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## Book Review: Pink, D.H. (2009). *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*

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## A Review of *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*

**Reviewed by Kathleen Fite**

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Pink, D.H. (2009). *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*. Riverhead Books: New York. 242 pages

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Okay, I admit it. I am a fan of Dan Pink. After a friend suggested I read his book *A Whole New Mind*, I made a mental note to buy it. Serendipitously, he came to our university campus; I met him and heard him speak. He talked about his new book *Drive*. I knew it was a book I would buy; the next day I did.

This three-part, six-chapter book has taught me, an educator, more about motivation than any other resource I have used in the past. Part One encourages us to think beyond our reward-and-punishment system to a new way of thinking about motivation. Part Two presents what he refers to as Type I, “intrinsic behavior where we have an innate need to direct our lives and how we learn; and, how this type of behavior enhances performance and satisfaction.” Part Three, referred to as the Type I Toolkit, provides a variety of resources designed to support Type I behavior. Pink makes connections to business as well as schools. It is these latter connections that educators and administrators should closely examine as I think they offer promise for 21<sup>st</sup> century school improvement.

Pink begins by providing the reader with the basics of what he calls Motivation 1.0. Early man was trying to survive, and his behavior reflected that goal. But, as society advanced, the purely biological drive yielded to a second drive, Motivation 2.0, where we sought reward

and avoided punishment, referred to Type X (“ex”trinsic reward) behavior. This operating system has remained in place for a long time; however, it does not address the distinctly human traits of autonomy and intrinsic motivation that are at the heart of Motivation 3.0 and Type I behavior.

In what has become classic Pink style, the author supports his tenets with a plethora of research findings and references. Support for his beliefs span from seminal research on intrinsic motivation, such as that by Harry Harlow, and contemporary research, such as Edward Deci and Richard Ryan’s self-determination theory (SDT) and Teresa Amabile’s work on creativity, to examples of successful entities such as Google, Zappos, and Wikipedia. Though much of his book references the business world, his examples are relevant to the field of education and personal fulfillment. Teacher researchers could benefit from reading the research findings and examining if their own practices reflect mostly “if-then” reward behaviors, or if they help the students connect to a greater cause or purpose and reach within themselves to uncover solutions.

He writes with unmistakable clarity and presents his documentation so well that the lay population will be able to understand how drive and motivation work. Behemoths like

Google provide examples of a result-only work environment (ROWE), and concepts like a FedEx day, where employees are given a day to solve a problem or tackle a project utilizing principles of Motivation 3.0, place value on autonomy and reflect an inherent understanding that intrinsic motivation evokes creativity. We tend to think it is high salary and prestige we seek in our lives; however, it is the fulfillment we derive from our deeds that tends to win out in the long run.

The Sawyer Effect, coined from the story about Tom Sawyer where work can be turned into play or play into work, is used as a metaphor for taking the drudgery out of what could otherwise be the mundane. In education we have not always valued play and play environments as being conducive to learning. Practicing teachers and administrators would do well to look at challenging behaviors and projects with lenses more reflective of the Sawyer Effect, where participants became eager to participate and value community rather than dread involvement.

Pink fills the pages of his book with point after point emphasizing that we need to encourage Type I behaviors and utilize the principles of Motivation 3.0. The current revamping of our educational system, referred to as 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and skills, could benefit from encouraging these types of behaviors and ways of thinking. We need to encourage connectivity and creativity in our students. Motivation 3.0 theory has shown that rewards don't always yield the results we are after; they often encourage the fastest route to an end or a myopic focus rather than encouraging divergent thinking and problem solving. Obtaining a tangible reward does not necessarily mean that self-fulfillment will follow. Pink stresses the power of intrinsic motivation and Type I behavior and describes the concept of what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow" when people are functioning in a sort of Goldilocks "zone" where things are not too hard or easy, challenging or simple; and, the person forgets himself in the task or moment. An *autotelic*, or self-directed, experience can be a reward in itself.

The book incorporates practical resources for reinforcing Pink's tenets. His Type I Toolkit has a variety of interesting and valuable ideas and references, including *Nine Strategies for Awakening Your Motivation* and *Nine Ideas for Helping Our Kids (He is a father.)*. In this section, Pink identifies and describes select Type I schools (which include Montessori schools) and names gurus (Douglas McGregor, Peter Drucker, Jim Collins, Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, and Gary Hamel) who embody and encourage the Type I persona. Also included are: a glossary, books he considers essential to read for understanding motivation by such authors as Carse, Colvin, Csikszentmihalyi, Deci and Flaste, Dweck, Gladwell, and Senge, fitness tips, and condensed summaries for each of the chapters.

Especially helpful to teachers will be his section for parents and educators. He offers some glaringly practical ideas for determining if homework is appropriate and offers suggestions for creativity building as well as do-it-yourself (DIY) report cards. Teachers could develop a home survey where parents and children are asked to rate the value of aspects of homework and offer suggestions how assignments could be improved or to survey the students to find ways to give them more ownership of their work by encouraging self-grading and reflective narrative and sharing.

Pink references the work of Carol Dweck to help us see how there are different and more effective ways to praise behaviors and how specific praise choices yield changes in behavior. He also reminds us of the importance for the child, as well as the teacher and administrator, to connect activity to a bigger picture and see the cause and effect of our actions. Taking a macro view of teacher and student behaviors and the consequences of those behaviors could help us better understand the ripple effect of what we do and say.

This book offers a lot of information for the money. Pink tells us what drives our behavior and how we develop a sense of worth,

fulfillment, and connectedness. Now it is our turn to do something with the information. Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs to move beyond a mere carrots and sticks modus operandi to encouraging attributes of autonomy, mastery, and purpose so that we

move up front to the driver's seat rather than being strapped in the back seat and driven. Pink has given us the key; it is up to us as educational leaders to start the engine and move forward.