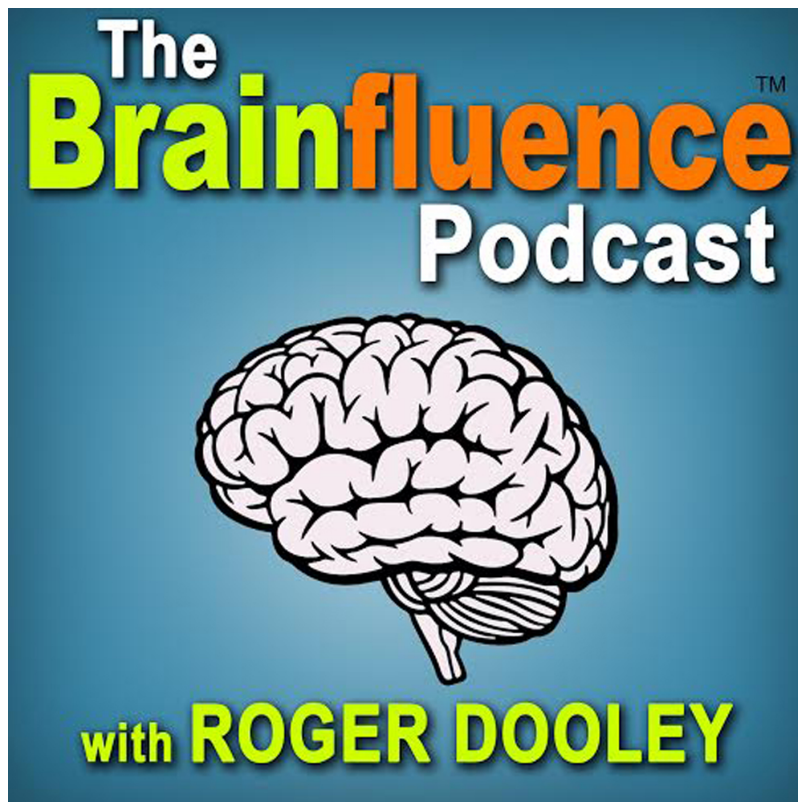


[The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli](https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way)
<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



Roger Dooley

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

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 is now available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and bookstores everywhere. Dr Robert Cialdini described the book as, "Blinding insight," and Nobel winner Dr. Richard Claimer said, "Reading Friction will arm any manager with a mental can of WD40."

To learn more, go to [RogerDooley.com/Friction](https://www.RogerDooley.com/Friction), or just visit the book seller of your choice.

Now, here's Roger.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to Brainfluence. I'm Roger Dooley.

I'm excited by this week's guest because his interests overlap with mine in more than one way. And I know you'll find his insights valuable. Joseph Michelli is a speaker, author, and organizational consultant. He's the author of numerous national bestsellers, including the Starbucks Experience and the New York times number one bestseller, Prescription for Excellence. He was named as one of the top 10 thought leaders in customer service by Global Gurus. His latest book is the Airbnb Way: Five Leadership Lessons for Igniting Growth through Loyalty, Community, and Belonging. Welcome to the show, Joseph.

Joseph Michelli: I'm so glad to be here. I listen to the show. I love your writing. It's an honor.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, what appealed to you about Airbnb, Joseph? I think they're a pretty young company compared to some of the other folks you've written about. They haven't gone public yet. And coincidentally today, just the day we're recording this, they announced a big loss. They do have growth and a lot of transactional volume for sure, but is it too soon to call them a success?

Joseph Michelli: Wow. I got to tell you, it was 2008. I was working with the Ritz Carlton hotel company, and I was working on a book called The New Gold Standard. And at that time, in 2008, we were struggling with the elevation of the customer experience for the Ritz Carlton, obviously, it was a premier experience, but it was a little stuffy and pretentious, And customers had kind of moved away from being required to drink beer out of bottles and wanting ... They wanted to be able to drink the beer out of bottles instead of having to drink them out of glasses.

So that's where I was in 2008. At the same time, there were two guys in San Francisco trying to make rent. And they were leveraging the power of a very rudimentary website, that they upgraded over time, to create what turned out to be Airbnb. So within the space of that 11 years or so, they definitely have valuations at \$38 billion, depending upon who calculates them, for their public offering, and who knows what this current loss is going to mean to that. But yeah, to me it's a success that they've defined and changed the industry of home-sharing

Roger Dooley: They do have actual revenues and some actual profits, so that's, that's a good thing, compared to, we just saw, we were begin the process apparently of implosion. Hopefully it's not fatal for them, but obviously they're going through

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

some major changes in restructuring right now. But I think Airbnb actually has a lot more solid revenue and value under their belt.

Joseph Michelli: Absolutely. It depends on where you go. Prior numbers were like three point \$8 million sorts of profitability on top of all that revenue that they're generating.

Roger Dooley: It isn't that much, but at least it is indicative that they're kind of close to being profitable.

Joseph Michelli: Well, yeah, all the corners were not in the black. Certainly not Uber and not Lyft and many of those players when they went to the public market.

Roger Dooley: Right. And it shows a little bit in their results too. Joseph, I'm really fascinated by the Airbnb story. In fact, I actually started on a section about Airbnb in my book Friction, but ended up not completing that just to keep the book length in shack. It's a great story but you can only include so many stories. My take was that like other successful platforms, Airbnb is a friction reducer. It makes finding a non-hotel place to stay in a different city way, way easier than it used to be, one, you'd either have to go to Craig's list or maybe some small specialty website with limited listings. It's kind of the same way that eBay made buying and selling stuff, even really specialized stuff, very easy, and Uber brought drivers and riders together. That's what Airbnb does.

But the hard part about creating a successful platform is getting the network effect to kick in, eBay and Uber work only because there's lots of people on both sides of the deals and like dating sites as well. How did Airbnb get to

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

the point where people could actually use them and be confident of getting matched up and how did they fend off some of their... There was some existing competition that presumably already had a network effect.

Joseph Michelli: There was. VRVO was probably the main player, very nichey in the vacation market as opposed to say an urban location or way out rural which wouldn't be considered vacation. So they definitely had a big competitor, had market penetration. If you want to talk about a clunky website and you want to talk about friction for the user experience, you were talking about VRBO. And the contractuals and everything about that thing was kind of a behemoth. And so I think there was a great opportunity on that alone.

But your points while taking the friction reduction in, in the Airbnb world is on this side of the host. It's a lot harder to get somebody to put their house up to potentially have it destroyed by a guest, than it is for a guest to potentially stay in someone's house, particularly if they're not sharing a room in a house with a homeowner.

So that challenge I think really got faced by getting some of the insurance benefits of \$1 million protection against any of those kinds of damages. So being able to put that in play. I think also if you're really trying to make some money out of your house, you need to have the infrastructure of an Airbnb beyond the ability to get access to your property. You need to be able to have the building benefits, very limited amount of money being taken out of the overall listing fee because everything is favoring host on this. You're paying 3% to 5% on a listing

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

fee and literally you probably couldn't process your credit card for much less than that.

So if you get the insurance benefits and you have this platform that does drive access to your property and you've got all these other benefits in addition to the marketing and the transactional processing, plus you have a rating system, right? That enables you to demonstrate your competency and your greatness and based on that rating system, the AI kicks in and the better you are at doing this, the more profitable you're likely to be in terms of showing up when people search.

Roger Dooley: I'm in Austin, that's where HomeAway is located. So your comments on that are interesting and the fact that their website, at least at that point, was difficult to use. One area that companies have been somewhat disruptive in, but used as a tool for disruption is by really easy onboarding, where WhatsApp app managed to get their user onboarding process for messaging down to about two minutes, including a verification step, which even for an app, it's really phenomenal. And of course Uber gets drivers on board way faster than most taxi companies do, particularly say the one in Black Cabs, where they've got years of education required. But I think it's a little bit more challenging as you've already pointed out, to bringing new hosts online. How have they been able to speed that process up and make it as easy as possible at Airbnb?

Joseph Michelli: So I speak a lot about Friction in my book, so I definitely think there are things they've done that make this a less friction filled experience, including super fast load times on their website. But when it comes to that process, they've done everything they can, I think to reasonably

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

reduce friction. But in some ways, I even speak to the fact that they may have increased friction. For a while there they were requiring people to put their picture on their profile, which is kind of a death killer to enrollment normally. Couldn't use an avatar, had to be a fairly recent picture for both the host and the guest.

It turns out that that friction wasn't giving them what they wanted, which was to increase trust. It actually was putting them at some risks that people were doing some prejudicial decision making as to whether or not to accept a booking or not. So that requirement has been subsequently removed from a necessity.

So I think that at times they make decisions based on designing for trust and they think that to do that, they may have to do things that might create more friction. But it's interesting in other areas of the business, they're all about... These guys who founded it are from design schools and they definitely use design thinking and they try to make the least number of clicks and moves and ease of user experience at every turn. But I just think it's noteworthy when you talk about areas of trust, they're trying to get people to have a dialogue before they book a room. Just to make a point off of that, in the old days, in the original days of this, you had to request a booking as a guest, and the host had to give you permission. And so that whole interaction, your profile, all that stuff mattered. Now they go to instant booking and they're trying to drive the entire community to instant booking because they realize waiting to get accepted for a room when you're trying to do a booking is definitely crazy friction.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

Roger Dooley: Yeah. Well it certainly is. Weirdly enough, I have not actually stayed in an Airbnb, but I do book a lot of hotels and obviously if you had to wait for the hotel to get back to you to say your reservation was okay, that would really make you crazy. Especially when you're juggling flights and rental cars and who knows what else.

Joseph Michelli: Yeah. It kind of reminds me of the days when you could name your own price tool or something on one of the travel sites and you didn't know exactly what hotel you were going to stay in. It's just a little too mysterious. But I think if you're talking about somebody, let's imagine I want to rent a place in my house, a room in my house. A lot of those hosts we talked to really said, "I don't want to just give people the opportunity to instantly book. I want them to have a dialogue with me and I want to make a decision about whether I'm going to let this person sleep in the room next to me on any given night."

Roger Dooley: Which is kind of reasonable. And presumably the person that is requesting that kind of an accommodation is more understanding than if you're trying to book something at the Hilton and they said they'd get back to you tomorrow.

Joseph Michelli: Yeah. And I think that's that name, your own price kind of thing was if you're willing to give up certainty as to where you're going to stay for a price reduction, then you get that. And I think that's what you're seeing in that marketplace too, some self-selection around people who are willing to take a lower price, maybe go through a little bit more vetting in order to stay in somebody's house instead of a different kind of accommodation.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

Roger Dooley: Well, Joseph, I've built some big communities and I know that building community is difficult, look at the difficulty that Facebook is having right now where they've got obviously the biggest community on the planet, but boy, it's really kind of fraying at the seams for a variety of reasons. Admittedly, when you have a very specialized community where you can sort of limit some of the problems by saying, "Okay, we're not going to talk about religion or politics or a few other flashpoints," but how has Airbnb built a community and how does that help their business?

Joseph Michelli: Well, I think it's really interesting. Doug Atkins has really been the framer of the community at Airbnb. So Doug Atkins wrote the book called the Culting of Brands. He was a marketer. And people were telling him that there's no brand loyalty, and he was begging to defer, and he wanted to understand the dynamics of loyalty. So he studied it. He studied all kinds of cults, things that some people might not think of as cultic, but that really we're trying to drive an aligned viewpoint. Then he went from there and he was the guy who started Meetup. So he really got into that offline community building. And then from Meetup, he really got into the world of movements. And so how do you get a community on the move?

So he's really the architect at Airbnb of a lot of the community stuff. I think they've done an incredible job of rallying hosts around the rights of home-sharing. So they get these hosts, I think very excited about the fact that you have a right to, at least in their mind, leverage their greatest asset, not be hugely restricted. As long as you're paying your taxes and you're a good neighbor, you

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

shouldn't be limited from being able to use your property in short term rental.

So there's a lot of excitement around that, I think. And then they've championed a true North for what they want to be known for. And they're appealing, I think, to the underlying emotional need for us to belong somewhere. So to belong to a community, but also to create a community that produces belonging in a world that's highly divided. So their social messaging, their mission around create a world where anyone can belong anywhere, I think is a very powerful force. There's a lot of online support for their community and there's a lot of offline support.

So I was at a host club in Portland last weekend, Airbnb was there supporting a host, a host group that meets on a regular basis for community activities. They were doing a fundraiser for homelessness as well as for advocacy regarding home and sharing rights.

Roger Dooley: That's a pretty big issue these days in some cities where there's been a significant impact on real estate prices early, so is claimed, from home-sharing operations where people are buying properties specifically for the purpose of sharing them. I can see where that would create some backlash. In terms of community, how do some of these larger property owners fit in because you've got people who are owning multiple properties or maybe even more corporate type owners these days. Is there a way that that can be sort of integrated or is that an issue these days?

Joseph Michelli: Oh, I think it's definitely something they're working very hard on. I would say most of my time was spent in what is

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

their kind of their home community. So I deal with mostly smaller entities who are really leasing out their house to protect themselves from housing insecurity. So I dealt with more of the home hosts as opposed to the more corporatized hosts. And there is, I think some tension in that, does that emulate more of the hotel model? Is that where the hotels are trying to go into some of that play?

So I really don't have a solution for that. It's one of those things I leave hanging in the balance at the end of the book saying, I'm not sure how they're going to pull the go round on this. What really makes it work for most people, I think is the uniqueness of the value proposition.

Matching a changing demographic of traveler who wants to travel off the grid. I think it's also matching a social phenomenon where people aren't necessarily buying new and they're wanting to repurpose. So being able to reuse existing spaces instead of constantly having to construct new spaces. So I'm never quite sure what all this other part of it, the more corporatized side means.

Roger Dooley: You mentioned trust a little while ago, Joseph. I think the that impacts so many areas of business and it's such an important thing, but particularly here where you've got strangers interacting, in one case the hosts are letting somebody into their house. What are some of the steps that Airbnb has done to increase that trust?

Joseph Michelli: I think without a doubt, it's the reputation system and it's been an evolving mechanism too. So early on, if I were going to rate a host and a host was going to rate me much as you would in an Uber scenario, I could rate you, you might host first and then fear the retaliation of you on me for whatever rating I had. So they did simultaneous

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

reveals of the ratings. But their rating system is a big part of what makes that platform work. Somehow or another, we instill a lot of trust on what other people say about their experiences with someone, and it's a verified user. So it's not as though there's a lot of other distortions in the data.

Roger Dooley: Actually it's a verified transaction too unlike Amazon, where people can review products without necessarily having purchased the product from Amazon, although the verified ones are flagged or even there, there's some issues with real versus fake reviews, but at least you can be reasonably sure that these reviews are in fact from real people who did take part in this transaction. Is that true or is there also an undercurrent of potential fraud there?

Joseph Michelli: Yeah, I don't see any fraud in this one. I am a user of the service, I just stayed at an Airbnb this weekend. It's waiting for me to review my host and they always show up every time no matter what I say about them. So I guess there's always potential, but I think this is up and up and it's how they secure some trust. And trust is big to them. And there's a great Ted talk by Joe Gavia called Design for trust, and it's worth watching because he speaks to all kinds of things that they're doing, including the size of a conversation box between a host and a guest and some of the prompts that they give to try to help people build a little pre-awareness of one another before there's an arrival on your doorstep.

Roger Dooley: why don't you explain a little more about that process? Well, we will link to the Ted talk in the show notes, but just

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

for our listeners right now, what are some of those maybe little a trust hack that they're using?

Joseph Michelli: Yeah, I think predominantly they're trying to give people... First off ratings are a trust hacks. So they talk a lot about the fact that if somebody tells you... He does a great example in the video where he says, "Hand your phone to the person next to you in the audience and unlock it." And the anxiety that would happen for most humans around that. But if you had a rating system that said, "The person next to you is really good with phones and they don't pry into other people's private areas in your phone." You'd probably have less anxiety. So it's some of that.

There is the communications that happen before a booking. So even if you get an instant booking, there's still an effort to reach out to you and say, "Hey, I want to know a little bit more about you, what the purpose of your visit is, how I can help you." And again, structuring that dialogue for those interactions in a way that increases the probability that people are going to share appropriate amounts as opposed to overshare or under share, are factors that drive trust.

Roger Dooley: The pre transaction dialogue, I think so important. There's some fascinating research using a psychology tool called the Ultimatum Game, where two strangers in a lab setting potentially share some money. The experiment, it gives it to one person who can divide it between himself, I'll use male pronouns, and the other person and the second person can either accept or reject it. Now if it's accepted, they keep the money. And you would think that every time people would walk away with money because theoretically any split proposed should be better than

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

nothing. In fact, that isn't how it works because people are humans. So you frequently, the first person who makes the split decide to keep eight or nine for themselves, underestimating the fact that the person on the other end wants to punish them more than they need that other dollar to.

So it's really fascinating. But getting to the point about the pre dialogue in lab settings in general where it's just conducted the way I described it, about a third of the deals fail, which is pretty amazing because they could walk away with money every single time, but about a third of the deals fail. And there's one little hack that experimenters found cut that to one in 20 failing. And it was just to have the two participants talk for 10 minutes before the experiment. Their speculation as to what was going on there, but just that little bit of dialogue, maybe they found that they had something in common, they just humanize themselves to each other, that little bit of dialogue totally changed the outcome of the game.

And so I can see where in a transaction like this, a little bit different than a lab setting, but still just that humanization from getting to know the other person even a little bit helps.

Joseph Michelli: We put a lot of other hacks in for trust, not necessarily the things that Joe talked about in the Ted talk, but we looked at a lot of the research on what causes a profile of a host to be more attractive, what levels of disclosure and what you say in your profile. We looked at a goodly amount of research about how sharing some negatives about your property increased the sense of trust. So if you say,

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

"Look, if you're somebody who is a light sleeper, don't choose this room."

That's a huge, huge power play because then everything else you say about the good of the building, assuming that being a light sleeper isn't a factor that would dissuade you, at least the credibility and the drive toward trust is there. Lots of messages about avoiding puffery throughout your visual depictions and your narration of your property.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. I think that's an important lesson for all marketers because that same issue that you're describing works in any kind of persuasive communication. If you take a message that's all good stuff and include something negative or a caution or, but the product does not do this, whatever, that message will be more persuasive even with that negative information, than it would have been if it was all positive. That makes perfect sense, that disclosing a flaw or two will make it sound better. And then of course, so much puffery that it sounds unrealistic, that's who I think is something that all marketers should avoid.

Joseph Michelli: We talk about listing your property as if it's an accurate picture of it for a date. You don't want to show up 20 years older and misrepresenting all of your strengths.

Roger Dooley: We talked about onboarding of hosts. I assume onboarding of guests is pretty simple.

Joseph Michelli: Oh super simple. That's crazy simple. With intent.

Roger Dooley: There was some concern that you don't want to get a bad guest, but how is it? What happens the first time around when a guest is a first time guest, they have no rating? Or

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

maybe they've only got one rating or something. Does that impact the transaction at all?

Joseph Michelli: Typically not. It's more likely to impact you when you're first starting off as hosting your property and then as you're onboarded to be a host, they give you some ways in which you can incentivize those first guests to come in because they are taking an increased risk without having anything, any track record to bake themselves off of. So they're even helping hosts figure out how to market themselves. They do a lot of tools to help you with pricing based on market factors, not least of which the fact that you have no ratings

Roger Dooley: What percentage of hosts do you think travel is Airbnb guests? I don't know if there's any stats on that. Do you have any idea?

Joseph Michelli: Oh yeah. The host community, I saw something on something like 60% of hosts are actively guests in Airbnbs. But what I think is most noteworthy is that when you talk to somebody at Airbnb, like an employee of Airbnb, they go, "I don't really know why you refer to me as employee because I'm like a host, I'm a guest, I'm an employee. I'm part of the Airbnb community." So titles, labels, one day you're the guest, one day you're the host, one day you're supporting both.

Roger Dooley: Well then that kind of leads me to my next topic, Joseph. In the book you talk about Airbnb's logo. Why don't you explain the significance of that?

Joseph Michelli: Yeah. Well, so the Airbnb logo is a super simple representation, the Baylow. And it communicates that

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

people can belong anywhere. It's something that should be able to be drawn with your toe in the sand. It is an icon just like the Nike swoosh, so it doesn't need to be associated with any wording. I went through that with Starbucks when they removed the siren from the Starbucks coffee circle. And so I think it really is intended to be easily created and easily accessible in a defining message about belonging.

Roger Dooley: And it's a roughly triangular in shape too, which sort of corresponds to either of the three pillars that you talk about or perhaps the different roles that you could have within Airbnb. The three pillars that you talk about, belonging, trust and community, we've talked a little about trust and community, these all kind of interrelate, they aren't necessarily distinct entities, but what do you mean by belonging?

Joseph Michelli: Yeah, so for belonging in the Airbnb concept is that there is a welcoming experience and that when you arrive, you feel like you belong here. So when I go to a hotel, I don't necessarily feel like I belong at that hotel. I feel like I'm doing business in town and that hotel is nearby. But the notion should be that this should be designed to say, "This is your place. We care about you in some meaningful way and despite your differences, wherever you came from, you belong where you are right this moment." And that's at the heart of the brand and we've seen it manifest. For example, a host in Milan told me that one of their guests got ill and they took them to the hospital and stayed with them and translated on their behalf in the hospital. And that happens at the Ritz Carlton, but doesn't happen, at least hasn't happened for me at many of the other hotels, short of that.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

Roger Dooley: Right. Well hopefully you won't require that kind of assistance in a foreign country.

Joseph Michelli: I don't feel like that there is that investment in me. Let's put it that way.

Roger Dooley: Right, I understand. And you're right. I'm sure other hotels will be happy to call you a cab or if it was really serious call you an ambulance, but that would probably be where they bid you adieu.

Joseph Michelli: Right. And I think it's having somebody who does that and then calls your family and keeps up. It's what you would do with a friend in your home. And I think many of these hosts have taken on that notion that if you belong here, we need to treat you like you're an extension of our family.

Roger Dooley: Are there some more routine, like obviously, going way out of your way to help guests in some kind of emergency is one thing, but are there some simpler behaviors that Airbnb encourages to build that belonging?

Joseph Michelli: Yeah. It's often just sharing the best practices of people that are very minor. There are people who literally have maps up in their entryway of people who've stayed there, but the maps have no borders, right? So they have this physical shape, but there's no borders. So it's just like an example of that or signage that welcomes people or just a personal messaging before arrival or clarification of, "Here's your guidebook, an electronic guidebook that I send you, my recommendations for you. It's the extension of letting you know that I'm available if you want us to interact or not or leave you alone. We're really fully here

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

but we want to make your stay what you want it to be." And I think a lot of it is giving tips on what's going on, best places to eat, for example, make a huge difference.

Roger Dooley: That personalized recommendation is humanizing the process. It's not, here's some travel sites, top 10 attractions or top 20 restaurants in the area or something like that. Here's what Yelp recommends. It's when you say, "Here's some places that I enjoy and that you might." It just makes the whole process seem a little bit more personal and in relates to what they're trying to accomplish.

Joseph Michelli: Yeah. A lot of signs on chalkboards, welcome here, whomever. It's those little things that are not robotic and overly predictable and overly traveled. Just small touches create that sense that you personally belong here. Not generically, you're another number for me.

Roger Dooley: Right. Something that I was going to actually do a blog post about that I haven't, but what you're just talking about, reminded me of it, the other day I stayed at a holiday Inn express and I wanted to be a little bit smarter the next day. So as I walked in I thought it was pretty interesting, there was not a chalkboard, it's one of those writing boards that kind of the ink fluoresces on itself, sort of illuminated chalkboard type thing that had the first names of all of their frequent traveler, frequent guest members.

So there was Roger up there among maybe a dozen other names that were checking in. There was another sign, a guest of the day, which was not me, but it was somebody apparently, I presume they change that

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

everyday. I did to check. Maybe it's been up there for three months. And then there was also a little handwritten note on a note card with my name on the outside and the manager wrote a little note welcoming me. It would've been nice if maybe there was a free cocktail coupon or something in there. But even so, clearly, they are trying to emulate the experience of a much better place for a hotel. It's really at the budget end of the spectrum.

Joseph Michelli: Right. Well, Chip Conley is an architect of a lot of the hospitality delivery at Airbnb. So Chip came from hotels and he wrote *Peak: How Businesses Get Their Mojo from Maslow*. And so I think he really understands what belonging is, is a higher level need of human beings. And hospitality for him is kind of what Danny Meyer might call enlightened hospitality. He calls service with heart. So I think a lot of it is figuring out how do you do all the operational things to be solid because it's hard to welcome somebody if the place is sloppy, right? Like, "Hey, welcome here. But I really didn't take the time to make it happen for you."

But past the operational stuff, it's like what are the little things that cause a person to say, "Hey they thought about me. They made this relevant to me. They took some time to make it about me."

Roger Dooley: I would think that delivering consistent experience across such a diverse array of places is kind of a challenge. Heck, even the big hotel chains have difficulty delivering consistent experience and they've got similar facilities and direct employees and so on. I'm sure that to some degree, guests are tolerant. If you choose to stay in an igloo or something, you're not going to expect the same

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

experience of what if you were at Manhattan loft. But what do they do? How do they try and maintain some kind of consistency across all the hosts?

Joseph Michelli: So if it's going to go back to the rating system, but I think again, even in the way you present your igloo, you're going to have to set some expectations about what are the realities of that. So communicating upfront how this might be a little bit different than Manhattan is pretty important. Beyond that, they are going to be still rated on the cleanliness of that igloo and the communication that was involved in it, and whether or not this was as it was promised and all those other things that are critical to anybody determining that they had a quality stay in any kind of location.

So all of that's in there and if you are having problems with this, there is a lot of just-in-time messaging that come back to you. So if you're getting fours on cleanliness, they're going to be giving you some tips and hacks to try to get yourself up to a five. And over time, those fours are going to make it impossible for anybody to ever find you on the site. I think that's the reality. It's a meritocracy governed by those who've experienced it.

Roger Dooley: And just for our listeners who maybe didn't know that you can indeed rent an igloo, you can rent an Island, you can rent a TP and various other kinds of unconventional lodgings on Airbnb. I was pretty amazed by the diversity of things. Now the numbers of those aren't necessarily large compared to the more traditional type of rentals, but nevertheless, pretty amazing.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

Joseph Michelli: Yeah, I think there's 5,000 castles listed and 124,000 tiny houses, so you can go big or you can go small.

Roger Dooley: There is something for everybody.

Joseph Michelli: That's right.

Roger Dooley: Okay, well I think probably that's a good place to break off, Joseph, and let me remind everyone that today we are speaking with Joseph Michelli, author of the new book, the Airbnb Way, five Leadership Lessons for Igniting Growth Through Loyalty, Community and Belonging. Joseph, where can people find you?

Joseph Michelli: You can find me @josephmichelli.com but those who are in the United States, we have a contest running through December 16th. You want to go to Airbnb and check it out. They're going to give you a tour. I'll fly you there in the continental United States and Airbnb will put you up in San Francisco so you can find out more about that @airbnbway.com, no purchase necessary if you want to enter that contest, it's Airbnbway.com.

Roger Dooley: Great, and we will link to those places to the book and any other resources we spoke about on the show notes-page @rogerdooley.com/podcast. And we will have a text version of our conversation there too.

Joseph, thanks for being on the show. Maybe we'll bump into each other in an Airbnb sometime.

Joseph Michelli: I'd love it. Thanks a lot.

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.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

The Airbnb Way with Joseph Michelli

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/joseph-michelli-airbnb-way>

And remember, Roger's new book, *Friction*, is now available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and book sellers everywhere. Bestselling author Dan Pink calls it, "An important read," and Wharton Professor Dr. Joana Berger said, "You'll understand Friction's power and how to harness it."

For more information or for links to Amazon and other sellers, go to [RogerDooley.com/Friction](https://www.RogerDooley.com/Friction).

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>