

A Whole New Mind

In the best-seller *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink informs us that the reign of the left brain is fast coming to a close. Indeed, the subtitle of the book – *Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future* – tells us all we need to know about Pink’s beliefs about the future of the knowledge economy.

His argument is compelling. He notes that the modern economy grew out of the ability of knowledge workers to build products and services based on logical, left-brained analysis of consumer needs. And Pink goes on to assert that the success of left-brained thinking is leading to its reduction in importance.

Pink identifies three factors that are having an undeniable affect on the global economy. Those three factors are abundance, Asia, and automation. Together, these three factors will erode logical, left brain dominance of the North American economy and place an emphasis on creative, right brain thinking.

In the second part of his book, Pink identifies “six high-concept, high-touch senses” that we need to master if we are to succeed in the Conceptual Age: design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning. And pointedly, all of these concepts are right brain attributes. Design is a combination of utility and significance. As utilitarian aspects of a product or service approach perfection, the emphasis shifts to aesthetics. Pink suggests that stories are “context enriched by emotion.” More importantly, stories are how we remember important information and details. Symphony, the third high-concept, high-touch sense, is the ability to integrate seemingly disparate inputs and detect the broad patterns that connect them.

Empathy is a talent that allows us to understand another person’s perspective while not necessarily agreeing with it. We anticipate another person’s needs and respond to them. Work that is dominated by rules will give way to work dominated by instinct and intuition. Play is manifested in three forms: games, humour, and joyfulness. Each of these forms creates laughter and laughter produces more creative, productive people who can work together. The final high-concept, high-touch sense is meaning. Pink suggests that as we age, there is a greater emphasis on the meaning of our lives and hence, our legacy. This shift from function to form will require creative responses.

Pink suggests that western economies need not fear this shift in global reality. In fact, he sees these shifts as providing unprecedented opportunity. Specifically, he believes that enhanced individual affluence, more powerful technology, and greater connectedness will provide westerners with “enough collective momentum to nudge us into a new era.”

Pink’s book makes a convincing argument in support of transferring our emphasis from logical understanding and analysis bounded by externally imposed rules and regulations to endeavours emphasizing free flowing, creative processes bounded only by our imaginations.