

Alpha Business Coaching Newsletter

"New Thinking for Motivating at Work"

Dear Small Business Owner:

Understanding how people are motivated has always been a quandary to me. Sometimes, I don't even understand what motivates me! But, in Daniel Pink's new book, *Drive*, he talks about updated research that's been done to better understand what drives humans. I'll reveal some of his learning here.

For decades, the belief has been that people motivate best with external rewards, like money and threats. It's the old "carrot and stick" theory--lead people with either coaxing or force. This theory is rooted in the 1950's and '60's when the Industrial Age saw many people working in factories and doing fairly meaningless work. Research has shown that this mentality isn't compatible with how people think and work best today.



Pink lists many reasons why this way of motivating is failing today's workplace. Here are a couple of them:

- It produces diminished performance on the job.
- It crushes creativity.
- It crowds out good behavior.
- It encourages cheating and unethical behaviors.
- It fosters short-term thinking.

You can dig into to the book to find the supporting evidence of why these results happen.



In the new work environment, rather than providing carrot and stick rewards, Pink believes people will work better for praise and feedback. Workers are looking for leaders to provide them with useful information rather than being focused on applying ways to control employee's work and environments.

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So what does he believe is the "right" way to motivate today? He believes people are looking for 3 things:

- 1. Autonomy--control in how they work.** This doesn't mean pure go-it-alone independence but choices about what to do and how to do it. It requires managers to resist the temptation to control people but to instead do everything to let people be self-directed. This requires seeing employees not as pawns but players. This won't happen overnight but giving more independence in tasks, time, techniques and team are the areas in which to start.
- 2. Mastery--getting better at something that matters.** We need to prize learning and effort over performance. This focus believes that intelligence is something we can increase. And, it adds that people gain more satisfaction when feeling like they're improving themselves rather than just performing well for the company. In a well-developed culture, people can be learning and performing.
- 3. Purpose--seeing a greater objective that's being achieved at work.** We want a cause greater and more enduring than ourselves on which to be working. Research has shown that the profit motive, potent as it is, is not a complete motive for both individual and organizations. Advanced-thinking companies are finding ways to set goals for "purpose to drive profit." A unique new company doing this is TOMS shoes; it gives away a pair of shoes for every pair it sells.



Even for jobs that can be mostly routine, Pink believes you can still increase the task's challenge or add variety. He believes that workers produce more if they are helping to build a healthy, long-term, motivated environment that pays fairly and that fosters autonomy, mastery and purpose.

I believe we need to listen to the research and drag our business practices into the 21st century. It won't be easy because most baby-boomers have grown up with the carrot and stick. I challenge you to incorporate one of these advanced-thinking practices into your business.

Sincerely,
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