



# BOOK REVIEW

## Drive: The Surprising Truth about what motivates us

Cannongate Books, £12.95

Daniel H Pink

### Motivating people

“FORGET EVERYTHING YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW ABOUT MOTIVATING PEOPLE - AT WORK, AT SCHOOL, AT HOME. IT'S WRONG.”

These are the first words you will read on the inside front cover of the latest offering from Dan Pink, author of 'A Whole New Mind'. Since managers striving to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty are constantly trying to motivate employees to keep promises and commitments, to go the extra mile to help customers, understand customers, keep them informed, take ownership, solve the problem etc etc, it's very relevant to anyone in a customer management role. Have they been doing it wrong for all these years? Let's find out.

### Intrinsic or extrinsic rewards?

The Leadership Factor Client Conference was closed by Richard Kimber who wondered whether there's a disconnect between 'what science knows' and 'what business does'. Richard pointed out that most organisations still attempt to motivate most employees using traditional 'carrot and stick', 'if - then' rewards; basically extrinsic reward systems, but if they switched to an intrinsic, self-motivated mind-set could it revolutionise their ability to deliver great customer service?

Pink lists seven problems of traditional carrot and stick motivation systems:

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

Continuing in challenging vein, Richard suggested that management is unnatural, leadership is natural. Putting people in an unnatural management situation therefore creates inter-personal tensions, resulting in most employees who leave their job actually leaving their boss rather than leaving their company. Extrinsic rewards only work with a narrow range of repetitive tasks such as piece-work or traditional product line manufacturing.

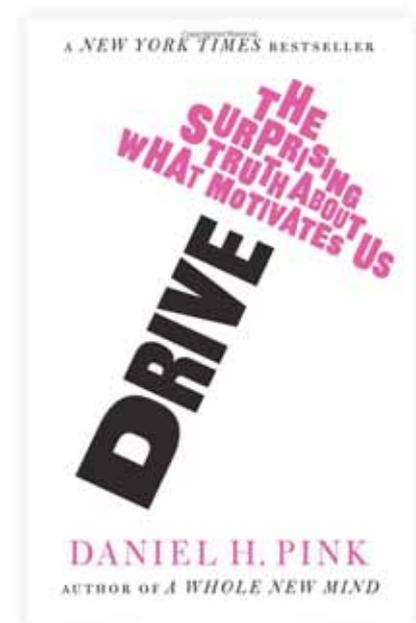
In "Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us", Dan Pink highlights three key human attributes that make most of us more intrinsically motivated:

#### Autonomy

Most of us want to direct our own lives, to be in control of what we do and how we decide to do it. A significant cause of stress is said to be 'role conflict', where people are forced into situations, tasks or roles that are outside their comfort zone or alien to their personality and beliefs. This is exacerbated if they have make no-win choices between conflicting roles e.g. a boss who wants them to work long hours and a partner that wants them to come home early to help with young children.

#### Mastery

This is the urge to be really good at something. People are always proud of



'mastery', whether it's playing a musical instrument or being the best brick layer on a building site. It makes them feel good.

#### Purpose

People also feel good about spending their time doing something that's important, useful or beneficial in some way.

#### Autonomy

Organisations and managers often grapple with the trade-off between autonomy



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and control. Pink is convinced they err far too much towards the latter, so trying to take some steps towards more autonomy for employees would be a positive move. Pink suggests several practical ideas such as...

### Encourage peer-to-peer rewards

Introduce a budget where employees can award a small monetary bonus or prize to colleagues for going the extra mile to benefit customers.

### Conduct an autonomy audit

Do a really quick survey asking your department or team to score four simple questions on a 10-point scale (where 1 means 'hardly any' and 10 means 'a huge amount') asking employees how much autonomy they have over:

- Your tasks at work – what you do on a given day
- Your time at work – how you allocate your time each day
- Your team at work – to what extent you can choose the people you collaborate with on tasks
- Your technique at work – how you perform your tasks

### Introduce DIY report cards

Ask your team members to specify their top objectives at the beginning of each month. At the end of the month ask them to score themselves on the extent to which they have achieved their objectives. If not why not and what they plan to do differently next month. Have monthly one-to-ones with team members where the employee's and the manager's report cards for the employee are compared and discussed.

### Mastery

If Pink is correct, mastery has major implications for maximising employee engagement. One implication is that organisations should trust people to do their jobs how the employee thinks best. This is 'autonomy', and Pink splits it into four elements, the 4 Ts:

- Task = what
- Time = when
- Team = with whom
- Technique = how.

Fedex gives employees one day per month when they can do whatever they want, but they have to make a presentation about it the next day. Other companies have copied this idea, sometimes with fantastic results. Google got Gmail out of a 'Fedex day'. Other companies let employees organise themselves into project teams or replace production lines by manufacturing cells where teams of employees carry out a much bigger part of the manufacturing process, organising themselves in their own way.



The bigger implication for organisations striving to improve employee engagement is whether they seek to do it through an intrinsic or extrinsic reward and manage-

ment culture. If Pink is correct, employee engagement will not be improved by management implementing a series of measures to 'make' employees more engaged, but by liberating employees to manage themselves and consequently become more engaged as a by-product.

### Employee surveys

One good starting point is to include autonomy, mastery and purpose questions on your employee survey and in all employee appraisals, personal reviews or one-to-ones. Autonomy questions can easily be split into the 4 Ts. Typical questions that relate to mastery include being proud of your job, being proud of the organisation you work for, having the right skills for the job, having the right tools / equipment for the job, having sufficient training for the job. Purpose can be covered by questions such as understanding the purpose / mission of the company, doing worthwhile work, how you / your job helps the organisation to achieve its objectives, how the company or its products / services benefit society. **S**



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