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## How to Stay Motivated -- and Get That Bonus

*By Barbara Chai*

Daniel Pink became well known for "A Whole New Mind," his 2005 best-selling book in which he made the bold statement that right-brainers -- people who are strong in qualities such as empathy, storytelling and inventiveness -- will rule the future. In his new book, "Drive," Mr. Pink explores the concept of human motivation and what he calls "the surprising truth" about what motivates us.

"Drive" boils down true motivation into three elements: 1) autonomy, the desire to direct our own lives, 2) mastery, the desire to continually improve at something that matters, and 3) purpose, the desire to do things in service of something larger than ourselves.

Mr. Pink takes aim at business in particular. He warns that traditional carrot-and-stick methods, in which companies use a particular incentive -- often money -- as a contingent reward for a task, are not only ineffective for motivating employees, but potentially harmful. He offers up new models for corporations that he says will tap into true motivation, yield higher satisfaction among employees and deliver stronger results.

The Wall Street Journal talked to Mr. Pink about his own motivations, how to influence others, and how our culture and economy play a role in motivating factors.

The Wall Street Journal: What was your personal motivation in writing this book?

Daniel Pink: I got a lot of questions from readers on the previous book ("A Whole New Mind"). With this move from left-brain abilities to right-brain abilities, how do we motivate people? That led me to the science of human motivation, which unfurled in the last 40-50 years. At another level, I'm someone who works for himself, I've got three kids in school trying to make their way and I'm just curious about what makes us tick.

WSJ: You state there is a shift in motivation happening now, from a system built on external rewards and punishments, to one centered on the principles of autonomy, mastery and purpose. Why is this occurring?

Mr. Pink: I think it's happening now for a number of economic reasons. One is we're moving more toward creative conceptual work, and for that, this regime of carrots and sticks doesn't work very well. The second thing is, we're seeing the weaknesses of that older approach to motivation. If you look at the last decade, it's been one of almost breathtaking underachievement. The economy seems to be lurching from boom to bust, and so I think we're recognizing the limits of this approach today.

WSJ: Is it mainly in Western countries?

Mr. Pink: I don't think it's a Western thing to really talk about intrinsic motivation and the drive for autonomy, mastery and purpose. You have to not be struggling for survival. For people who don't know where their next meal is coming, notions of finding inner motivation are comical. But there are more and more countries with rising middle class, and more people shifting to this different kind of work, and it's exposing the inadequacies of a motivational system in business that people are simply horses that respond to carrots and sticks.

WSJ: Are there circumstances in which the carrot-and-stick approach still works?

Mr. Pink: Carrots and sticks work pretty well for simple, routine, rule-based tasks. I don't think it needs to be completely banished, but those kinds of if-then motivators have limited effectiveness.

WSJ: What's at stake for companies that stick to the carrot-and-stick approach?

Mr. Pink: First, it's bad business strategy. These supposedly hard-headed businesses who claim to value facts and evidence are actually in many ways abiding by folklore about what really motivates people. What's at stake is whether business decides to run by folklore or science. I'll take science. The continued overuse of carrots and sticks puts businesses on a path that is extraordinarily dangerous.

WSJ: You suggest providing "now-that" rewards after a job has been done well. Can you give an example of this, and how it is different from an "if-then" reward?

Mr. Pink: Let's say you have a small design team in your office and you want to redesign your Web site. You could go to the team and say, "If you do something amazing, I'll give you each a \$1,000 bonus." That's typically how we approach things. Science shows it narrows their focus, which is good for getting out of a burning building, or adding columns of figures. However, for that kind of Web site-design task, you don't want a narrow focus, you want a broad focus. The better approach is, "I need you to redesign a Web site. Here's what we need to accomplish, and I'm here to give you guidance and provide any tools." And then let them go and design something great.

After, a reward can be to go up and thank them, take them out to lunch, give some form of recognition after the fact, companywide. It can even be a cash bonus. But because it wasn't contingent, before the job, it's far less destructive. The danger with that is if you do it over and over it becomes an "if-then" reward in "now-that" reward clothing. Especially for fostering creative, conceptual work, the best way to use money as a motivator is to take the issue of money off the table so people concentrate on the work.

WSJ: Why would employees be less concerned with external rewards, like cash bonuses, now and more concerned about inner motivation, or as you say throughout the book, "the third drive"?

Mr. Pink: Part of it is the nature of work that is this migration from left-brain, rule-based, routine, algorithmic work to right-brain, nonroutine, creative, conceptual work. They're as different as information-age work, industrial-age work, and agriculture-based work. You need a different system to get the best out of people doing different work.

I also think especially now, as we turn the page on this decade, there's a sense that something has gone wrong. That we're not doing things the right way. You see evidence of that in different kinds of business corporations such as the low-profit limited liability corporations -- these are not pure profit maximizers. Even the Harvard Business Review is writing about how profit maximization isn't the answer.

WSJ: What is your advice for people seeking their true third drive?

Mr. Pink: It's a process of discovery. What do you do for fun? What would you do for free? What do you do in your spare time? Think about whether you can make a living doing that. What holds people back is that fear of somehow deviating from the path. Then, think in a hard-headed way if you can do those sorts of things in a way that actually earns a living. It's more possible than people think.