



The danger of extrinsic rewards on motivation – What I learned from my 5 year old

Description

Another quick one, prompted by an interesting behaviour exhibited by my daughter today that taught me rather a lot about extrinsic rewards.

I have mentioned before the research that has been done on motivation in the past by the likes of Edward Deci and the writing of Dan Pink and more. All of them point to the same thing, extrinsic rewards are bad for intrinsic motivation. The basic reasoning is that at some point, no matter how careful you are, the reward will become the reason to do the task. The extrinsic reward replaces the original intrinsic motivation.

I have in the past spoken about my daughters reward chart. On early post of mine was about what [Super Nanny](#) had taught us about gamification and what it meant for the next few generations. We had tried to be very careful about how we used the reward chart – knowing what I know about the nature of motivation. Stickers got harder to get as she mastered the art of being good!

Recently we thought we had cracked it. The reward chart had not been used in many weeks – job done. Or so we thought.

This morning I had the following conversation with my daughter.

Daughter: **“Daddy.”**

Me: *“Yes dear.”*

D: **“I haven’t had a sticker on a reward chart in ages.”**

M: *“No sweetheart. You have been really good recently, there has been no need to use it.”*

D: **“Oh. Well. I was quite naughty yesterday. Can we start using it again, then I can get that My Little Pony I wanted.”**

Do'h.

So there we have it. Total proof that the extrinsic reward has, in her mind, become a main reason to be good.

More work ahead I feel!

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