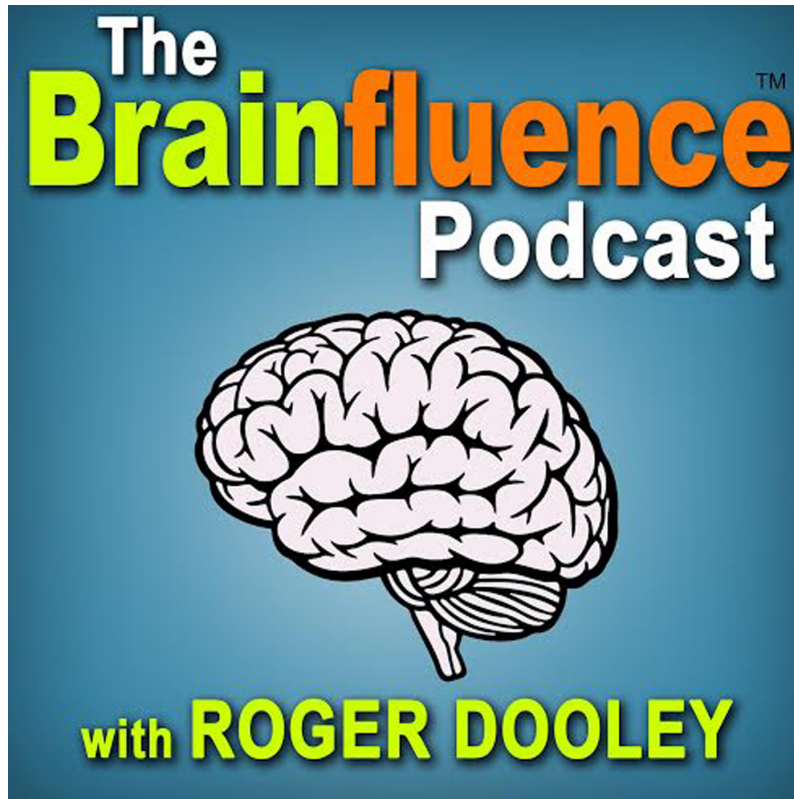


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Full Episode Transcript

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Roger Dooley

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Welcome to Brainfluence, where author and international keynote speaker, Roger Dooley, has weekly conversations with thought leaders and world-class experts. Every episode shows you how to improve your business with advice based on science or data.

Roger's new book, FRICTION, is published by McGraw-Hill and releases May 17th. Dr. Robert Cialdini described the book as "blinding insight," and Nobel winner, Dr. Richard Thaler, said reading FRICTION will arm any manager with a mental can of WD-40. To learn more or to pre-order, go to rogerdooley.com/friction.

Now, here's Roger.

Adrian Swinscoe: So Roger, I know that you know, things like you know, psychology and neuroscience and behavioral sciences, behavioral economics and all of those different things, like the impact of emotion and stuff, is all rising up the agenda right now. But you've been writing about this on, was it neurosciencemarketing.com, like for years now. So I mean, you're in danger of being ahead of the curve, are you not?

Roger Dooley: Well, I think back then I was one of the early folks to start writing about that. It was way back in 2005, I think, that I did my very first post on the topic and at that point the idea of applying the tools of neuroscience to marketing was still in its infancy. There were a few companies offering some types of service that said they could do that. Some of these offerings may not have been well

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documented or really well backed up with science, but there was an interest in that and I found it fascinating too.

So I began writing about it, initially, pretty heavily focused on applying specifically neuroscientific tools like EEG to measure brainwaves, fMRI to measure sort of realtime, almost, brain activity. And over time what I found was that people were definitely interested in that. But if I wanted to speak to the needs of the majority of business people, talking about tools that then we're really the province of only the biggest brands, the Coca-Cola's, the BMWs and so on, wasn't that helpful.

So what I found was that there is a wealth of literature from behavioral science that tied in very nicely with neuroscience because really it's simply two ways of describing the same phenomenon. It's not that these disciplines are separate, it's just that the tools are a little bit different. Where one is measuring actual behavior of humans and the other is looking at their brains when they are either experiencing things or doing things and that kind of information could really be extended so that even the smallest business could apply these tools to their own marketing or other aspects of their business. And that's, that's really what, by the time I wrote my book *Brainfluence*, much of the information in there is that sort of very broadly applicable behavior science based stuff. But I try and present it in a way that's both fun and understandable.

I just looked the other day and one thing that really excited me, Adrian, was I looked at my Amazon reviews, which I tend not to do too frequently, but I peeked in and

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the number one key word where it says, you know, they say people mentioned and they use different keywords that the very first one on the list was easy to read. And I felt that was a really sort of high crowdsource praise because that was exactly what I was striving for.

Adrian Swinscoe: Perfect. So now, I mean, that's, that is Brainflu, Brainfluence, rather. But you recently published a new book, which is called, FRICTION: The Untapped Force That Can Be Your Most Powerful Advantage. Now, I mean I've been, I like the idea of this friction and I call it sort of, grit, in my own sort of parlance, as it were. But I'd love to hear about, kind of, your take on it and like, tell me about the book and how it came about and, and sort of what its main sort of thesis.

Roger Dooley: Okay. Well, the origin story for FRICTION that goes back to a little framework that I developed probably about five plus years ago now called, the persuasion slide, and it has its roots in behavioral science and, in particular, the work of BJ Fogg who created his Fogg Behavior Model. I found myself speaking to a lot of web marketers who are trying to find ways to improve their conversion processes and just get better results from their websites, from their apps, from their print marketing and so on.

And I, as I'm want to do, I like to take the really serious work that smart scientists are doing and translate into something pretty easy to understand. That was the origin, this simple little framework based on the playground slide and I'm not going to get into the details of that here other than, there's a motivation component that involves both gravity and the angle of the slide. There is a nudge at the

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top that gets the little kid moving down the slide, as when mom or dad gives them a push. But also there's an element of friction and that is, in the real world, if the kid gets stuck halfway down the slide because it's rusty or poorly maintained, that's because of friction. And what I saw in, not just e-commerce, but really everywhere in business was that that same thing was happening.

Every year. Trillions of dollars, the most recent number I have is from 2016, but 4.6 trillion dollars of merchandise was left in e-commerce shopping carts that year. And if you look at why people abandon those carts, there's a lot of reasons. Maybe they wanted to check shipping and they couldn't figure out how to do it without putting the product in their cart, which has been a frictional element on its own. But if you look at the reasons that have been tallied for this, and there've been studies that actually check to see why people left stuff, most of them are friction related. It was a complex checkout process, forms that were too long, things that were confusing in the checkout process. Uncertainty as to what might happen next if you push that next button. Is that going to suddenly charge your credit card or are you gonna have a chance to look and see if they actually applied the 20% discount that you were supposed to get. And, and really I found friction was everywhere.

So that launching point for my framework was the origin of the FRICTION book. And as I dug into it more really the topic kind of expanded from beyond e-commerce and other types of selling processes, to the internal processes inside companies. One study estimates that 3 trillion dollars of effort inside organizations is wasted because of

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bureaucratic procedures, meetings that are wasting time, emails that really don't need to be distributed to people, but they end up having to read them and then remove them. There's so much wasted time that it amounts to trillions of dollars.

So that was important and I even extended it to the macro level, comparing the economies of China and India. Why China's grown so much more quickly, eight times as quickly as India in the last 30 years, when they were about the same size of economy at the, at the starting point. Now, there are a lot of reasons for that, but a lot of it is frictional. India's really legendary bureaucracy and red tape and licensing schemes and such, that make it very, very difficult for businesses to get started and to grow.

And then finally at the micro level, even our personal behavior, Adrian, is shaped by friction. Where, if you want to adopt a good habit or break a bad habit, one of the simplest things you can do is manipulate friction. Make that bad habit harder to do or make that easy a habit, make that good habit easier to do and it's, it really has a profound effect for you. If you look at the opinions of habit experts like Charles Duhigg or James Clear, author of Atomic Habits, this is a key element. All of their strategies, try and make the behaviors you want as simple and easy as possible.

So that that was the origin of the book and it ended up being, the definition that I ended up using was friction representing any unnecessary or wasted effort, time or money in accomplishing a task and it's, it really pervades so much of our lives and often we take it for granted.

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A few years ago you probably would not think twice about the friction of getting a taxi ride to the airport, for example. You know, you would have to either go try and hail a cab or perhaps call one in advance and so on, you know the taxi process. And it wasn't until Uber came along and showed us how much friction could be removed from that process by showing you exactly where your ride was, when you'd be picked up, where you were during your trip, and completely eliminating the cumbersome checkout process at the end, that we realized, whoa, that was a high friction process, but it was there all the time, we just never saw it.

And, and that's really what I hope to do with the book is show people how to see friction and then, of course, how to eliminate it.

Adrian Swinscoe: Thank you for that. I mean that's useful. I mean, as this something that I've sort of thought about myself and, and one of the interesting things is that ... If I think about friction if you like, as a physical phenomenon, in the world of physics that, you know, there's, there's good friction and there's also bad friction. So like, friction can create good things, but it can also hinder things as well. I mean, do you think that's the same applies in the way that you're looking at it or are you just looking for the bad friction, i.e. the unnecessary stuff?

Roger Dooley: No, actually, hard times. I would say that in business, 90% of the friction is bad, but it can be good. Sometimes you can have things that are a little too low in friction and sometimes they're intentionally designed to be that way. Probably a website that many of your listeners use is

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LinkedIn, for business networking. And one of my complaints about them has been the way they manipulate friction in very specific ways. They used to make it so easy to share your email contacts by just having a big continue button after you do something with very fine print saying, yes, I want to share my email contacts. But it was easy to make a mistake and suddenly you find, oh, I've shared, you know, all my Gmail or Yahoo Mail or Outlook contacts with LinkedIn. You know, I think there they minimized friction to accomplish their business objective. They also did so in a way that really is, what some might call, a dark pattern, where it was done in a way that was not necessarily in the user's best interest. And certainly there, you know, there are times when it makes sense for a company to slow people down in an action of before they take, you know, some particular kind of action.

Adrian Swinscoe: I think that's right. I mean, and thank you for bringing up the idea of dark patterns, because you mentioned BJ Fogg's work and you know, and behavioral design and, and then there's people like Nir Eyal that's, that's taken that on with his work around with the, you know, the book that he wrote, Hooked, and you know, helping companies, particularly software companies develop habit by forming, if you like, apps and technology in businesses. And so, and it's raised an ethical dimension to the work, sort of as, to quote Spiderman's uncle Ben, was it, sort of, with, with great power comes great responsibility, sort of thing. So I mean, it's important to keep that in mind. And when you, when you use some of these things, don't you think in terms of when you eliminate friction or you use some of these, that these,

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psychological tools or behavioral insights and things, that you kind of, you must consider what you're doing and why you're doing and if it's the right thing to do, don't you think?

Roger Dooley: Well yeah, I know BJ and Nir and also Robert Cialdini and every one of those people as well as other folks that practice in this area emphasize that they are explaining behavior and that it's really important to use these tools in an ethical way. In fact, Nir has a book coming out, perhaps it's the Hooked antidote, but it's called Indistractable. It's specifically meant to help people prevent some of these sort of attention grabbing, you know, vampire apps that are reducing their productivity and their personal satisfaction. So, but I, you know, I know that every one of them really believes that yes, it's important to understand these tools, but to use them in a good way because you know, any tool that can help you adopt a good habit, can probably also help you adopt a bad habit. It's really in the way people use these tools.

And I, one quote I like from Zig Ziglar, who's probably the most famous sales trainer of all time, somebody asked him, isn't the stuff that you're teaching manipulative? Because he, he wrote books about, you know, twenty ways to close a sale and you know, you've got the presumptive close and this close and that close, which on the face it, if you're reading it say, wow, this is really manipulative. And he said that are the most important persuasion tool you have is your own integrity. And by that what he meant, I think, was that if you are helping the customer get to a better place then it is fine.

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In fact, he would, he would go so far as to say it's your obligation to do your best to close the deal because the customer may be holding back not because it's the offer doesn't make sense, but being because of the typical sort of indecision thing. So he would say it's your moral, your moral duty, to close the sale. Now that that's probably a little bit stronger than most people would go, but what he really meant was, you know if, if what you're doing is going to help the customer, if they're not going to regret it three days later or a month later, then you should use these tools and it's fine. On the other hand, any sales tool that you use to sell somebody something that they don't want, they don't need or isn't going to help them in the long run is, is wrong.

Adrian Swinscoe: Sure, absolutely. But it's a thing that it needs to be kind of right on the top of the agenda. You know, everything, people should be conscious about what they're, what they're doing and how they're doing it. But that in mind, I mean not with that in mind, moving on from there, is that early in the book you talk about these things which I thought, which I thought was fascinating because I thought, where can I buy some of these? Because you talk about friction goggles. I mean I, and I had to this, these images spinning around in my head what do friction goggles look like. I thought they looked like, I imagine they probably would like those goggles that you used to wear in chemistry, kind of like LABSCO at school.

Roger Dooley: Early version of the book that you were looking at, did not have the illustration in it, but I can, I can send you an illustration from the actual book when I've, I've got the illustration, don't have the actual book at this particular

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moment yet. Without, without giving away a whole lot, I'll say that the book starts with a little fable, which the book is not a fable book, Who Moved My Cheese? or Bob Berg's really great to The Go-Giver book. It's basically the type of business book that most people would expect, but it does start with a fable that involves friction goggles and these goggles enable people to see friction where they might've missed it before.

Just to, you know, we were talking just a couple minutes ago about how people did not see the friction in taxis until Uber came along. Similarly, I mean you could point to any number of things. People didn't see the friction in grocery stores until somebody figured that out that you could do it without any checkout process at all and so on. So these are mostly metaphorical goggles that people, after they read the book, will have really as a permanent part of their psyche. And the reason I say that is I've, friction concepted number of speeches so far and afterwards it has really stuck in people's minds. For the rest of the day at the conference, people are encountering some kind of unnecessary difficulty, they're standing in a long line to get their lunch, so I can say the friction, friction.

Editor at McGraw-Hill says that the whole staff there has begun seeing friction everywhere. So I think it's really something that once you start thinking about it from that standpoint, you see it everywhere and you, you want to do something about it. Now, it's always possible, but there will be some physical friction goggles, so folks who tune into rogerdooley.com might, might end up seeing what they look like in real life.

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Adrian Swinscoe: And we watch this space, you know, that might be the next kind of technological development coming out, out of Roger Dooley Inc. But I think it's, I think it's fair when you get turned on to something, I think it's right to say it's, I think it's to do within the brain, it's to do with the reticular activating system that somebody, I learned about years ago. Which, I remember buying a car years ago, it was that blue BMW and I'd wanted to, I wanted to buy it for, for a little while and, and once I had it I was driving around and it just felt like you used to, I used to see, I felt like I was seeing kind of BMWs and similar cars all over the place and unbeknownst to myself at the time that the BMW Saloon, the three series, that I was driving at the time was, was, it became one of the most popular cars on the road. But this was just, sort of just before that. But it's almost a bit like, when we tune into things, we almost start seeing more of them because it's, that's, it's almost like, because we're tuned into them and, does that make sense?

Roger Dooley: Oh, absolutely. I totally identify with the car example. That's, that's a pretty well documented phenomenon that you bought a car that you think is really unique and like, the week after you buy it, suddenly you're seeing them everywhere. And they were always there. It's just that they were like every other car at that point. Unless it was something that you perhaps had your eye on for a while and were already observing for that, but definitely the case. And in the case of friction, I think it's a good thing, because the more people see it, the more can do to eliminate unnecessary friction to make their business run better and their lives easier.

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Adrian Swinscoe: Absolutely. And so, I mean you mentioned examples like, like Uber and also, you know, shopping at the supermarket and being able to do so without having checkouts and things now. I mean does this, is this exclusively a B to C phenomenon or does it apply to pretty much every type of industry?

Roger Dooley: No, you know, actually that's, the broader question I often get is what I want to talk about, behavioral science and marketing techniques and so on. They say, well, is this really mostly B to C? And the answer is no, because B to B buyers are just as human as B to C buyers. The way they do things maybe a little bit different. They may not be jumping on a website and dropping an item in their shopping cart all the time, but they are still humans. They have non-conscious drivers just as consumers do, and the, it's just as important to make things easy for business customers as it is for consumer customers because they too will be drawn and become more loyal. They find one company easier to do business with than the other. In fact, I think that if you talk to B to B buyers and they start talking about different companies, you'll get 'em to say, oh, geez, this company's a real pain to deal with. You know, every time I have a problem it's, you know, takes days to get it resolved and multiple emails and phone calls. And over time, you know, if there's only one supplier for a product, well sometimes they have to put up with that. But after one or two experiences like that, they will start doing business with that supplier that offers a more frictionless experience.

Adrian Swinscoe: Perfect. So I wanted to, I mean, not wanting to really dive into the book and give all the, all the crown

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jewels away, as it were, of the book. But I wanted to ask you about a couple of things that stood out for me in a book, when, that I just thought are interesting concepts. And the first one is about the Japanese or Kaizen concept of muda and I wanted, I thought, oh, that's just like a brilliant word.

Roger Dooley: I, I'll go with muda, but we would have to ask a native Japanese speaker to verify that, but I'll go with muda for now. And this is something that is not a new concept, but you may recall when the Japanese auto industry was taking over the world and people thought that they were just completely unstoppable as the globally dominant economic power. And there were a lot of reasons for that. But one of the things that they were very good at doing was manufacturing stuff very efficiently, including automobiles. When the people in Detroit started looking at how the Japanese were building cars, they just found that there was a huge amount of waste in the way Americans are doing it. And it was everything from having massive stockpiles of inventory and lots of other things.

But one concept that sort of came to the fore was Japanese manufacturers had identified wasted effort as muda and they would analyze, say, oh, what a worker was doing down to just every single motion. So that, if for instance, a worker had to pick up a tool, they would find a way, rather than to have that person rotate their body 90 degrees to grab the tool, they would find a way to position the tool so that that effort could be minimized. And every aspect of the task was treated like that. You know, could you eliminate even the smallest amount of effort from that process? I think it was probably good metaphor there

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from the way we work with customers and so on, we need that same level of attention. But what, then of course the workers were also very fast because it was almost effortless.

And there's one, one comment that I describe in the book that when some American auto people saw a Japanese worker on an assembly line, he was moving so quickly and efficiently, they just couldn't believe it. It was like, we can never do that. You know, our guys won't do that. But it was not just because the workers were putting out a high level of effort, it was because the process had taken every bit of waste out of the process. So, you know, I think that's a, there's a fundamental lesson there that, in this case, they were able to become extremely productive by simply eliminating friction. And that's, it's the pervasive theme of the book, of course.

Adrian Swinscoe: Absolutely. And the other one I had thought that was really interesting because it adds a dimension on to this idea of friction, was that the, you talk about this, I guess it's psychological phenomenon called the paradox of choice and how it, how it manifests itself as friction. I mean, can you tell us, tell us a little bit about that. 'Cause I think the paradox of choices based on the work of Iyengar and Lipper back in the late 1990s and 2000s, early 2000s, I think.

Roger Dooley: Right. Yeah. Then popularized by Schwartz's book, The Paradox of Choice and that is sort of in the broader category of what I call cognitive friction. And that is where you aren't aware that something is causing friction. It's just that your brain is working harder to deal with it and

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when your brain works harder to deal with something, it changes your behavior and that affects everything from say a type font that's difficult to read and it affects your perception and your behavior. But in the case of choice, it's well established that if there are a lot of choices for what would normally be, perhaps, a simple decision, then it actually slows people down. They may take longer to examine the choices, but they end up actually, if they're buying things, purchase fewer.

And the, the classic study involves jam where in alternating weekends, in a specialty store, the researchers put out at table with jam samples and then bottles that people could buy. They had one weekend they would do three jams and other weekend they do 24 and logically you would say, well, if there's a bigger choice then people buy more stuff because maybe they don't like the three choices, but they're bound to find one that's right on the money for them when there's a couple of dozen choices. But, in fact, what happened was when there were a lot of choices, they sold fewer jars of jam.

And now that doesn't mean the choice is always bad if you are in a complex buying process, choice is good. Amazon has infinite choice and obviously they do pretty well. They own half the e-commerce market, but they reduce some of that choice friction by offering a lot of tools. The way they sort the products where they display them. You've got star ratings, you've got reviews, different kinds of screens where you can filter by price, you can filter by colors and characteristics of the product. So they provide you a lot of tools to narrow that choice.

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I think probably a more, something that would resonate more as a choice problem is, if you've ever been on an e-commerce site that had a bad search feature, so you searched for something and it gives you a whole page of stuff that appears to be random to you. You get tired of that pretty quickly and you go shop somewhere else. Amazon, even though their website as far from beautiful, it is really a selling machine.

Adrian Swinscoe: Sure, absolutely. So Roger, hopefully those, some of those questions have given us a, given the folks are listening in a flavor of this sort of what we're talking about here, and that kind of, what it is this friction that exists all around us, whether it's stuff that is just really hard, some of the stuff that just kind of wastes our time and effort, stuff that is, that works on a cognitive basis or even stuff that we don't really see as being difficult because we don't, it becomes normalized, as it were. It's just the way that things are until something else comes along and replaces it, i.e. in the Uber example.

So hopefully those questions have given us, the people an insight into these, this is some of the, this is the area that you're trying to tackle here. But if I was to say to you, or somebody's saying to themselves and they're listening in to this or reading the highlights and they say, hmm, I'd like to start my own journey. Kind of, I'd like to, I'd like to get my own set of friction goggles, let's say, and they're like, and rather than actually, before they can, they can buy the book, which I'm sure that we'll go by the book. But they want to say, I want to kind of get started on my journey to spotting and eliminating the friction that I see around me. Where would you encourage them to start? I

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mean, what sort of thing should be doing first or thinking about first?

Roger Dooley: Right? Well, I think that most of us have experienced a couple of major kinds of friction and one is in that customer experience side and then also on the internal side how the company does things. And to me the start is to think about developing a friction aware culture inside the company so that everybody, not just the leaders, but everybody is sensitized to identifying friction and, unless it serves some useful purpose, getting rid of it. And so one, one starting point that I'd suggest is on the customer facing side, very carefully observing customer behavior.

I was at a conference just a couple months ago and there was a behavioral science company there that looked at trying to improve the way websites worked and the shopping experiences worked and so on. And The lady would commented, well, I go in and ask somebody how many steps are there in your checkout process? And said, oh, commonly people say, well there's three. But then we go in and we analyze every single motion. This is how it sort of hearkens back to the muda concept. Every single motion that the customer has to make, do they have to scroll down, do they have to click something, do they have to tap the screen? All the motions, they find that it's not three, it's more like 27. And you know, I think just really putting aside the assumption of what customers, what you think customers have to do to do business with you and then actually observing real customers going through the process, particularly first time customers who are, don't already know how

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everything works. And I think that would be a huge eye opener for a lot of people.

Adrian Swinscoe: Perfect. Well, thank you for that. That's great. Great advice. Roger, is there anything else that you'd like to add that we've kind of missed out?

Roger Dooley: No, I think we've really covered a lot of territory here and I'm really excited to, to talk about this with you. This is actually the first FRICTION specific interview that I've done, Adrian. So it's really a lot of fun and yeah. So you, you can claim that honor, if that's an honor and I, but I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about this because as you can probably tell, I get pretty excited about it.

Adrian Swinscoe: Yeah, that's cool. I mean, so Roger, where can folks pick up a copy of the FRICTION? So where's the best place that they can go to?

Roger Dooley: Okay, well it should be available at most places where you find books, obviously amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com and so on, as well as, hopefully, physical bookstores. Probably the best place to start would be rogerdooley.com because there I've got a jumping off point. I'll have both links to the book, links to my own podcast, my blog and neuromarketing and so on. And so that's, that's a pretty good starting point to find out all things that I'm involved in. And I, I'll add too, I am on Twitter at @rogerdooley, and that is probably my preferred social medium.

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Adrian Swinscoe: Roger, we will make sure that we get that, we get that all edited up and written up and ready to go, just as the book is about to go, kind of, live. I want to wish you the best of luck on the book. Congratulations on finishing it. I appreciate the amount of work that goes into, kind of, writing a book and also all the writing that goes on in between. But lastly wanted just to say thank you for sharing your time and your insight today. That's been great.

Roger Dooley: Well, thanks for the opportunity, Adrian. I enjoy talking to somebody who understands the psychological aspects of the topics. It's been great.

Thank you for tuning into this episode of Brainfluence.

To find more episodes like this one, and to access all of Roger's online writing and resources. The best starting point is rogerdooley.com. And remember Roger's new book, FRICTION releases May 17th. Bestselling author Dan pink calls it "an important read" and Wharton professor Dr. Jonah Berger said, "you'll understand friction's power and how to harness it."

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