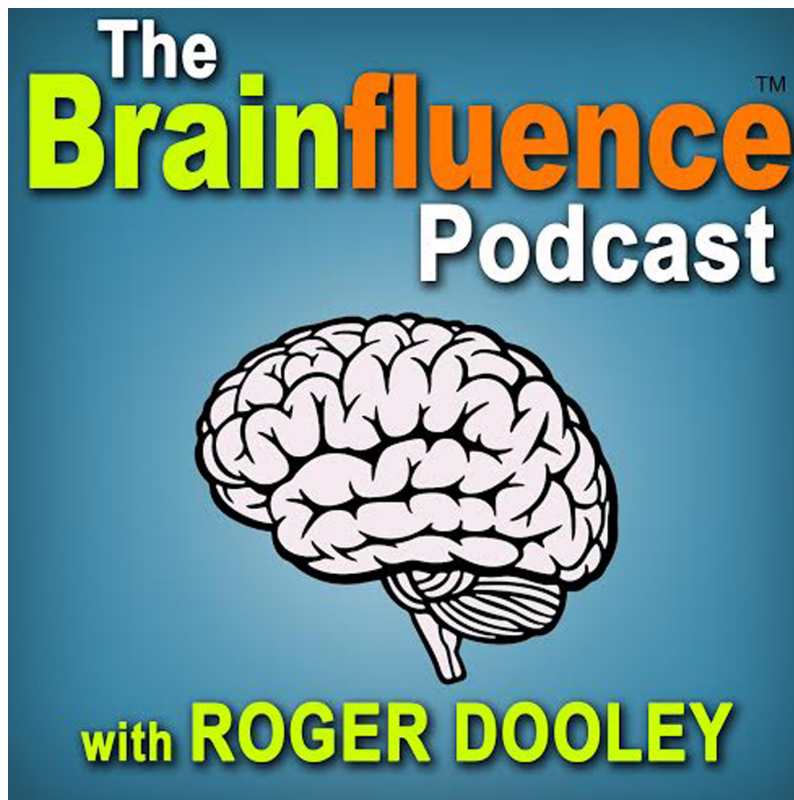


Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



Roger Dooley

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

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.

Our guest today has been my unwitting mentor for at least a decade. When I first started writing about neuromarketing, my initial focus was on what today is often called consumer neuroscience. Use of tools like FMRI, EEG and biometrics, for example, to evaluate how people reacted to advertising. But as I spent more time writing and interacting with my readers, I found that most of them couldn't afford to do that kind of study. Small companies didn't have the budgets and even big companies couldn't justify studying every single ad or message in that way. People wanted guidance to help them choose their messaging to use directly or at least to create hypothesis that they could test. And I found that scientists like Robert Cialdini and Dan Ariely had years of

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

research that could help marketers make good choices without wiring people up to see how their brains reacted.

Roger Dooley: One of the books that was an early influence was Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive. That was one of the books that exposed me to the diversity of research and persuasion science and really encouraged me to dig deeper into the field. Beyond that, when I was working on my first book Brainfluence, I was inspired by the short single concept chapter structure in Yes! and ultimately broke Brainfluence down into 100 even shorter chapters. One of the authors of Yes! was someone you all know as a periodic guest on the show and the author of the classic book Influence, Robert Cialdini. The other authors are Noah Goldstein and Steve Martin and today Steve is joining us on the show. Steve is a behavioral scientist and Royal Society nominated author in the field of influence and persuasion. His books have sold over 1 million copies and have been translated into 26 languages.

Roger Dooley: Steve's work has been featured in the New York times, on BBC TV and radio, Washington Post, Financial Times, TIME Magazine and the Harvard Business Review. Today Steve is visiting professor of behavioral science at Columbia University Graduate School of Business and he is the CEO of INFLUENCE AT WORK UK, a leading behavioral science consultancy. And there's one more interesting connection between Steve's work and mine. His newest book is Messengers, Who We Listen to, Who We Don't and Why coauthored with Joseph Marks. As I was preparing for this chat, I went to Amazon on the.com site and I found that if you visit the listing for my recent book, FRICTION, that Amazon was recommending

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

Messengers as a frequently bought together choice. You could even buy them both in a bundle. So if you believe in the wisdom of crowds or at least believe in Amazon's algorithm, if you like my stuff, you'll also like Steve's. That was a really long intro, but finally, welcome to the show, Steve.

Steve Martin: Oh, lovely to speak with you, Roger.

Roger Dooley: Steve, it's great to have you on. I can't believe it's taken this long. I'm curious as to what your personal journey has been in the persuasion space. How did you become one of the world's top persuasion experts?

Steve Martin: Well, it certainly wasn't by thought or decision actually. And you're exactly right, Roger, it's been far too long. We should have done this a lot sooner. But as I perhaps alluded to a second or two ago, I largely find myself in this situation through a function of good fortune. Just over 20 years ago I was actually still working in the corporate world and I was working on a project where I needed to get some guidance and expertise from a persuasion researcher and I reached out to Robert Cialdini who you and your listeners will be very familiar with and I know that Bob's been on the program a few times with you and we started collaborating together. That was 20 years ago and it turned out to be one of those fortunate situations where I happen to suddenly become pretty good friends and co collaborator with arguably one of the founding fathers of behavioral science. And so that's what started the journey and haven't looked back since.

Roger Dooley: Well, your business is based in the UK and it strikes me, I don't know if that's correct, but that the UK has been

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

quicker to adopt behavioral science based strategies than we have here in the US. I mean, obviously Bob Cialdini's been influencing people, no pun intended, in this country for years, but it seems like UK was quicker to adopt nudge strategies by the government. Is that the case, do you think?

Steve Martin: I think that is largely true, but perhaps what a number of people don't realize is that a lot of this work was actually ongoing before organizations like The Behavioural Insights Team in the UK and subsequently with the Obama administration and other governments now started to set up these behavioral science units. These individual pieces of work and programs were undergoing for a few years before that. So I'm sure Bob won't mind me saying this, but Bob and I went to Downing Street in as early as 2006 and talked about how insights from specifically influence and persuasion science could be used to generate communications and messages and programs that would influence people in desirable ways to perhaps reduce their energy consumption, pay their taxes on time, attend health appointment. So there were kind of specific and individual types of examples.

Steve Martin: And I think what actually happened in 2008, 2009 when the financial crisis hit us all, is suddenly there were a lot of policy makers in a situation thinking, "Well, we've got a job here where we need to influence people. We need to change behavior but we don't necessarily now have the resources to be able to do that. We don't have the ability to legislate or find people more or use economic incentives because we don't have the money to do that." And so all of a sudden these very effective often very cost effective and efficient social psychological triggers

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

suddenly became prominent and attractive to people and I think that's where things started to... that momentum started to build. And now, what are we? 2020, 10 years after the first behavioral insight unit was actually set up in London, in the UK and I think we're in a golden era or we're suddenly moving into this golden era of applied behavioral science. It's super exciting.

Roger Dooley: It'll be interesting to see... right now as we're taping this, we're in the early stage of the Corona virus problem and how some of these strategies might be used to guide the behavior of the humans who are spreading it or who have the potential to spread it. Because, obviously, you can do certain things that use legal constraints, prevent certain types of activities from happening and such. But I think that in the long run, behavioral science may play a key role too. Do you think that's going to be the case?

Steve Martin: Yeah, I think you're onto something there, Roger. I mean, no doubt in situations that we're in, such as this current crisis, these big legislative regulatory type of requirements are all going to do most of the heavy lifting. I don't think a single nudge is going to persuade millions of people to stay at home and work from home and self isolate. But rarely it was so is it the case that when we need to influence and change behavior, that one strategy alone has the effect. It's a multiplicity of different insights. So there's going to be regulation, there's going to be legislation, going to be good advice, there's going to be these social, psychological and behavioral economic based insights as well. I think it's going to be a combination of these things. And it certainly sounds like, what is it? The kind of middle of March now. So we're at kind of the early stages of this social distancing challenge

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

that we're faced. So I think we're going to need every tool in our armory as we go through the coming weeks. So I think behavioral scientists will absolutely have something to say.

Roger Dooley: So Steve, I think that, obviously, you're right and if we think about our normal behavior as humans, most of that behavior is not governed by law. In other words, we are mostly pretty good to the people around us and we don't do bad things to them. Not because it's illegal, but because there's sort of a common code of behavior. And I think that's what's going to have to evolve in this newer environment where we have the legal constraints, but people have to sort of recognize that there's a different and new normal in how they interact with each other.

Steve Martin: Yeah, exactly right. I think messages, I think, that convey the importance of we're in this together. I think, something that Cialdini would call those unifying or unity based messages are going to be particularly important to be able to convey this sense of, this is bigger than all of us and we need to kind of marshal our respective resources and our patience together to get through this. So I think that's really going to be an important part of the coming weeks and months.

Roger Dooley: Right. So Steve, Messengers was a really good read with some great insights. And like all your work, these insights come from science and hard research data. How would you describe, for our listeners, the concept of the book?

Steve Martin: Well, thank you very much. That's very kind of you to say that. We do see the book as a kind of step on, almost like a natural progression from the work that people like Bob

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

Noah, Dan Ariely, myself and others have been doing over the years. One of the things that we noticed quite often. So we have a small office here in London, Roger, and I've got a team of smart young behavioral scientists and often we'll be sitting in one of our meeting rooms over lunch and we'll be talking about stuff that just happens. We'd be reading headlines in the newspapers and we'd be saying, "How is it possible that someone can say that? It's clearly not true, clearly questionable." Yet there are people out there that are believing some of these things that are actually being said.

Steve Martin: And it kind of struck us that we've spent a lot of time researching over the last 20 years myself, others for a lot longer, what you put into a message that would most incline an audience to pay attention to it, believe it, say yes to it. But also struck us that sometimes it's not the message that's actually doing a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to persuading people, it's actually who is saying what is being said that increasingly we're finding matters a lot. In fact actually, that experience that we've all had where, maybe you go into the office one day and you have an idea about something that you could do that would make work a little more productive, a little bit more efficient. You've got an idea and you mention it to a few of your colleagues and they look at you in that odd way as if to say, "I'm really not sure if that's a good idea."

Steve Martin: And as frustrating as that might be, it becomes really annoying when a couple of days later someone else comes along and says the exact same thing that you've been saying just a few days previously and all of a sudden that same group that roundly rejected it when it was your idea are now enthusiastically embracing it when

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

it comes from someone else. And we've all had that experience and that together with this explosion of fake news and questionable information that's being shared. And we kind of thought there's something here about the messenger. It's not just the content or the wisdom or the truthfulness or, in some instances, the foolishness of what's being said that's carrying sway, there's something here about the messenger. And so Joe and I and Joe's a brilliant young behavioral scientist, a PhD scholar down at UCL. We looked to the research and said, "Well, What research is out there?"

Steve Martin: And what we found was surprising. There were lots and lots of pockets of individual research that looked at different messenger traits and the influence they can have on whether an audience will accept and embrace and believe what's being said. But it had been about 40 years since anyone had actually looked at gathering up all the latest research and presenting some formal set of unifying traits that define what an effective messenger is. And so that's what Joe and I spent two and a half years researching and writing up and that's what we have set out in Messengers. The eight universal traits or ways in which someone is most likely to be heard regardless of the truth or wisdom of what's being said.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And yet even simpler than that. In an era of relatively complex business books, say, your overall breakdown of Messengers is just two categories, hard and soft. Explain the difference between those and do we fall into one or the other or is everybody somewhere on a spectrum?

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

Steve Martin: Yeah, you're right. The research we find, we are able to categorize these eight messenger traits into two types, hard and soft. So hard messengers are typified by the fact that they have some form of status. They signal or have cues of status that communicate that they have a position above their audience. So things like they have socioeconomic position, they're rich or famous, they have competence or in some instances they're dominant personalities. And the fourth trait is they're simply attractive. And there's lots and lots of research that supports the idea that when we see a signal of one of these traits, we become more inclined to then subsequently listen to what a messenger that has one or more of those traits is saying. So those are the hard traits. They are status orientated, but we also listen to people that have connectedness with us.

Steve Martin: And those are the soft traits. So there are four of those. They are someone's warmth, their trustworthiness, their vulnerability, and also their charismatic nature. And the soft messengers don't seek to get over or above their audience, they seek to get along with their audience. And so depending on the context and often depending on the situation and the types of messengers that are communicating particular messages, sometimes we're more attracted to kind of hard status types of messengers and sometimes we're perhaps more inclined to listen to the soft more connected messengers. And so it's not that any one trait or any one type of messenger is going to be always more powerful or always going to override all the others. Context does matter and situations really do matter. But what we find is that we can largely categorize

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

any messenger into one of those two large traits of hard or soft.

Roger Dooley: One of the interesting things the book is that people actually sort of turned off their brains when they were listening to experts. This had to do with an experiment that involved financial decisions. But when people were listening to an expert, they had lower levels of brain activity than if they were sort of actively making that decision themselves. Do you see that as an indicator that we sort of outsource our thinking to people that we believe are experts or people that we trust?

Steve Martin: Yeah.

Roger Dooley: And that maybe if we're listening to somebody that we think is credible, we even to sort of turn off some of that critical thinking?

Steve Martin: I think we do and you're exactly right. You've picked up on that experiment that shows something that we kind of in our guts probably recognized and have done for a number of years, which is that when we see someone with some expertise or competence, as we call this trade in the book, we see them as having instrumental value. They have something. It could be a piece of information, it could be an insight, it could be advice or recommendation that would be valuable to us. And in those instances we arguably listen to them more. But the study that you're talking about actually now provides physical evidence of that.

Steve Martin: When people were... when their brains were scanned, as they were introduced to financial recommendations, if that

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

recommendation prior to it being presented to a participant, if the researcher said, "Right, this is information that comes from a credentialized financial expert," those parts of the brain that are typically associated with probability weighting and calculus, they largely flat lined. It's almost like that signal of expertise or competence is the kind of door opener to our minds. And as a result the message that then follows or the recommendation that subsequently comes from that expert is accepted more, it's considered more valuable, more competent, more useful, more instrumental, more valuable to us. And absolutely fascinating that we're now in this position where we have this technology to be able to demonstrate those things, the neuro physicality of an expert introduction.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Do you think this drives some of the political polarization that we have going on right now where it doesn't really matter which end of the political spectrum you're on, politicians will be saying things that either are not totally accurate or maybe they can't really justify with facts, but their supporters don't call them out on that? Now, there's probably confirmation bias at play there too, but I wonder if that's part of it as well that it's like, "Well, I trust this person so I really don't have to evaluate what they're saying."

Steve Martin: I think there is, and in fact actually we cite evidence in the book. In fact, a study that Joe led with one of my other colleagues, El Copland and Cass Sunstein actually from Harvard, the law professor from Harvard. What they did was they set up a beautiful experiment where essentially introduced people to a test that they needed to undertake and there was no objective answer to this test and they

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

found that there was an expert in the room that could advise them. And what they found, which won't surprise anyone, was that when they were offered advice from an expert, they typically followed it, they got the task correct and they were rewarded for it. What was really interesting though was when they began to introduce information about these experts and point out that they perhaps weren't necessarily similar to them.

Steve Martin: For example, maybe their political affiliation was dissimilar. And they started to measure a really disturbing set of outcomes, which was people that recognize that this person was an expert, was giving them useful information. When they started to find that they had some dissimilarity to them, they perhaps didn't share their political affiliations, they were more inclined to not accept their advice, even though they knew it was right. They would literally pay to be wrong in that context of dissimilarity and there you go. That goes some way to explaining the division and the partisanship that that now exists. The fact that we're willing to dismiss the expertise of a credible authority simply because they are not similar to us is pretty unnerving.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). One of the other things that was kind of surprising to me, although I've written about some of this research myself, is the effect of clothing on perception, both perhaps clothing as a status indicator, what a suit might mean versus a sweatshirt, but also even things like logos. And logos might indicate some kind of a status. Explain how that works and is particularly how it works today because, I think, probably 50 years ago you could look at a photo of somebody in their work environment, say, and have a pretty good idea of not only

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

what they did but what their status level was. Today, not quite so true. You've got CEOs and very wealthy people who dress probably sloppier than any one of us is at the moment, or at least you could look to the media, show Billions has a very wealthy hedge fund owner, Bobby Axelrod, and he's always in tee shirts and hoodies. Now, they're probably really nice tee shirts and hoodies. How does clothing work in 2020?

Steve Martin: Yeah, it's an interesting question is that because it has traditionally been a reliable source of information. We look at how someone is dressed, have they got that Windsor knotted tie and that suit on and we make all sorts of inferences about them. Similarly, if you go to see your doctor it's probably quite reassuring if they actually look like a doctor. They've got the white coat, they've got the stethoscope, they've got the certificates on the wall. It is becoming a little more difficult now given that we have often kind of casual policies when it comes to clothing. But it's not just clothing that we look to to decide whether someone is an expert. I mean, you talked about CEOs a few moments ago. One of the things that we found quite interesting is, is that CEOs don't just necessarily have to look like CEOs in terms of how they're dressed.

Steve Martin: Things like their facial structure also conveys their competence and their expertise as well. In fact there's been studies that have shown that you can show pictures of CEOs to people and you just have them rate the perceived competence simply by a brief look at their face. And people are pretty good at recognizing and identifying those CEO's that are likely to be the more successful ones and equally recognizing that, just from facial

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

features and simple glance, the CEOs that are less likely to be successful. That's been repeated in politics as well.

Steve Martin: And not just in terms of what their faces look like, but the sounds that come out of their mouth as well. Tonality it seems is important as well. So we make all sorts of inferences, not just by way of how someone is dressed and what they look like, but also their facial features, their height and even their voice. Famously, we've had two female prime ministers here in the United Kingdom in Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May, both of whom took voice coaching to lower the tonality of their voice and as a result convey a sense of competence and credibility. And as a result some people have suggested that they were contributing factors to the success of them being able to subsequently win elections.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I want to jump back there for a second, Steve. And you say that their successes as politicians can be judged by their appearance more or less. Now, something we've heard about before is the Warren Harding effect, where Warren Harding was a guy who looked very presidential but actually proved to be a relatively inept president, but he looked like what a president should look like and got elected. But when we come to CEOs, did you say that people were able to gauge which CEOs were successful by their appearance and more or less that they could guess which ones were successful?

Steve Martin: Indeed, indeed.

Roger Dooley: So how does that work? Explain that and whether we should all be scheduling plastic surgery.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

Steve Martin: Well, it's an interesting one, isn't it? Because is it the case that the successful CEOs are successful because of what they look like or their looks actually just got them into that position in the first place and they just happen to be lucky as a result. But it was the case in the studies, people were shown pictures of the faces of 25 CEOs whose organizations were in the top performing half of the NASDAQ and also 25 pictures of CEOs that were in the bottom performing on the NASDAQ. And they were simply asked who looks the most competent and the correlation was unnerving. They were able to identify that those successful CEOs simply looked like they should be successful CEOs. So the direction of causality there I'm not so sure about Roger, whether it's because they look competent, that was the reason why they actually got appointed.

Steve Martin: That could be the case. There's other research that shows that a CEO's disposition will often be a determining factor when boards are recruiting executives. So for example, we found evidence that suggests that if an organization is perhaps performing not so well, if the share price has fallen, doesn't seem to be a credible plan, the levels of psychological safety across staff is relatively low, boards and recruiters are much, much more likely to appoint executives with a dominant type of personality. The idea that they think, well, this person with this dominant disposition needs to come in and take control. But in situations where an organization is actually doing pretty well, there's a clear plan, a clear strategy, the share prices is pretty healthy, there are high levels of psychological safety, those same boards are much, much

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

more likely to appoint a more connected, warmer executive in those instances.

Steve Martin: And it speaks to a broader point, doesn't it? It speaks to this point that a lot of the decisions that we are faced with are really, really tough decisions to make. We don't know who is going to be a good president, who is going to be a good CEO. We don't know whether Brexit is going to be good for the UK or not. And so what we often do is we replace those really tough, almost impossible to answer questions with an easier one, which is well, who looks like they know what they're talking about or who seems to have some form of credibility or who seems to be the attractive option here? And we use those much easier instant answers that are available to us to often answer much more complex difficult ones.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's kind of scary in some ways I suppose, and maybe eventually the scientists will figure out what's really driving this. In other words, do these poorly performing companies, maybe they wanted to hire the CEO to look like a CEO or a competent CEO but they had to settle for what they could afford or is there some kind of emotional cue that if you're managing a very successful company, perhaps, you are communicating some different emotional state than if you are constantly fighting fires, preventing bankruptcy? So I don't know, interesting thing and maybe someday we'll have an answer to that.

Steve Martin: Yeah. I think you're right about that. I mean, the other challenge of course here is that we typically, when we think about an organization's success, whether this is a company, whether it's a political organization, even if it's a

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

sports team, we do have this tendency to assign undue causation to that success to an individual and say, "Well, it's down to the CEO." When in reality, particularly the larger types of organizations, these individuals probably have less of an influence over the overall outcome. In social science, we call this individual success hypothesis. The fact that we typically assign undue cause to one individual's contribution, but there's whole teams, whole populations of people involved here and often an enormous amount of luck as well. So I think we fall foul of it in that way as well.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well Steve, you've offered consulting services for a long time and I'm curious, do clients looking for help in solving their business problems, do they respond better to hard or soft messengers? Do they want somebody coming in who is authoritative and confident and really at the sort of the hard end of the scale? Or are they looking for somebody who's more warm and empathetic?

Steve Martin: Yeah. That's a really good question. And my answer to that, Roger, is it does seem to be that context matters. So if you've got an organization that has some challenge that is really causing an issue, is detrimental to that organization's current health and success. The evidence we find is that they do typically look to the harder type of messengers. Those that are able to convey dominance, they have instrumental value, they have some notoriety. Much, much more likely to pick those harder status type of messengers. But in contrast, if the situation is that they want help, they want support, things are going reasonably well and they want to boost their productivity, in those

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

instances they're much more likely to pick a more trustworthy perhaps warmer type of individual.

Steve Martin: The optimal, I guess, situation is that if you want to be the most successful messenger, you would have a combination of both these things. You will be able to convey your expertise but also to be able to convey your kind of warmth and your trustworthiness. It seems that of all the eight universal traits that cause us to be heard, that combination of competence, trustworthiness and warmth does seem to be a pretty powerful triumph of traits. If we're able to convey all those three then I think we are probably putting ourselves in a position of advantage.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So perhaps it's, not to put words in your mouth, but it's sort of a case of switching things on and off a little bit or at least dialing up and down certain aspects of what you're doing. So if you are conveying an important business concept of what a company has to do to be better or to fix a problem, there you probably want to be on the harder side. But then when you get to the discussing the impact on people, maybe at that point you are sort of dialing up the warmth and human aspect a little bit so that you can seem empathetic as opposed to not empathetic.

Steve Martin: Yeah. I think that's a wise conclusion there. And one of the things that I think is particularly important when it comes to conveying your expertise, your competence is to arrange for people to do that for you. I've conducted studies myself actually that show that sometimes it's not necessarily what you say or what you present or what you propose that persuades an audience to accept your recommendation or follow your advice, but often it's how

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

you're introduced before you make that recommendation or proposal that is the determining factor of whether people will listen to you.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Expectations are huge. I know I've written about that. I'm sure you have too. I recall one piece of research, pretty dated now, but involved a presidential candidate, Ross Perot, who was a really fascinating guy. He was a third party candidate in the US, he was a successful, wildly successful business person. He was a billionaire when billionaires weren't quite so common and was also kind of a hero figure because when some of his employees were taken hostage in Iran, he, after getting nowhere with negotiating, hired a team of commandos to break them out of jail basically and bring them home. So very, very interesting guy, but not a great appearance. He was kind of short, had really scratchy voice, had big ears, was probably the opposite of that sort of, which is probably ironic, but not the guy you'd pick out as the competent CEO, maybe.

Roger Dooley: But regardless, this particular test that I think I read about, some work done by Frank Luntz, the Words That Work author, he found that if people saw Perot's video first, they saw him speaking, they had totally different impression than if they saw first his bio and then some testimonials from other people. When they saw that they said, "Wow, this guy's great." And they were not put off by his, sort of, non presidential appearance and voice. But when they saw that first, that basically permanently influenced their opinion of him even after they saw then his bio and testimonials. So probably there's a message there for all of us, if you want to be persuasive or be well accepted, be sure your intro is pretty good.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

Steve Martin: Exactly right. In fact, actually we also looked, as we were researching for the book, it was kind of 2016 and so the primary's over in the US. It was kind of interesting because we looked back at previous research on charisma and how the charismatic communicator is able, often, to elevate themselves in terms of their ability to have their message heard. And, again, regardless of what the truth or wisdom of what they're actually saying is, we even found, interestingly, research that that suggests on Ted. That those speakers that use more hand movements have what we call in psychology surgency. That positivity, that ability to marshal people behind a collective vision, much, much more likely to be viewed and to have more high ratings on Ted talks than the exact same presenters, the exact same content that's being delivered by perhaps a less charismatic messenger. So I'd add to that competent and trustworthy pair of traits the ability to kind of convey charisma as well is increasingly in this reality TV type of world that we're living in now. It seems to be increasingly important as well.

Roger Dooley: Well, in the book you mentioned some research involving college professors where people view just a 10 second segment of their classroom performance. And amazingly enough, those quick impressions about the competence of the professor, how good the class was lined up with the opinions of people who had gone through the whole semester of classes with the professor. So just in that little glimpse, people were able to accurately predict what the entire course would be like, which I found fascinating. And, again, very, very indicative of the power of body language.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

Steve Martin: Yeah, absolutely. It's extraordinary. And it was a different set of researchers that did the research with Ted talks where what they did, Roger, is they took these videos of people giving Ted talks and they turned the videos into kind of animated stick men and women so that they couldn't see facial features, they couldn't see how tall or short or how slim or not so they were. All they saw was these stick insects. So they could just see their body movements. And they were able to use those cues to determine how successful that Ted talk was. Even to the point of recognizing when the audience would applaud after something they'd actually said just by they turn the sound off, no other cues except that representation of their body language. Powerful, powerful cues. Extraordinary.

Roger Dooley: Well that's amazing. And I could go on for hours here, I think Steve, but let me remind our listeners that today we are speaking with Steve Martin, co author of Yes!: 50 Scientifically Proven Ways to Be Persuasive and the new book Messengers, Who We Listen to, Who We Don't and Why. Steve, how can people find you?

Steve Martin: Well, you can find us at, regards to the Messengers, at messengersthebook.com. You can actually start reading the book. We've put the introduction and first chapter up online so you can start reading that for free. And also Roger, your listeners might be interested to know, there's a test that you can take. It's free. It will require maybe five or six minutes of your time and it will give you an accurate reflection of the type of messenger traits that you typically rely on when it comes to communicating your message or your preferences. And so there might be some good insights there to determine whether or not of all the eight

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

Steve Martin's Messengers: Why People Listen

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/steve-martin-messengers>

traits you are particularly strong at certain ones or whether there's opportunities for you as well. So that test is available at messengersthebook.com and entirely to take.

Roger Dooley: Excellent. Well, we will link to those places, to all of Steve's books and to any other resources we mentioned on the show on the show notes page at rogerdooley.com/podcast. And we'll have a text version of our conversation there too. Steve it's taken a few years but better late than never. Thanks for being on the show.

Steve Martin: Oh, it's been great to be with you, so thank you very much for the invitation.

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*, 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.

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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