Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan
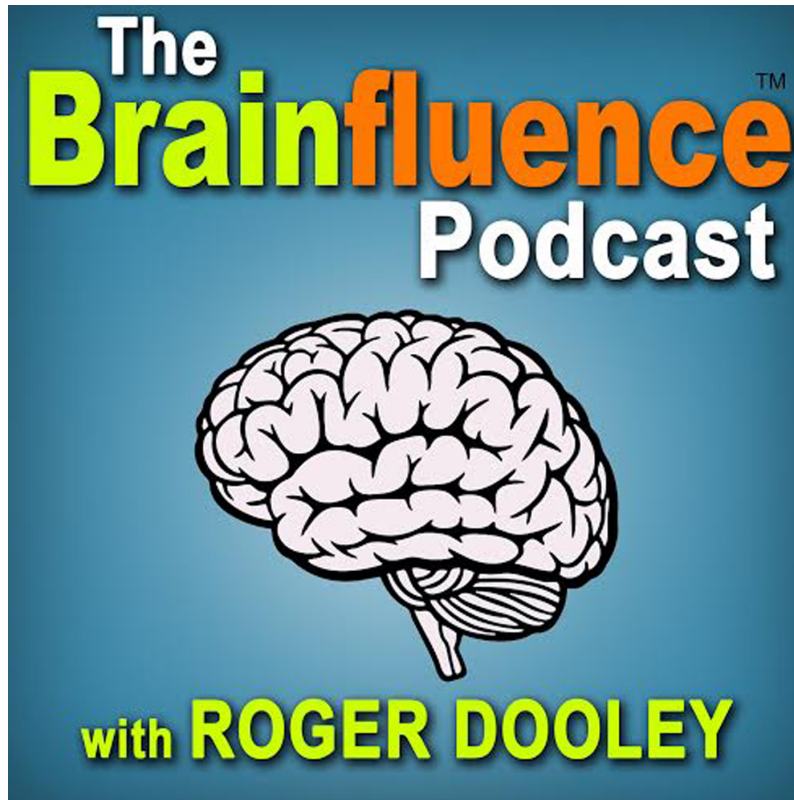

Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

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. I'm Roger Dooley. Today's guest is Sam Mallikarjunan. Oops, almost got that right. We'll have the complete spelling on the show notes page. He's a marketing fellow at HubSpot and former head of growth at HubSpot Labs. Sam teaches advanced digital marketing at the Harvard Division of Continuing Education and is the co-author of the book, How To Sell Better Than Amazon. Welcome to the show Sam.
Sam:	Thanks for having. Don't worry about messing up my name, I'm somewhat seriously considering changing my name to Sam from HubSpot because more people call me that anyways.
Roger Dooley:	Yeah, you could probably get that email too.
Sam:	Yeah, I don't have sam@HubSpot.com. Probably it's sam@samfromHubSpot.com, sure.
Roger Dooley:	Samfrom@huspot. Anyway, okay. Yeah. Sam, I'm sure a lot of our audience uses HubSpot or is at least familiar with the company. I'm guessing many fewer than that read Dan Lyons' book, Disrupted. For those who don't know the book, it's a first-person tale written by a very traditional journalist who had always worked for very traditional publications, and he ended up as a blogger content guy at HubSpot.

It's a hilarious read in a lot of ways. I can really see both sides of it. I'm probably much closer to Lyons in age than you are Sam, but at the same time I've been part of the digital world since the nineties, so some of his observations I think are spot on, in the same that HBO's Silicon Valley is, when he pokes fun at the general Silicon Valley ethos or how things happen there. But at other times he seems a little weirdly out of touch, like when he's shocked that his bosses expect him to actually promote his content after he hits the publish button.

I wonder if editors at Hachette didn't actually expect him to promote that book as well. I know being an author myself, the first question I ask is, "Well, what's your social following like? How big is your email list?" But I guess Malcolm Gladwell doesn't have to A-B test headlines, and so probably Dan didn't want to either. But anyway, I did a quick search and I did not see your name in the book. Did he mention you either as a pseudonym or anonymously?

Sam: Yeah, so it's important to point out that that book is satire. So while it's based on some truth he used pseudonyms for everybody because he had to exaggerate it to make it entertaining. I don't think I'm in the book. I definitely read it, because any time somebody has a bad enough experience that they feel the need to give up and start collecting information to write a book about it, that's just useful information for any manager to know. But I don't think I'm in the book.

Roger Dooley: Well, maybe there'll be a sequel, who knows? Yeah, anyway, Sam just in case there are a few people who aren't familiar with HubSpot, can you give a quick picture of what the company does and how it's grown?

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

Sam: Yeah. So HubSpot is a software company that builds a software that helps companies grow. We focus primarily on the SMB space, the small and midsize business space. It's the things you need to get customers. So, sales and marketing software with both a free CRM and a free suite of marketing tools. And then, rolling out recently the customer success hub, so how do you get really good at keeping customers so that you can afford to spend more to get customers. We build an all-in-one platform that companies build their customer acquisition and retention campaigns on top of.

Roger Dooley: Explain about HubSpot Labs. Is it just a different name for the development department, or does it actually have a sort of a distinct role, separate from HubSpot itself?

Sam: Yeah. I wrote an article, most of my articles are thinkgrowth.org, recently on this topic. On what I call uninspired optionality. If it's something that the core product team could be working on if they just had more bandwidth, it's not really a Labs project. It's just a different products team or an expanded product team. What Labs was supposed to work on were things that were outside of the core use cases that we solved for, so all the sales tools. Originally we were a marketing software company, Salesforce was actually one of our investors.

But it became really, really clear that marketers can't be successful unless they're aligned tightly with sales, and unless sales is following a good process to follow up with inbound leads. And so the Labs team focused on, "Okay, can we build tools for sales reps that help them go after inbound leads better?" And then eventually it just became, that's clearly a part of our customers business

that we need to own. So all of those ideas get tested in labs first. Can we, should we, and what should we build?

And then there's some other things that are off the core, like for example the community, like inbound.org. Which is not a HubSpot branded site. It is operated by HubSpot Labs but it designed to solve the problem of marketers need a home where they can ask questions and talk and stuff, and not have people try to sell them crap through LinkedIn. So that is another example of a product that, can we build it, should we build it, and then what should we build for people?

Roger Dooley: Okay, so stuff that isn't quite the core product but might eventually grow into a core product, in some cases at least.

Sam: Yeah, if it's successful, sure.

Roger Dooley: You know, marketing software seems like a complicated intimidating topic. I know people who swear by Infusionsoft for example, I know a lot of direct, well internet marketer types, and they swear for it for their email communications and list management. But at the same time they complain about its brutal learning curve and how expensive it is to find people who can actually figure out how to use it. How does HubSpot deal with making a product evermore powerful but that normal humans can use?

Sam: The same way that we tell customers to approach their marketing, we have to approach our product adoption. Which is that it's not about us. It's not about what we have to sell. It's not about our product. It's not about our features. It's about what the individual customer needs. And Infusionsoft, HubSpot, Salesforce, all of these

companies sort of had their genesis before the dawn of what we call freemium. So there are free tools that solve basic use cases, and then you help people get really good at that, and then you help them grow their business or grow in their career as a professional.

We started before that era, and I'll get back to freemium in a second. But we started before that era and that's why we had the incredible consulting team and academy team that we had, which now that certifications that are far beyond just the software. You can get certified in sales or contextual marketing or email marketing. Because if people aren't going to be good at using your product, especially if you're a subscription business, they're not going to stick around. That was actually my first job at HubSpot, was when people bought HubSpot to talk to them and be like, "Okay. What's your marketing plan? What are the challenges that you have? What do we have to work with? What does the sales team expect from us?" Et cetera. Solve all of those questions that you have to have answered if you want them to stick around as a customer.

You can't just say, "That's not my problem." Now we've gone even further with rolling out the suite of free tools. Which is, not everybody has a very complicated problem. Some people need to book meetings very easily or just have a form that somebody can get into their database. That's pretty easy. That's easy for us to solve, so we make that free and then we use automated and one-to-many education through the academy to help them get really good at that, with the hope that if we can help them get good at that they're eventually going to have more complicated problems.

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

So start small, focus on the education and think about it as an investment in the business. If your customers aren't sticking around because they stuck at using the software, you might say, "That's not my fault," but at the end of the day you're still going to go out of business.

Roger Dooley: Right. Do you do a lot user experience testing to see how easy or difficult onboarding is? Particularly with free users, because I like the freemium model. I know that there are software products that I've used, Buffer comes to mind as an example of a social sharing software that has a freemium model. It was just so easy to get started that eventually I hit the limit and said, "Okay. I need some of the paying features." I still don't have the most advances version but nevertheless I was a successful sale for them because they got me onboard, got me hooked, and then I said, "Wow, if I could do this other stuff it would be even better." Do you really evaluate the onboarding process?

Sam: Yeah. So Buffer is a great example of that, as is Dropbox. Dropbox, it was sort of …

Roger Dooley: Yeah, that's a good example, because I'm a paid customer there too after using their free service for years.

Sam: Yeah, and I am for Google Drive, even though I used Google Drive for free for, I don't know, five, six years, eventually ran out of space. They're good at a couple things. One, they're good at ... you think about the cost of customer acquisition, how much that costs. Giving somebody a free tool costs you money, but if you're good at that, if you give them a free tool, you're good at helping grow and get them to actually become eventually a

paying customer, the cost of customer acquisition can be lower.

That's what Buffer and Dropbox and those companies were really, really good at, Google Drive, were really, really good at. The other thing they were good at was sort of virality, right? So how do you ... Dropbox again being one of the best at this, where you just send somebody an invite, they get free storage, you get free storage. I think I had like, I don't know, eight gigs or something of free storage before I ended up finally paying for Dropbox back in the day.

Roger Dooley: Right. I think we all went through that. It's like, "I need more space, who can I send an invite to?"

Sam: Yeah, totally. Yeah, exactly. And then eventually I'm like, "Listen, I'm getting a ton of value out of this, what's 10 bucks a month, or 20 bucks a month, or whatever? You know, in order to have all this data safe and accessible across my devices.

So, the shift to freemium again is focusing on, can you get really good at defining an individual person's problem and creating a tailored experience to them. We model that funnel for every bucket of what we call buyer personas, for every sort of psychographic bucket of buyer personas. We model the funnel of them discovering us, of them starting to use a free tool a downloading and e-book. Which we look at the same as starting to use a free tool because it's them learning something. And then we constantly run experiments all throughout the process to see, how can we figure out what their real problem is and help them get that moment of value faster and more significantly?

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

Roger Dooley: Do you do a lot of user experience testing? And if so, what kind of tools do you use for that? I mean, not necessarily the specific brands, but sort of what categories of testing do you do? And you can mention brands too if you want.

Sam: You know, we learned getting good investors is incredibly important when you're a startup. Another one of our investors was Google, and they flew down here when we were younger and really beat into us this idea of watching your customers, physically watching your customers use your software. So we do do some of that. We fly customers here or we go to their office and physically watch how their day goes, we shadow the customers.

We also do a lot of teleconferencing with customers. Where we show them new products or we show them other iterations of things. We have entire dedicated rooms in this building just for teleconferencing with customers to get feedback.

But the interesting thing is when somebody ... it's sort of like quantum physics, one you observe the phenomenon you change it. So we do do a lot of watching people use the software passively, and the correlating that to whether or not they were successful. So, whether or not they kept paying us money is a good thing. But also like, did they get an increase in traffic? Did they get an increase in leads, in customers, in revenue? Based on what they were doing inside the portal.

So we do a lot of the objective watching people use the software, making small changes. Especially in Labs, before I'll build a feature oftentimes we would just put a button in there that said the feature. If nobody's going to

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

click the button for the thing we're not going to build the thing behind it. And then doing a lot of watching customers actually use your platform. For the Labs tools, we generally use Hotjar. That was our watching videos of people using specific aspects of the tool. And then the core team uses a custom solution.

Roger Dooley: To put you on the spot, you might not have an answer for this off the top of your head, but can you think of an example of where somehow improving the customer experience, the user experience lead to a much greater rate of adoption or a product or a feature, or much greater use by existing customers?

Sam: Yeah. So, inbound.org which was a Labs project, is a good example of this. Originally it was sort of like the Reddit or Stack Overflow of marketers. Where people would submit articles and the community would up-vote and down-vote. And then I had a woman on my team with a hypothesis, which seems obvious in retrospect, that the majority of new users were coming there to learn new things, and the quality of the content or the level of sophistication of the content wasn't tailored to them. So we actually had to make a hard choice.

When inbound.org was small, we started with Rand Fishkin from Moz, almost everybody on it was a hyper sophisticated marketing SEO nerd. So we ran a test to see, is that were the long term engine of growth is going to come from? The super sophisticated SEO nerds. She just put buttons on the website that said, "Take to me to beginner, intermediate and advanced content." And the click-through rate on those was ludicrous high. People obviously wanted to have an experience tailored to a

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

different level of content. And the number of clicks on advanced was very, very small as an overall percentage.

So before we built this user onboarding thing that's like, "Tell us what problems you have? What do you know? Would you call yourself basic or intermediate?" Before we built all that we designed a test, a very simple test, to say, "Do people want to self-select by their level of skill? And if so, what does that tell us?" In this case it taught us that we need to start manually manipulating the content and doing some other things to get really good at helping people find their little groups, their little niches of people who not only had the same problems that they did, like category tags, but also were sort of on the same level of sophistication that they were.

Roger Dooley: Assuming too that some of the experienced people can participate in those, because as a longterm community builder, some of the best interactions are those experienced folks who enjoy helping newbies and solving problems that aren't challenging for them. Actually what you see is sort of a virtuous cycle, where the person that came in 18 months ago as a newbie is now actually helping other newbies solve problems because their skills have improved so much. It's great.

You know Sam, I think you're highlighting something that has been, not a continuous theme but a theme that's been repeated a few times here on the show. That is that before you build something expensive, test it by the cheapest possible way. Rather than building a feature, put a button for the feature to see if anybody going to click the damn thing. That makes a huge amount of sense. or building some minimal functionality, like your button for content, to see A, whether people are interested in that at

all, or, and also then that let you sort of gear content and say, "Hey, we've got many more beginner users, so we clearly need to build that part out and make sure it's functional."

Sam: And making sure you go down the value change. So a lot of people, especially startup entrepreneurs, they'll do some surveys, something like that. And people say, "This is a great idea. This is the best idea ever." But again, if they know they're being observed, especially if they know you personally, that's going to change their behavior. So sort of observing them in their natural habitat and really getting good at understanding what they want. Even to the point of, before I'll launch something that's a paid feature, not necessarily in HubSpot Labs but even with other things that I use, I'll take them through the purchase process, all the way through, buying this tool that doesn't actually exist.

And then before they actually buy, I'll let them know, "This isn't live yet but we've added you for three months of free access when it does eventually launch." Never had anyone get upset about that because they were getting ready to buy a solution that they hadn't previously had before, and they generally appreciate what it is. And then if they get really excited about it, then that's cool. That's a good group of people for me to talk to.

But you know, really getting down to, if you're trying to sell something, will people actually give you money for it? Or if you're trying to work on a specific feature or get them to solve a specific problem, how far down that funnel are they actually going to go?j Does that have value if they don't know that they're being observed? And it changes

their behavior entirely once you just do like, "What do you think of my idea on a scale of zero to 10?"

Roger Dooley: Yeah. I think you won't have any difficulty convincing our listeners that surveys and questionnaires can be really inaccurate, particularly when people are predicting future behavior. You know, "Would you pay for this?" "Yeah, sure. Yeah, I want that." Until you ask them to pull their credit card out. That's really brilliant. There's so many ways that you can test things without spending a lot of money that will at least give you an indicator or direction as to whether it's worth getting to the next level of test or to actually developing something.

Sam: If you build something or launch a product or whatever, without first validating that the market wants it, either you're really showing that what you care about most is yourself, your ideas and your problems and not what the market actually wants. And it's brutal sometimes to have the market or the user say like, "This is totally uninteresting to me." And then you have to ask the question, "Am I targeting the wrong people? Am I targeting the right people the wrong way? Or do I just have a bad idea that only I think is interesting?" You have to be honest with yourself about that.

Roger Dooley: Right. Well I've seen organizations where the flow would be more like, the product manager has a good idea and then has to write up a huge document of use cases and so on. Then it goes into development, and then eventually something comes out, a nearly finished product for user testing. Of course at that point it's a little bit late because you've spent all the money, people may not want it.

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

Sam: Yeah. I don't know how many engineers are listening to this, but there are still plenty of companies in the world that practice waterfall. Which is where you design ... You survey, design, build and deploy an entire complete customer solution at once. And there are some cases in which that's actually a pretty decent idea, particularly consumer hardware, like Tesla or whatever. Although Tesla tested it with a very small sample size as well with people who could afford very expensive cars.

As opposed to like, in case you noticed, there's never been a Facebook 2.0 or a Google 2.0 or anything else like that, because it's continuously, "What's this little bit of value for this individual person or type of people? And, can we make that better? Will they find this other this particularly valuable?"

Roger Dooley: Right, and Amazon's never redesigned their website. It's just a constant process of tiny improvements and tweaks that are based on testing and data.

Sam: That's actually Amazon's entire model by the way. So Amazon is a great example of what we call a platform company. Where Randy Miller, the Amazon director, had that great quote of, "If you don't know how to sell something, launch it through the marketplace, let other retailers sell it. See if customers are interested, and then jump into it yourself." It's noteworthy that Amazon's slogan is not, "Don't be evil," because that tends to irritate the retailers who are doing all the testing for you, but that is very much an obsession that they have. Which is, how can we be very, very smart about what it is people want and how they want it?

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

Roger Dooley: Yeah. So changing gears a little bit, I get the impression that content marketing is a big deal at HubSpot, Dan Lyons aside. I know that I've worked with a couple of your writers on different projects, where they've needed either quotes or input or something. One writer actually crafted a few posts out of my persuasion slide model. How important would you say content marketing is these days at HubSpot in general? And is now passed its prime? Are we in the age of content shock? Or is it getting more important? How would you characterize it?

Sam: This is the age old debate between what is content marketing versus inbound marketing. It's hard to have any communication between two humans and not call it content. Right? So all marketing is content marketing. Inbound, we think of as this different super-set of it. Which is, are you using that content to deliver free value to people before you ask them to convert into your funnel, or give you information, definitely before you ask them to buy something?

I think when people ask about content marketing and whether or not it's saturated, what they're talking about is we have this deluge of absolutely garbage content, while the search engines and the social media networks that generally are the engines of distribution for these struggle to catch up. It's really hard for a search engine to understand, or for any computer to understand, is this quality content? Is this actually interesting to the user?

But the folks at Google and Facebook are generally very smart people and they've done really good work on that topic over the last five years, and now it's increasingly about the quality. What is the quality of the content? And don't get me wrong, we had experiments in the history of

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

HubSpot where we published, this doesn't sound impressive now because we have a team of 30 people on the content team. But back in the day there was one of us running the blog, and we were publishing six articles a day. One of my articles was like, "The e-commerce applications of LOLcats." And that was the playbook back then.

But fortunately Google and Facebook, because their monetization is based around their customers finding value in their platforms and being happy with that, they force us to be better people, or better marketers, and really focus on the quality of the content. It's definitely harder than it used to be. Just because you write an article that impresses your mom or your boss or whatever, does not mean that you're going to get a bunch of traffic off of it. It has to be a habit commitment to doing it longterm. You have to be very methodical about it.

It's gotten extraordinarily difficult to gain the quality signals. I don't know if you saw, there was Alibaba, their AI team recently passed the Stanford reading comprehension test. Which is ludicrous, it's insane. I don't think people, especially marketers, think enough about AI and machine learning, I always put AI in air-quotes, you can't see that but, quote-AI and machine learning are impacting their business and forcing them to be more human in everything that they do.

On the bright side, content marketing, inbound marketing is uniquely positioned to be excellent at that, because if you understand the psychographics behind your customers, you're focused on being the answer to the question that they're looking for and being ridiculously, ridiculously helpful. Which is why at HubSpot we think of

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

like I said content we think of the same way our product managers do. Like, are they getting value? Are we getting retention? are people coming back? Did they actually find what they were looking for? Not just, did they click this call to action and become a lead?

So it's a lot harder. And don't get me wrong, I sort of long for the days when marketing was easy and you could make crap-ton of money just spamming Google. But at the same time, it's made us have to be better people and a little bit more proud of our jobs too.

Roger Dooley: Right. So Sam, it's been five years since Sell Better Than Amazon came out, and I guess maybe not enough people followed your advice judging by Amazon's growth. But is it possible today to sell better than Amazon? How would you update that advice?

Sam: Yeah. So the core advice is still the same. I was in a meeting with our chief operating officer JD, and he pointed to me the fact that the concept of customer-centric unit economics is still somewhat new in the marketplace. This is this idea that instead of just profit and loss, or revenue, or whatever, you actually put the customer at the center of your economic model.

You think about, "I'm going to put a dollar into acquiring a customer, and then I'm going to monetize that customer over the course of their lifetime." Most people think of SaaS companies like HubSpot when they think of this, but there are companies that are better at it. Like Starbucks is phenomenal. Average customer lifetime value of over $14,000, even though their average order value is like $5.98. They're absolutely phenomenal at it. And I'll spoil

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

the book for you, so I guess if you're reading this you don't need to buy the book, or you can if you want.

But the whole idea is, if you're really, really good at keeping customers, you can spend more to get customers. So, Starbucks isn't saying, "I'm spending $2 to sell a $6 cup of coffee and sandwich." Starbucks is saying, "I'm spending 2,000 or 3,000 or 5,000 dollars to acquire and retain a 14 or 15,000 dollar customer." When you can do that, that's what opens up the potential for innovation. That's when you can spend lots of money and time on content and free tools, maybe have actual sales reps talk to your customers, or invest in automated bot technology, or whatever. People always ask like, "How is it HubSpot can do such interesting marketing?" Well, it's because we're crazy good at keeping customers and we're really good at selling to them over and over and over again. And because of that, we can spend more time understanding their questions and selling to them.

I'll finish with my favorite quote from Jeff Bezos. At one point he decided to add negative reviews to the website. He got this letter from his investors basically saying, "Listen Jeff, we know you think this internet is going to be big and all, but you obviously don't know how to run a business. You make money when you sell things." Noteworthy by the way, Amazon makes like $260,000 a minute. So, turns out he did know how to run a business. And Bezos replied, it's somewhat interesting, he said, "We don't make money when we sell things, we make money when we help people make decisions." So if you've got the bottom of the funnel, which is, how do I get really good at keeping these customers? Then going to the top of the funnel, which is, how do I get really good at helping people make decisions.

[The Brainfluence Podcast](#) with Roger Dooley

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

You can definitely still sell better, if not more you can sell better than Amazon, because they're trying to sell everything to everybody, and that's not possible yet. They cannot replicate the human experience of really understanding your customer for everything in their catalog, and they're not particularly good at customer nurturing. I would argue, although they're doing exceptionally well, if somebody was going to disrupt Amazon that's where they'd hit them. Although Amazon would just buy them.

But you know, I get three to five emails a day from Amazon, all talking about themselves. Asking me no questions about myself. Just spamming me three times a week with a coupon, telling me that that's their, that's what we call email marketing. So it's definitely still possible. Fundamentals haven't changed. Get really good at keeping your customers around, then you can afford to spend more acquiring customers. And focus when you're spending more on acquiring customers, not just raising your bid on PPC, although you can do that if you're good at keeping customers, but getting really good at investing in helping understand people. Who they really are, what their challenges, at scale. Especially if you're an e-commerce business, understanding that, and then helping them make a decision. Netflix being my personal favorite example of that.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. Although weirdly they can come up with some off the wall stuff it seems like. But yeah, I agree, not just the getting the customer in the door and providing an efficient experience, because Amazon could be successful just by doing that I suppose. They get you in the door and they ship the product when they say they're going to, and you got it 48 hours later and you're happy. But going way

beyond that, to help you make those decisions and whether it's suggestions, which are often on target, not always. But they're really, they're customer focused and it's pretty hard to maintain that in so many areas if you're trying to compete with them.

Sam: Yeah, and what I'd like to see them do, and people don't do this enough, ask me questions. The story I like to tell is, they sent me this thing on one of the 40 emails they sent me that week. It was about like a golf swing trainer. I have no aspirations to play professional golf, but my in-laws really love golf, and I want to spend more time with them, and I want to get good enough that I don't piss off my father-in-law. That's literally my only goal.

But they never bother to ask like, "Why do you want to get better at golf?" But now that you know that about me I bet you could sell me 100 other things. First of all, you could sell me the golf swing trainer better because you can position it that way. But you could also say like, "What are other ways to build a closer relationship with your in-laws?"

When you're more focused on a specifically buyer persona, you can either ask directly questions, or you can ask informed data or whatever. The more you try to be everything to everybody, the sort of everything store phenomenon, the worst you're going to be at that. So those companies that are really, really good at owning a buyer persona, are companies that are selling better, again if not more. I'm not going to say you're going to sell more than Amazon. Otherwise we'd be doing this podcast from my mountain lair in the Southern Pacific or something. But you can definitely sell better than

Amazon. You can win that battle for the individual customer.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. Your ask-your-questions concept reminds of a little bit of Ryan Levesque's ask formula. Where he does really a deep dive into what a customer's both demographics are and motivations are, and what they see their problem is. By the time the customer has answered these questions, now the seller has a very detailed roadmap of how to sell that person. In your case, they would know that your male, they know what level you're aspiring to, maybe what you saw your weakest points were. Where, "Hey, I can hit the ball pretty far, but man I can't put worth a darn." Be super targeted.

Sam: People think about content the exact same way too. Based on the content that you read, that you download, gives me as a sales rep an opening to ask you questions about your problems, rather than talking about myself. That's why our close rates on leads are so much higher, because by the time I'm done ... Listen, you downloaded the guide to using Pinterest for business. I pick it up, I ask you, "Why do you care about this?" Everything else like that, I do some research on you. By the time we're done just having a conversation about why do you care about Pinterest, all of my qualifying questions are answered, and it's just following through on the sales process from there.

Roger Dooley: So, Sam one last question and I'll ask you to put your futurist hat on. We've seen multiple industries get disrupted in the last 10 years. Whether it's taxis or retail or hotels. What do you see as being really close to being disrupted, perhaps underway or maybe in the near future? Anything in your crystal ball Sam?

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

Digital Marketing Insights from Hubspot's Sam Mallikarjunan

Sam: The sort of obvious popular answer right now is the finance industry. I've spoken at a lot of their conferences recently and they're getting better at thinking about the future. But they're just awful at it, they're so slow. The argument would be we have to be, but so did the taxi companies, in order to comply with regulations.

Blockchain technology I think is a resounding failure for where it's at right now. It's not good at solving the majority of finance use cases, but it's going to get a lot better. There are some people doing some really interesting work there. So I would say the finance industry should be absolutely cowering in its boots. But the rest of us shouldn't get too cocky, because like I said the advancements in machine learning and having machines that can ... Most people don't realize by the way when they're interacting with AI. Every time you use Google you're interacting with AI.

The advancements in that are going to make our jobs and lives very, very interesting. So people lik customer service representatives, or even sales and marketing professionals, how do we avoid losing our job to a bot? By pivoting our process around what the bots suck at, which is the empathetic sales process, versus what they're really good, which is actually everything we've talked about today. Which is asking questions, understanding responses in natural language and getting really good at sort of at scale helping people make decisions.

So, finance definitely. If I was a finance CEO I'd be very, very concerned about the world right now. But I would encourage sales and marketing and customer success professionals to not get too cocky because there's a wave

heading our way too. And it AI does a better, quote-unquote AI does a better job of listening and customizing their interactions than we do, we're not going to win that fight.

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, good advice. Let me remind our audience that we're speaking with Sam Mallikarjunan. He's a marketing fellow at HubSpot, former head of growth at HubSpot Labs, and a co-author of the book, How To Sell Better Than Amazon. Sam, thanks for being on the show. Can you tell folks where to find you online?

Sam: Absolutely. If you Google anything even close to my name you should find my website. But you'll get most of the writing that I do at thinkgrowth.org.

Roger Dooley: Great. Well we will link to there on the show notes page at rogerdooley.com/podcast. We'll also have a text version of our conversation there as well in PDF format. So, thanks again for being on the show. Great conversation.

Sam: Thanks for having me 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.

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