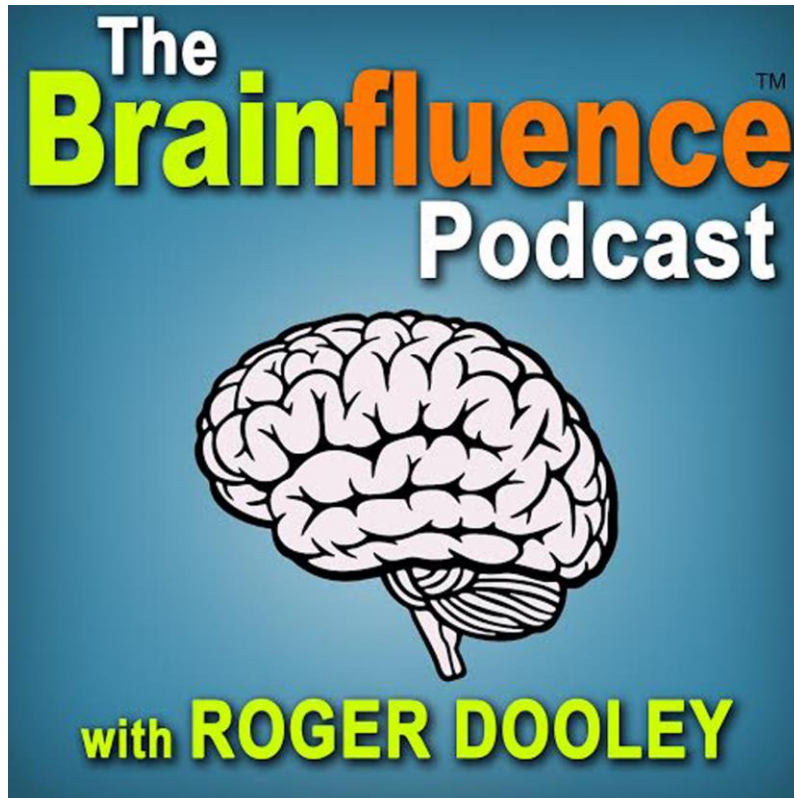


Ep #40: Smarter Conversions with Peep Laja



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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. Our guest today is Peep Laja. Peep is an entrepreneur and conversation optimization expert. He's been doing digital marketing for 10 or more years in Europe, the Middle East, Central America and the United States, staying one step ahead of Interpol, I guess.

He's run a software company in Europe, an SCO agency in Panama, a real estate portal in Dubai and today he runs a conversion optimization agency, Markitekt and publishes a conversion optimization blog ConversionXL.

His latest project is a ConversionXL Live Conference which will be here in Austin this coming March. Peep is yet another Austin conversion expert, part of the Austin conversion mafia and even though he's local, today we're speaking by Skype rather than meeting in person. Peep, welcome to the show.

Peep Laja: Thanks Roger. Thanks for having me.

Roger Dooley: Great. Let me ask you, I've asked the Eisenbergs this because they were migrants to Austin. What brought you to Austin of all the places in the world that you could be in? In fact you've checked out quite a few of them it sounds like.

Peep Laja: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). Well, actually it's kind of a coincidence because when I lived in Dubai in 2005 and

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'06, I fell in love with a girl who happened to be from Austin, Texas. It was love that brought me to Austin.

Roger Dooley: Wow, so it was not the fact that it was the conversion hub of the United States and maybe even the world. It was just happenstance, although I guess your presence here helps add to that reputation. Very good. That's a fascinating story, Peep.

First, I want to compliment you on the excellent quality content that you've been publishing at ConversionXL. Many of your posts are really detailed and well-illustrated. I'm guessing that you're a real believer in content marketing.

Peep Laja: Oh I am. My whole business was built on it and I blog like my business depended on it, because it does.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). It's really great. I know I've shared a lot of your stuff. Do you find that the bar is being raised for content marketing overall? That what was a good blog post a few years ago, today would be sort of lost in the shuffle?

Peep Laja: Right, absolutely. A few years ago you could write short, superficial blog posts that don't rely on any sources. You could just voice your opinions and people would be all over that stuff. Not so today. If you look at the most popular blogs and let's forget celebrities like Seth Godin can still write ...

Roger Dooley: Yeah, he can still do the 100 word post and have it be shared a million times, but it doesn't work for the rest of us.

Peep Laja: No, not really, yeah.

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Roger Dooley: We don't have his exact skill of putting things into such simple, beautiful terms too. He really is good at that.

Peep Laja: Right. He wrote this one sentence blog post and it was good. The rest of us, we need to work hard as the noise level on the internet is getting too much and the amount of good blogs is growing, so in order to stand out you just can't publish and hope it works. You need to really work hard.

Roger Dooley: Right, well it seems like everybody's a content marketer these days whether it's big brands or small businesses. The local pool guy is a content marketer.

Peep Laja: Yeah, lots of clueless people still around. There's still way more crap content and it's a shame to see how much human potential goes to waste because people don't know what they're doing. I welcome the competition, that there's more good content because that urges all of us to do better.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). Do you do search ads too to promote your business or are you relying pretty much on content?

Peep Laja: It's content and referrals. No paid gigs.

Roger Dooley: Right. That's a refrain I'm hearing more and more these days, that companies who are successful content marketers. Now obviously if you're putting out mediocre posts, you're going to be disappointed with the amount of traffic they're generating, but for those companies that have sort of cracked the content marketing code, many of them find that the cost per conversion is a lot lower than any kind of paid ad.

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Peep Laja: You know it's also, it depends what you sell. When I sell and expensive and very complicated consulting service, fees run into \$10,000 per month and up, it's not something you would buy based on an ad click.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative)

Peep Laja: You need to demonstrate expertise, build a relationship, all that stuff. Ads don't do that. Content marketing can.

Roger Dooley: Right. You're establishing authority too along the way.

Peep Laja: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative)

Roger Dooley: In addition the generating traffic. You probably have a more elegant way of breaking this down, but it seems to me that there are two common conversion situations. One is a dedicated landing page where a page is established to take traffic from perhaps paid search ads or a particular social media campaign or something like that where you pretty much know what the visitor is looking for, what the source of the traffic is. You know their intent.

Then the other approach, the other category is a content page, something like a blog post, an About Us page, a homepage, it could be any page on a website where you don't really always know how the visitor got there, why they came.

Let's look first at landing pages and tap into some of your wisdom for our listeners here. What are some of the most common mistakes you see when you're called in on a project?

Peep Laja: A common flaw is that people draw paid traffic either to their homepage or onto a page that does not have a focused message. The way you should approach it is you

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start with the campaign in mind. You have something that you want to promote, you have an offer you want people to opt into your email list. Whatever that is.

Now you figure out how you're going to get the traffic that wants that offer so you can create targeted ads or send targeted tweets. What have you. That works really, really well if the message that you spread to drive traffic to that landing page matches the content of the landing page.

It's focused on a single offer. Apart from people just not being very focused on it, not very focused about their offer or how they get the people there, there are all typical problems. Number one, clarity. People can't figure out within a few seconds what your page is actually about and why they should care.

Coming up with a value proposition is hard work of course, especially if what you offer is not that unique. Of course it comes down to businesses not really knowing what's the unique thing that they could offer.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). Right, and I think probably focusing on themselves too much as opposed to focusing on what the visitor might be looking for or what the visitor needs.

Peep Laja: Right, yeah. Copyrighting. It's a huge problem. People start writing, "We are ... Our business was founded in 19 ..." Who cares? People care about their problems. They're looking for solutions to their problems. Yeah.

Roger Dooley: Right. I've seen some horrific search ads where, one for actually a major retailer, one of the top two or three retailers in the country. I searched for ... I won't go into

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why I was searching for this particular term, but it was umbrella holes.

I got a search ad, Find umbrella holes at ... The name of this retailer. I click through and of course they didn't actually stock umbrella holes, which would be a pretty difficult thing to have an inventory and instead it gave me some very generic search page of stuff that was vaguely related to umbrellas.

Talk about a waste of money. You find out how many millions of other clicks they're paying for that are doing nothing for them.

It seems like these days we talk a lot about content marketing, a lot of the traffic coming to sites is not coming through dedicated landing pages where you can match the search term and do all those good things that you do on a landing page so that the visitor can't help but understand what's going on.

Instead you get people who are coming to the site through organic search, maybe a link they clicked on Twitter and they're ending up on content pages. They may have different motivations, but probably what they really wanted to do is read the content, so how do you try and convert these people without annoying them?

Peep Laja: Right. A part of that traffic that just randomly happens to your site, they have no intention of buying anything from you ever because they just don't need what you offer, so you can't convert everybody. Nothing to do about it.

As for the other portion that might convert down the line, you just need to know that you can't rush it. You can't say that, "Hey, now that you're reading an article on my blog

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why don't you pay me \$10,000 a month and buy my service." You know? It doesn't work that way.

You're rushing it. The way to convert those is to start with a micro-conversions, capturing emails is absolutely the best way. Of course you can get them to follow you on social media as well if those are your main channels of communication and so on and so forth.

Of course email is the best. How do we capture emails and without pissing everybody off? The thing is that pissing some of the people off, let's say with an aggressive method like a popup. It's like well we shouldn't do that because that's bad user experience.

On my blog, ConversionXL, I ran this test. I know I want to capture emails because it's very important for my business. I split tested a static offer on the sidebar of my blog. The offer was an AB Testing guide, a PDF download.

That versus a scroll triggered box where it was just like a box that appears as the user scrolls down. It is not as annoying as popup, meaning that users have showed some kind of engagement already. They've interacted with the...

Roger Dooley: Right because they're looking farther down the page.

Peep Laja: Right. Then a movement happens which captures their attention. They opt in or not. Then popup that is triggered either after certain seconds or when they detect exit intent. When the user moves the mouse cursor either to the X or the back button, so then they're hit with a popup.

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When testing that on my blog, the winner here was the scroll triggered box by quite a huge margin. I think like 25, 30% margin.

Roger Dooley: Even better than the popup?

Peep Laja: Even better than the popup. However, I took it one step further. I thought well, why does it have to be this or that? Why don't I try combining both the static scroll trigger box and the popup? Three ways to capture emails.

The first concern would be that it's too much, they're cannibalizing each other and all that, however what ended up happening when I have all three email capture methods, I capture 30% more emails than with one capture method alone.

When I look at the number of emails that I get over a course of 30 days, over a month, with that extra popup added, it's just so worth it to me for my business. Thirty percent more subscribers each month is huge.

Roger Dooley: Oh yeah.

Peep Laja: That's way more important than two people a month complaining about it.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). I think people now seem to be fairly accustomed to popups to subscribe. I think as long as they're relatively easy to close, it's not confusing as to how you close them if you're not interested, they're less annoyed than the old advertising popups that were typically for something totally irrelevant that sometimes appeared above your current window. Sometimes they appeared below your current window.

Peep Laja: Right.

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Roger Dooley: It was always for something that you had absolutely no interest in where it's pretty logical, but if you're visiting a content site, they might ask you to subscribe. It's actually a benefit if you're interested in the content because you're going to get notified of new content for free. I think that people are generally pretty accepting of that.

Peep Laja: Right, right. Actually I saw an interesting case from our Dutch friends Online Dialogue, Tom and Bart ...

Roger Dooley: I talked to Bart yesterday believe it or not.

Peep Laja: All right. Well, maybe he mentioned the popup split test they did on a hotel website. If he didn't then I will tell you about it.

Roger Dooley: No, no. Go ahead, Peep.

Peep Laja: It's a hotel. I don't even remember what the popup offer was, but the point was that most people just closed the popup. By most, it was like 99%.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative).

Peep Laja: That was okay because actually the offer, the thing that they wanted to use it to do was not to opt in to popup offer, but to book a hotel stay. What ended up happening was that people who saw the popup and closed it right away were more likely to book a hotel stay. They made more money.

The post rasterization for the test was that it could be it's because the popup made them interact with the site.

Roger Dooley: Oh, very interesting.

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Peep Laja: It's kind of like you go to an Apple store and all the laptops there are, the leaves are at a 45 degree angle so in order to use the computer, to play with it, you need to tilt the screen up so you're interacting with it. It's kind of the same idea.

As you said, people are more accustomed to it and actually it even might help.

Roger Dooley: That's really fascinating. Bart's got some crazy stuff that he's tested and found works like adding an irrelevant link below the submit button or something like that where it sort of violates what conversion best practice of never put an irrelevant link on the page or even a nonessential link on the page because somebody might click it.

They could stick something like, "Like us on Facebook" underneath their call to action and it will actually increase the conversion rate, which is bizarre but he's got the numbers.

Peep Laja: Yeah, we human beings, we're weird.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, yeah. Well, I guess that's what keeps some of us in business. One technique I've seen is a full screen call to action when you arrive at a site, you don't really see the content. You see just a big screen. I know our friend Noah Kagan with AppSumo I think does something like that.

Have you seen that or tested that? To me I think it's certainly effective in getting in front of people, but I know I've occasionally not really realized that there was content down below. There wasn't a big arrow that says read the content. I click on a link or something and I arrive at a site and all I see is a big picture or a form or something. It's like oh, I guess I screwed up somehow.

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- Peep Laja: What's the specific question that you're asking me?
- Roger Dooley: I'm wondering if you've tested that approach of where ... I think actually it seems like you might have a page on ConversionXL where it does that, where when you arrive at the site you pretty much see a call to action and nothing else.
- Peep Laja: Yeah, you know my blog homepage is just that, it's just an offer. It wasn't always like that. It used to have some information about me, the author of the blog, had a recent blog post, some testimonials. A bunch of stuff.
- Roger Dooley: Right.
- Peep Laja: Like a typical homepage because we have multiple messages, something for everybody. I was measuring how many people go and start reading blog articles and how many people opt in to my email list.
- As I started to remove things from the homepage, the number of people opting into my list which is my main goal, just skyrocketed, double, tripled. Now I have nothing but an offer there.
- Roger Dooley: You just kept removing, removing until that's all that was left.
- Peep Laja: Exactly right. Now I'm down to just an offer. Right now I keep on testing the right offer, but I've nailed it at just an offer works great.
- Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). Right. That's really interesting. I think it seems like maybe the bounce rate might go up a little bit, but on the other hand, if you convert more, a higher percentage that's really what counts. Some folks

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bounce and don't get to the blog posts, it's more their loss than your loss if you're converting more.

Peep Laja: Exactly right. Let's say that those people that come read an article and leave but don't opt in to my list, they might never come back. I have no means of communicating with those people anymore. My homepage conversion rate is around 12% which is phenomenal. It used to be around 2%, so still really worth it.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). Very good. Have you ever seen testing or have you conducted your own tests on timed popups versus exit intent popups? I know exit intent popups are sort of the rage now, but I'm just wondering if you've actually tested that.

Peep Laja: No, I have not. Also, the reason is it's not something that's very easy to test because ...

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I know.

Peep Laja: ... the tool, whatever tool you use it is as it is.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I was wrestling with the same dilemma because I've got software that will do either, but I couldn't quite figure out an easy way short of a bunch of coding to do an AB test on that.

Peep Laja: Yeah.

Roger Dooley: Might just have to run one for a while and then run the other for a while and do a rough comparison. Not too scientific, but better than nothing.

Peep Laja: Right. Mm-hmm. (Affirmative).

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Roger Dooley: Peep, you wrote an article not too long ago on website redesign and sort of the pitfalls or perils of that. Why don't you tell us about that a little bit.

Peep Laja: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). Well, when people say that hey, my conversion rates are not what they could be. We need to improve something. Then often the default path they choose is let's just redesign the site. That is often a bad idea because A, redesigning your website is not just something you do for two hours. It's a huge process. It involves lots of meetings, designers and mostly development work.

That becomes a resource black hole often. It goes over budget, over time. You spend all this money and all this time and what typically what ends up happening is that there's no difference in conversions or even if the conversions even go down.

it happens all the time even for very prominent companies. Target had that problem. Recently in the UK, what was the site that ...

Roger Dooley: Testco maybe?

Peep Laja: Marks & Spencer spent like 150 million pounds in two years developing their new site and sales went down 8.1% which is in their case, many millions. Why that is, is because A), typically a redesign process is a brain work of people in the marketing department, maybe the CEO's opinions or cherished notions. People don't really analyze what parts of my website actually working and what kind of pages are not?

Let's say that if I run an e-commerce site and my visit to product page and add to cart ratio is off. It's like maybe

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0.5% of people on the product page only add something to the cart. If that's the case typically we know that the product page performance is not very good. We'll need to rethink it, figure out what's the problem here.

Then you might have let's say your credit card payment page where let's say 90% of people fill out the credit card form. In that case you don't want to change anything. It works great.

The way to do a redesign process if you're going to do it and the only reasons for doing it are if your website is just hopelessly outdated, even uses some outdated technology like Flash or whatever, or if you have very little traffic. Your conversions low and you have very little traffic, so running AB Tests is not a viable option. You can't test all these things within a reasonable amount of time.

Then you might want to go for a radical redesign. You want to keep the layouts of pages that are working well exactly as they are in terms of what goes where, just do a face lift.

Roger Dooley: Right.

Peep Laja: Pages that are not performing well, figure out why and completely rethink things period. Just figuring out why and where, that is an intensive process. Sometimes with my clients we take a full month to go through the data, the digital analytics data, heuristics analysis, qualitative research, user testing all that stuff.

Whenever somebody wants to redesign their website they should be very careful. If you have traffic, let's say if you have at least 30,000 visits a month and your website does

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not look entirely horrible, then the better way to go about it is just to improve your site one item at a time.

Roger Dooley: Right, which is sort of the Amazon approach. To me, I would say Amazon never redesigned their site, but I'm sure if I compared today's actual page to a page from 10 years ago, I'd find dozens of differences because they keep testing.

Peep Laja: Right, right. Their page in the '90's of course was totally different, but if you look at the last 10 years, 2005 until now, all the changes that have been iterative, Amazon has never changed its site overnight. It's like one item at a time. The add to cart button is no different.

They just roll it out live. They're always testing and testing with some more segments, you know? Only a few percentage of their traffic is exposed to that test before they expose it to a larger audience of course, because their traffic is so huge.

That's a much better, safer way to go about it because if you test stuff, you know specifically what works and what doesn't work and the interaction between elements whereas if you change everything at once some things get better, some things get worse. You don't know which is which.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm. (Affirmative). Peep, you decided to launch your own ConversionXL Live Conference. What possessed you to do that? Tell us a little bit about when and where it will be and what the focus will be.

Peep Laja: ConversionXL is a conversion optimization and growth conference just outside of Austin, Texas March 11th to 13th. The website is live.ConversionXL.com. It is a

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serious three day event about making more money. Conversion optimization, growth optimization, all these very important topics.

Why did I want to do this event? Two reasons, A, it's become a goal or a mission for me and my company to educate the world about conversion optimization. CRO is what SCO used to be like in 2005. People really didn't know what they were doing, lots of misinformation everywhere. When it comes to SCO, there still is everywhere.

The same thing with conversion stuff. It's becoming more mainstream. If you look at Google Trends, type in conversion optimization, you see it's growing rapidly. More and more people all around the world are looking into it. Companies are demanding it from their service providers.

So many people don't know actually how to do it. They just test random stuff that doesn't make a difference. Their testing methodologies completely wrong, so actually they're declaring tests that didn't win as winners because they don't know much about sample sizes, they confuse statistical significance with validity. All these typical problems.

With the idea that I want to educate the world about conversion optimization and how to do it and how to do it better, my blog is just one outlet. What else can I do? The idea for the conference. I have a pretty large audience, 140,000 monthly readers for ConversionXL, so I felt that through my email list and then the blog, I could reach out to a sizable community, bring them together.

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It's a three day event where all these practitioners in the same place for three days and can have this deep, meaningful, insightful conversations and we can just raise the level of the industry. That's what it's all about for me.

Roger Dooley: Three days is pretty heavy duty. Some of the other, or actually most of the conversion conferences that I've seen around the world are one day. Three days is intense.

Peep Laja: It is. It's on purpose, it's outside of the major city. It's one hour outside of Austin. It's in Horseshoe Bay and the reason is that in most conferences you have the sessions during the day time and then everybody goes somewhere.

Roger Dooley: Right.

Peep Laja: You go to your family. You go have dinner somewhere. I'm making sure that nobody leaves. Everybody stays in the same hotel where the conference is at so everybody parties together. You're locked in with these people kind of like forced engagement with the community.

Roger Dooley: Right. That's a great strategy. Let me remind our listeners that we're talking with Peep Laja who runs conversion optimization agency Markitekt and publishes the ConversionXL blog and is now organizing the ConversionXL Live Conference in Austin in March, 2015.

Peep, how can people find your stuff online and connect with you?

Peep Laja: ConversionXL.com. That's my blog. Everything else is in there. Join my list, follow me on Twitter. Always very high quality conversion content.

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Roger Dooley: Great. Okay, we'll have that link and links to anything else that we talked about in the show notes page for this podcast at RogerDooley.com/podcast. Also there we'll have a full text version of our conversation with Peep so that those folks who are more readers than listeners can access it too. Peep, thanks for being on the show.

Peep Laja: Thank you, Roger.

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.