

Daniel Pink: There's research showing that time of day effects explain about 20% of the variance in how people perform on these workplace tasks. So that's a big deal.

(Intro Music)

Robert Glazer: Welcome to Elevate, a podcast about achievement, personal growth and pushing limits in leadership and life. I'm Robert Glazer, and I chat with world class performers who have committed to elevating their own life, pushing the limits of their capacity, and helping others do the same.

Lenox Powell: This episode was previously recorded and published on the Outperform Podcast

Robert Glazer: William Penn once said, time is what we want most, but what we use worst. Our guest today Daniel Pink, knows a lot about time. Specifically timing.

In his new book *When*, which is already a New York Times, Washington Post, Walls Street Journal, and USA Today best seller, Daniel takes a deep dive into the concept of timing. And how we could better use it to perform at a high level in our lives, in our work, and in our decision making. In addition to distilling cutting edge research and data on timing, and writing in a way that will likely change most people's understanding of how it affects their life, Dan is also the author of several other New York Times and Wall Street Journal best selling books, including *Drive*, *To Sell is Human*, and *A Whole New Monday*.

Daniel Pink, it's an honor to have you on Outperform.

Daniel Pink: It's great to be here. Thanks for having me.

Robert Glazer: Now before we talk about *When*, and your research on timing. I just wanted to share that your book *Drive* had a deep influence on me and how we decided to build our culture at Acceleration Partners. Specifically our focus on flexibility and capacity building. I really think it's a book every founder should read as they decide how they want to build their business and culture.

Daniel Pink: Well thanks. I appreciate that. I'm talking to you from my office, which is the garage behind my house here in Washington DC. So it's nice to know that the things that fly out of here every once in a while land and have an effect. You've kept me in the writing business for maybe two additional weeks.

Robert Glazer: They've had an impact for sure. And you know that leads to my first question, I'm actually curious. What gave you the drive to write *Drive*?

Daniel Pink: That book came out of just some curiosity based on a previous book that I had written. I wrote a book called *A Whole New Mind*, which makes the argument that the set of skills that are necessary in the economy today are shifting from these more reductive SAT spreadsheet kinds of abilities, to the less reductive, less algorithmic, artistic empathic big picture skills. And in response to that

book, I got a lot of email from people saying, "Hey if this is right, how do we create organizations that foster these things? How do we at some level motivate people to do that kind of work?" I didn't really have a good answer to that question. I knew a little bit of the research on motivation, so I started looking at it. And once I looked at it, in a little greater depth, I was just blown away by what it said. Because it really turned on its head, a lot of the things that we believed about motivation.

Robert Glazer: What is it that business leaders don't understand about motivation?

Daniel Pink: Okay. There are a number of things. One of them is ... I think what they don't understand is the locus of motivation. Many people think that motivation is something that one person does to another. And that's not right. Motivation is something that people do for themselves. And so the task of running organizations, of leading teams, of doing anything where you're in a nominal position of authority and have responsibility for other people, is to put those people into a context in which they can motivate themselves. As a writer, motivate should not be a transitive verb. That is, it shouldn't have a direct object. No one will understand what the hell I'm talking about when I say that, but that's how I look at it. You can't think of motivate as a transitive verb. It's not. It is something that people do for themselves. It's not something that one person does to another.

The other thing is that if you look at 50 years of research in behavior science, it's pretty darn clear what it says. And it's this, there's a certain kind of reward we use in organizations. Social psychologists call it a "control and contingent reward." I think that's a bit cumbersome so I like to call it an if then reward. If you do this, then you get that. If then reward. 50 years of social science tells us that if then rewards are actually very effective for simple tasks, or short time horizons. They work really well.

The reason for that is that human beings like rewards. They like them so much they create this kind of intense narrowed aroused focus. So they get us to focus narrowly. They capture our attention in a very narrow way. That's effective if you know exactly what you need to do, and you can see the finish line. However, the same body of research, truly the exactly same body of research that tells us that if then rewards are affective for simple and short term tasks, tells us that if then rewards simply are not effective for tasks that require more creativity, more conceptual thinking, and with longer time horizons.

And the mechanism is exactly the same. In those kinds of tasks, for creative tasks for a non obvious problem, you want to be able to see wider and farther. And so you want an expansive focus for creative tasks. You want to more distant focus for long term tasks. And what if then rewards do, is they narrow our focus and shorten our focus. I mean it's very complicated to execute. But the principle is quite simple. If then rewards, good for simple and short term tasks. Not so good for complex and long term tasks. The challenge ... And forgive me for ... I feel like I'm about to, if I haven't already started, start a rant here. Is that

organizations use if then rewards for everything. Rather than the one category of work where we know that they're affective. So what we should be doing is, deploying the right motivators for the right kinds of tasks.

Robert Glazer: Drive came out in what you referred to as the rubble of the economic collapse, in which the work environment was different. So if you're thinking about present day, are you seeing companies since you wrote the book making better decisions around motivation and compensation. You know we have a lot more purpose driven companies. There's a lot of gamification. So is it getting better or worse, or has it stayed about the same?

Daniel Pink: I think it's getting better, but not by a massive amount. There are many organizations that I've heard from. I don't have a comprehensive data drenched answer to that question. But my impression, for whatever that's worth, is that yes, there has been some slow progress. I hear about a lot of companies that have abandoned those very controlling, if then kind of reward schemes for something that is simpler, that is more transparent, that is more difficult to game, and that actually comports with what we know about what truly motivates people. Because what we know for these more complex tasks, is that what really motivates people over the long haul is sense of autonomy and self direction, mastery, which is the chance to get better at something that matters to make progress, and purpose, knowing that what you're doing, makes a contribution or makes a difference. Now again, those also very easy to announce, they're harder to put into action in a real organization.

Robert Glazer: Any comment on United's recent bonus for a lottery swap?

Daniel Pink: That's a ridiculous idea. I mean it's almost like something out of The Onion. I mean, this idea that oh, what we're going to do is we're going to give people bonuses based completely on randomness and chance. I almost feel like that's the kind of thing where somebody said it as a joke, because it's such a bad idea. Now, this idea of intermittent unexpected rewards is in some level a motivator. That's the whole principle behind slot machines. But if you think about, think of somebody's affect when they're playing a slot machine, if you've ever seen people sitting in front of a slot machine. I mean they basically are zombified there. And so I don't think that is the look that you want on the faces of people working in your organization. I mean fortunately they unwound that within 24 hours. But still, what the hell were you thinking folks?

Robert Glazer: I talked a bit earlier about capacity building, which I think really builds the muscle for greater achievement. Based on the study you've researched and used for Drive, and some of the other stuff you've written, how do you think intrinsic motivation is related to one's ability to build their capacity?

Daniel Pink: I think it's essential. If you really want to build your capacity there're going to be limits in how much you can rely on external motivators. You just burn them up really quickly. So I mean you can think of it, you can analogize to energy. That is extrinsic motivators are like coal. So to keep going in pursuit of capacity

building. If that's the only reason you're doing it, you have to keep shoveling coal into the furnace. And you need more, and more, and more, and more, and, more. Whereas intrinsic motivation is a little more like solar power, in that it's renewable. It's ... has fewer externalities. And so I don't know how you build genuine capacity for anything even modestly complex without a sense of intrinsic motivation.

Robert Glazer: And I'm curious then, how would you think about that in terms of building capacity in others? Then is the need to create intrinsic motivation within those others?

Daniel Pink: Yeah. Well and I think if you want to help build capacity in others ... I mean again at some level on this you have to turn the dial a tad and say, "What can we do to put people into situations where they can build their own capacity?" That can be a little bit more directive. But if you're a leader and you want people on your team, your group, to build their own capacity, then these elements of autonomy, mastery, and purpose are essential. I mean you have to have some amount of self direction, and willingness, and volition to build your capacity.

Like for instance it's hard to help build the capacity of someone who resists that very idea. Who is either overly compliant, or is resistant. What you need for capacity building, is some amount of self direction on the part of the person whose capacity is being built. The second point, mastery, is itself in many ways a synonym for capacity building. It's basically are you getting better at something? Are making progress? Are you moving forward? And then I think this gets neglected in capacity building in many realms of life. Whether it's business or education or even sports, is the purpose side of it. Which is why are we doing this? Why does what I do matter? Why do I build my capacity? And from a very early age kids ask that question, and adults just dismiss it. And it's a very important question.

That is, if you think about the capacity building that a teacher does, if a student asks why are we doing algebra? Why are we reading the Scarlet Letter? Or they ask their parents that. A lot of adults will say be quiet and read the book, quiet and do your homework. But if we adults don't have answers to those questions, we're doing something terribly wrong.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. So let me ask you, at our annual retreat last year, we call it AP Summit, we decided to focus on employees' life goals and their 2018 goals. Trying to make the connection how success outside of work, connected to the company's success. Is this a good way to bridge intrinsic motivation in the business? Or are personal and professional aspirations really two different things?

Daniel Pink: I think it's going to depend on the person. I really do. I think it's going to depend on the person, and it's going to depend on the situation. I think it's a worthy question to ask, but I don't think there's a uniform answer to it. And I think that

Steve's answer is going to be different from Maria's. But I also think that Steve's answer today, could be different from Steve's answer eight years from now.

Robert Glazer: So the motivation changes, and we have to figure out ways to identify it and move along with what it is that is motivating our employees.

Daniel Pink: And people change. Here's the thing, like if you think about, there's a very complex interaction going on here in the workplace. You have the individual, you have the organization, and you have essentially the context. So those are the three variables. So when you're talking about three variables, things already get a little bit complicated. But those three variables are going to be different 10 years, let's even say five years from now.

Maria's going to be a different person than she was. The organization's going to be a different person. And the context of everything, the economy, the political situation, whatever, is going to be different. And so this is why, it's not like some kind of Crock-pot where you just set it and forget it. You have to stay on top of these things. That's why running organizations, being a leader, managing teams, is really, really, really, hard. I mean I don't think that we acknowledge how incredibly difficult that job is. That's why so few people do it well. Because it's really, really, really, hard.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. What worked yesterday probably won't work tomorrow. As soon as you figure out and you master one thing, you probably have to learn a new skill.

Daniel Pink: Yeah.

Robert Glazer: Well you bring up time, and so that's a great segue into your new book *When*, which is at the top of almost every chart right now. So congrats again on all the book's success.

Daniel Pink: Thank you.

Robert Glazer: So in *When* you talk about the importance of timing, both for doing things within a day, and sort of across and overall across the timing of your life. I thought maybe we'd start as you do in the book, when the beginnings. But you know, one thing you didn't cover in the book and I'd be curious to ask you, is about beginning too early.

Daniel Pink: Yeah.

Robert Glazer: You talked about false starts, but is there ... Especially in businesses. I've seen a lot of businesses. Did you come across anything around too early?

Daniel Pink: It's an interesting question. I looked at some of it. And there is some research on there, not enough to make me comfortable to go out and fix it on a page and give real people real advice. Bill Gross who founded Idea Lab, which is sort of a

venture capital incubator type operation, he did a study of his companies and said he found that timing was the most important factor in the success of his company. So I think that's pretty interesting. On your point more directly on being too early, there is a little bit of research that calls into question what we learned in business school. I didn't even go to business school, but what everybody has learned. The first mover advantage. There a theory out there saying that the first player to move within an industry or a new category or whatever, has an advantage. And there's a lot of research showing that's not quite the case. That it's often-

Robert Glazer: Second player.

Daniel Pink: Yeah. The best follower. I like to call this the early bird gets the worm but the second mouse gets the cheese. The second mouse phenomenon. Because that first mouse gets crushed by the trap, leaving the cheese for the second mouse. But on that particular issue, I'm also leary because so much of it is pure randomness and luck. And that is something, the randomness of life of "success" of how things turn out is something that we human beings don't like very much. We'd like to ignore that as a factor in our life, but it plays a much greater role than most of us are willing to acknowledge. Once we acknowledge it we're filled with existential dread about the randomness of existence. So we pinch that off and instead what we do as human beings, is we look at any of our triumphs are due to talent and hard work. And any of our failures are due to bad luck. And any of other peoples triumphs are due to luck and any of their failures are due to their own incompetence.

Robert Glazer: And if there's one thing I learned from your writing, you like scientific proof and a lot of it. So I appreciate that that's still, you can get the right data on that. But you did talk a lot about beginnings. And one of the things I took away is ... And I've been a big advocate in my family, in my company for improving morning routines as a way to build capacity, and just perform better throughout the day. Yet after I read the book, and based on the research you talked about chronobiology and chronotypes, that premis may actually not hold true for everyone. So can you explain a little bit about what chronobiology is and why it's important for us to understand our chronotype?

Daniel Pink: Yeah, happily. I think what you're saying is true for most people. Just as you put it very well, not true for everyone. So chronobiology is ... We can just unpack the words. Chrono, clocks. Biology, the study of life. It's basically the study of our time based rhythms. And among the things that chronobiologist have discovered is that each of us has a chronotype. That's a more complicated word for basically, just like essentially are you more of a morning person? Are you more of an evening person? Or are you in between?

So are you somebody who wakes up early and goes to sleep early, colloquially those are considered larks. Are you someone who wakes up very late, and goes to sleep very late. Colloquially an owl. And what the distribution of chronotypes tells us, is that about 15% of the population are larks, strong larks. About 20% of

the population are strong owls. Which means that most of us, two thirds of us are in between. And that our chronotype actually has a big role in determining how the day unfolds. How our mood and our performance changes over the course of a day. And what's really the case here, is that there's sort of a common pattern, which is true for those of us in the middle, and those of us who are larks. And then the people who are evening types, owls, they're much more complicated and the world, especially the world in the western working world is really not well configured to them.

Robert Glazer: And when you segment out the day into three stages, can you talk a little bit about what those stages are and why they're important for people to understand the different tasks that would work better for people naturally? Both based on their chronotype and then the time of day. Because I think that was really interesting discovery for me. Particularly the part about when you're likely to be paroled or not paroled.

Daniel Pink: So basically we move through the day in three stages. You can see this in a lot of measures of mood. There's a peak, mood goes up. A trough mood drops considerably. There's a recovery, mood goes back up. So peak, trough, recovery. Most of us, that is 80% of us go through in that order. Owls, again much more complicated, often will go through in the reverse order. Recovery, trough, peak. Okay, so that's our pattern of mood. And mood is important but our pattern of performance is also really important. And here's how that works. During the peak which again for most of us, is the morning. During our peak, that's when we are most vigilant. That makes it the best time for analytic work. What does that mean? That means work that requires heads down, focus, attention, and energy. So that could be writing a report or analyzing data, or something that requires that intense kind of focus. That is the ability to bat away distractions.

So we should be doing that kind of work during our peak. During the trough, big drop in mood and big drop in performance. The book is studded with all kinds of data showing how dangerous that trough can be. On the road, in a hospital, in classrooms. So during that trough period, we should be doing more of our administrative work. Work that doesn't require a massive amount of brain power. Which we have in our day to day lives. That's filling out reports, or answering routine email, or doing that kind of thing. And then during the recovery, which again for most of us is the late afternoon, early evening. What we see there is a rise in mood, which is good. But no greater vigilance. Which we think of as bad, but if you pair that declined vigilance with an elevated mood, then it actually makes a potent combination.

That makes it a good time for addressing what psychologists call insight problems. Those are problems with really non-obvious solutions. They require ... To use on the phrases in the literature, a flash of illuminance. And people tend to solve those kinds of problems better, not during the trough but during their non-optimal times. So for owls earlier in the day. For larks, later in the day. And so all of this suggests that we can do a lot better if we just move the right work

to the right time. Put our analytic work in the peak, our administrative work in the trough, and our insight work into recovery.

Robert Glazer: And that has implications for parents, and for leaders. Because there's some things that we can control. What time of day we do them. And then there's others that we can't, such as school. I think in reading the book, the one time when I was probably frustrated and kind of was yelling with you, was with the school systems. As you say the data is just really, really clear about the performance on high school students starting later in the day, and people having breaks. Yet everyone ignores all this data, under the guise of wanting to get better test scores and do things that the data says these things don't help at all.

Daniel Pink: That's completely nuts. But I think you're right Bob, that what we can do is, we can ... At an individual level, an organizational level, we can't control everything. But we can make some small changes. And the small changes can have a big payoff. There's research showing that time of day effects explain about 20% of the variance in how people perform on these workplace tasks. So that's a big deal, all right. So if you think about what else explains that variance, let's take innate intelligence probably explains some of that variance.

That's a hard thing to recalibrate all of a sudden right. You can't just like make somebody smarter. But time of day is something that we can do something about in many cases. For instance, one of the things that drives me nuts is the way that organizations schedule meetings. The only thing they care about is availability. We don't say, is this going to be a meeting where we need analytic focus? Is this going to be a meeting where we need people to be looser and brainstorm? Is this purely an administrative meeting? Who's going to be there? Are we going to have people who are better in the morning, people who are better in the evening?

We don't even think about it. Literally in no meeting in North America does that issue even come up. And it should come up, because it makes a material difference. So if we just start asking those kinds of questions, and bosses ... Let's talk about capacity building. One way to help on capacity building, if you're a leader, is to allow your team, the individuals on your team, to do their right work at the right time. So if your people are doing analytic work and you have a bunch of morning or intermediate people who do that analytic in the morning, you have to take a hippocratic oath and do no harm. And one way to do harm would be to schedule a 9:30 meeting about that travel voucher policy for this team and suck away an hour of their best time. So there really are small things we can do, to match up our chronotype, our tasks, and our time of day.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, I think a lot people in our company have actually probably happened upon this. In the morning they put a block called GSD on their calendar which is get bleep done. And that's uninterruptible time. And we've synced a lot of it. So a lot of it have it at the same time, and we've determined that if I can have those two to three hours and get my cognitive ... I do my reading, and my writing, and

my answering to things. Then I can move into meetings and stuff in the afternoon. So that's helpful because we have the flexibility to do it. But I assume that on the flip side if you want a night watchman for your plant, you probably want a night owl. That's when you want that person to be vigilant. The mood needs to fit the job at that point.

Daniel Pink: Right. Absolutely.

Robert Glazer: You talk a lot about, and a point you made really strongly was that organizations, particularly schools or companies, they're so quick to solve a what problem, but not a when problem.

Daniel Pink: Yeah, exactly.

Robert Glazer: So if we knew that smoke in the building in the morning hurt test scores by 20%, we would fix that in five minutes. But when the data says that waking people up an hour early has the same result, no one seems interested in changing. So it seems like that was one of the main messages of the book. Has that had an impact?

Daniel Pink: No. Actually I shouldn't say no, I should say not yet. Because again there is this notion that questions of when, as exactly as you said. Questions of when are less important than questions of what. And empirically that's not true. Let's go back to test scores. I'll just give you two data points here. There's an important study out of Denmark showing that kids who took tests, standardized tests in the afternoon versus kids who took standardized tests in the morning. Kids who took test in the afternoon scored as if they'd missed two weeks of school, period. They do worse.

There's research out of the LA Unified school district showing that kids who have math in the morning, have higher GPAs and higher test scores than kids who have math later in the day. So it makes a material difference. But let's be clear here, I'm not saying that when people do stuff is more important than what people do or how they do it, or who they do it with. But I'm saying it's as important. And if we don't start taking those when questions seriously, we're going to continue to make mistakes. I guess the good news is that any kind of leader who does take these when questions seriously, who knows that they have a material effect on performance is going to outperform our peers.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. I think it's a field frankly that you're opening up for leaders to even consider that the extra money that they were putting into training or new programs or things that may not be necessary. It may be taking a more individualized approach to each person and seeing when things work for them and when things work for the company overall.

Daniel Pink: You make a very good point about its cost effectiveness. We're talking about having people do different things at different times. We're not talking about

buying them new equipment. We're not talking about sending them to an expensive training program. We're not talking about boosting their salary. We're talking about letting them match up when they do their work with the right time for them to do that work.

Robert Glazer: Yeah it just occurred to me as we're talking about this, if we run a training program for new employees from three to five at the end of the day, we're probably going to get 25% less retention than if we spent the same amount of money at 9 a.m. in the morning.

Daniel Pink: It depends on what kind of training. If it's a more analytic training ... You know what you should do is you should measure people's chronotypes and then have 80% of them do it in the morning and the owls do it later in the day.

Robert Glazer: I almost suggest that but we do so many personality testing that I might get a lot dirty looks when I say-

Daniel Pink: Although, you can do the chronotype test in 40 seconds.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. No, I actually would like to do that and overlay it on some of our other tests and see what correlations there are to some of the personality types.

Daniel Pink: In the literature there are correlations between chronotypes and personality factors, big time. Particularly on the so called big five, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, you see in general larks much more extroverted, much more conscientious than owls. Again, recognizing that most of us are in the middle. But you have owls higher on neuroticism, higher on various kinds of problematic behaviors, whether it's addiction or, I don't want to call it behavior, but higher on things like addiction and depression, but also higher on intelligence tests. So there are personality differences that are associated with these chronotypes.

Robert Glazer: I'm going to take that as a to do and I might look at [inaudible 00:28:21] or Meyers-Briggs. I will let you know what I find. But I think that's interesting. The more we do these tests we see a lot of overlap and I think it starts to really just emphasize for people that they are who they are and trying to figure out who that is and then align everything around them seems to produce the best performance.

Let's take a quick break for a word from our sponsor and we'll be back to talk more with Daniel Pink.

Adam Grant: Hi I'm Adam Grant. As a Wharton Psychologist I've spent most of my career studying two big questions. How do we unlock original thinking and build cultures of productive generosity? With those questions in mind I recently co-founded a pretty extraordinary community dedicated to discovering groundbreaking ideas while trying to make the world a better place. It's called

the Next Big Idea Club. Together my friends Malcolm Gladwell, Susan Cain, Dan Pink, and I search far and wide for the eight most original, most essential nonfiction books of the year and we send them straight to you. We also interview the authors and we send you the key insights across video, audio, and text formats. And remember this is a book club so when you join the exclusive online forum, you get the chance to discuss every season's selections not just with other members but also with me, Malcolm, Susan, and Dan.

Robert Glazer: Get insider insights from Dan Pink, Malcolm Gladwell, Susan Cain, and Adam Grant and sign up for the Next Big Idea Club today at www.nextbigideaclub.com.

All right, welcome back Dan and I want to transition a little bit into the next part of the book that I made a lot of notes on and that was sort of about teams and how teams synchronize. You write some interesting research about how different types of teams come together. I'd love to hear a little bit more about that from you.

Daniel Pink: Well, I was looking at in this case was literally that, synchronization. It wasn't teams in general, it was how do teams coordinate with each other in time and that's part of what teams do. The one group that I looked at were these folks in India called dabbawalas, who are these guys, almost always men, who do something pretty remarkable. They pick up homemade lunches at people's apartments in Mumbai, India and then deliver those homemade lunches to those families loved ones in office buildings throughout downtown Mumbai, which is maybe 20 miles away. These dabbawalas do this every single day. They deliver 200,000 lunches every day. They do it without errors. So much so that FedEx has studied them, UPS has studied them, there's a Harvard Business School case study about them.

They do it with this accuracy. 200,000 lunches every day at high levels of accuracy and amazingly they do it without barcodes, without GPS, without technology of any kind. How are they able to synchronize? So that was one of the puzzles that I was trying to solve and it turns out that when you look at how groups synchronize in time, rowing teams, choirs, there are a set of core principles that are somewhat counterintuitive but endlessly interesting.

Robert Glazer: I've been thinking about this in light of the NCAA tournament. Because there's some data around the more the teams touch each other and high five that they perform better.

Daniel Pink: Oh, yeah. So one of the elements of it is a sense of belonging. And this is true in a lot of the research on teams that that belongingness not only in terms of synchronization but in any kind of team, belongingness is a huge factor in which teams flourish and which teams flounder. And the way that belongingness happens is through ... I mean it's almost anthropological. It's through shared rituals. It's through touch. And the study you're talking about showed that if you have people watch videos of basketball games and simply touch, high five, low fives, chest bumps, fist bumps, whatever, and count those kinds of touches then

that actually ends up being predictive of which teams are going to succeed later in the season.

But belongingness is fostered with all kinds of things. Shared jokes, shared language is incredibly important. Even clothing. So any kind of belongingness cues are essential in team coordination and team synchronization.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, it's interesting and I read it right before the tournament. So I was watching this and I ... For some teams there's just a feeling that the Loyola Chicago are making their run, it's interesting. There's a lot of studies being done on these games. Probably a lot more than I realize.

Daniel Pink: Probably. I mean, the other thing is, especially in the NCAA tournament, there's also just a huge degree of randomness too. So I hate to extrapolate from it too much. Especially since in my family bracket, I finished in last place.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. Wasn't pretty. But it wasn't pretty for most people this year.

Daniel Pink: No.

Robert Glazer: So the midpoint you know key, we got beginnings, ends, midpoint's often overlooked. One of the things that I thought was really interesting was you were talking about midpoints in relation to teams. And that there were some studies where when teams were given a certain amount of time, whether that was a day, or a week, or a month, or six months to solve the problem, most of their urgency and cohesion sort of happened right at the midpoint. Can you talk a little more about that?

Daniel Pink: Yeah. So this is the research of Connie Gersick who had an inkling about how teams actually operate. And the prevailing view until that time was that teams start and they make steady progress all the way through to the end. Maybe not perfectly steady, but sort of an overall slope upward to, from beginning to end. And what she found was a dramatically different pattern. That in the beginning teams did very, very little. There's a lot of status seeking and other kind of behavior like that. But they do very, very, little. And she said it wasn't until a certain moment, when teams threw off the old routines, really got going. And invariably she found that that moment when teams really got kicking was the midpoint. So it was weird. Give a team 34 days to do a project, they get started in earnest on day 17. Give a team nine days, they get started in earnest on day five. She even did some recent experimental research giving teams an hour and there's always this moment where someone said oh my god, we're halfway done. We got to get going. And that occurred between the 29th and 31st minute.

And so there's something about reaching that midpoint that seems to be where people ... And the way she did her research was she video taped and audio taped a lot of these team encounters. And invariably there was someone who

said, something along the lines of, oh my gosh, we're halfway done. We got to get moving. And so there's something about that midpoint that can be galvanizing.

Robert Glazer: You know I read that. And thinking about it as a business leader, and a company, I was thinking should we be giving our teams less time to get to the decision, if they're not going to get any urgency until the halfway point? And maybe breaking it up into smaller things. Is there any research on that?

Daniel Pink: I don't know. That's a good question. Here's the thing. So that's possible. That's certainly possible. The other thing that's possible is, and you see this in a little bit of the research on productive procrastination. There's some kinds of procrastination that are productive. That it could be that there's something happening during that first half, that is akin to incubation. That it doesn't show on the surface as activity and progress, but something essential is happening then. But it'd be fascinating to test.

Robert Glazer: Right. It might be an essential part of the process, and if a year task than it's a year's-

Daniel Pink: But if you give that team, saying "Hey, you know, this task really only takes 17 days." You say, "Well I'm going to give you 17 days." Maybe they get started on day eight and a half, and then end up failing. Who knows? So maybe it's the other way. Maybe if the task requires 17 days, a team needs 34 days to get it done.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. It's worth testing.

Daniel Pink: Yeah. That would be a ... You know obviously there's going to be some variance based on the kind of team and whatnot. I think what was interesting is that what Gersick's research showed is that our intuitions about these patterns were dead wrong. And so the analogy that she used, she actually used an analogy from evolution where the prevailing view in evolutionary theory, until the early 1970s was that yeah, species evolved in this kind of steady predictable way. And what revolutionized that field was an insight from two paleontologists who found, no, no, no that's not how it goes. Basically you have these long periods of stasis, followed by periods of intense activity. What they called punctuated equilibrium. That is you have equilibrium and then a huge burst of punctuation. And Gersick was saying that teams operate in that way too. It just so happens that the punctuation mark occurs at the middle.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. And we're talking about middle, in terms of the micro sense. But if we turn quickly to the macro sense you write a lot about the timing of big events in our lives such as getting married, writing a book, starting a business. Does life have sort of the same dynamic as an individual day? Does it follow most of the same principles?

Daniel Pink: Well. I don't know if it has the same ... It doesn't have the same rhythm as the hidden pattern of a single day. But there are rhythms, and shapes, and patterns over lifetimes, big time. So I mean, one of them has to do with midpoints. There is across many, many countries, literally dozens of countries, there is what scholars call a U shaped curve of happiness. Meaning that in the middle of our lives ... It's not like the bottom falls out. There's no evidence of the so called midlife crisis. But what you do see is a slight dip. So people are reasonably happy in their 20s and 30s. They begin to decline in their 40s. And their 50s they really reach bottom. And then over time they begin to get happier and happier. And so there's a U shaped curve for happiness and wellbeing.

There are other kinds of patterns too dealing over time with ... I think they're quite interesting. With the size of people's social networks, and what they prioritize, and things like that. Again I think the meta point here is that we have to recognize that these temporal forces have an affect. In the course of a day? Hugely. But even in the course of a life. That much of our lives are episodic. And episodes whether it's a relationship, whether it's a career, a particular job. Episodes have beginnings, middles, and ends. And each of those three things, beginnings, middles, and ends exerts a different effect on our behavior.

Robert Glazer: And for some people it seems like the middle is really motivating. I got to make something of my life. And then for others the rut is bigger, and it goes in a different direction. Is there anything that leads people down one path or the other?

Daniel Pink: Well one of the things that's come out in some of the research is that ... We can go back to teams here for a moment. Back to basketball. Is that it's interesting to study basketball as a way to study midpoints because basketball unlike most enterprises has an announced midpoint with its own name instead of rituals, at halftime. We don't have that in other parts of our ... You don't have that in careers, or relationships, or anything like that. It's not like you have a relationship with someone and at some point the buzzer goes buzz. You know, and it's like we're at halftime now.

Robert Glazer: According to your research it would probably help though. Get some motivation.

Daniel Pink: It might. It might. But basketball does have that explicit halftime. We have midpoints everywhere. Midpoints are ubiquitous. They're just implicit rather than explicit. They're hidden from our view rather than staring us in the face. And so in basketball, and this is some research of Jonah Berger at Penn and Devin Pope at the University of Chicago. They found that in general, the team that has the lead at halftime is more likely to win the game. It doesn't require sophisticated mathematical acumen. A team that's ahead at halftime is more likely to win, right. They're ahead, and the game's half over. And also the fact that they're ahead might mean that they have better players. But there's an exception to this rule. And the exception is that teams that were behind by one

point are more likely to win. Being behind by one was more advantageous than being ahead by one. Being behind by one was equivalent to being ahead by two.

So what's going on there? And in subsequent experimental research, because again in basketball scores, if you look at the score at halftime and compare it to the score at the end of game. All you're seeing is correlation. You can't tell why it's happening, you can't tell what's causing it. But in experimental settings you can set up experiments to try to isolate the cause. And what they have found, and others have found, is that being slightly behind at the middle is very motivating. It's very galvanizing. When we're way behind at the middle, we can give up. When we're way ahead we can get complacent. But when we're a little bit behind it looks like people really, really bring it. And so for that person in midlife, one of the things that he or she can do, is recognize midpoints. And they have this dual effect. Sometimes they make us wake up, other times they get us to roll over. But actually imagine, hey I'm a little bit behind right now. And that can be a form of motivation.

Robert Glazer: It's interesting. So I wonder how much that parallels to the person. Right, if they feel like they're way behind in life, maybe you know wallow in their sorrow. And if they're a little behind it's motivating. And that leads us into endings. And you know you talked a lot about endings and how important they are. I think two takeaways I took was if you're planning a vacation, plan something really good at the end and it will improve your whole memory of the vacation.

Daniel Pink: That's true. Yeah.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. In terms of experiences, a conference or something like that I guess you got to make sure your closer is really good.

Daniel Pink: Oh yeah. Endings of any kind of experience are hugely important. There's so much research on this. Endings help us encode entire experiences. And by encode, I mean they help us evaluate and then record experiences. So there's research showing that how a person was in the last year of his life, dramatically shapes how people remember the entirety of the life. And so you know you see it in consumer transactions. You can see this anecdotally on Yelp. I mean go to Yelp reviews of restaurants and look at how many Yelp reviews on restaurants talk about what happened at the end of the meal. And so there's a lot of research on this. And endings have a disproportionate effect on how we encode experiences. And once again as with the hidden pattern of the day, we're not aware and intentional about that. And so I think that organizations can do a much ... At all of the things you mentioned Bob. Consumer transactions, or conferences, or family vacations, or any kind of experience. To really be thoughtful and intentional about having a great end.

Robert Glazer: I make you choose between your two babies, here. If you had to either start poorly, you know, avoid starting poorly or ending well, which do you think would have an overall bigger impact?

Daniel Pink: It's a great question, I think it's going to depend on what the enterprise is. So there's some cases where getting off to a big beginning disadvantages you for so long that a strong ending doesn't really correct things. So I think it's going to depend on whether you're talking about a career, or whether you're talking about a ... If you're talking about something more like a customer transaction, or that kind of experience, I'm going to put my money on the ending.

Robert Glazer: So the shorter the duration, the more impact probably the ending has, right?

Daniel Pink: That's a good question. I would guess so, I'm not certain.

Robert Glazer: Okay. I'll give you some homework on that one.

Daniel Pink: Hey thanks.

Robert Glazer: I would assume that, yeah. Because the beginning and end are close to each other so the beginning can't really hurt you that long.

Daniel Pink: That's probably right. I mean one of the pieces of research that I wrote about in terms of beginnings is the monumental difference between graduating from college in a recession and graduating from college in a boom economy. That difference. So if you've got Suzie and Esther who graduate from college, let's say same college, same major, same level of ability. But Suzie graduates in a recession, and Esther graduates in a boom economy. That's going to show up in their wages 20 years later. That is 20 years into her career, Esther's going to be on the average making more money than Suzie, even though she's similar in ability and background and everything else. And the reason has to do with she just got off to a better start. So these beginnings have a ... especially in that domain have a monumental effect on how things turn out for people.

Robert Glazer: Yeah. And your recommendation was if you have a bad beginning try any way you can to start over.

Daniel Pink: Yeah. Absolutely.

Robert Glazer: Different ways of hitting the reset button. Taking a personal perspective I'm curious, what is a timing mistake that you've made either personally or professionally that you learned the most from?

Daniel Pink: Wow. There are a lot of them. I mean, I really changed my ways on a lot this stuff. So I'm much more deliberate about what work I do, and when I do it. And so I made some mistakes about not being deliberate enough and putting my analytic work at a certain time of the day and my insight work at another time of day. There's a whole chapter in the book about breaks. And so I spent 50 years rarely taking breaks, which turns out to be a bad idea. Although I think that the most at the level of nitty gritty is delivering good news and bad news.

So if you say to somebody I've got good news and bad news. The question becomes which do you deliver first. Do you deliver the good news first or the bad news. And I always gave the good news first because ... For a whole host of reasons. You know you want to lay down a cushion beforehand so you don't seem like a total jerk. I was concerned that if you start negative people would just turn off on you, they won't even listen to the rest. It's also just uncomfortable giving bad news for a lot of us. So you want to ease your way into it. And turned out to be flatly wrong. There's interesting research out there showing that the vast, vast, vast majority of people when they're on the receiving end of good news and bad news, want the bad news first. They want the bad news first and the good news next. Because it goes back to another principle of endings, which is given a choice human beings prefer endings that elevate. We prefer rising sequences to declining sequences.

So throughout my life I'd always given the good news first and then the bad news. And now I completely changed my way. I give the bad news first and then the good news.

Robert Glazer: I also noticed you're a big convert to the nappuccino.

Daniel Pink: I'm a convert to napping, because I was never a big napper. When I took naps before I would wake up feeling terrible. And what I realized among the errors of my ways, was that the ideal nap is much shorter than I would have imagined. The nap between 10 and 20 minutes long. I don't do this every day but there are days, several days when I will take that 10 to 20 minute nap. A way to get a boost out of it is to have a cup of coffee first. Which sounds weird, but it takes about 25 minutes for coffee to get into our bloodstream.

So if you have a cup of coffee and then go to take a nap, now let's say you nap for 20 minutes. Or say you lay down and it takes you six or seven minutes to fall asleep and you nap for 15 minutes. When you're waking up after 25 minutes that caffeine begins hitting your system which gives you an extra boost. But again the key thing here on naps, to my surprise was that the very best naps are extraordinarily short. Between 10 and 20 minutes. Beyond that you begin to accumulate what's called sleep inertia. Which is that sort of groggy, boggy, oatmeal in the head feeling that get sometimes from naps. And in order to get the benefit of the nap you have to dig your way out of that, which can be time consuming.

Robert Glazer: You did a great infographic of the nappuccino so we will link to that in the show notes so that people can see the recipe who want to participate in it. So last question, as much as I could go on forever, you have multiple best selling books. And I know there are a lot of aspiring writers out there. And I'm curious, what have you found to be your best time to write a book, both in a macro sense, and in a micro sense within a day?

Daniel Pink: Let me take the micro side first. For me as someone who is much more lark than owl, I do my ... Remember we go peak, trough, recovery. And so I should be

doing my analytic work during the peak. Which means I should be doing my writing during the peak, during the morning. And in response to this research early on, I really did change my ways. So I write ... I had done this to some extent but I became much more rigid about it after having absorbed a lot of this research. So I do all of my writing in the morning, because I know that's when I'm at my best. And the only way to do that is to clear the decks. To eliminate all the other stuff. So try not to even look at email, certainly don't answer the phone. Often don't even bring my phone into the office. So you have that sequestered time to do your heads down analytic work in the morning. So that's the micro.

In terms of the macro, you know that's a harder one. On the commercial side of it, you just don't know. It's like in stocks it's very hard to time the market. Sometimes your timing on a book, is right. Sometimes it's not. Sometimes your idea is ... This goes back to something we were talking about earlier. Sometimes your idea is, as we used to say in politics, a little ahead of the voters. Sometimes it's too late. And in other times, you just don't know. For instance every once in a while, and it's hard to foresee, there are moments, weeks, or months where there are just like a gazillion books coming out and everybody is just battling each other not to be thrown off the row boat. And there's not much your morning can do about that. In terms of when to write a book, I don't think there's a hard and fast set of rules about that.

To me the hard and fast rule would be for any aspiring writer out there is talk to people who've written books. And understand just how freaking hard it is to write a book. Not that it requires massive intelligence. Obviously it doesn't if I've done it. But it requires a massive amount of work. It requires a massive amount of doggedness. It requires a massive amount of persistence and just putting your butt into a seat. And a lot of the times the writing of a book is just totally not fun. I mean just dreary and horrid. And so you really have to ask yourself whether you really want to write that book. And the other thing is is that, and I see this mistake made by a lot of journalists, is that they'll write an article that gets some attention, and they'll immediately be so seduced by the attention that they get from that, that they go to write a book about it. And if you're going to write a book, you have to be in love with your idea. You have to be willing to spend a huge amount of time on it.

I mean I just did an interview for a book that I wrote 17 years ago. So I'm still living with that thing that I did 17 years ago. If it wasn't something that I really liked, I would be miserable. So there are a few ideas and concepts, stories, whatever that you want to go out on a few dates with. But there are very few who you want to go steady with and almost none that you want to get married to. So you have to be very, very selective on that front.

Robert Glazer: Yeah, it's one thing to have a moment, but a movement is a lot more work and requires a lot of sustained effort.

Daniel Pink: Well said. Exactly. Exactly.

Robert Glazer: Daniel I really enjoy your books and your thinking. Please keep on writing them. And thanks for taking the time to dig through all this research with me, make sense of it, and see how we can apply it in practical ways in our life.

Daniel Pink: Thanks so much for having me. It's a pleasure to be with you.

Robert Glazer: Great. So for our listeners out there we'll include the show notes from this episode on our site as well as Daniel's website interviews he's done, his Ted talk and some other insightful resources and links for you. And until next time keep outperforming.