



*A Whole New Mind: Moving From the Information Age to the Conceptual Age*, by Daniel H. Pink (2005)

Reviewed by John Durel

Leaders of organizations that serve or employ young people should consider the insights offered by Daniel Pink in this book. If your organization seeks to prepare children for a fulfilling life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or if you currently employ those who will eventually lead your industry or profession in years to come, then this book will help you understand how the world they will live in will differ from what you have experienced in your life.

Pink observes trends that are increasingly obvious to all of us, and argues that they portend a new way of living and working for Americans in the coming decades. We are moving from an economy that has depended on left brain strengths to one that emphasizes right brain strengths. This is not to say that left brain attributes will be unimportant. However, they will no longer be sufficient for achieving success in work and life.

<b>Information Age</b>	<b>Conceptual Age</b>
20 <sup>th</sup> Century	21 <sup>st</sup> Century
Defining occupations: lawyers, doctors, accountants, engineers, computer programmers	Defining occupations: graphic artists, designers, entertainers, caring professions
Sequential: work processes are generally linear	Simultaneous: work requires the ability to see many things at once
Analysis of data: break the whole into components	Synthesis of data: weave the components into a whole
Text: speaking a thousand words	Context: painting a picture
Providing information and data	Telling a story, making a video
Producing something that is functional	Producing something that is beautiful
Play is the opposite of work.	Play is an important part of work.
A good life: having an abundance of material possessions	A meaningful life: using your unique abilities in service to others



## Six Aptitudes

The author selects six aptitudes that will be increasingly important in the coming era.

1. Design – the ability to create something that is beautiful, whimsical, or emotionally engaging.
2. Story – the ability to fashion a compelling narrative that incorporates the relevant data and information.
3. Symphony – the ability to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole.
4. Empathy – the ability to understand, build relationships with, and care for others.
5. Play – the ability to integrate laughter, lighthearted and games into one’s work and life.
6. Meaning – the ability to find meaning, purpose and spiritual fulfillment in one’s work and life.

## Signs of Change

Here are some of the facts that Pink points to as evidence that this fundamental change is occurring in the economy and culture of America.

Knowledge jobs are moving to Asia or are being automated. They are being replaced by new jobs.

- While we are exporting high-tech computer jobs to Asia, we are importing nurses and teachers.
- In India chartered accountants prepare American tax returns, lawyers do legal research for American lawsuits, and radiologists read CAT scans for American hospitals.
- Any job that depends on routines – that can be reduced to a set of rules, or broken down into a set of repeatable steps – is at risk of becoming automated.
- More Americans today work in arts, entertainment and design than as lawyers, accountants and auditors.
- The number of graphic designers in the U.S. has increased tenfold in a decade.

No longer is it sufficient to produce a product or provide a service that is reasonably priced and adequately functional. It must also be beautiful, unique, attractive, pleasing, empathic, meaningful, or fun.

- “I see us being in the art business. Art, entertainment and mobile sculpture, which, coincidentally, also happens to provide transportation.” Robert Lutz, CEO of General Motors.
- “At Sony, we assume that all products of our competitors have basically the same technology, price, performance and features. Design is the only thing that differentiates one product from another in the marketplace.” Norio Ohga, former chairman of Sony.
- Medical schools have begun to offer seminars in narrative medicine in addition to hard-core science courses. Students learn to talk with patients, and to listen with greater empathy and understanding. Some schools take students to art museums to help them develop skills of observation.

- Half of all Americans over the age of six play computer and video games. For people under the age of 30, video games are as woven into their lives as television was into the lives of the previous generation.

### **Museums Lead the Way**

To succeed in the Conceptual Age, people and organizations will need to embrace art, creativity, relationships, and play. Many of Qm<sup>2</sup>'s museum clients have missions that align well with this future. Children's museums have long recognized the importance of play in the healthy development of children. They provide environments and experiences where children can develop their artistic and creative abilities. In contrast, schools – where learning is designed for the Information Age - children's museums are preparing children for the Conceptual Age.

A continuing challenge is that schools treat play as distinct from, and less important than learning. Perhaps the San Antonio Children's Museum has it right with its tagline: Where Children Play to Learn, and Adults Learn to Play. Children's museums can help adults understand that play is essential to a healthy and fulfilling life, no matter how old you are.

Pink mentions two Qm<sup>2</sup> clients in his book: The National Building Museum as a great place to learn about design; and the Lemelson Center's "Invention at Play" exhibit where you can discover how playful habits of mind underlie invention.

This book provides argument for the importance of the work museums do. Read it for insights and data on how the future success and happiness of your community and its citizens will depend on the programs and services you provide.