



## Bad Behaving Blood Donors

In 1970, a British sociologist warned that paying individuals for blood donations would not only be immoral, but reduce the overall blood supply in the country.

The theory was ridiculed at the time, so two Swedish economists decided to test the idea twenty-five years later.

The two economists divided 153 women interested in giving blood into three groups.

The first group was told their blood donation was voluntary, and they received no payment for giving blood.

The second group was told they would receive 50 Swedish kronor (about \$7) after giving blood.

The third group was told they would receive 50 Swedish kronor after giving blood, BUT they could immediately donate their reward to charity.

Researchers tracked the behavior of all three groups:

- 52% of the first group (volunteers) donated blood
- 53% of the third group (optional volunteers) donated blood
- But only 30% of the second group (incentivized group) agreed to donate blood

The British sociologist turned out to be right.

**Lesson #1:** When you want someone to do the right thing, leave money out of the conversation.



## Killing Creativity

Teresa Amabile, a Harvard Business School professor, wanted to better understand the effects of rewards on creativity.

She and her colleagues organized a study with 23 professional artists who had created commissioned and non-commissioned pieces.

The artists were requested to provide 10 commissioned and 10 non-commissioned works of their choice.

All the pieces were shared with a review board of accomplished artists, and the board was asked to rate the works on creativity and technical skill.

**The results:** “The commissioned works were rated as significantly less creative than the non-commissioned works, yet they were not rated as different in technical quality.” – Drive

In addition, artists shared that they felt significantly more limited when completing the commissioned works.

One artist reported - “When I work for myself there is the pure joy of creating and I can work through the night and not even know it. On a commissioned piece you have to check yourself—be careful to do what the client wants.” – Drive

**Lesson #2:** When you are working on a creative project, forget financial incentives and enjoy the process.  
Your happiness and creativity will increase as a result.

# 5 Favorite Lessons from Drive by Daniel Pink



## Rupees for Performance

Dan Ariely and a group of researchers went to Madurai, India to test the effects of incentives on performance.

They asked 87 individuals to play a series of games ranging from tossing tennis balls at a target to recalling a sequence of digits. All tasks utilized motor skills, creativity, or concentration.

The researchers divided the participants into three groups. The first group was offered a small reward of 4 rupees (\$0.50 or 1 day's work) to complete the tasks.

The second group was given a larger incentive of 40 rupees (\$5.00 or 2-weeks' pay). The third group was offered the highest reward of 400 rupees (\$50.00 or 5 months' pay).

The results indicated that increased incentives actually worsened performance.

The 40-rupee group performed no better than the 4-rupee group, and the 400-rupee individuals performed substantially worse than all the other individuals by every measure.

"In eight of the nine tasks we examined across the three experiments, higher incentives led to worse performance." - Drive

**Lesson #3:** When you want to perform well on a complex task, don't put money on the line.



## Now-That Rewards

Instead of an "if-then" incentive, try a "now-that" reward, such as "Now that you've completed this project under budget, I'd like to take you out to lunch."

The "now-that" reward is less likely to be viewed by the individual as the reason for doing the work and less likely to decrease his or her intrinsic motivation.

Teresa Amabile, the Harvard Business School professor from lesson two, found that rewards unexpectedly given after workers completed a creative project are much less risky than promising rewards before the project begins. In fact, these unexpected "now-that" rewards often lead to more motivated teams.

**A word of caution:** frequent "now-that" rewards can have the same effect as an "if-then" offer. If they become too repeatable, the individual may expect the reward as part of the work.

**Lesson #4:** When you want to reward someone for their effort, make the reward unexpected.



## A Doctor's Best Medicine

Many doctors struggle to maintain their motivation while working 80-hour weeks. These long working hours often lead to burnout.

The Mayo Clinic, a prestigious medical facility, created a trial to attempt to combat burnout for their doctors.

During the trial, doctors were offered one day a week to focus on one aspect of their job they found most meaningful and enjoyable, such as patient care or research.

"Doctors who participated in this trial policy had half the burnout rate of those who did not." – Drive

**Lesson #5:** When you are on the verge of burnout, dedicate a few hours a week to doing work you find meaningful.