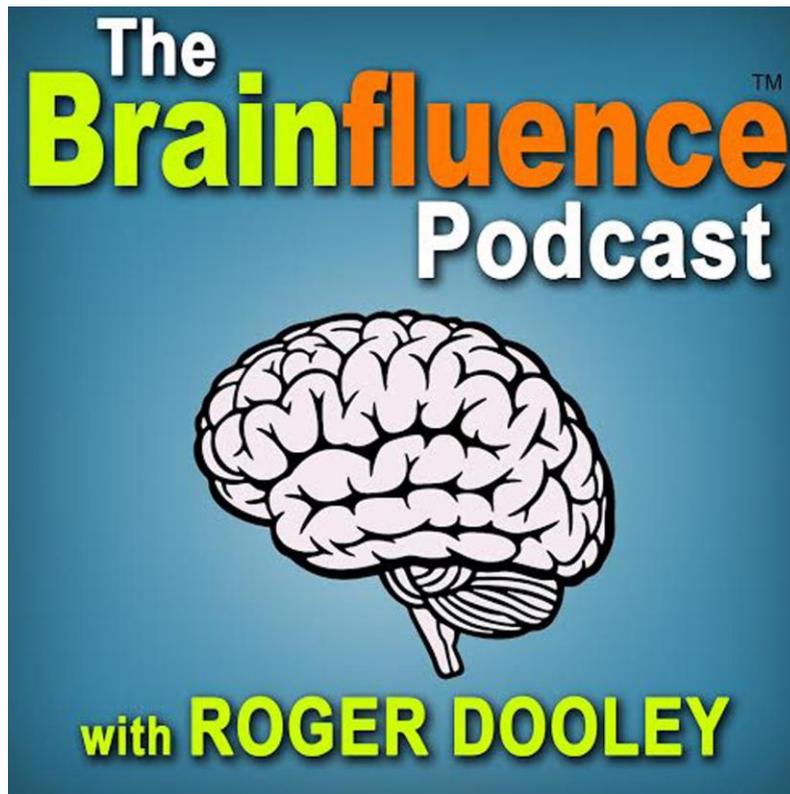


Ep #27: Unselling with Scott Stratten



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Roger Dooley

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Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley, author, speaker and educator on neuromarketing and the psychology of persuasion. Every week, we talk with thought leaders that will help you improve your influence with factual evidence and concrete research. Introducing your host, Roger Dooley.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast. This is Roger Dooley, and this week we have a special guest, Scott Stratten. He's the president of Unmarketing, who's an expert in viral, social and authentic marketing, which he calls Unmarketing, and in fact, "Un" is kind of a theme. Apple has the iPhone and iPad and so on, and Scott has pretty much got the "Un" thing down, except for I guess the "Uncola."

Scott is a sought after keynote speaker and I know he's good because I've seen him speak at ... If you haven't, check out a video or two of his. He brings a lot of energy and humor to his keynotes, a lot of fun to watch, but you learn a lot too.

Scott has written multiple bestselling business books, and he has a brand new one out, *Unselling: the New Customer Experience*.

Scott, welcome to the show. Did I miss any key factors in your bio there?

Scott Stratten: No, you didn't, Roger. We are trying to get "Uncola." It's really hard to get it, but we're working on it. I think that's the last kind of feather in the cap for us.

Roger Dooley: I think from 7Up sales, you may be getting closer and closer to that objective.

Scott Stratten: It might become to a reachable price.

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Roger Dooley: Pretty soon you'll see it on eBay.

Before we get to your new book, Scott, let's go back to one of your pet peeves, QR codes. Your last book was titled, amusingly enough, QR Codes Kill Kittens, and it was really full of hilarious photos of misused graphics and people who put QR codes in totally ridiculous places like trailing behind an airplane and on a door that slid away as you approached it and so on.

What do you think the state of QR code insanity is now? Have things improved since you wrote your book?

Scott Stratten: Ah, heck. My book has done nothing. They've just gotten worse, I think. I have to set it straight. I don't have an issue with the technology. I love technology. I'm a huge geek, and QR codes have led a wonderful life for decades, have been used in logistics and for sporting event tickets and movie tickets and airplane boarding passes.

When the technology and the equipment is there to scan them readily, then there's no problem. It's when we started using them as a consumer marketing tool, that's when the insanity started. It's just gotten worse.

I'm sure anybody listening, you can't go a day driving without seeing them plastered on trucks or cars or buses. That principle alone, the fact that motion plus distance is not a good scanning environment. Then you look up on a billboard and they have something on the billboard off the freeway.

It's the definition for me of misused digital marketing where we're using it because we can and not because we should.

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Roger Dooley: Now, for those billboards, you probably need the telephoto lens attachment and really high ISO speed to capture that thing before you whiz past it at 60 miles an hour.

Scott Stratten: The only people that should use them are injury attorneys, on billboards. You're going to get into an accident scanning it, so you're already ready to go.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, but who benefits? Is it the other attorneys because you cause the accident?

Scott Stratten: That's true. That's very true. "Sue us and we'll represent you at the same time."

Roger Dooley: I like the concept of your new book. It's another take on selling. I know I just talked a few weeks ago to John Jance, who's also sort of jumped from marketing to selling with his new book.

One of the key concepts that you talk about at the very beginning of the book, Scott, is funnel vision, which, and I spend a lot of time in the conversion space, so everybody talks about conversion funnel, and it's not a perfect model, but what do you mean by "funnel vision," and is it a good thing or a bad thing?

Scott Stratten: Funnel vision is something that, first, we look at the funnel. That's everything. Then also we look at it improperly. I'm from a classical sales background. I used to be a national sales training manager in the packaging industry, so I know that funnel side of things. My first problem with the funnel is that we look at it, we think it's actually what it's not. We put everything into the funnel.

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To me a funnel is where we can reach out and control the contact. A true funnel is an email address, a mailing address, a phone number, a card at a tradeshow. The problem is we've lumped everything else into the funnel now, saying social media is part of the funnel, so if you get a "Like" or a "Follow" or a "Friend" or a "Contact," that too becomes part of the funnel. Actually, social media is more of a social sieve.

In classical funnel, if I send an email, you have to react to it, delete it, read it, don't open it, whatever you want to do. If I mail something to your business, you have to decide whether or not to discard it or not. But if I tweet something, unless you are on Twitter within that very small timeframe ... it could be five, ten minutes sometimes ... you will not see that tweet.

If I post something on my business page on Facebook and you've liked my business page ... you're a fan, as we used to say ... then only when the Facebook gods deem it worthy of their algorithm may it be served in your news feed.

A lot of businesses are looking at about 3 to 5%, if that, that's just being served up, so that's not to me a true funnel. I don't think social is part of a funnel. I never thought it was a good sales marketing tool. I think it's more of a customer service than a communication and connection tool. We're looking at the funnel wrong, first off.

Secondly, the problem is we're only looking at the funnel as an immediate sales process funnel. We get the lead, let's say, in a classical sense, we get your info. We throw you some emails. We throw you some product information, and then you may purchase.

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The problem is that's where the funnel ends classically. To me, and what Unselling is, is it's everything that comes before, even before you get into the funnel, and everything that happens after, because to create the best customers and more customers to me is to create repeat customers, so customer service, operations, every part of a company, is actually involved in that sales process.

If you look at it now, again, we both know data and numbers, and they're very popular. Everyone wants to back up their own argument. They'll use the headline data they want. Sixty percent of especially B2B purchasing decisions are made before they even get into that classical funnel, so decisions are now being made much more so before they reach out to you, so there's more of a sales cloud out there, full of ...

That's where you throw an SCO and content marketing and social media and reviews and blogs and videos, all those things, and forums, is that that's a cloud that everybody is pulling from, everyone's funnel is pulling from. But every time somebody buys from you, they go back into that sales cloud, so they are susceptible to be going to other places of competition.

A sale is not just about the transaction that happens when they decide to purchase. Selling is an ongoing, to me, organic type of thing.

Roger Dooley: Of course, what happens after the sale is just as important, because that's where a lot of the information in the cloud comes from, and if you've got a lot of great reviews out there and people who are not saying your product sucks, then you're likely to sell a lot more product.

Maybe the problem with the funnel aspect, the classic line is, "When you have a hammer, everything looks like a

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nail." I suppose if you have a funnel, then every customer contact looks like something that you could dump into the top of it and hope that a sale falls out the bottom.

Scott Stratten: The problem is it's falling out. It actually literally does come out and leaves. That's my big issue, is that we don't understand about how that whole thing works anymore. People are so much more pre-educated, to me. We're not as much the experts anymore for answers for them as we are kind of the facilitator of hopefully that sale and ongoing ones.

We don't think about that. We say, well, ask anybody in business, "What's the best marketing tool," and it's, "Word of mouth;" right? It's referrals, but we're not doing things to gain those referrals.

On the flip side of what you were saying, if we have bad reviews, that also will hurt us more than any kind of marketing we can try to counteract it.

I actually had somebody in Istanbul, when I spoke there, after my talk, put up her hand and says, "Hey, we're getting really hit on Twitter with how bad our product is. How do we fix that?"

I just kind of stared for a second. I'm like, "That's funny." She goes, "I'm serious." I'm, "You don't have a Twitter problem. You have a product problem." You can be on every social site, be on every platform, but if your product or service is terrible, that nothing else matters. Fix that first and then look at everything else.

Roger Dooley: I think that Turkey was going to filter Twitter, weren't they? Maybe they could take that approach.

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Scott Stratten: Maybe the problem is solved. Letting nobody talk is not the best way to do word of mouth for sure.

Roger Dooley: Scott, I fly a lot, like you, and I've grown attached to my elite status and perks and the boarding early and all that kind of stuff. It would be really hard to pull me away from United Airlines, which happens to be my airline, I wouldn't say of choice; that's the one that I happen to build my status on. It's sort of a self-reinforcing thing.

You actually were elite on Air Canada, and despite the overwhelming advantage ... To me, it would take a lot of effort to change just because you've got to build up your points and so on and you're going to be giving up stuff in the meantime, but you actually transitioned away from Air Canada. Tell us about that story. Was it proactive marketing by WestJet, or was it more of a failure by Air Canada?

Scott Stratten: I wasn't elite on Air Canada. I was super-elite. I have the highest level you can possibly get, which means I have no life; I'm just on airplanes all the time. I was at the level of judging people who were elite. I was over 100K on them. I got everything you wanted, and I was doing the exact thing. I got the best treatment and the upgrades and everything else, so I was happy.

Imagine how poorly they have to treat somebody to want to leave from there. Two years ago, I was 100,000, and this year I will end up being 28,000 on them on purpose. That's because, from WestJet, there was no marketing from WestJet. The bar was set so low that you didn't have to do anything to make me want to leave.

With Air Canada it was not one incident. It was 12 of them. That's the thing we have to realize, when we lose

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customers, when they switch over, let's say from an airline, which you said, the barrier to change is huge. We have a lot of vested time and points and interest in these places, so for me it was a whole bunch of things.

We talked about in selling it's about the pulse and your customer pulse. It's just these little blips. It's not usually one thing that makes you leave a company. It's a combination of issues and no resolution or no satisfactory resolution to those issues, which maybe just start to go down, down, down and to the point where I was in that vulnerable stage where I was looking for anyplace that would allow me.

Let's be honest here. To me, my hierarchy of flying, number one, is direct flights, so if you are called "Horrible Airlines" ... that's your name ... but you're the only direct flight from here to Albuquerque, I'll take that direct flight. I need to make that trip, so that's why I have still 28,000 on Air Canada, because they offer only direct flights to certain places. But after direct flight, now I'm looking at what airplane is good, what makes it easy to change.

It's Air Canada's fault that I looked at their competition. Now, that's a statement that people need to hear is that it's your fault when people go to your competitors. You had the hardest part done. I was a customer. I was a loyal customer, and I was part of your loyalty program, and I left. That is solely and absolutely only Air Canada's fault. That was not because WestJet was good or better. That was their fault.

WestJet is great, but they're great across the board; the Twitter account, the people, to the point where I got on a flight, and I was just kind of going over the final looks and writing a little bit of one of the chapters about Air Canada.

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I'm sitting on a WestJet flight at the front, and somebody got on and said to the flight attendant, "Hey, my name is 'So-and-So,' and I'm a VP of WestJet and I'll be helping you out today." She's like, "Oh, great." He goes and sits down in his seat.

I didn't think much of it. It was nice he introduced himself. But then after we got up to a certain altitude and they started doing the drink service, he got out of his seat, literally rolled up his sleeves and worked the cart with the flight attendant and walked away. Didn't introduce himself to everybody, "I'm the VP," "I'm the VP," "I'm the VP;" he just helped.

I was blown away at how amazing is this that I was working on the chapter about airlines on the plane. And I went to the flight attendant. I said, "Does this happen all the time?" And she looks at me and goes, "Yeah. Yeah, it starts with our president, our founder, does it, which means everybody else does it. And that's what WestJet is like." My jaws dropped. "Do you guys know right now I'm writing this chapter." So I got his name and I got her name. I'm like, "I'm going to put you in the book." She's like, "No, you're not." I'm like, "Yeah, I am." Now they're in the chapter. That's the point where ...

The problem with talking about being good to your customers and connecting and all that stuff, it's really kind of warm and fuzzy. There's not a lot of numbers, but I have numbers to show the revenue that has shifted from Air Canada over to WestJet and also over to Delta. Delta and WestJet have their combined, partner airlines. But I shifted so much revenue. There is a direct bottom line of that.

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The problem is that will never show up on Air Canada's annual report. It will never show up and say, "Well, we went down this revenue because we're terrible at a lot of things." They'll just say because of this market or that market we changed it, and that's not the case. It's, make my life easy when I travel. If I cancel a WestJet flight, my money goes into the WestJet account, and I can rebook it. I don't have to call somebody and get an approval or a voucher.

I'm on stage two weeks ago in Arizona. A Delta flight connecting gets delayed, and I'm about to walk on stage in front of 600 people, and I have the app, and I just press ... The app pops up and says, "Would you like to go to this other flight, you make your connection." It says it's going to LA an Orlando. I press one button, and it switched me. That's technology. Forget QR codes and everything else. Does your technology help people?

That's what Delta did and the same as WestJet does that as well. They make my life easier. They make me feel happy to spend money with them, and now I'm a Medallion member on Delta and I'm at the top of WestJet's program too. That was in under 18 months that I went from 100,000 to nothing at all, barely, to being a member on both other airlines.

Roger Dooley: That's a pretty amazing story considering the difficulty of switching and the pain involved. The classic sales maxim is, "It costs you ten times as much to get a new customer as it does to retain an existing one," even though so often the focus on sales is new customer acquisition and just figuring that existing customers will take care of themselves.

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Scott Stratten: Right, which is the worst. That's the last thing you should be saying about existing customers take care of themselves. It's our job. It's our job as businesses to take care of them. That's the point. That's where you realize, hey, if it hits the fan, and you cannot stop that from happening. You can't prevent screw-ups. It's now we recover from them. I think both for me currently Delta and WestJet both recover from problems and treat me well to the point that I give them all the money I can.

Roger Dooley: Fascinating stuff.

Changing gears a little bit, one of my pet peeves are open office plans. In the middle of your book you mention that briefly. Where do you fall on the open plan office versus the more privacy spectrum?

Scott Stratten: You know what's bad for productivity? People. That's what hurts productivity a lot, I think. I think from creativity to productivity, that this whole concept of this open ... I'm not one for putting more cubicles in necessarily. I had a cubicle when I had, in my short-lived corporate life, and I understand that, but this point that free-flowing information has to happen in physically open free-flowing space is concerning to me. There's so much noise, so much distraction and so many interruptions.

Back in my employee days at places, all my day was managing interruptions, and I just don't think that helps anybody in companies. I had an office and a door, let alone, I understand creativity. I understand getting together and a meeting of the minds, but I don't think that happens eight hours a day.

I think you do need time to focus sometimes, I think literally to the point that you have to schedule in

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productivity time at work without interruptions. We schedule meetings, and we have no problem. They're useless, for the most part, but we say we want everything open. Well, it's a great way to get a lot of nothing done for me.

Roger Dooley: I know that there is certainly plenty of research out there that shows the loss in productivity from interruptions and in particular if you're engaged in some kind of a complex task like coding where you sort of have to build a mental construct of what you're doing, you have to remember where bits and pieces are of the code you're working on, and you sort of build this thing in your head, and then somebody comes in and says, "Hey, what about those Patriots?"

Scott Stratten: Yeah, It's not pretty; yeah.

Roger Dooley: Immediately all that sort of vanishes in your head. The statistic that I've seen from actual research shows that it takes about 20 minutes to recover from one interruption. Even in a situation where you have some degree of privacy, it's not quite the same.

I know when I transitioned years ago from an office, where I actually did have a private office and a door that I could close, to a home office where basically I was completely alone for the whole time, the difference that I saw was pretty amazing. I would get into I guess what some folks might call a flow state and sort of wake up two hours later and realize that I had gotten a whole bunch of stuff done. That just didn't happen in an office environment, where even just a phone ringing. If you don't have to answer it, it's still that little interruption. "Is somebody going to get that?" It's not quite the same.

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Scott Stratten: That 20 minutes of recovery time, that's just one interruption.

Roger Dooley: Oh, yeah.

Scott Stratten: Think of how many happen during the day from the idle kind of chit-chat to the noises, to the sounds. I imagine, I remember when I used to close my door sometimes at the work place, one of the VPs came to me and said, "We need you to be a team player here. We need more as a community feel."

I'm a team player because I get my job done. I'm trying to get work done here that you don't see ... "Well, we need to be open for the pop-in and the drop-in." We can also have those virtually. Those happened a lot too, where we create our own distractions, but I don't think there's anything wrong with wanting to get stuff done.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, definitely.

One thing our fellow Wiley author, Brian Solis, talks about is the future of business in part being ruled by, I guess you'd call it sort of an enforced transparency, that businesses can no longer create a façade and hide behind it, largely driven by social media. I'm guessing that you would agree with that premise pretty strongly.

Scott Stratten: I certainly would. What I don't agree ... and this is not what Brian would say ... but that a lot of people in social say, is that everybody needs to be on Twitter, and all CEOs should be blogging, and everybody can be transparent. I don't think that's a good idea.

First of all, I think if the person is a jerk or not moral, I don't think they should be exposed to people. That's not a

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good thing for a company. Also, maybe it's not their strength. Maybe it's not their time. Maybe it's not their abilities to be doing that.

I'm a huge fan of enabling people's strengths and not improving weaknesses. I think that we focus on people's strengths, but I do love transparency. I love the other side of it, that good companies come out good and bad companies can be exposed. I love that about social. I love that about review sites. I love that about stuff that companies can now be held accountable. I think it's an important part, and trust in business.

Roger Dooley: It really makes brands have to be a lot more truthful in what they're saying about themselves. You can't just run a bunch of TV spots and create that impression, because if it doesn't match up ...

Sort of along those same lines, you talk about the moral offense and gave me an example of the Mozilla CEO, whose politics didn't line up with apparently large numbers of social media users, and he ended up being forced out.

It didn't result in the exact same thing, but about a year ago I wrote an article about Abercrombie & Fitch, where their CEO was taken to task for some comments about not wanting to sell to unattractive people and that sort of thing. The thing that was amazing about that wasn't just the fact that there was a huge amount of outrage about his opinions, but that that opinion was actually six years old or so, and it had been written in a magazine interview and just sort of languished there forever, but in the sort of new world of social media and picking up causes, that ended up being resurrected and going viral so many years after. I thought that was pretty interesting.

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Is there a dark side to this? Is social media turning into a mob where just one scrap of information from an executive or a celebrity could suddenly turn into a huge campaign against the brand or against that individual?

Scott Stratten: I firmly believe that outrage is contagious. That's for sure. Something that you didn't even know about or care about yesterday is your biggest concern today. I understand it, but I also understand it's also overblown a lot of the times. Was it really a scoop or breaking news that Abercrombie & Fitch only wants to sell to attractive people? They have shirt-less models standing in front of their stores. I actually think that can help the brand when you get rid of the outrage.

At the end of the day, is your target market getting angry? So for Abercrombie & Fitch, are good-looking people going to get angry, or did it help them even more if people are saying, "Yeah, exactly. I go there because I'm good-looking." I don't know if it actually hurts. There's levels of moral outrage. It depends on what it is.

Yet, like the Mozilla CEO being ousted is a good example of what in theory happens to me right, but sometimes ... When the Chick-fil-A huge type of thing happened and the same-sex marriage and that issue, where that actually attracted certain demographics to them more and repelled another side. I think when you're polarizing, we all look at the bad side, the angry side. I've built a business on being polarizing. I've seen the angry side of it, but when you flip it, it also attracts people stronger to you that have the same beliefs or the same wants and needs.

Although outrage is contagious, sometimes it's just kind of within the echo chamber of Twitter and not necessarily as a whole business.

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What we've been seeing in the NFL in the past month, which is justifiable and of course, obviously people getting behind it is a good thing, so I see the good of it and we're holding people publicly accountable. Let's not kid ourselves. The reason why the NFL teams or the NFL or Chick-fil-A, or anyplace is reacting and apologized is because of public pressure and sponsors threatening to stop or doing it. It's where the money is. They didn't suddenly get moral yesterday or something.

I just think we do have to also take things with a grain of salt, that there's still humans. There's people behind these accounts. There's individuals there. We're not faceless. Coming from a guy who wrote a book, the kittens one, that was all brand screw-ups, I also have to be aware that there are always people being affected by what we do or say. People can lose their job because they mis-tweeted something, which affects their family, which affects their lives. I think we do have to realize that there's all these people at the other end of these things.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. There was that incident maybe a year or so ago with the, I think it was a PR lady who, before she was getting on a plane ...

Scott Stratten: Justine Sacco, yeah.

Roger Dooley: Made an inappropriate tweet about Africa. By the time she landed she was out of a job. It was inappropriate, but it seemed like there was just such a groundswell of opinion, that that was more of a mob action than a well-reasoned business decision.

Scott Stratten: Yeah. Somebody showed up at the airport to confront her about it. There's a line that we get to, and I am happy that she lost that job. I think that was a horrible, horrible thing

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to say, that you say you're flying to Africa, you hope you don't get AIDS. Who says that? Especially somebody in PR.

It's in Unselling. We talk about that incident, but the problem is, some friends of mine in the industry say, "We'd hire her because now she's gone through it so she knows not to do it." I'm like, "Nope, nope, still not good." She got a job eventually and everything else.

I just think I don't want to be in a world where tweeting that gets brushed away and brushed aside. I don't want to do it. I don't want to live in a world where domestic violence is allowed for NFL players. I don't want to live in a world where making a joke about AIDS across an entire country who's suffered incredibly from a disease that it's okay. I don't want it to be okay anymore and I'm glad it's not.

Roger Dooley: Well, I think that the new world of social media is definitely starting to enforce that.

If you look back over the years of how many things were covered up so readily by any kind of organization, and now those kinds of cover-ups are just about impossible because somebody will talk and someone else will pick up the cause. If it's deserving of attention, it will get a lot of it.

Scott Stratten: That's where I think where Brian is coming from with that too, about the enforced transparency. That's what I like about it, that you really are, you've got to sit back and say, "Do we want to see this on a billboard tomorrow?" That's really where it holds you accountable, where you have this site, like a glass door and stuff, that internal people will post things and say things. I think that accountability

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is due. It's overdue. If it makes anybody think twice about doing something that's unethical, that's a better world we live in.

Roger Dooley: Well, Scott, we're almost out of time. If you had one additional important lesson that it's in your book that businesses need to know about, what do you think that would be, either in the overall underlying message or some other topic that you think is often overlooked by businesses?

Scott Stratten: I think one of the biggest things, one of my kind of key anchors I've been talking about for five years now has been about social media, is the fact that I was nearly fed up with social media recently and to the point, even Twitter, and I'm the biggest fan of Twitter you'll find, is that we create our own noise on these things and not to contribute to the noise, where instead of being companies and brands who just post schedule and cross-promote and just talk, so just announce things, that we've got to get back to conversation.

We've got to get back to talking back with each other as business owners and just people in general. I want social media to come back to being social, not just media. I think there's still strength there and power there that we can create communities and connections, but it's really hard when most people are contributing to the noise. I think we can change that.

Roger Dooley: Very good.

Let me remind our audience that we have been speaking to Scott Stratten, and his new book is Unselling: The New Customer Experience. We will have links to the book as

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well as Scott's website and so on the Show Notes page at rogerdooley.com.

Scott, how should our listeners find your stuff online or get in touch with you?

Scott Stratten: Unmarketing.com is the site. At Unmarketing is the name on most social media platforms. If you want to go right to the book, it's unsellingthebook.com.

Come on Unpodcast any time and listen in to Allison and I rip apart some businesses.

Roger Dooley: Great. Thanks so much, Scott. It's been fun talking.

Scott Stratten: Thanks, Roger.

Roger Dooley: Thank you for joining me for this episode of the Brainfluence Podcast. To continue the discussion and to find your own path to brainy success, please visit us at rogerdooley.com.

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