



**Daniel H. Pink**



**WHEN**

**THE SCIENTIFIC  
SECRETS OF  
PERFECT TIMING**

*Discussion Guide for*  
**BUSINESS**





1. Pink argues that individuals and organizations don't consider questions of "when" as seriously as they do questions of "what," "who," and "how." How true is that of your workplace?
2. Are you a lark, an owl, or a third bird? How about the people you work with? What are the implications for your organization?
3. People tend to move through the day in three stages: a peak (best for analytic work), a trough (best for administrative work), and a recovery (best for insight work.) In your own job, what are two or three core tasks that you should handle in each stage?
4. Can people in your organization schedule their work according to their chronotypes? If that's not possible all the time, what are a few ways to balance the demands and surprises of the workday while also granting people some autonomy to take advantage of their own daily rhythms?
5. When organizations schedule meetings, they typically apply only one criterion: availability. How can you be more strategic and take advantage of the "synchrony effect" (p. 32) when scheduling meetings?
6. Pink describes a fictional Hospital of Doom, in which patients suffer significantly worse outcomes as the day progresses. If you're a medical professional, how does your hospital or practice combat the dip? Can you develop your own checklists and vigilance breaks?
7. Does your organization view breaks as an essential part of performance or as a mild form of slackery? How about you? Have you scheduled at least one break today that is social, moving, outside, and fully detached?
8. Think of a current long-term project. If you've lost momentum, or fear you might lose momentum in the future, what is a fresh start date in the next 60 days that can reinvigorate your pursuit of the goal?
9. Now consider an upcoming project. Have you done a premortem (see p. 107)? If not, take 15 minutes and try it now.



10. Midpoints exert a dual effect on our behavior. Sometimes they fire us up; other times they drag us down. How can you increase the odds that midpoints operate as a spark instead of a slump?
11. Pink suggests that organizations extend mentoring beyond young employees to people in the middle of their careers. What do you think about mid-career mentoring? Is it something your organization ought to try?
12. When an end becomes visible, people often kick harder. How can you enlist the energizing effect of endings in your organization? When are interim deadlines and short fuses effective?
13. What is one thing you can do at the end of a customer experience or transaction to create an ending that elevates?
14. Managers often try to soften negative feedback by starting with good news, yet Pink shows most people prefer to receive the bad news first. Do you prefer the good news before the bad news or vice versa? How does that preference affect the way you give feedback?
15. Competitive rowing teams have a specified person whose job it is to ensure synchrony. Who at your organization draws the team together and fosters a sense of unity? What, specifically, do they do to build group cohesion?
16. Group synchronization also depends on a sense of belonging – which, in the case of the Indian dabbawalas, is fostered through codes, garb, and touch. How does your organization nurture belonging? Is it working?
17. What is one thing you're going to do tomorrow based on the ideas in this book?

## NOTES

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