

# Payoff Summary

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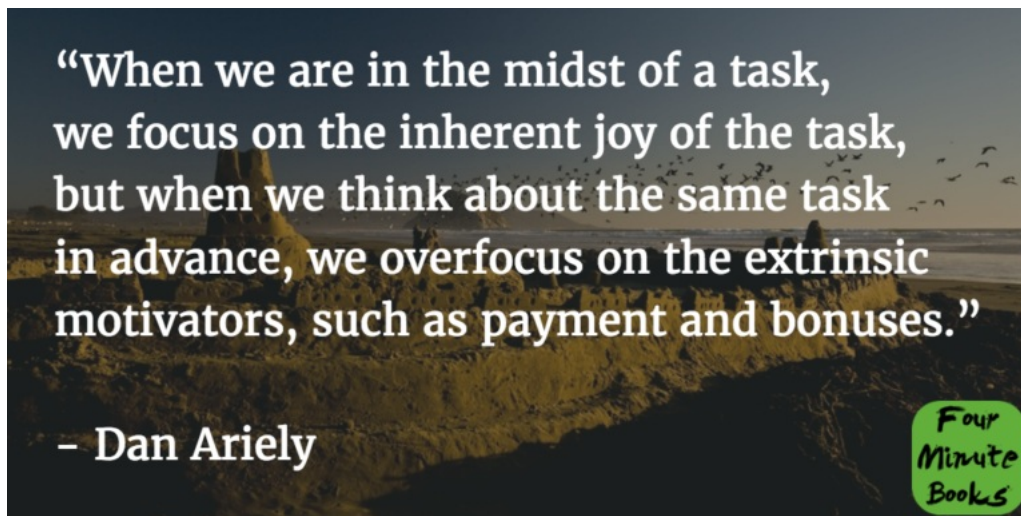


[fourminutebooks.com/payoff-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/payoff-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Payoff unravels the complex construct that is human motivation and shows you how it consists of many more parts than money and recognition, such as meaning, effort and ownership, so you can motivate yourself not just today, but every day.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Dan Ariely is awesome. He doesn't take himself so seriously, plus he always finds creative ways to make what he wants to say accessible to everyone. This is the fourth of his five books to make it on Four Minute Books.

He's primarily concerned with errors in human thinking, like how we can avoid making irrational errors, use them to our advantage or what causes us to lie.

Published in November 2016, this short book is part of TED's series of books from their speakers. It's called *Payoff* and explains why staying motivated isn't as straightforward as dangling a promotion and pay raise in front of your nose year after year.

These are the 3 lessons I learned from it today:

1. As long as your work is meaningful, it doesn't matter if it's miserable sometimes.
2. You can give your work meaning by putting in more effort.
3. External motivators, like money, don't work in the long run.

Zig Ziglar once said if motivation doesn't last, that makes it no different from bathing: you have to do it daily. So here's your dose for today (and hopefully many days after that)!

**Lesson 1: Meaningful work can be miserable, yet still make you happy.**

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Do you like your job? I mean really like it? If your pay was cut in half, would you still do it?

Even if not, chances are you're not doing it *just* for the monthly paycheck. There are other factors at play, right? Dan says reducing motivation to money and status is a huge mistake. It's a complex construct, with variables such as happiness, achievement, pride, fulfillment and countless other intangibles factoring into the equation.

The number one factor though, is **meaning**.

**If you find your work to be highly meaningful, it can be miserable, yet you'll happily tolerate it.** That's because meaning and happiness aren't the same thing.

Just think about careers, which include extremely excruciating work, whether that's physical (ultra marathoners, sculptors, kitchen chefs) or mental (writers, therapists, poker players). These people don't enjoy the task itself more than others, they just derive more meaning from it.

For most people, the best way to get a big sense of meaning from their work is to contribute to a bigger mission.

Sure, sipping pina coladas all day on a beach would be nice for a while, but the happiness from such pleasure activities is always short-lived. It can't possibly compete with the prospect of proper meaning.

## Lesson 2: Effort engenders meaning.

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Dan's next assumption lends further credibility to his last one: **effort engenders meaning**. The more work you put into something, the more meaningful it will seem to you. This principle piggybacks off one of the strongest biases in humans: the sunk cost fallacy.

Naturally, we hold on to something ever tighter, the more time and effort we invest into it. This often works against us, because it makes it hard to let go of things that aren't working, but when it comes to motivation, this can be advantageous.

Here's how Dan verified the idea: he took two groups of people and gave them the task of folding origamis. One group received well-written instructions and pictures with directional arrows, leading them step-by-step. The others were given minimal and even slightly confusing guidance.

As you would expect, the guided group's origamis looked a lot better. But when asked how much they were willing to pay for what they'd made, the do-it-yourselfers outbid the first group by far. Clearly, putting in all this work had made their results more meaningful to them.

## Lesson 3: External motivators aren't sustainable.

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Lastly, and I'm sure this won't surprise you, Dan found that **external motivators, such as money or (social) status, will work in the short run, but actually hurt your motivation long-term.**

Many studies have been conducted in this field. Dan's was done in 2013 at a semiconductor factory of Intel in Israel.

He promised workers a cash bonus they'd receive in the morning if they met a certain quota the day before. Many workers rallied and completed the task. However, the second the money was in their pocket, their productivity dropped not just back to normal levels, but even *below* them. So before offering extra cash, you're better off not incentivizing at all.

Dan controlled this with a pizza group and a compliment group. It turned out the latter performed the best throughout the week, all thanks to a simple "Well done!" text they received from their boss in the morning.

Whatever comes from the inside is a lot more powerful than any carrot or stick could possibly be.

## Payoff Review

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Short, to the point, enlightening, fun and entertaining. No fluff, no clutter. *Payoff* is everything a book should be. Just yesterday I took a walk and thought: "Hmm, actually it hasn't mattered much what I've done in life so far, I always had fun doing it." My guess was that if you give everything you do your best shot, you'll always consider it worth your while. Sure seems to be true for me. Hypothesis confirmed!

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- Why a young fashion designer might have no problem working 18 hours a day
- The reason you should never pay your children to do their chores
- How Dan made participants of a study feel like Sisyphus with lego bionicles
- What affects motivation that's related to work, but not quite the same
- Which underlying idea puts the wrong perspective on material motivators
- How you can best use your lunch break to stay motivated

## Who would I recommend the Payoff summary to?

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The 23 year old student, who keeps complaining about the material she has to study for school, the 37 year old developer, who can't think of another reason to do his job besides money, and anyone who knows they could put in more effort at work.