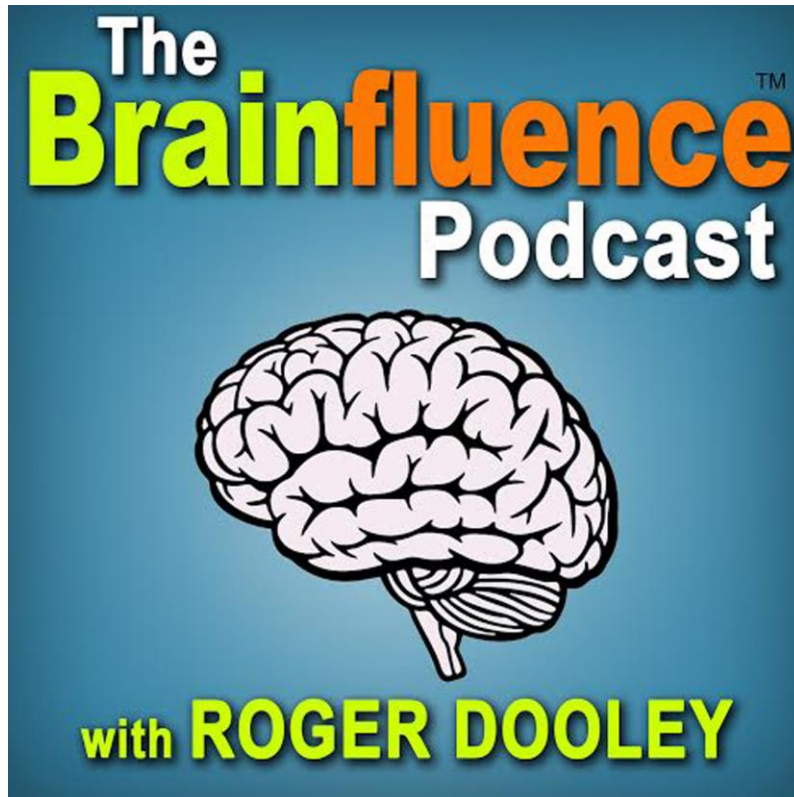


Ep #70: How to Launch a Book (or Anything) with Tim
Grah



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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. I'm Roger Dooley and our guest this week has an amazing story. He's worked with bestselling authors like Dan Pink, Barbara Corcoran, Charles Duhigg, Chip and Dan Heath and many other names you'd recognize instantly. What he's done for them is help them build their platforms and launch books that sell by the truckload and hit the New York Times best seller list.

We're going to hear some of the specific techniques he uses and how they can work whether you've got a large audience or just starting to build one. A lot of what he has to say doesn't just apply to books. It can apply to any kind of product launch or introduction. It's my great pleasure to welcome Tim Grahl, book marketing expert and author of *Your First 1000 Copies: The Step-by-Step Guide to Marketing Your Book*. Welcome to the show, Tim.

Tim Grahl: Thanks for having me, Roger. I've been looking forward to it.

Roger Dooley: Tim, first of all, how did you happen to break into the book marketing business? That's a niche space and obviously you've turned it into an art form. How did that happen?

Tim Grahl: As these things go, you tend to fall into them or at least I felt like I fell into it more than made a specific plan. I went

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to school to be a programmer and I was doing freelance web development and at the same time I've been building up my own blog network that I ended up selling but that helped me really learn how to do marketing and get people to pay attention to what you're doing online because I only made money if people are actually reading my blog. I combined those together and at that point, I mean, we're talking 8, 9 years ago, there was not a whole lot of people that could understand marketing and also build the nuts and bolts.

You would usually have somebody that understood marketing where they couldn't build websites and vice versa. I got started just helping anybody that would give me money to figure out their online marketing and build out their websites. Then I started just picking up author clients not really on purpose but I really liked ... I would just reach out to authors. I enjoyed their writing and talked to them about if they needed anything and at some point I just decided I'm going to focus 100% on authors and helping them build their platforms and connect with readers and sell more books.

I came in that way and just started reaching out to more and more authors and then overtime my name just got passed around and that's all the referrals I was getting so it was more of just I love books. I've always loved authors and I got to start working with them and really enjoyed the work and so I kept traveling the road I was walking.

Roger Dooley: Great. You've worked with some big names like Dan Pink who's a past guest on the show and well-known to our listeners. I'm sure many of our listeners are thinking that for an author with multiple previous best sellers and a

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pretty major brand name, personal brand, launching a book is relatively easy or do even folks with a significant following have to work at it?

Tim Grahl: Oh, you have to work at it and you have to know how to leverage what you're doing. When I came along, Dan Pink was getting close to launching Drive. He already had To Sell ... not To Sell is Human. That was his last one. It was A Whole New Mind and that had been a really popular book and what I did is I came along and what I say that basically built a bucket that started catching all of this stuff he was doing. One author, I talked to, I think last year. He's really well-known. He started one of the most popular business magazines in the US and he was coming to launch his book and he realized he had spoken to literally hundreds of thousands of people over the last decade but he had no way to reach out to them and actually let them know that he had a book coming out.

What I helped Dan do early on was start capturing those people building his email list, building his following, building permission and contact with people and when we launched To Sell is Human, his last book, it debuted number 1 on the New York Times list which was higher than he ever debuted before and over 70% of the sales came through the efforts of his online marketing and his email list. It is easier if you're already well-known but you still have to know how to leverage it and what I found is the ideas usually, they can scale.

I used the same techniques to launch Dan's book as I did launch my own book and my own book was a big success by my standards. I didn't have this huge following. I wasn't already well-known but I was still able to leverage

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what I had to make the book really successful. It's easier when you are well-known but you also still need to know how to leverage what you're doing and how to get the most out of it otherwise you're still just hoping that the system works for you and it may or may not.

Roger Dooley: The advice about building your list is something that I give to people all the time and people contact me and ask me for advice for getting started in blogging or perhaps writing in various forms. The thing I always tell them is don't make the same mistake I did and wait too long until you get serious about building your list because I went for years without ... Even at first I was attempting to build a list and then basically just a half hour that little subscribe button or something on my blog.

I didn't begin to get at all serious until maybe a few months before my book launched after I delivered the manuscript and started thinking about, "Okay. How are we going to promote this?" I wish I would have had your book a lot earlier in that process, that's for sure because it's full of good advice and the thing that's nice is you've got different strategies for different levels of authors and also for a different point in time where ... Why won't you explain a little bit about that? You have strategies for the author who has a week away from launch and has no list as well as the well-established author who has been planning for 12 months.

Tim Grahl: I actually want to address one thing you said. I'll come back to that question. It is important to build a list but what I want you to understand and what I want people to understand is an email list is just a tool. Just like if you have a tool box, you have hammers and screwdrivers and

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whatever and you pull them out when it's the right tool for the job. If you have a screw that you're trying to get in a board and you try to pound on it with a hammer, you're mostly just going to be frustrated.

An email list is the current best tool for building permission and permission is having a group of people that you are able to get their attention and drive action. The best tool for getting people's attention and driving action is an email list but at some point that could change. It could become something else. That doesn't exist yet and I will immediately get rid of the email list and move to that thing. The goal is permission. I need to have a group of people that I can reach out to and at any time get their attention and drive action.

We use email right now because it's the best tool but I always want to start with a strategy and the goal and the goal is always permission to have this group of people that are paying attention to what I'm doing and then we pick up the right tool for the job. Email lists are very important. That's the first thing I tell writers, start building your email list. It's the most important thing you can be doing for marketing but that's why it's so important. It's the best way to stay in contact with people long-term because you want to build a platform that builds overtime and sustains your entire writing career. That's the goal.

Roger Dooley: Plus I want it in control. I don't think some folks have relied ever. At least a couple of years ago we're relying on Facebook because obviously as a platform Facebook has some real advantages. I mean, virtually everybody is on it and they have great notification practices and what not but then suddenly folks were counting on their Facebook

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page as being able to reach their fans found that you're not reaching most of your fans now unless you pay for it. At least if you've got your own web platform, your own website and your own email list, you can control those elements.

Tim Grahl: Exactly. I could talk for our entire interview about what's wrong with Facebook as a marketing platform and the main thing is just their goals are different than yours. They own the actual access to people. That's the difference is you have to own the access to people. When you own their email address, you own the direct access. Nobody can come in and stop you from emailing them where Facebook if you're relying on them, they can at any time shut of the access to the people and that's what they've done over and over and over again is change that to where you don't have the access anymore. That's why I define permission as ability to get people's attention and drive action and if you can't do that, it's not permission.

You had asked about different strategies depending on where you're at. When you're coming out with a book, if you don't have a list, you don't have a platform and you're coming out with a book. What I recommend people is basically, use the book to build the platform. When you're an author, it just changes your status over night and this actually surprised me when I came out with my book because before my book came out, I've done all the work. I had launched the number 1 New York Times best sellers. I had 5 clients on the New York Times list at the same time.

I had done all of this work that was good work and well-known in certain circles but it was like nobody knew I

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existed on a larger scale until I had a book and it started changing everything. Conferences that I couldn't get opportunities to speak. They'd invite me to speak or podcast that wouldn't return my emails, now they have me on the podcast because just changing my title to Tim Grahl, author of *Your 1000 Copies* but that "author of," it just changes your status. What I tell people to do is basically use their book as this weapon to crack open doors that would have been closed otherwise. When your book comes out and you don't have a platform, you need to use that book to build your platform ...

Roger Dooley: Just to interject, Tim. I know before *Brainfluence* came out, I was doing few speaking gigs and I had people inquire. I remember 1 gentleman, "What's your book?" and I said, "Gee, I don't have a book yet." Immediately it was, "Oh, that's okay," but you knew from the tone of his voice that that was not okay. If you don't have a book, you're not real. I'm sorry to interrupt. Go ahead, Tim.

Tim Grahl: No. It's really surprising because on a practical level, logically it doesn't really make much sense anymore because anybody ... My book is a short. I think it was 28,000 words or something self-published book so anybody can decide to write a book and self-publish it, now they're an author but it's still has this status. There are all these reasons why but it does make a really big difference. What I do for authors that if you already have a platform, you used the platform to launch the book but you always look at it as a 1 part of an entire career. One of the things that people get stuck on is looking at anyone launch as the thing.

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You want to always have a long-term view of everything. You always want to be playing the long game because I plan on doing things being a writer or launching new products or whatever it is. I'm 34. I've got a good 30 years left in me at least of work. I want to make sure everything I'm doing is building so that I get bigger and better as I go. Whether it's a book or product, I'm always looking at how is this not only going to help me in the short-term but how is this going to continue to build my platform for the long-term. That's where when I'm looking at a book launch, I'm looking at it as how can I sell as many copies now but then how can I use this book to build my platform so my next book launch will be even bigger.

Roger Dooley: Explain how you do that? How long-term focus would vary from just folks getting this book and selling a bunch of copies?

Tim Grahl: I mean, one thing is that so many authors launch a book and then a month later they moved on with their life and they're doing other things or if you look at the book as a way to build the platform, it becomes the next 2 years of your life. I actually learned this from Dan Pink. When he comes out with a book, that's the next 2 years of his life. He's out promoting the book knowing by promoting the book, it's going to build everything else on the backend that he's trying to build in his business.

You can constantly be out promoting the book because it helps everything else in the business. The long term view is just ... I mean, it's exactly that. It's that whole reason of why do we hate the used cars salesman that's trying to shove a car down our throat that we don't need and that's because he's always playing the short game. He's

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thinking about if I can just get him to buy this car but what he doesn't realize is even he makes this sale, I am never coming back and I'm telling everybody never to go to this guy where if you're constantly playing the long game, you're thinking how can I help people so they'll stick around for a long time.

I want people that are on my email list now to buy my next book and my next book and my next book and my next book and so I have to treat them that way where I want to be helpful to them. I want to look at like how can I add value to their life constantly so that they'll stick around and they'll keep buying everything that I have. So many times people think of marketing as kind of the antithesis to helping people. Marketing is getting what I need and that's different from helping people get what they need.

What I found is the best type of marketing is looking out for the other person's good. You end up even the most selfish person should be trying to be as helpful as possible because that's the best way to build a business that makes money for a long time. It's actually the most selfish thing you can do to be the most helpful, you can possibly be to other people and that's what good marketing is you're constantly adding value. I define marketing as creating long-term connections being relentlessly helpful.

Roger Dooley: I think from a list standpoint, mailing to it fairly frequently with good content that's consistent with your books, really makes a lot of sense because first of all you're not just hitting these people when you've got something to sell them or something that you want to ask them to do. You're delivering this content on a regular basis. Also it's

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refreshes that permission because I think one thing that's always upsetting to me is whenever I do a mailing, and I do about 1 a week typically with my new content for my blog from Forbes or podcast.

I always get a few unsubscribe and you just say, "Oh, man. I hate this. I'm being rejected," but really what you're doing is ensuring that your list has people that are actually still interested in what you have to say and it could be that those folks signed up and either are expecting something different or perhaps they're in a new job or a different life situation, whatever. It's just not good for them anymore. Despite the fact that it's dispiriting to see people who unsubscribe when they get your great stuff that you swayed over to send them, it's really a good thing from the standpoint of maintaining a good and vibrant list.

Tim Grahl:

I just did a product launch for an online course to my list last month and I know a lot of people in this industry that are doing these types of things and I made twice as much off of my list as a friend of mine made off their list that's twice as big. What I find is I want people to unsubscribe because I'm having to pay for them to be on my list anyway and they're never going to buy anything. If they unsubscribe, it's because they're not interested in what you have to say which is totally great because that means you're left with people that are interested in what you have to say and they're paying attention.

I hear where you're coming from but I've got to this point where I'm like whatever. I want people to unsubscribe quickly because I want to be left with the people that are paying attention and interested in what I'm doing. What I

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have found with email lists, there's all these kinds of these advice out there about nobody reads long-form anymore and you don't want to send too many emails because you'll become annoying and I want to say, "Okay. I guess I have to give back all this money I've made because that's all I do."

People absolutely do read long-form. People absolutely will keep opening your emails even if you send them a ton of email because what I found is people's threshold for helpful content is really, really high. People's threshold for bad content is really, really low. I did my launch and in the space of 2 1/2 or 3 weeks, I said, "I don't know. I wrote 30,000 words." It was like tons of email. I mean, almost every other day, I was sending another email but my open rate never went down and my open rate is actually now gone up a little bit and so it's been because I kept sending helpful content and I would send long-form content.

I would send emails that were over 2,000 words long but people would read them because it was helpful and useful content and people that are interested in reading my content, they'll just unsubscribe which is fantastic. What I have found is if I constantly forget all of this advice that you see out there from people that don't really know what they're talking about, and what I just think is like, "Okay. What can I do that's the most helpful to people?" What can I create that's going to be really useful to people and I'll just do whatever it takes to create that.

One of my most popular blog post is this step-by-step guide to building an author website. I think it's almost 3500 words long so it's really long for a blog post but it also keeps bringing me traffic and a year-and-a-half later

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traffic actually keeps going up to that post because now it's the definitive guide and people share it because it's the definitive guide. If I have written a 300-word 5 good things to do on your website blog post, it would just go in with all the other noise that's out there but by creating long-form, super, super useful content, you stand apart from all these other people that are constantly just churning out low-grade crap really.

That's because they're more interested in churning out blog post or churning out content that they are thinking about what's going to be most useful to people. I'm constantly playing at the edge of what can I do that's really, really useful to people and what I find is people can tell. People can tell if you're looking, if you're just trying to throw something out into the world or if you actually spent time thinking about is this going to be useful and then they'll trust you and they'll buy other things that you have for sale.

Most of this advice I see out there about how to create content, how often to send emails or how long the content should be, it doesn't apply to you. Just ignore all of it and just focus on the people on your list and just constantly ask yourself what can I do that's most helpful, what can I do that's most helpful? I just went a month without sending anything because I was moving and I couldn't concentrate and I had all this stuff going on in my life. I just was like look, I'm not going to send anything because it's going to be halfway done. It's not going to be my best stuff.

I waited until I could write something actually helpful and sure enough they loved it. That's what I recommend is

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whenever you're doing this stuff, people threshold is really, really high when you're trying to help them. That's the biggest advice I can give is like ignore all of this kind stuff that says everybody should be doing X because it's all wrong. You should be doing whatever is best for your audience.

Roger Dooley: That's great advice, Tim. I think it applies not just to books of course but if you're selling software as a service, if you're doing info products or if you're doing anything. I mean, today just about every business is doing content marketing in some form or other. I mean, if you look at the statistics, it's crazy. The amount of money or the percent of money that's going in to creating content and a lot of this content isn't very good but as you say if you can create content that stands out, you will survive although I have to admit from what I've seen at least in some spaces there are a lot of people that are getting that quality message and there's a ton of high quality content being churned out, 2, 3,000 word blog post with illustrations and just really good stuff. The bar is going up and if you're putting out junk, you're doomed.

Tim Grahl: Right. I've had to look at this too like as companies that have lots of resources get in the mix. It's going to change how I have to do things too but what I keep seeing and every time I get worried about that stuff because I worry about that stuff too. I just think okay, I want to be helpful. That's why I'm doing this. That's why I'm in business is to help people get what they want out of life. If I work really hard to help ... It goes back to ... Zig Ziglar said this all the time. He said, "If you help enough people get what they want out of life, you'll get what you want out of life too."

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You guys listen, you don't know me that well but I'm a pessimist. I hear that stuff and I'm like, "Okay, yeah. That's easy to say when you're Zig Ziglar and you're 60 and you're rich. It's different thing when you're me and you're struggling but what I found is over and over as I test that idea, it just works. If you help enough people get what they want out of life, you'll get what you want out of life too.

Roger Dooley: It makes a lot of sense. I quote Zig all the time as well. he's got a great quote about integrity too and so that's you're most important persuasion tool because I talk quite a bit about in my writing about persuasion and neuromarketing and that can immediately sound like manipulation and Zig sounded like a manipulator often when he tells you you've got these 15 different ways to close a sale. I mean, that sounds manipulative but he was always trying to get the customer to a better place. He always felt that your integrity was your most important tool.

If you knew that you were going to help that customer, if they bought that car or set of cookware or whatever he happen to be selling at the time that it was okay and that you both be in better place at the end of it. Let's talk a little bit about social media. How important is it for authors or other folks who are trying to build a platform to have a big social following and are there any particular ... Which platforms do you think work best?

Tim Grahl: All of it is mostly a waste of time. I have been involved with authors that have had huge social media followings and then I actually test and track sales and it doesn't turn into sales. Here's my thing on social media. This is how

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most people think, "Okay. If I can build big enough following, then I'll have access to these people and they'll buy what I'm selling and that doesn't work. That goes back to my tool reference, my tool metaphor and by trying to treat Twitter or Facebook or whatever else as that means, you're basically picking up a screwdriver to hammer a nail.

It's just not going to work and you'll get frustrated. You'll build up this social media following and it just never turns into anything. Most cases it's the 95% of work that gets 5% of results. If you dig below the surface on most of these social media campaigns, if they are successful which most of them aren't, if they are successful, it's usually because there's something else going on and why people think the social media made a difference is because that's the most public thing. That's the thing you see were actually on the backend, it's usually something else.

Again, I've tested this over and over with big time authors. I've seen behind the scenes on launches of other products and social media is not the thing that drives sales. Now, social media is helpful in a more 1 to 1 way. You can reach out to people. You can connect to people. You can follow what they're doing so when you want to connect offline, you're actually ... One of the things I use social media for is if I'm going to have a meeting with somebody, I'll go back and read their social media from the last 6 weeks so I understand where they're at mentally and what's on their mind so that we'll be in the same place and I'll be able to talk with them about stuff.

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What it goes back to is it's not permission. Permission is the ability to communicate with people that gets attention and drives action. Every time I've tried to test social media against this, it just bails and bails miserably. I was doing a book launch with an author that had over 100,000 Twitter followers which most of us would kill for and just ... I just started testing how many people click his links so I started running them through Bitly where you can actually test how many people ... see how many people click your Bitly links and on the upper end, it was 750 people and on the lower end it was 250. They average about 500 people per link that you put out actually and that's just clicking.

Roger Dooley: That's actually pretty good for 100K followers. I mean, I know that some folks who have multiples of that, who if you look at the traffic that you drive it's not all that much. They tweet your link out and used to be that one of these social influencer types could take your server down with one tweet. That doesn't work anymore. Now, they'll generate 100 clicks maybe, maybe 200 and only if the content itself gets shared by their followers then it starts to, you can do better but in terms of direct clicks, from that individual's links, they don't drive that much traffic. If you look at the impression it's like in your Twitter statistics. You say okay, we'll I've got I don't know 24,000 followers or something but if I look at the stats for an individual tweet, I'm seeing it's 200 exposures or 250 exposures or something like that.

Tim Grahl: An exposure is more like they even saw it.

Roger Dooley: Exactly.

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Tim Grahl: At this point, we're not even ... We've removed the whole like they buy anything from the equation and now we're even removing that did they even click on. It's like they might have seen it and we're going to count that. If you just think through logically how you interact with these platforms. Everybody that's listening if you're on Twitter, just think about all the people you're following on Twitter. Let's say there's 100 and most people follow way more than 100 people but let's just say 100. How many of those 100 people, of all their updates in a 24-hour period, how many of them do you even look at?

For most people they're like, "Oh, maybe 1%," where if you compare that to your email most people at least look at 100% of the email that comes in. Then Facebook actively calls from your newsfeed things that they don't think you're going to be interested in and other brands stuff. Again, there's all these reasons for doing it. I think Facebook is making the right business decision for themselves because if we like Coca-Cola and Pepsi and UPS and all of these brands and then those actually start showing up in our feeds, we'd stop going to Facebook because it would turn into advertisements even though we like those pages.

They're constantly trying to keep your newsfeed clean and things you're interested in and you're not interested in all of these pages that you've liked. On the marketing side is the one I'm trying to create the pages, the stats jump all around but somewhere around 15% of the people that have liked your Facebook page is it even show up in their newsfeed, much less do they actually see it. That number keeps dropping but again if you look at social media as a 1 to 1, I have found Facebook is really good at creating 1

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to 1 communication. If I email somebody and I don't hear back from them but then I reach out on Facebook, a lot of times I can get their attention.

Social media is useful but not in the way that most people are thinking of it in trying to use it so when it comes to marketing, I basically do nothing on social media. I focus on the email list and I focus on building the email list as big as possible and my social media is actually 99% automated. People reply to me on Twitter, reach out to me on Facebook. I'll respond but otherwise it's just automated. Everything is automated on it and I don't spend any time on it on a given day from a business standpoint because it's just a waste of time.

So many of these things that we spread ourselves so thin trying to do everything that we do everything half fast and it doesn't work, and so what I get people to focus on is find the one thing that works and just put all of your A's in that basket and you'll get so much more out of it than trying to okay, now, I have to have an Instagram feed and so I got to be posting stuff on Instagram and we'd never even stop to check and see if it's actually doing anything for us.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. It's funny that you mention that. I just got back from a small invite-only conference and more than one of the speakers made a very similar comment about not chasing every channel available and because I just heard last week on a podcast oddly enough, about a guy who is absolutely killing it on Instagram that he built 150,000 followers in the space of 6 months and was getting huge ... he was actually driving traffic and conversions to his website. I said, "Wow, gee. I never really thought of

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Instagram as a tool.” He was a B2B market too. It wasn’t a very visual market.

I immediately started reevaluating my strategy. Do I have to start building out an Instagram channel too? I think the advice from really smart people about being focused sunk in. I said, “No. I don’t really have the time or the inclination to build out an Instagram channel in addition to what I’m doing and it probably would be very hard to replicate that guy’s success anyway.

Tim Grahl:

Yeah. I mean, again, I would go back. One is there’s always going to be outliers. There’s always going to be these ones that just all of a sudden, there’s huge success but I hate those stories because you can’t replicate it. People used to give all this advice in the book marketing world about how you should be like Gary Vaynerchuk. It’s like okay, I respect what Gary has built but Gary is popular because of his personality. People really attach to his personality. You can’t be Gary Vaynerchuk and so the idea that you should follow what he does just doesn’t make any sense.

I want things that are replicable with that. If 10 people do it, 9 of them are going to be successful, not if 50,000 people do it, one of them will be successful. When you hear stories like that Instagram story, that is one of those who are 50,000 people are trying to be successful in Instagram and one of them hits some kind of thing that one ... Again, there’s probably something going on behind the scenes that you’re not aware of. These people that are seemingly overnight successes, there’s this 1 guy that came out of nowhere. This was several years ago. Came out of nowhere and had built this huge following

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and had come out with products and was selling all these products and he did it really fast.

When you dig into his background, you've learned he was in eBay. What were they called? They're like one of the power sellers. One of the early eBay power sellers and he had learned how to work the eBay system to make all of this money. You realize that man is a business man. He understands how it works and when you watch from the outside, it looks like he came out of nowhere that he's just putting up these blog post and it's killing it but you understand on the backend, he knows how to run this system of a well-oiled machine business because he has background in it and he's learned how to do it.

I would say if you scratch below the surface of that Instagram story, there is something else going on there of why he's able to turn it into so much success and it's because he didn't randomly start posting pictures on Instagram and this success showed up.

Roger Dooley: I'm sure you're right, Tim. We're just about out of time. I could go on for hours here, I think. This is a really interesting conversation but let me remind our listeners that we're speaking with Tim Grahl, book marketing expert and author of *Your First 1000 Copies: The Step-by-Step Guide to Marketing Your Book* and I can vouch for the quality of that book. I bought it a few weeks ago, read it and immediately wish I'd had it for my own launch few years ago and will definitely be paying attention what's in it going forward. Tim, where can people find you online?

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Tim Grahl: You can find me at timgrahl.com. That's T-I-M-G-R-A-H-L dot com and Google anything around that or my book title you'd be able to find me and then I have a 30-day free email course that you can sign up for if you're interested and learning how to build a platform. I have a free 30-day email course you can sign up at my website.

Roger Dooley: Great. There are a lot of resources on that website too. We'll have links to Tim's website and book and so on and any social profiles on the show notes page at rogerdooley.com/podcast. We'll also have a text version of our conversation there. Tim, thanks so much for being on the show. It's been fascinating.

Tim Grahl: Thanks for having me.

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.