



BOOK SUMMARY

A Whole New Mind by Daniel Pink

This is a powerful book. It catalogs and explains the benefits of working on the right side of the brain. In 1990 I was heavily influenced by John Naisbitt's book *Megatrends*. One of those trends was to begin developing high-touch in an era of high-tech. 23 years later, Pink has created a reference for us to consider right brain activities. Design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning. He says we should bet our business on understanding Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (survival, security, belonging, ego, spirit). According to Pink, "Artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big-picture thinkers – will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys". Pink claims that we are in a "conceptual age" where an MBA isn't worth what it use to be.

What follows are some tidbits I gathered from the book as well as some of my favorite quotes:

- Pink encourages us to ask three questions: Can someone offshore do it cheaper? Can a computer do it faster? Is what I am offering in demand in an age of abundance? You can't answer no to the first two and no to the third, you're in trouble.
- Pink claims more Americans today work in art, entertainment and design than work as lawyers, accountants and auditors. I don't know about you but that was a shocking statement to me.
- "Meaning is the new money." – Daniel Pink
- **Design** – rather than merely quote what Pink says, I will ask how the following concepts apply to managing our workplaces. For example, what does the design of your employee handbook look like? Is it ugly back and white? What story does that tell? How can anybody relate to such a document? As Don Miguel-Ruiz states in his book *The Four Agreements*: we have the opportunity to be artists with our stories. The story of how we relate to our work and the people that we work with. The story of who we serve and how we do it. I see this concept of design applying to our interiors, our management literature, visualizing our SOP's and more.
- "An organization's knowledge is contained in it's stories." – Steve Denning, World Bank executive
- "Scratch the surface in a typical boardroom and we are all just cavemen with briefcases, hungry for a wise person to tell us stories." – Allan Kay, Hewlett-Packard.

- **Story** – If our organization is a series of collective stories, what stories are being told around your place? How can we give people a more empowering story to focus on? Would I know your story when I walk in the front door?
- **Symphony** – this is about seeing the big picture. About pulling the pieces together. In order to play in a symphony, you have to be using the same score. Is everybody in your organization playing the same tune? Do they even know the score?
- **Empathy** – Empathy is about the ability to be present. To be in the now. Unfortunately, so many of us are running so hard it is a difficult thing to accomplish whether at work or at home. One of the most successful insurance agents that I ever met said that his primary job was to “make people feel good about themselves”. He said that he did this by “finding the good in them”. No wonder he is a multi-millionaire. How does your organization make your employees feel good about themselves?
- **Play** – Does it feel safe to laugh at your company? Have we forgotten how to have fun? I watch my three year old and observe our natural way of doing things. Of curiosity, experimentation, failure and learning, laughter and play. In a sense we have to become childlike again if we want to produce creative innovative organizations. This means that we have to have permission and feel safe in doing so.
- **Meaning** – “People have enough to live, but nothing to live for; they have the means, but no meaning.” – Robert Fogel, Nobel Laureate economist. These words echo those of Victor Frankel written a half-century earlier. I know that I have been on a search for meaning and perhaps you have been as well. This search caused me to quit a successful litigation career so that I could become, in Maslow’s terms, “one with the work that I do”. Where is the “meaning” in the work that your company does everyday? Whether it is manufacturing widgets, selling insurance coverage, or a retail operation, any real hope at finding meaning comes from service. Service Master certainly recognized this and it made them the largest janitorial service in the world. So did the folks at Southwest Airlines. And it made them the most successful airline ever. The greatest meaning of all comes from our relationships. The relationships that we have with our work individually, the relationships that we have with our co-workers and the relationships that we have with our customers and clients.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greater question is what fear lies in the way of making this right-brain transformation? Whose judgment are we concerned about? As Shakespeare stated, “To work we love with delight we go.” Here’s to thinking Pink.