

Book Review by Sophie Brigden

A Whole New Mind – Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future – Daniel Pink

Published in 2005/6 the book has been around for quite a while. Daniel Pink actually wrote speeches for the American Vice-President Al Gore and has written a number of other books based on work, business and technology.

This book analyses the most pressing personal and economic issues in our future – namely globalisation and ever evolving changes in technology and how they will continue to impact on the way we live, work and imagine the world. After this he sets out how we can survive and thrive in this future and the capabilities we will need to do this and examples of activities we can do to develop these skills.

Pink discusses that society is changing from the Information Age, one that favours left brain thinking – logic, science and sequential, computer like reasoning and where MBAs, accountants, lawyers and IT programmers thrive, to a society based on the Conceptual Age, which favours right brain thinking. Right brain thinkers have, in the past, been viewed as people who are less successful - these are the people who see the big picture, recognise patterns and are emotionally intelligent. These are the artists, designers, storytellers and counsellors.

So why does Pink think right brainers will rule the future?

He doesn't entirely! What he is saying is that society has been too focussed on prizing left brain capabilities and that in order for us to succeed we need both left and right brain capabilities to, as he coins it, think with a whole mind.

He states the future of what capabilities you should develop for the future are based on 3 questions:

1. Can someone overseas do it cheaper?
2. Can a computer do it faster?
3. Am I offering something that satisfies the non-material transcendent desires of an abundant age?

These 3 questions mark the fault line between who will get ahead and who gets left behind in a world that moves at a furious pace...

His solution he explains are human attributes that are both:

1. *High concept* – the ability to create artistic and emotional beauty. To be able to detect patterns, connections between things and create opportunities. To be able to craft a satisfying narrative and combine unrelated ideas into a novel invention.
2. *High touch* – the ability to empathize and understand the subtleties of human interaction. To find joy in one's self and elicit it in others and to stretch beyond the quotidian, in pursuit of purpose and meaning..

Examples where this approach is impacting society include:

- The curriculum at American medical schools which now train potential doctors in narrative medicine (listening to patients stories). Why? Because they believe help patients more in a holistic way from observation, listening to their stories and empathising than they can get from tick box questionnaires and computer diagnostics.

- Corporate recruiters in top firms are visiting top Art graduate schools in search of talent. The Masters in Fine Art (MFA) is becoming the new MBA. Why? Because Asia can do the work of the MBA cheaper. Many MBA graduates are becoming this century's blue-collar workers with their jobs moving overseas. MFAs are working in top companies who are prizing the way they think.

The 6 Senses

Pink sets out and explains in the book 6 essential aptitudes on which professional success and personal satisfaction will increasingly depend:

1. *Design* – Not just function but also design. Not enough to create a product, a service, an experience or lifestyle that is merely functional. Today it is economically crucial and personally rewarding to create something beautiful, whimsical or emotionally engaging.
2. *Story* – Not just argument but also story. It isn't enough to marshal an effective argument. The essence of persuasion, communication and self –understanding has become the ability to fashion a compelling narrative. Facts are not remembered by people but stories are.
3. *Symphony* – Not just focus but also symphony. The greatest demand today isn't analysis but synthesis. Seeing the bigger picture, crossing boundaries (using hobbies you might have to influence your work) and being able to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole.
4. *Empathy* – Not just logic but empathy. Thinking logically makes us human but those who will be able to thrive will be able to understand what makes their fellow woman or man tick, to forge relationships and to care for others.
5. *Play* – Not just seriousness but also play. There is a lot of research that points to the health and professional benefits of laughter, lightheartedness, games and humour. In the Conceptual Age, in work and life, we will need to play.
6. *Meaning* – Not just accumulation but also meaning. In a world of abundance and material plenty people are looking to pursue more significant desires: purpose, transcendence and spiritual fulfilment.

Activities for mastering the 6 senses

1. *Design activities:*
 - Keep a design notebook and write down interesting designs – the aim to encourage you to look more...
 - Read design magazines
 - Design something yourself – the future belongs to customers wanting original objects e.g design your own Nike shoe
 - Visit a museum
 - Pick an object you love – what emotions does it invoke and how does the object affect each of your 5 senses? What connection is there between how you feel and think about the object?

2. *Story activities:*
 - Interview others.
 - Visit a storytelling festival.
 - Write down opening lines on cards, put in a hat and on the spot tell a story that begins with the line on the card – in a business context apply to a product, service or experience.
 - Select an image and develop a story around this.
 - Who are these people – make up stories of the people around you as you drink your coffee.

3. *Symphony activities:*
 - Listening to music (classical)
 - Drawing
 - Type a word into Google and from that page follow the link. Continue 7/8 times – what patterns and relationships are there between the pages visited?
 - Create an inspiration board like fashion designers or artists.
 - Use brainstorming.

4. *Empathy activities:*
 - Learn the techniques to decipher the emotions revealed on someone else's face.
 - Evesdrop! Make notes of people's overheard conversations.
 - Take acting classes – inhabiting the mind and heart of someone else helps understand the emotion and emotional expression of others.
 - Volunteer.

5. *Play activities:*
 - Find a laughter club.
 - Play the cartoon captions game- take a cartoon with a caption – cover it up and get others to come up with witty new ones.
 - Play video games.
 - Dissect a joke and work out what makes it work.

6. *Meaning activities:*
 - *Make a list of the important changes you would like to make in your life and what's keeping you from realising them e.g. I'd like to spend more time with my family, but I travel a lot for my job. Replace the but in the sentence with and...and then add so ...I need to find ways to bring my family along during some of my travels..*
 - *Take a Sabbath.*
 - *Read books of positive psychology, mindfulness and flow.*
 - *Meditate*
 - *Visit a labyrinth.*
 - *Picture yourself at 90 – What have you contributed? What are your regrets? What have you accomplished?*