

THE BIG IDEAS

The Sawyer Effect

Contingent rewards don't work.

Motivation: 1.0 + 2.0 + 3.0

Type I and Type X.

Autonomy

The sun of STD.

Mastery

Flow + The Three Laws.

Purpose

A big question + a small one.

Drive

The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us

BY DANIEL H. PINK · RIVERHEAD BOOKS © 2011 · 288 PAGES

"This is a book about motivation. I will show that much of what we believe about the subject just isn't so—and that the insights that Harlow and Deci began uncovering a few decades ago come much closer to the truth. The problem is that most businesses haven't caught up to this new understanding of what motivates us. Too many organizations—not just companies, but governments and nonprofits as well—still operate from assumptions about human potential and individual performance that are outdated, unexamined, and rooted more in folklore than in science. ...

The good news is that the solution stands before us—in the work of a band of behavioral scientists who have carried on the pioneering efforts of Harlow and Deci and whose quiet work over the last half-century offers us a more dynamic view of human motivation. For too long, there's been a mismatch between what science knows and what business does. The goal of this book is to repair that breach."

~ Daniel H. Pink from *Drive*

Dan Pink is an incredibly engaging writer and this book is fantastic.

He's the best-selling author of *A Whole New Mind* and *To Sell Is Human* (need to do Notes on those as well).

In this book, he tackles human motivation and, as the sub-title suggests, tells us "The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us."

Here's his Twitter summary: "*Carrots & sticks are so last century. Drive says for 21st century work, we need to upgrade to autonomy, mastery & purpose.*"

The book is packed with great stories, great research and a ton of Big Ideas that can help you change your life—from how you lead and how you parent to how you live. I highly recommend it. (Get a copy [here](#).)

I'm excited to share a few of my favorite Ideas we can apply to our lives today so let's jump straight in!

THE SAWYER EFFECT

"Over and over again, they discovered that extrinsic rewards—in particular, contingent, expected, 'if-then' rewards—snuffed out the third drive.

These insights proved so controversial—after all, they called into question a standard practice of most companies and schools—that in 1999 Deci and two colleagues reanalyzed nearly three decades of studies on the subject to confirm their findings. 'Careful consideration of reward effects reported in 128 experiments lead to the conclusion that tangible rewards tend to have

"Science shows that the secret to high performance isn't our biological drive or our reward-and-punishment drive, but our third drive—our deep-seated desire to direct our own lives, to extend and expand our abilities, and to live a life of purpose."

~ Daniel H. Pink

"In our offices and our classrooms we have way too much compliance and way too little engagement. The former might get you through the day, but only the latter will get you through the night."

~ Daniel H. Pink

a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation,' they determined. '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.

Try to encourage a kid to learn math by paying her for each workbook page she completes—and she'll almost certainly become more diligent in the short term and lose interest in the long term. Take an industrial designer who loves his work and try to get him to do better by making his pay contingent on a hit product—and he'll almost certainly work like a maniac in the short term, but become less interested in his job in the long term. As one leading behavioral science textbook puts it, 'People use rewards expecting to gain the benefit of increasing another person's motivation and behavior, but in so doing, they often incur the unintentional and hidden cost of undermining that person's intrinsic motivation toward the activity.'

This is one of the most robust findings in social science—and also one of the most ignored."

Contingent rewards.

If you do this, then you'll get that.

We *think* that carrots (and sticks) work WAY better than they actually do.

The research actually shows that the best way to destroy intrinsic motivation is to add extrinsic rewards to the equation.

For example, you can take kids who enjoy drawing, give them rewards for doing so, and watch their interest in drawing plummet. (That's one example from hundreds of studies that demonstrate this effect.)

It's "one of the most robust findings in social science—and also one of the most ignored."

As Dan says: "Rewards can perform a weird set of behavioral alchemy: They can transform an interesting task into a drudge. They can turn play into work. And by diminishing intrinsic motivation, they can send performance, creativity, and even upstanding behavior toppling like dominoes."

Dan calls this the Sawyer Effect. You may recall Mark Twain's character Tom Sawyer who needed to paint a fence. He dreaded the task but decided to act as if it was the coolest thing in the world and, lo and behold, his friends *paid* him to paint the fence for him.

As Twain shares: "that Work consists of whatever a body is OBLIGED to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do."

Plus: "There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger-coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign." (<— Hah.)

So, the Sawyer Effect = "practices that can either turn play into work or turn work into play."

Here's an example from the Johnson home. Since Emerson was tiny (he's 3 1/2 as I type this), we've been having fun making mundane tasks like doing the dishes, taking out the trash, feeding the dog (Zeus!), etc. seem like a lot of fun. (Hah.)

Rather than begrudgingly doing these things and telling him, "One day you'll have to do this!" we've been acting like it's awesome and saying, "One day, when you're big enough, you'll be able to help more... but not quite yet."

The result?

He LOVES doing all of these things and happily takes the initiative to do as much as he possibly can. <— The Sawyer Effect.

"The desire to do something because you find it deeply satisfying and personally challenging inspires the highest levels of creativity, whether it's in the arts, sciences, or business."

~ Teresa Amabile
Professor, Harvard University

P.S. On that note, Dan makes the point: “Pay your son to take out the trash—and you’ve pretty much guaranteed the kid will never do it again for free. What’s more, once the initial money buzz tapers off, you’ll likely have to increase the payment to continue compliance.”

He also has a section at the end on how to bring these Ideas into parenting. One Idea: Allowances are good and chores are good but don’t give an allowance for doing chores. Allowances help kids learn how to deal with money while chores help them develop the sense of contributing to the family. But when you pay for chores, you take an opportunity to develop moral character (helping fam) and turn it into a transaction. (One book he references I need to cover is Alfie Kohn’s *Punished by Rewards*. Note soon.)

MOTIVATION 1.0 + 2.0 + 3.0 & TYPE I + TYPE X

“Perhaps it’s time to toss the very word ‘management’ onto the linguistic ash heap alongside ‘icebox’ and ‘horseless carriage.’ This era doesn’t call for better management. It calls for a renaissance of self-direction.”

~ Daniel H. Pink

“The Motivation 2.0 operating system depended on, and fostered, what I call Type X behavior. Type X behavior is fueled more by extrinsic desires than intrinsic ones. It concerns itself less with the inherent satisfaction of an activity and more with the external rewards to which that activity leads. The Motivation 3.0 operating system—the upgrade that’s needed to meet the new realities of how we organize, think about, and do what we do—depends on what I call Type I behavior. Type I behavior is fueled more by intrinsic desires than extrinsic ones. It concerns itself less with the external rewards to which an activity leads and more with the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself. At the center of Type X behavior is the second drive. At the center of Type I behavior is the third drive.”

Dan uses the metaphor of a computer’s operating system to describe human motivation.

Back in the old, old, ancient days (say 50,000 years ago), our operating system was a very basic **Motivation 1.0**. This was all about basic survival needs. Do this or die kinda thing. Dan calls this our “First Drive.”

Fast-forward to the 20th century (/most places today). What do we have in most organizations? From businesses to schools to families, we have **Motivation 2.0**. This is all about carrots and sticks. Rewards and punishments. Do what they want and you get a carrot. Don’t do what they want and you get a stick. You’re controlled/coerced. Now, this worked well (particularly with assembly-line super-basic stuff) until it didn’t. That’s the Second Drive. It’s extrinsically focused.

The thesis of the book: We need to upgrade our operating system to **Motivation 3.0** that captures the Third Drive—our need for Autonomy + Mastery + Purpose.

Dan describes those people and organizations driven by the extrinsic carrots and sticks of Motivation 2.0 as **Type X**. The intrinsically-motivated people and organizations of Motivation 3.0 = **Type I**.

Here’s what we need to know: Type I outperforms Type X in every way. Now let’s look at those three elements of Motivation 3.0 (Autonomy + Mastery + Purpose) in more depth.

AUTONOMY = SUN OF SDT SOLAR SYSTEM

“The fundamentally autonomous quality of human nature is central to self-determination theory (SDT). As I explained in the previous chapter, Deci and Ryan cite autonomy as one of the three basic human needs. And of the three, it’s the most important—the sun around which SDT’s planets orbit. In the 1980s, as they progressed in their work, Deci and Ryan moved away from categorizing behavior strictly as either extrinsically motivated or intrinsically motivated to categorizing it as either controlled or autonomous. ‘Autonomous motivation involves behaving with a full sense of volition and choice,’ they write, ‘whereas controlled motivation involves behaving with the experience of pressure and demand toward specific outcomes that comes from forces perceived to be external to the self.’

“Nothing is more important to my success than controlling my schedule. I’m most creative from five to nine A.M. If I had a boss or co-workers, they would ruin my best hours one way or another.”

~ Scott Adams
Dilbert Creator

"As an entrepreneur, I'm blessed with 100% autonomy over task, time, technique, and team. Here's the thing: If I maintain that autonomy, I fail. I fail to ship. I fail to excel. I fail to focus. I inevitably end up either with no product or a product the market rejects. The art of the art is picking your limits. That's the autonomy I most cherish. The freedom to pick my boundaries."

~ Seth Godin

"Figure out for yourself what you want to be really good at, know that you'll never really satisfy yourself that you've made it, and accept that that's okay."

~ Robert B. Reich
Former U.S. Secretary of Labor

Autonomy, as they see it, is different from independence. It's not the rugged, go-it-alone, rely-on-nobody individualism of the American cowboy. It means acting with choice—which means we can be both autonomous and happily interdependent with others."

Autonomy.

This is at the heart of our Third Drive and Motivation 3.0.

It's "the sun around which Self-Determination Theory's planet's orbit."

Dan walks us through the research of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan—the creators of Self-Determination Theory and leading researchers in intrinsic motivation. ([See Notes](#) on Deci's *Why We Do What We Do* for more.)

The basic idea here is that, when we have autonomy, we feel in control of the decisions we're making in our lives. (That feels *really* good.) We're not coerced or controlled. (Not so good.)

Dan walks us through the four aspects of autonomy in the book: *task, time, technique, team*.

- *Task* = You decided what you'll do.
- *Time* = You decide when you get to do it.
- *Technique* = You decide how you're going to do it.
- *Team* = You decide with whom you're going to do it.

The more of those elements you have, the more autonomy you'll feel and, VERY IMPORTANTLY, the more engagement you'll feel with your work. In short: Low autonomy leads to low engagement. High autonomy leads to high engagement.

How's your autonomy looking? Anything you can do to boost it for yourself or those you lead?

THE THREE LAWS OF MASTERY

"Flow is essential to mastery. But flow doesn't guarantee mastery—because the two concepts operate on different horizons of time. One happens in a moment; the other unfolds over months, years, sometimes decades. You and I each might reach flow tomorrow morning—but neither one of us will achieve mastery overnight.

So how can we enlist flow in the quest for something that goes deeper and endures longer? What can we do to move toward mastery, one of the key elements of Type I behavior, in our organizations and our lives? A few behavioral scientists have offered some initial answers to those questions, and their findings suggest that mastery abides by three, somewhat peculiar laws."

Mastery.

It's essential for our Type I optimization.

Dan walks us through Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's fascinating personal story (I didn't know that he and his family fled the Nazi regime when he was a ten year old—leaving Hungary to Italy and losing half his family in the process) and his world-changing research into Flow.

Check out the book and our Notes on [Flow](#) for more on that.

For now, know that getting into Flow is an essential aspect of attaining mastery. We need to have clear targets, get feedback on our performance and make sure that our skills match our challenges. (Dan calls this "Goldilocks tasks"—where they're not too hard (enter: anxiety) or too easy (enter: boredom) but juuuuust right (enter: flow).

Then he tells us about The Three Laws of Mastery. Here they are:

"Being a professional," Julius Erving once said, "is doing the things you love to do, on the days you don't feel like doing them."

~ Daniel H. Pink

1. **Mastery Is a Mindset.** Specifically, Mastery is a GROWTH MINDSET. Dan walks us through Carol Dweck's research. Check out our Notes on [Mindset](#) + [Self-Theories](#) and remember that you CAN IMPROVE!! Rather than have a fixed/entity mindset in which you think your abilities are set in stone, adopt and cultivate a growth/incremental mindset in which you KNOW (!!!!) that, with effort, you can develop Mastery.
2. **Mastery Is a Pain.** Specifically, it takes a ton of deliberate practice. Check out all our [Notes on the 10,000 hour rule](#) and remember Anders Ericsson's research that tells us we must deliberately try to get a little better every.single.day. That's not easy. In fact, it's a pain.
3. **Mastery Is an Asymptote.** An asymptote? Yah. Remember your statistics class? An asymptote (love that word) is a curved line that approaches a straight line but never quite hits it. For our purposes here, know this: We NEVER ACTUALLY ACHIEVE PERFECT MASTERY. It's always just outside our grasp. And that's awesome. :)

The Three Laws of Mastery.

How're you doing with them? See any opportunities to Optimize?

PURPOSE: A BIG QUESTION + A SMALL QUESTION

"In 1962, Clare Boothe Luce, one of the first women to serve in the U.S. Congress, offered some advice to President John F. Kennedy. 'A great man,' she told him, 'is one sentence.' Abraham Lincoln's sentence was: 'He preserved the union and freed the slaves.' Franklin Roosevelt's was: 'He lifted us out of the great depression and helped us win a world war.' Luce feared that Kennedy's attention was so splintered among different priorities that his sentence risked becoming a muddled paragraph.

You don't have to be a president—of the United States or of your local gardening club—to learn from this tale. One way to orient your life toward greater purpose is to think about your sentence. Maybe its: 'He raised four kids who became happy and healthy adults.' Or 'She invented a device that made people's lives easier.' Or 'He cared for every person who walked into his office regardless of whether that person could pay.' Or 'She taught two generations of children how to read.'

As you contemplate your purpose, begin with the big question: *What's your sentence?*"

I love that.

So: What's YOUR sentence?

This is my sentence: _____.

(Awesome.)

That "Big Question" is Step 1 in gaining clarity on our Purpose.

Step 2? Ask yourself a small question.

At the end of every day, check in and ask, *"Was I better today than yesterday?"*

Dan reminds us that we're not looking for perfection here. Rather, little (tiny!) ways we got just a bit better than the day before. 4%.

As we discuss again and again, those small gains, compounded daily over an extended period of time lead to ASTONISHING returns.

Big vision.

Baby step.

THAT's the way to live on Purpose.

"Autonomous people working toward mastery perform at very high levels. But those who do so in service of some greater objective can achieve even more. The most deeply motivated people—not to mention those who are most productive and satisfied—hitch their desires to a cause larger than themselves."

~ Daniel H. Pink

P.S. For curious souls, here's my sentence: *"He created the greatest collection of wisdom ever and helped the world OPTIMIZE."*

P.P.S. Love this line: "Reminding yourself that you don't need to be a master on day 3 is the best way of ensuring you will be one by day 3,000."

"One cannot lead a life that is truly excellent without feeling that one belongs to something greater and more permanent than oneself."

~ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

THE COCKTAIL PARTY SUMMARY

"When it comes to motivation, there's a gap between what science knows and what business does. Our current business operating system—which is built around external, carrot-and-stick motivators—doesn't work and often does harm. We need an upgrade. And the science shows the way. This new approach has three essential elements: (a) *Autonomy*—the desire to direct our own lives; (2) *Mastery*—the urge to get better and better at something that matters; and (3) *Purpose*—the yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves."

That's the "Cocktail Party Summary" from the end of the book.

It's time to upgrade our underlying motivational operating systems.

It's time to move from Motivation 2.0 featuring carrots and sticks to Motivation 3.0 where we embrace AUTONOMY + MASTERY + PURPOSE.

How can you do that a little more today?

Here's to embracing our Third Drive as we optimize + actualize!

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

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About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.