

## BOOK REVIEW FOR ABAC JOURNAL

Title: A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future.

Author: Daniel H. Pink

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by Dr. Noel Jones (Reviewer)\*

According to Pink the dominant brain focus of the past 40-50 years has been the Left-Brain. This is exemplified in occupations such as computer programmers, lawyers, MBA graduates, accountants, engineers and Medical doctors. The Future requires a different kind of Mind – with a Right-Brain focus. These are creators & empathisers, pattern organisers, and meaning makers. This is exemplified in occupations such as artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, counsellors, and big picture thinkers.

We are moving from an economy and a society built on logical, linear, computer like capabilities of the **Information Age** to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities of what's taking its place, the **Conceptual Age**. This is what gives rise to 'A Whole New Mind'.

A greater emphasis on the Right-Brain is for anyone who wants to survive and thrive in this emerging world e.g. people uneasy in their careers or dissatisfied with their lives, Entrepreneurs and business leaders eager to stay ahead of the next wave, parents who want to equip their children for the future and legions of emotionally astute and creatively adroit people whose distinctive abilities the Information Age has often overlooked and undervalued.

Left-Brain people are characterised by reductive reasoning and analysis e.g. knowledge workers are well educated manipulators of information as exemplified in the occupations mentioned above.

### Globalization

The Forces of Change brought about through Globalization – and the shifting of

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many knowledge worker jobs to the East through Outsourcing and Off shoring (O&O), and the power technologies that are eliminating many kinds of work altogether are all driving this Conceptual Age. These forces require new approaches such as 'high concept' and 'high touch', defined as follows:

- **High Concept:** The ability or capacity to detect patterns and opportunities, to create artistic and emotional beauty, to craft a satisfying narrative, and to combine seemingly unrelated ideas into something new.
- **High Touch:** The ability to empathise with others, to understand the subtleties of human interaction, to find joy in one's self and elicit it in others, and to stretch beyond yourself in pursuit of purpose and meaning.

The defining Left-Brain skills that powered the **Information Age** are still necessary, but no longer sufficient for the **Conceptual Age**.

The Right-Brain skills that were often dismissed as frivolous such as inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning will determine who flourishes and who flounders in this new age. However, individuals, families and organizations all require these new Right-Brain skills/aptitudes in this Conceptual Age. To contrast these – the left hemisphere specializes in text and the right hemisphere specializes in context. The left hemisphere analyses the details and the right hemisphere synthesizes the big picture.

To be truly effective in our lives we need to use both of our brain hemispheres in a

balanced way, in a smooth, single, integrated whole in one entire brain. That is to bring the Ying and Yang together – to make a whole.

Some people seem more comfortable with logical, sequential, computer-like reasoning - they tend to become lawyers, accountants and engineers. Other people seem more comfortable with holistic, intuitive and non-linear reasoning – they tend to become inventors, entertainers and counsellors.

The Conceptual Age will see a diminished relative importance of Left-Directed Thinking and a corresponding increased importance to Right-Directed Thinking. But what are the causes of this shift? There are three main causes according to Pink, summarised in three key words:

- Abundance;
- Asia, and
- Automation.

### Abundance

Western Abundance is exemplified in the huge material possessions available and owned, in the need for self-storage for our excess to requirements (this is currently a \$17 Billion business in the US, ever larger than the film industry), and the level of throw-aways we have.

The US spends more on trash bags than ninety other countries spend on everything – i.e. waste bags cost more in the USA than all the goods consumed by nearly half the world's population.

But! Abundance has put a premium on beauty, spirituality and emotion. Abundance has freed people from a focus on survival to the search for meaning in our lives – the quest for self-realisation.

## Asia

Knowledge workers have a whole new set of competitors in Asia.

Jobs are being outsourced and off shored to Asia – India, China, Philippines, and Thailand where salaries are a mere fraction of those in the West, and yet are relatively high by local standards.

### Examples:

- A US chip designer earns \$7,000/mt while in India its \$1,000/mt.
- A US accountant earns \$3,000/mt while in Philippines its \$300/mt.
- A US nurse earns \$4,200/mt while in Philippines its \$420 mt.
- Key Global job shortages are in Nursing & care-workers (20 M), IT and Teaching.
- 10% of US computer software and information technology jobs will move overseas in next 2 years.
- 25% of IT jobs will be off shored by 2010.
- 3.3 million white-collar jobs and \$136 billion in wages will shift from US to low income countries like India, China and Russia by 2015.
- Europe will lose 1.2 million jobs to offshore locations by 2015.

## Automation

Automation is changing the way we work.

Engineers and programmers will have to increasingly rely more on creativity than competence, on tacit knowledge than manuals, on fashioning the big picture than sweating the details.

Computers are also changing the face of medicine – in a typical year more than 100 million people go on-line for health and medical information and can visit 23,000 medical websites.

The same pattern is impacting the legal profession where many services such as divorce, or draft contracts or get legal documents drawn up can now be done on-line.

### To Survive in Today's World:

Individuals and organisations must examine what they're doing to earn a living and ask themselves three key questions:

- Can someone overseas do it cheaper?
- Can a computer do it faster?
- Is what I'm offering in demand in an age of abundance?

If your answer to 1 or 2 is yes, or to 3 is no, you're in deep trouble.

Survival today depends on being able to do something that overseas workers can't do cheaper, that computers can't do faster, and that satisfies one of the nonmaterial, transcendent desires of an abundant age.

### To Prepare for the Conceptual Age:

To prepare for the Conceptual Age, in a world impacted by Abundance, Asia and Automation, in which Left-Directed Thinking remains necessary but no longer sufficient, we must become proficient in Right-Directed Thinking and master aptitudes that are high concept and high touch. We must perform work that overseas knowledge workers can't do cheaper, that computers can't do faster, and that satisfies the aes-

thetic, emotional, and spiritual demands of a prosperous time.

We must also acquire and develop the following six senses:

- **Design:** Not just function but also design that is beautiful, and emotionally engaging.
- **Story:** Not just argument but also Story, the essence of persuasion, communication and self-understanding, the ability to fashion a compelling narrative.
- **Symphony:** Not just focus but also symphony the ability to put all the pieces together as in synthesis, seeing the big picture, crossing the boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces into an interesting whole.
- **Empathy:** Not just logic but also empathy, the ability to understand what makes others 'tick', to develop relationships, and to care for others.
- **Play:** Not just seriousness but also play, to increase laughter, games and humour into our lives – work life balance.
- **Meaning:** Not just accumulation but also meaning, to pursue more significant desires like purpose, transcendence, and spiritual fulfilment.

## Conclusion

Making the transition from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age, moving from a landscape of Left-Directed Thinking to one of Right-Directed Thinking, adding the capacity for art and heart to our penchant for logic and analysis, won't be easy", according to Pink. The purpose of life is the journey itself. As the Native American Indian saying goes: "the journey is more important than the arrival".