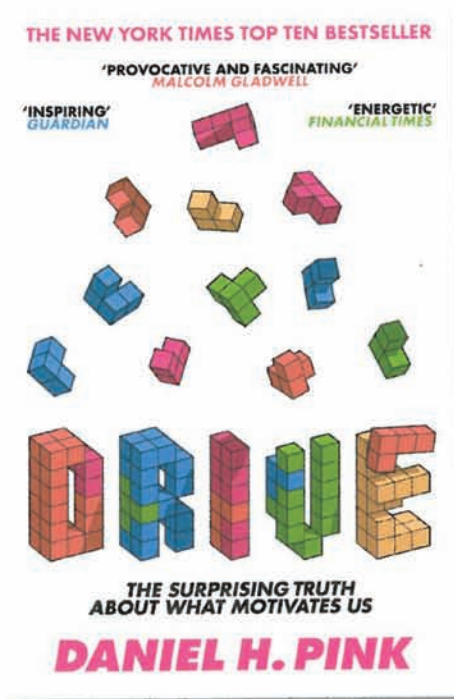


# Book of the month

Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us – Daniel H. Pink



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Although it has been two years since I first read this book it has since grown to become my most frequent reference point. The ongoing economic climate has reinforced the need for all organisations to listen and absorb Pink's mantra, "If you look at the science there is a mis-match between what science knows and what business does."

Former speech writer to Al Gore and workplace guru, Pink pulls together many motivation theories with a mass of workplace reality to examine what really motivates employees. As its title suggests, we should not be surprised to learn that Pink's conclusion is about financial incentive not being the best way for organisations and managers to motivate an individual. There are other deeper motivational triggers that should be examined.

Pink is able to demonstrate that money is often not the best motivational tool available, citing many fascinating examples including research carried out by the London School of Economics, which considered 51 studies of corporate performance-related pay schemes and concluded: "that financial incentives can result in a negative impact on overall performance." Pink acknowledges that money can motivate if the task is repetitive and not requiring too much thought, however where creativity or problem solving is required he demonstrates that money actually impedes performance. If ever the world needed great problem solving, it has to be now.

He continues to highlight scientific and practical evidence reinforcing his points with many references to both management gurus and acclaimed psychologists (Peter

Drucker, Gary Hamel, Douglas McGregor, Ryan and Deci). The evidence Pink builds is overwhelming; the world has changed but we continue to apply the same old (and normally ineffective) practices to people management.

Broadly speaking, the book is split into two halves: the first focuses on the 'what', the second on the 'how'. It is the what that is the really interesting part. Pink focuses on three key aspects to motivation: autonomy (people want to have control over their work); mastery (people want to get better at what they do); and purpose (people want to be part of something that is bigger than they are).

In truth, Pink's point of view and style is extreme, which obviously stems from his story-telling, lobbyist background. It's a headline grabbing approach and possibly a little one-sided, but it is very effective at getting the attention of the right people: those managers and leaders for whom staff motivation is critical. The how part of the book does tend to drift somewhat as Pink outlines his manager toolkit, but the quality and strength of the initial half of his argument helps this book stand out from the crowd.

In Pink's own words: "If we bring our motivation, notions of motivation into the 21st century, if we get past this lazy, dangerous, ideology of carrots and sticks, we can strengthen our businesses, we can solve a lot of those candle problems, and maybe, maybe, maybe we can change the world. I rest my case."

This is an entertaining read but a serious book for business leaders and absolutely everyone with responsibility for engagement and development.