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## ***A Whole New Mind, by Daniel Pink***

*Reviewed by Charlie Grantham*

This is a great 234-page summer read. Dan's central thesis is that we are shifting once again into a new age – a new age of commerce, learning, and living. Developed nations are moving from an industrial world dominated by left-brain logical thinking to a right-brained intuitive world. This is what he calls the conceptual age, which will be dominated by a different way of knowing, being, and doing. There are a lot of parallels here to the work of Richard Florida, whose latest book we will review next month.

Pink sees three forces driving the Western World in this direction: Abundance; Asia; and Automation.

There is an Abundance of material goods even though we complain of high gasoline prices. Most of us are free from having to spend most of our waking life eking out a living wage. His point is that the predominance of left-brain thinking has been so successful that the make it quicker, cheaper, faster mentality has lessened its own significance. The ultimate in planned obsolescence? So now we have time to devote to other more “meaning creating” activities.

Asia has become a vast pool of inexpensive labor, especially in the goods-creating sphere, or manufacturing. This is somewhat of a no-brainer, but what happens is that routine (and sometimes not so routine) work moves to where it can be done most cheaply. While we bemoan the fact the all this employment is leaving North America and Old Europe, it is an inescapable fact of modern life.

Automation is changing the landscape of work. Automation of everything from factory assembly to medical diagnosis. Just about everything that can be broken down into a series of logical steps, or actions, is being automated. Why? Because machines can do it better and faster than humans.

So what do humans have to do now? Well, here is the heart of the book. Humans need to, and will be propelled to, decrease their logical, systematic ways of being and develop more of the “conceptual” side of themselves.

Pink then launches into a very nice description of the six critical competencies or senses (notice I didn't say skills—which is such a left-brained way of describing things) required for the conceptual age. They are:

1. Design—not just a function but also DESIGN
2. Story—not just an argument but also a STORY
3. Symphony—not just focus but also SYMPHONY
4. Empathy—not just logic but also EMPATHY
5. Play—not just seriousness but also PLAY
6. Meaning—not just accumulation but also MEANING

I don't want to spoil your pleasure of discovering these things we all need to learn how to do to be successful in the future. After all, this is a review, not the book itself. Suffice to say that we see these six competencies as being right on. Here's a little teaser: two quotes from this section of the book.

"Play will be to the 21st century what work was to the last 300 years of industrial society—our dominant way of knowing, doing and creating value" (Pat Kane, author of *The Play Ethic*, p. 185)

"You're not going to find the meaning of life hidden under a rock written by someone else. You'll only find it by giving meaning to life from inside yourself." (Dr. Robert Firestone, author and psychotherapist, p. 216).

One final thing we really like about Dan's approach: for each of these six competencies he gives the reader a very complete guide (he calls it a "portfolio") of resources where you can go to learn more about design, or find out how empathetic you are, or even learn how to play and tell stories. These guides are worth the price of the book by themselves.

Pink offers some sage wisdom at the conclusion of the book. Given all that has gone before, he believes each business person needs to ask three basic questions to move into the conceptual age. Answers to these are the essential conditions of business success for the future:

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?

Here's to all our success in the conceptual age.

### **About the Work Design Collaborative and *Future of Work Agenda***

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