



It Ain't Out There!

By Shelley A.W. Roy

For thirty-seven years, I have studied human behavior. I am fascinated by ideas like how the brain works, how learning occurs, where do people's beliefs systems come from and, why do we do what we do. Recently several colleagues recommended Daniel Pink's book **DRIVE**. According to the back cover, Pink draws on four decades of scientific research on human motivation, and exposes the mismatch between what science knows and what business does. I was interested because motivation is the short answer to why do we do what we do. In the book, Pink lays the foundation for questioning our present understanding of motivation. If Pink were familiar with Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) his case for the mismatch between knowing and doing would be even stronger. Knowing PCT would allow Pink to clearly show that **motivation ain't out there**.

What exists outside of us does not exist without something happening within us. There is nothing out there for us until we perceive it and record it inside of us. There is no such thing as extrinsic motivation. **Motivation is an inside job.** What most people think of as extrinsic motivation is simply external incentives. In trying to manage ourselves and others we may try to use external incentives to coerce ourselves or others into doing something; especially in cases where we fear a lack of internal motivation. Extrinsic incentives can take many forms, but usually falls into two main categories carrots (rewards) or sticks (punishments). They are all premised on do **this** to get **that** or if you don't do **this** then **that** will happen. Language reflects thinking and action, remember — incentives are external motivation is internal.

Motivation is the energy or reason behind our behavior. In PCT terms, there is only one thing that motivates any of us — error. The question you need to be asking is what creates internal error, not what motivates people. Error is created when there is a difference between our desired state (reference perception) and our perceived state (present perception). Only when we are not getting what we want is there energy to do anything.

Pink goes on to discuss how researchers have attempted to categorize man's desires by placing them into categories and give them labels. First Maslow categorized people's wants into a hierarchy of needs: physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Then Glasser categorized what people want into five basic needs: love, power, freedom/choice, fun, and survival. Now Pink, based on the work of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, offers another set of category labels: autonomy, mastery and purpose. Pink is correct the category labels of the past do not tell the whole story. But, the specific category labels aren't the problem; the problem lies in not recognizing no two people want exactly the same thing. The basic premise that we know what others want is flawed. Stop trying to read other people's minds. **Simple ask the individual what they want.**

Pink states, "In short, management isn't the solution; it's the problem." Management isn't the problem nor is it the solution. **A new understanding of human behavior is the solution.** Where Pink is right on

target is when he writes, “Perhaps it’s time to toss the very word ‘management’ onto the linguistic ash heap alongside ‘icebox’ and ‘horseless carriage.’ This era doesn’t call for better management. It calls for a renaissance of self-direction.” Business today requires a fundamental shift in understanding that for each of us — it is all about self, we are by nature self-directed. Who we want to be drives everything we do. This new perspective requires understanding this basic premise and resisting the temptation to control people. Managers who understand Perceptual Control Theory know how to tap into human potential, hire talented people and get out of their way.