). The goal is to help students see that learning takes time and effort, not just talent, encouraging a growth mindset and resilience.

3. Helping my Students See Why Learning Matter

My goal is to help my student develop their purpose and understanding of why they are learning the materials that they are learning. To ensure that this happens, the lessons would need to be connected to real-life skills and discussing how classroom activities help students reach personal goals, like independence or future careers. This also means celebrating how each student contributes to the class community. When students see that what they're learning has meaning, they become more engaged and confident.

4. Apply the Three-Part Type I Test for Homework

In my own teaching practice, I will use the “Three-Part Type I Test for Homework” from Pink (2009) to conduct meaningful homework. I will apply Pink's suggestions. First, to apply autonomy, before I give any assignment, I will grant students some autonomy to analyze the financial statements of the corporations they will be analyzing. Second, to apply mastery, I will ensure the homework supports mastery, not just repetition. Pink (2009) explains that the homework should be a “novel” or engaging task so that I will add more real-life questions, for example, I will instruct students to analyze real income statements and balance sheets for two competitors and ask my students to reflect on which corporation he would buy its stocks and why, such tasks that help students think more deeply about the lesson. This will help the students feel that they are learning something new. Third, to apply purpose, I will always explain the homework's purpose. Pink (2009) says students must understand “how this activity at home connects to the larger work of the class.” For this reason, I will write a short explanation on each assignment to show why the homework is essential. For example, I will write for them that the purpose of this assignment is to enable students to manage their personal wealth and or prepare them for a business leadership role in the future. By doing this, I hope homework becomes more like “home-learning” (p. 175) and students feel more motivated from inside, not only doing it because the teacher says so.

5. Improving Myself with Peter Drucker’s concept of Big Idea: Self-Management

I can improve myself by applying Peter Drucker’s concept of Big Idea: Self-Management. Individuals must think about their strengths and utilize them to improve their own performance (Pink, 2009). Peter Drucker said: “The need to manage oneself is creating a revolution in human affairs” (Pink, 2009, p. 197). My strengths, planning and organizing, analyzing, and decision-

making, help me structure tasks, prioritize work, and make strategic choices. These skills will support my goals: completing my PhD in Leadership and Policy by May 2027, publishing my first journal article in 2026, obtaining a school leadership position, working part-time as university faculty, and participating in at least one research project per year. My weaknesses, proofreading and editing, and scarcity of time, can be improved by collaborating with colleagues. As Drucker suggested, “Demanding of knowledge workers that they define their own task and its results is necessary because knowledge workers must be autonomous, workers should be asked to think through their own work plans and then to submit them. What am I going to focus on? What results can be expected for which I should be held accountable? By what deadline?” (Pink, 2009, p. 197). By working with peers to review work, share editing responsibilities, and discuss research ideas, I can improve quality, efficiency, and learning while maintaining accountability. By managing myself with autonomy, reflecting on my work, and collaborating with colleagues, I can strengthen mastery, stay motivated, and achieve my academic and professional goals (purpose). Applying Drucker’s self-management principles helps me take control of my career and contribute meaningfully to research and leadership in education.

Reference

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