



Book Review: *A Whole New Mind: Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Future*

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Daniel H. Pink has been getting a lot of ink lately and when I started his book, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*, I didn't really see why. For those of us in education who have been aware of the theory of multiple intelligences (Howard Gardner) and emotional intelligence (Daniel Goleman), I really didn't see what this new "idea" of the right and left parts of the brain being different could really add to the discussion.

Now, having finished the book, I am convinced that Pink makes a strong argument about the need to ensure that the right side of the brain gets as much out of our education system as the left side. And, that is especially important as we continue to debate how and what we teach in our secondary schools and our middle schools.

As Thomas Friedman taught us about how the world is flat, Pink teaches us how we will have to compete in that world.

Pink begins the book with an analysis of how our brains work. While scientists have long known that our brains are divided into two regions, the theory was that the two regions were separate and unequal. The left side "was the crucial half, the half that made us human. The right side was subsidiary—the remnant, some argued of an earlier stage of development. The left hemisphere was rational, analytic, and logical—everything we expect in a brain. The right hemisphere was mute, nonlinear, and instinctive—a vestige that nature had designed for a purpose that humans had outgrown."

But, now, according to Pink's analysis of scientific research, both halves of our brains play a significant role in nearly everything we do. However, they take "significantly different approaches to guiding our actions, understanding the world, and reacting to events.

This, then, is the idea that is at the core of the book: that the right half of the brain is not the lesser half,

rather it has critical abilities—every bit as important as the left half and, in the 21st Century, some abilities that will be critical to success, not only in our professional work, but also in our personal lives.

Left and Right

Pink believes that rather than the former construct of the left side *versus* the right side of our brains in how we approach issues, we need both working together: the left providing logic, sequence and computer-like reasoning and the right giving us "simultaneous, metaphorical, aesthetic, contextual and synthetic" thinking so that our decisions are not solely based on reason or logic.

After explaining how the brain functions, Pink contends that while there is much anxiety over losing jobs due to outsourcing, the jobs that have been or will be lost are mostly L[eft]-Directed work, that require little creativity (in some cases, I would argue, any creativity would interfere with the result—such as some of the accounting work and x ray analysis). However, according to Pink, "many of today's knowledge workers will... have to command a new set of aptitudes. They'll need to do what workers abroad cannot do equally well for much less money—using R[ight]-Directed abilities such as forging relationships rather than executing transactions, tackling novel challenges instead of solving routine problems, and synthesizing the big picture rather than analyzing a single component."

The Six Senses

In order to "complement" our L-Directed reasoning, Pink discusses six "high-concept, high-touch senses" that can help one develop the type of "whole new mind" this new era demands. Not only does Pink explain the senses in details, but there are a lot of resources and ideas in the rest of the book that

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can be used to explore and learn more about the senses.

1. Design. It's not just good enough to have a product, a service or a lifestyle, but that article must not only be functional but also be well-designed.
2. Story. With all the information overload we are receiving, it's also important to be able to tell a story in order to develop a "compelling narrative".
3. Symphony. "What's in greatest demand today isn't analysis, but synthesis—seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole."
4. Empathy. It's important to understand how people think, to forge relationships and to care for others.
5. Play. Use of humor, games and lightheartedness is critical to maximum success. "In the Conceptual Age, in work and in life, we all need to play."

6. Meaning. People need to find meaning in their lives, especially now that our material success has freed people from "day-to-day struggles and liberated us to pursue more significant desires: purpose, transcendence and spiritual fulfillment."

As I mentioned, I was not impressed by the book until towards the end. Interestingly, I especially enjoyed the chapters on play and meaning the most. I think most people would get meaningful new ideas out of how he synthesizes the research in so many areas of brain research. In writing this book, he certainly has used the right side of his brain to give us a lot to think about.

It is very important that we begin to think about Pink's ideas as we determine what is best and how best to teach our children. Focusing on how we help our students develop both hemispheres of their brains is critical if we are to be successful in preparing them for the future.