



Redux: The Surprising Truth About Human Behaviors and Learning with Dan Pink

Leading Learning Podcast
Transcript for Episode 337

Dan Pink: [00:00:00] Performance goal is passing the test. Learning goal is, “Do I know something about safety, and can I apply it in my life in a way that makes the workplace safer?” And our mistake that we make in organizations is that we think that, if people have achieved the performance goal (passing the test), then they have achieved the learning goal. And that’s not true.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:25] I’m Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:26] I’m Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:36] Welcome to episode 337, which features a conversation with author and speaker Daniel H. Pink. This is an encore airing of an interview from our archives. Understanding the science behind topics related to human behavior can be extremely powerful for learning businesses, and Dan Pink covers just such topics in his provocative, bestselling books that include *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, *To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others*, *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*, and, published in 2022, *The Power of Regret: How Looking Backward Moves Us Forward*.

Jeff Cobb: [00:01:17] Celisa and I have followed Dan Pink’s work for many years. We’re fans, and we highly recommend his well-researched, well-written, and frankly just enjoyable books, which plumb topics that have clear application in the realm of learning and in running a learning business. Celisa and Dan talk about the importance of when learning happens, motivation, learning goals versus performance goals, persuasion, marketing, selling, French verb conjugations, and, not to be overlooked, swimming in Japan. Celisa and Dan spoke in July 2019, and this episode originally aired in 2019.

Celisa Steele: [00:02:04] Today I’m very excited to be joined by Daniel H. Pink, the author of six provocative bestselling books, including *To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving*

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Others, which uses social science to offer a fresh look at the art and science of sales, and *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, which draws on over 50 years of behavioral science to overturn conventional wisdom about human motivation. Dan's newest book, *When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing*, unlocks scientific secrets to good timing to help us flourish in life. Dan is also the creator of the Pinkcast, a series of short videos that feature science-based tools and tips for working smarter and living better. He's a comic aficionado and a keynote speaker. Dan, welcome to the Leading Learning Podcast.

Dan Pink: [00:02:48] Celisa, thanks for having me.

Celisa Steele: [00:02:50] So, before we dive in earnest, what, beyond my short introduction, would you like for listeners to know about your work and your background?

Dan Pink: [00:02:58] Wow. I think that you've covered a lot of it. I don't think there's any secret to my essence. I think the one thing that I think has had a bigger effect on me than I realized and might go unnoticed is I grew up in Columbus, Ohio. I am a Midwesterner, and my Midwesternness comes out a lot more than I would have ever expected. So if you notice me being especially polite—

Celisa Steele: [00:03:25] I was going to say I would expect a very polite conversation.

Dan Pink: [00:03:28] —saying “please” and “thank you” at every turn, that's the explanation for it.

Celisa Steele: [00:03:32] Well, excellent. Then we'll just dive right in and. So, in *Drive*, I know you talk about motivation 3.0. And so I'm hoping you can briefly recap what that is—and, yes, I realize I'm asking you to compress a lot.

Dan Pink: [00:03:48] Sure. That's cool. So let me take three steps back from that question, and let's talk about human motivation. What motivates human beings? And the answer is not a singular thing. It's not anything you can distill into a single sentence because human beings are a mix of drives. So we have one drive in that we have a biological drive. You can call that motivation 1.0. We eat when we're hungry. We drink when we're thirsty. We have sex to satisfy those kinds of urges. So those biological drives are obviously part of what it is to be human. But it's not all of what it is to be human. So we have another drive too. We do respond reasonably predictably to rewards and punishments in our environment. If every time I come to the office and put on the headphones I'm wearing right now, and the Bose Corporation delivered an

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electric shock every time I put them on, I would probably stop wearing these headphones because I'm responding to that punishment. So we respond pretty well to rewards and punishments, and that's another drive. But human beings also have a third drive, and that's what I think has been neglected in a lot of our thinking in organizations about human beings until very recently, that human beings do things because they like doing them.

Dan Pink: [00:05:06] Human beings do things because it's the right thing to do. Human beings do things because they get better at it, because it's challenging, because it achieves some kind of purpose. And that's part of what it is to be human. And so, if we look at all of these drives together, I think what's important is that we have to have a three-dimensional view of human beings. And, until relatively recently, organizations were taking only that two-dimensional view of human beings. They were saying, yeah, there are these biological drives. We're going to have bathrooms and water fountains and whatnot. But we can stop at that second drive because, if we just have in our organization the right system of rewards and punishments, people are going to do what we want them to do the way we want them to do it, and everything is going to be right with the world. And that turns out to be fundamentally untrue.

Celisa Steele: [00:05:53] And so, what you laid out, motivation 3.0, that's been often neglected, but it can be crucial. It seems that there's really clear application of that to learning businesses.

Dan Pink: [00:06:06] Oh, heck, yeah.

Celisa Steele: [00:06:07] In terms of the internal staff and how they're organized and how they do their work together but also then around how they serve the learners. That is the main focus of what they're doing, and so maybe, if we could focus on that second group, the learners, what applications or implications of motivation 3.0 do you see for how we might better serve and support learners?

Dan Pink: [00:06:31] The main idea, what we know from this research—and that's also actually important too. What I'm saying here is not philosophical. It's not, hey, this is my opinion about how to run organizations better. I'm looking at 50 years of science. It says, "We have some pretty good evidence about what works and what doesn't when it comes to motivation." And what we know from this science is the following, and it goes directly to your question about 2.0 and 3.0. Here's what we know. There's a certain kind of motivator we use in organizations—we use them in learning too, about which more in a moment—bit there's a certain kind of motivator we use in organizations. Psychologists, social scientists call it a controlling contingent motivator. I like to call it an if-then reward. If you do this, then you get that. Here's what we

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know about if-then rewards. If-then rewards are very effective for simple tasks with short time horizons. The reason for that, and there's nuance here, is that human beings like rewards. We'll probably end up talking in a minute or two about intrinsic motivation. The fact that there's intrinsic motivation, that human beings have inherent motivations, doesn't mean that human beings don't have extrinsic motivations too. We respond to rewards and punishments in our environment in some cases. And so if-then rewards are extremely effective for simple tasks with short time horizons. We like rewards. They get us to focus narrowly.

Dan Pink: [00:07:56] However, the same body of research tells us that if-then rewards are far less effective for more complex tasks with longer time horizons. And the reason for that is that rewards get our attention in such a focused, narrow way that's effective if you want a narrow focus, but, for complicated things, you don't want a narrow focus. You want to have a more expansive focus. When the finish line is far away, you need something else to keep you sustained over that long haul. And so if-then rewards, great for simple and short term, not so great for complex and long term. And that's a very sturdy finding in social science. There aren't that many people out there in the world who will look at this body of evidence and say that's wrong because it's so, so, so well established. Now, let's go to your actual question here, which is what does it mean for learning? It means a lot for learning. It depends on what your learning objectives are. Let's say you want them to learn a new safety procedure or something like that. You could pay them. You could say, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to give everybody 100 bucks for taking this course and 200 bucks for passing the exam on the safety course." And, chances are, you would have a lot of people taking the course and a lot of people passing the exam.

Dan Pink: [00:09:15] I don't know, though, whether that would immediately translate into a safer workplace. And that's the key right there. So what you do with those contingent rewards—if you take this course, you get 100 bucks; if you pass the test, you get 200 bucks—what you get is people narrowly focused on that particular task. You get them focused on completing that objective. I'm going to get through this course. I'm going to do it any way that I can, and I'm going to pass the test. And there's a lot of evidence out there that actually that can be a wrong way to do things. And I'll give you one more point, and then I'll shut up for a second. And that is the difference between what are called learning goals and what are called performance goals. Learning goals and performance goals. So, if you think about this, performance goal is passing the test. Learning goal is, "Do I know something about safety, and can I apply it in my life in a way that makes the workplace safer?" And our mistake that we make in organizations is that we think that, if people have achieved a performance goal (passing the test), then they've achieved the learning goal. And that's not true. It's true

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sometimes, but it's not true all the time. And this is enormously important. And I can even give you an example in my own life about that. I'll give you a painful example in my own life.

Celisa Steele: [00:10:37] Yes, please.

Dan Pink: [00:10:38] About me as a learner. I took French for six years in high school and college. I got straight As in French. I can't speak French. Why? Why can't I speak French? Because I was focused entirely on the performance goal. What do I have to do to get an A on this quiz in French? What do I have to do to get an A on that midterm exam in French? And so I was narrowly focused on that particular performance goal. I'm going to get 100 percent on that quiz about conjugating irregular verbs. But, as soon as I got that grade, I hadn't really learned it. I was just basically performing, and I had no idea how to apply it. The learning that I had, such as it was, was incredibly shallow and not very deep. And so this is the mistake that we make in learning, that we want people actually to learn. And, when we focus too much on the performance goals, it can actually inhibit learning. It's very paradoxical. It's hard for us to wrap our minds around. One way to help people understand it is to think about their own experiences. And, for me at some level, I didn't fully understand this phenomenon until I started thinking about why I can't speak French.

Celisa Steele: [00:11:58] Well, it's very interesting because we're in the learning business. So much focus is given to things like learning objectives. You should be able to do this by the end of this course and all of that, which, to your point it's that performance focus because we want to be measurable, and we want to be able to see that impact.

Dan Pink: [00:12:18] So here's the thing. It gets complicated because certain kinds of learning objectives are not inherently bad. It's just a matter of what you're doing to get there. And it's complicated. So, if you think about something like in school, you think about something like grades. There's nothing inherently wrong with grades. It depends on how they're used. And so one of the things that we know about learning, one of the things we know about mastery of any kind, is that the way that people learn, the way that people get better is by having information and feedback on how they're doing. So a grade can be information and feedback. You can say, "Here's your grade right now. You're performing at a B level, but here are some steps that you can take to perform at an A level." That's great as a form of feedback, but, in many cases, in certain kinds of learning environments, like for me in French, that's the entire point of the exercise. The point of the exercise is to get an A in the class. And the structure is such that the policymakers, the architects of all this have the false belief that getting an A in a test means you've learned French. And that's the thing that's not true.

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Celisa Steele: [00:13:29] Now, I think there are an amazing number of implications of this. And I think then the application comes down to some of what you're starting to get into around how do we make use of learning objectives. To the extent that there are tests involved, how do we make use of those grades and things so that we can always make sure that the focus really is on the learning goals as opposed to absolute performance goals.

Dan Pink: [00:13:54] So you could take a learning objective—give me give me an example of what might be a learning objective.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:04] Well, we can stay with your French example. By the end of this course, you should be able to conjugate *être* in the present tense.

Dan Pink: [00:14:11] Right, right. That's very performance-oriented. But what I would do is, I think that a better performance goal would be as follows. We are going to make a Skype call to a hotel in Montreal, and you will have to make a reservation there, and then we're going to see how well you do on that. Then the other thing that we're going to do is that you're going to teach someone else how to do this.

Dan Pink: [00:14:41] Now, to me, that would start getting at learning rather than merely performance. Because, believe me, Celisa, there was a time in my life when, if you needed an irregular verb conjugated, I was your man.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:58] And you have the As to prove it.

Dan Pink: [00:15:00] I do.

Celisa Steele: [00:15:02] Great. Motivation is something we've talked about on the podcast in the past, and we'll make sure to link to some of those other episodes because, exactly what you're getting at with the focus on performance and also on the extrinsic versus intrinsic foci, again, that's all really important when trying to think about how best to support learners in learning and how best to provide for their engagement in the experience.

Jeff Cobb: [00:15:28] At Tagoras, we're experts in the global business of lifelong learning, and we use our expertise to help clients better understand their markets, connect with new customers, make the right investment decisions, and grow their learning businesses. We achieve these goals through expert market assessment, strategy formulation, and platform selection

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services. If you're looking for a partner to help your learning business achieve greater reach, revenue, and impact, learn more at tagoras.com/services.

Celisa Steele: [00:15:58] I was going to move on to talking about some of what underlies your book *To Sell Is Human*. The premise there is that all of us work in sales in the sense that we have to try to move and persuade others, whether those others are family members or work colleagues or would-be customers. And certainly learning businesses have to sell. They have to secure the revenue they need to remain in business in order to get those learners. They need those learners so that then they can have that desired impact on that field or profession that they're really trying to help by the learning that they're offering. And so I think there's this connection between marketing and learning where, in order for the learning to make any difference, people have to know about it. It has to be marketed. And I think that fits with what you're talking about in the distinction you make between sales and non-sales selling, that idea that persuasion and delivering value are really key and fundamental to both marketing and learning. And there's a quote from *To Sell Is Human* where you write, "Today, both sales and non-sales selling depend more on the creative, heuristic, problem-finding skills of artists than on the reductive, algorithmic, problem-solving skills of technicians," which I find really fascinating. And so I'm wondering what advice, if we can get practical about it, what advice you might have for those working in learning businesses about how to create those kinds of skills, the creative, heuristic, problem-finding skills?

Dan Pink: [00:17:24] I think it's hard. I think it's to unpack what that means and then focus on the particular components. One of the most fundamental skills in any kind of influence and persuasion is perspective-taking. Can you get out of your own head and see things from someone else's point of view? That is so monumentally important. Whether I'm on any level in learning businesses, whether you are actually literally selling a product or service to a prospective customer or whether you are an instructor who is trying to get her class to learn something, you have to be able to see things from someone else's point of view, hear things the way that they hear them. And I think that's a fundamental skill. And most of us are not very good at it. So one thing to do is recognize that. The second thing to do is take some small steps to get better at it. So one of the things that people don't do a very good job on—this is not an insight, but it's still important—is people stink at listening. And it's always bugged me. I'm not saying I'm great at listening, but people don't listen. And it's, in some ways, our schools' fault because we go to school. They teach us how to read. They teach us how to write.

Dan Pink: [00:18:37] They don't say, "Oh, people inherently know how to read. People inherently know how to write." But they say, "Oh, we don't need to teach people how to listen

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because they have ears.” And that’s just not true. People aren’t very good at listening. And so you have to get better at listening, and there are some small things you can do on that. One of them, very simple—they’re such simple things, but they’re rarely honored by people—one of them would be to, when someone else is talking, don’t think about what you are going to say next. Actually listen to what they are saying. And, even better, before you respond, pause. Make sure it’s settled in, and, even before you respond, pause, repeat what they said in your own words, and then offer what you’re going to say next. If people were to do that, just slow down a little bit, actually listen, pay attention to what people are saying rather than simply waiting for their turn to talk, which is what happens in most cases, if they actually pay attention and engage and listen, pause before responding and recapitulate the other person’s point of view or even ask a question about it—“Are you saying that X, Y, and Z?”—I think you’ll get much better at influence and persuasion.

Celisa Steele: [00:19:51] I’m taking a pause.

Dan Pink: [00:19:53] Because you understand what the other person is trying to say. The other aspect of this is that, if you look at sales sales, if you have a customer or prospect who knows precisely what their problem is, they don’t need you very much. They can solve their problem on their own. Where you’re more valuable is when people don’t know what the problem is, or they’re wrong about the problem. And that requires the skill of problem solving and problem-finding. Can you surface latent problems? Can you unearth hidden problems? The predicate for that is you have to be able to listen.

Celisa Steele: [00:20:38] I think it’s an excellent point that, if we listen more, it’s going to be valuable in that moment of persuasion, talking with a potential customer or a learner. And then there’s also the fact that it’s going to help us understand our market that much better. And so any assumptions that we might be making about what our learners need, if we’re truly listening, we will either be able to verify what we think they need is correct, or we’ll come to understand that, “Oh, actually, you know this seminar, this workshop, this online course we were thinking of offering really doesn’t speak to what we’re hearing as a need from learners.”

Dan Pink: [00:21:17] Exactly.

Celisa Steele: [00:21:19] So I feel like we’re doing a quick tour of some of your best hits here. And so I was going to move on to *When* because I think *When*, very much like *Drive*, which we started out talking about, has a lot to offer lifelong learners and those supporting and providing for those lifelong learners. Based on what you learned in researching and writing *When*, what

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recommendations do you have for learning businesses about how they might leverage timing to achieve the best learning results and outcomes?

Dan Pink: [00:21:54] There are so many things that learning businesses can do. Again, I'm going to take two steps backward and think about what do we really mean by timing? Because that is also multifaceted. Here, once again, we go to the research. And the research here is complicated because there's no one out there saying, "I'm a scientist of timing," but what you have is research being done in maybe 20 to 25 different fields that are asking these kinds of questions about timing. Things like how does our performance, how does our mood change over the course of a day? That actually ends up being really important. How do breaks affect our performance and our learning? How do beginnings affect this? How do midpoints affect this? How endings affect us—of any kind, beyond the day? How do groups synchronize in time? All of these yield lessons for learning organizations. At the very beginning, at the unit of the day, there are some really, really important things here, hugely important for any kind of learning business. And the most important of which is this, that human beings' brainpower, our cognitive abilities, do not remain static over the course of the day. They change. And so your brainpower is different at different times of day.

Dan Pink: [00:23:14] So much of what goes on in organizations, from meetings—oh, it doesn't matter whether you have this meeting at 9:30 or at 2:30—courses, seminars—oh, we can have this seminar at 4:30 or 11:15, it doesn't really matter—any kind of meeting. It matters a lot because our brainpower doesn't remain static over the course of a day. It changes, and it changes in a material way. And, once again, there is a mountain of evidence showing this. A mountain. So you look at something like just a brilliant piece of research headed by Francesca Gino at Harvard, and, along with two Danish researchers, they looked at 2 million Danish standardized test scores. So kids in Denmark take standardized tests, as they do here in the States. And in Denmark the students take the test on computers rather than number-two pencil on bubble forms, which many jurisdictions in the U.S. Still do. So they take them on computers. But, on testing day, the typical Danish school has more students than computers, so everybody can't take tests at the same time. So the students are randomly assigned to take the test at different times of day. And so some take them early, some take them late. The students who take the standardized test in the afternoon score as if they've missed two weeks of school. So that's a big deal. That to me that calls into question the validity of, could call into question, the validity of standardized tests as a policy-making tool.

Dan Pink: [00:24:45] I think what worries me more is if schools are going to make decisions about particular students. Oh my gosh, this score is very low. You should be in this kind of

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program. You should be in this kind of class. When, if that student had been randomly assigned to take tests in the morning, she might have scored higher. And you see it in just a whole array of data. Another really important study out of Los Angeles, again, looking at millions and millions of anonymized profiles of Los Angeles elementary school students, showed that students who take math in the morning learn more math. Period. They have higher test scores, period, than students who take math in the afternoon. And so the point of all this is that there is a mountain range—not even a single mountain, a mountain range—of evidence showing that brainpower changes over the course of a day. And so, if you're in a learning business, if you're doing a seminar, you're doing a training in person, the time of day makes a huge difference. It's not simply a logistical issue. And that's just one example of how the science of timing can affect what happens in learning organizations.

Celisa Steele: [00:25:53] Yeah, I think that's fascinating. A point that you make throughout *When*, that when should be given as much weight as what. And, learning businesses, we tend to focus on what are we teaching and what are those learning objectives or those performance goals that we have for it. And we tend to talk very little around when, other than, as you said, for it to just be a logistical choice. We have this slot or this slot. Where do we put it?

Dan Pink: [00:26:18] You're right. And I'm not saying that the when question is more important than the what. It's not more important, but I think it can be as important. And I would even see you and raise you—a lot of what we know about learning, going back to some of the motivation point, is the why question matters too. You see it in school, where kids come home, and they say to their parents, "Why do I need to be doing this homework?" The parents say, "Just be quiet, and do your homework" because they don't have a good answer for that. And so why am I going to this this safety class? Why am I going to this two-day seminar on how to use this piece of software? Why does it matter? Answering that question is also important. So we're at the juncture. If you get the why correct, you have people who will be more motivated learners. If you get the when correct, you're going to have their brains functioning better. And, again, these are all strategic questions. They're not simply logistical questions.

Celisa Steele: [00:27:25] I've been asking you questions about lifelong learning because that's who our listeners are, that's what they live and breathe. I know it isn't your primary domain, but obviously you're an observer, a thinker, a lifelong learner yourself. And so I'm curious, when you think big picture about what's on the horizon for humans and how we live and what's coming maybe in the next five years or so, what is it that excites you? And, to the extent that you have thoughts on it, what implications do you see for learning of whatever you want to focus on out there on the horizon?

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Dan Pink: [00:28:00] Who knows? I don't think I have a better take on this than anybody else. I can just give you my opinion of what I'm seeing out there. And it's maybe a dog's breakfast of insights here. So one thing that came out in the *When* research is the importance of breaks in learning. And we've absorbed this ethic that the way to get stuff done, the way to achieve, the way to learn, is just to power through and not take a break. And that's fundamentally flawed. That's just not true. There's, again, this whole mass of evidence showing that breaks are part of our learning. I think we're having a re-reckoning in this country, especially with sleep and the importance of sleep, not only in wellbeing in general but in learning per se. So I think that we're going to have, in many ways, a more three-dimensional view of what learning is. It isn't simply sitting there grinding away. It's part of how do you prepare your mind and your body for the possibilities of learning. And that goes to things like taking breaks and getting enough sleep. I think that's going to end up being—it's already becoming—a big factor, and we know a huge amount about how sleep consolidates memory, how sleep consolidates learning.

Dan Pink: [00:29:13] So, believe it or not, the rest, the breaks, and the sleep, I think, are going to become a bigger deal in learning in general. I think one of the challenges is to what extent we can do more self-directed learning, which is a challenge for the learning businesses. If people are able to simply select out—to me, I've always thought that one of the most potent learning technologies, the most potent learning platforms, call it most potent learning organization, I don't even know what you call it, out there, and I don't think it's fully recognized, is YouTube. When people want to learn, especially how to do something, increasingly they go to YouTube. How do I fix this door? How do I change this oil? How do I make a blueberry pie? And there's something in that that I think are lessons for learning organizations. What is it about YouTube that is so appealing to learners? I don't know, but it's the lessons are brief. They're very, very specific. They're very specific to what people are doing. They're just in time.

Dan Pink: [00:30:30] You can send me to a course on how to fix doors. But you know what? Learning how to fix doors is really important to me when my frickin' door is broken, and I can't close it. You know what I mean? So I think there's a lesson in there, in YouTube, as a massive force of learning. There are all kinds of horrible, insidious things that go on in YouTube too. But it's an incredibly potent form of learning. And then the other thing is, I do think that we're probably going to be reckoning with the social side of learning. As much as I like self-directed learning, a lot of learning in life is with other people. It's social. And I think an interesting question is what are some ways to facilitate, accelerate learning in a social way that isn't the traditional classroom setting? And I think what you see there is you see professional

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associations doing some very interesting things on that. I think you even see self-organized things—like book clubs are a really interesting model for how people learn socially.

Celisa Steele: [00:31:43] I think sleep and breaks, you said, and I totally agree, that those are so important. I heard someone recently describe sleep as the Swiss army knife of life. They can address everything. If we're sleeping well, it can help us think more clearly, learn better, reaction time. The emphasis on self-directed learning, but then also not self-directed learning that excludes social and how to make some of that social a little more self-organized and informal.

Dan Pink: [00:32:18] The other thing, and this is not a big insight, is, if I'm in a learning organization, if I'm a learning business, and I want to know what's going on and look for some ways to do better, then one of the things that I want to do is I want to look for bright spots out there in the world where people are learning a lot, and people are actually learning without me. You look at YouTube and say let's unpack that. I would get a team of people. Why is YouTube so popular as a learning tool? Let's unpack that. What are the attributes of it? Can we do that same kind of thing? Why are book clubs so popular as a form of learning? What is it about book clubs that attract people? Maybe we can do something like that. So if you look at where some of the bright spots, some of the innovation is happening and try to understand what's going into that, then I think it yields a lot of really interesting lessons.

Celisa Steele: [00:33:13] That's a great suggestion. You look for those bright spots and then try to take them apart and see what makes them tick.

Dan Pink: [00:33:20] Yeah.

Celisa Steele: [00:33:22] For the next-to-last question, we're going to switch gears a little bit. This is a question that we ask of all of our guests, and it's one that focuses on your personal learning specifically. And the question is, what is one of the most powerful...

Dan Pink: [00:33:36] Can you speak French?

Celisa Steele: [00:33:36] Right. *Si tu veux, nous pouvons parler français.*

Dan Pink: [00:33:40] Oh, my God, your French is so much better than mine. So how did you learn your French?

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Celisa Steele: [00:33:48] Well, I started in junior high and probably had potentially a similar experience the first year or two. But then I went to France on a little exchange.

Dan Pink: [00:34:01] Bingo.

Celisa Steele: [00:34:01] And so, that was to your point. You need to call up the hotel and make the reservation.

Dan Pink: [00:34:06] You had to make your way. You had to find a bathroom. You had to get food. Right. Exactly. Yeah.

Celisa Steele: [00:34:15] All right. So back to the question that we ask of everyone, usually without the French. What is one of the most powerful learning experiences you've been involved in as an adult since finishing your formal education?

Dan Pink: [00:34:28] I did a fellowship, a media fellowship in Japan in 2007 where I was able to spend a couple of months there with my family as well. We lived in an apartment in Tokyo. Just simply the day-to-day life of living in another place to me was, even for a relatively short time, was just powerful. I ended up doing research there as well into Japan's gigantic comic industry. But in some ways I learned more by going to the grocery store in Japan and trying to figure out what I was going to get and how I was going to get it. Because, if you think my French is bad, you should hear my Japanese. Going to the grocery store. Or why are the trains so much better in Japan than they are here in the northeast corridor of the United States? The things that are seared into my own experience and memory are not "Oh, let's go see that temple or the Tokyo Dome" or whatever.

Dan Pink: [00:35:41] But, for me, my kids were fairly little at the time. They were must have been—what were they?—maybe eleven, nine, and five, somewhere around there. So they were pretty little. And, at the time, all three of my kids were fairly serious swimmers. And so we would go to this local public pool in the evening in Japan. And so this family—I'm white, my wife is white, and, amazingly, our kids turned out white—and a five-person family is a very large family in Japan. And we tend to be taller than average. And so what you had is you had this squadron of giant white people coming into this Japanese public pool. And that to me is an unforgettable experience. What's it like to navigate the locker room and the rules of the pool? What are the kids learning from this? And so forth. So, for me, that experience of being immersed in another culture was, as an adult, probably the most powerful learning experience.

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Celisa Steele: [00:36:52] That also matches up with some of my experience. Travel, and especially if it's something like what you're describing, where you're staying in a place for a while

Dan Pink: [00:37:04] Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. I love to travel, but a lot of travel that one ends up doing is fairly ephemeral. So you're going to go here for a week or whatever. But there's something about living in an apartment and going to the grocery store and taking your kids to the pool for exercise at night and commuting on the subway and all—that is where it really, to me at least, where the learning about being in another place locked in.

Jeff Cobb: [00:37:43] Dan Pink is a bestselling author and speaker. In the show notes for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode337, you'll find links to his Web site and the Pinkcast. We highly recommend the Pinkcast, which is a series of short, free videos. Each one features a science-based tool or tip for working smarter and living better.

Celisa Steele: [00:38:06] At leadinglearning.com/episode337, you'll also see options for subscribing to the podcast, and we would be grateful if you would subscribe, if you haven't yet, as subscriptions give us some data on the impact of the podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:38:19] We'd also be grateful if you would rate us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you find the Leading Learning Podcast valuable. Celisa and I personally would appreciate it, and ratings and reviews help us show up when people search for content on leading a learning business. Go to leadinglearning.com/apple to leave a rating.

Celisa Steele: [00:38:39] Lastly, please help us grow the Leading Learning community. At leadinglearning.com/episode337, there are links to find us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Jeff Cobb: [00:38:49] Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

[music for this episode by DanoSongs, www.danosongs.com]

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