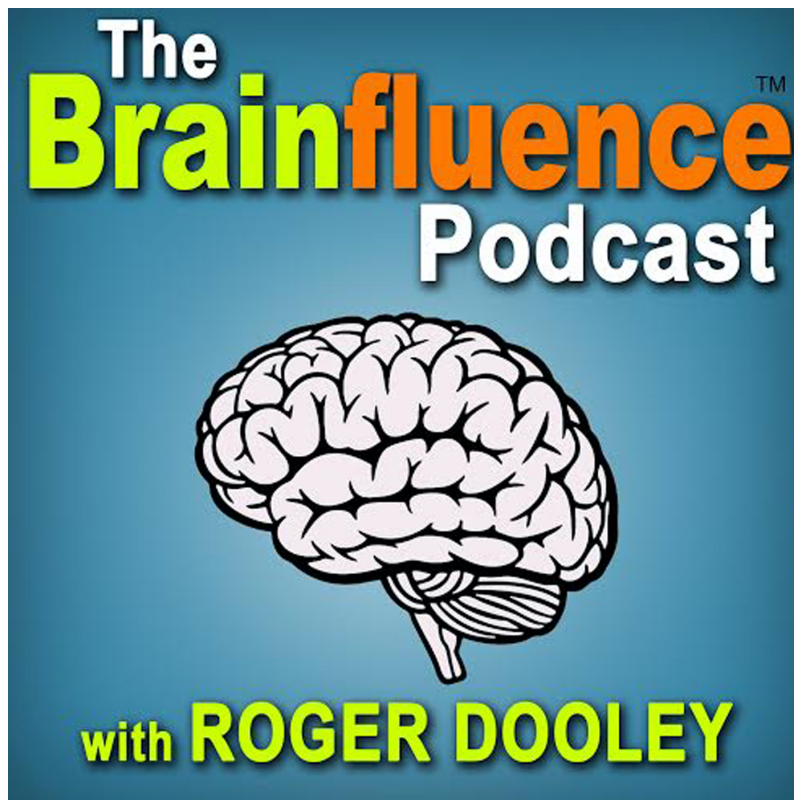


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# Roger Dooley

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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 is now available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and bookstores everywhere. Dr Robert Cialdini described the book as, "Blinding insight," and Nobel winner Dr. Richard Clamer 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: Joining me today is Laura Patterson, and this is kind of a strange situation. We are together here electronically, even though we live in the same small west side of Austin neighborhood, and actually probably about 10 houses apart. I haven't counted, but it's not very far at all. Another sort of strange part of the story is that we knew each other slightly because we both walked our dogs, but we did not realize that we shared an interest in marketing and writing until we were connected by a mutual acquaintance across the planet in India. That would be the creator of the Value Creation Institute, I believe it's called.

So it's so bizarre to discover that, "Oh, Hey, this person's in Austin. Wait, that's my neighbor." So this is actually crazy. I wish we could be doing this in person, but today we are in the sort of height of the covert pandemic here in Texas. Every day, this week we have set new high counts

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for cases, and today is no exception. The highest case count ever, so for the moment we will play it safe and do it electronically. So, welcome to the show, Laura. And why don't you briefly explain who you are and what you do.

Laura Patterson: Well, hello neighbor, and thank you. Thank you for having me be a part of your podcast. As Roger mentioned, we share a passion for marketing and for helping companies grow. I think that's the most important thing about what we share in common is that we're both committed and passionate about enabling our customers and to grow and to leverage marketing to do that. I've been in the world of marketing sales, and what you would call customer success today. I think that's what the current label, for a very long time, since well, for decades. I am excited to be able to leverage everything I've learned over these decades on behalf of our customers. That's really what we do. So I've spent my career predominantly in the B2B world. 14 years of my career in semiconductors and the rest of it in either manufacturing, healthcare or technology.

21 years ago, right now, 21 years ago, helped found Vision Edge Marketing. Really, we were kind of early to the game, Roger. I mean, we were all about being a customer centric, data driven organization to help companies use process measurement and analytics in order to acquire more customers, create more customer value, to accelerate growth, and improve performance. And that's what we do.

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, 21 years ago, that must have been a or novel concept. Today it sounds like a pretty normal thing to do, but then you're probably talking a different language. And

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yeah, I want to congratulate you on your new book, which is this, it is Fast Track Your Business. It actually features a short blurb for me in the front because I actually read it and recommended it. So it isn't often that I get to have a book that I have recommended, have the author of that book on with me. So that's really great to have you here today, Laura.

Laura Patterson: Thank you, and I really appreciated your comments because not only did Roger read it, but he actually provided feedback, which is really nice. Someone that you admire and whose expertise you trust, gives you some feedback to help make your end product better. That's what it's all about.

Roger Dooley: It seems I just can't help myself, Laura. The focus, as you mentioned, is on customer centricity and driving growth that way. But at the very beginning, you talk about marketing with a capital M and why that's an important distinction, which seemed to be sort of an odd little quirky thing to start with. Why does marketing deserve a capital M?

Laura Patterson: It's a good question. Anyone who gets a chance to read the book will read the how we came to have this conversation internally within our company. Because we had gone back and forth about whether it should be capitalized and I have a couple of people on the team who are sticklers for grammar and just other things that come to style. Every time I would send something to them to review and it had a capital M, they would send it back to me, fixing it and making it a small m. Then finally I said, we need to have a conversation about why I keep capitalizing M. Of course, in the book, we talked a little bit

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about that, and the question being people thought we were kind of nuts when we had this conversation. But the point I was trying to make is organizations that depend on marketing to serve as a strategic player, and to drive growth, and to bring what we call, and what Dr. Ramchandran calls, upstream marketing, into play.

Deserve to be capitalized because what they are doing is really moving the company forward towards achieving its growth goals. It's creating value for customers. That's really what marketing should be doing. And that when marketing is very tactically oriented and you're executing the things that marketing does, then that should be a small m. So, that was sort of the conversation. The way we started having this conversation actually was, is it the sales organization a capital S? Sure it is. But when you talk about sales, the function, the doing part, this thing is on sale. Clearly that is a small s. So, we began to have this conversation internally and it turned into quite a discussion. Something that warrants far more than coffee. Ultimately we settled on some guidelines for when we capitalize the M in marketing.

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, good. I think that all of our audience members who are in marketing can create their own personal style sheets now in their organizations, to be sure that the marketing as a function gets the respect it deserves. Customer centricity is something that is in everybody's mission statement these days in some form or other, but it doesn't seem like many businesses capitalize on that, or actually execute on that, I should say. Why is that, Laura? Why does everybody say they're customer centric, but really a relatively small number of companies actually seem to put the customer first?

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Laura Patterson: I think that's true. I want to back up for just a moment though, because I think that you're asking a really important question and led to one of the key things that this book is about. So this book takes a framework that we have been using for 20 something years. Just a quick story about how this book came into fruition. I think that will explain something and come back to your question. It's called the circle attraction and each chapter in this book is, as you know, Roger, takes people through the nodes on the circle. And talks a little bit about the axis that you need to have in place in order to make the wheel of growth turn. Many, many years ago, one of the CMOs that we still work with today, he's on I think his third or fourth company, since we've started working together. We presented the circle of traction to him and asked, he thought it was very valuable and he used it as a guideline.

The circle of traction starts with customer insights. The idea being that, how can you make decisions about how you're going to grow your business if you don't understand your customers and your market. So the notion of, if we build it they will come, which I'm very familiar with having been in the semiconductor industry, can work. We can have examples of that, but the companies that sustain themselves and really truly grow and end up being here and manifesting themselves into key players recognize that the customer has to be the critical beginning point for longterm and sustainable growth. If you want to grow organically, that is if you want to grow organically. And so, as I've told this story before, over the years as I worked with John, and we used the circle of traction with his companies, a few years ago, when I was in a meeting with him for his growth summit,

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for his latest company that he had joined. And asked me to come once again, to share the circle of traction, he said to me, when are you ever going to put that into a book?

And hence, that was actually, to give John credit, the seeds of this book was finally sitting down and really thinking through how we could share the circle of traction with others. And really talk about where customer fits into the conversation. I can tell you right away, whether a company is customer centric or not. So answer it, coming back full circle to your question, just when they began to tell me what their company is going to do in order to achieve success. What are the bets they're placing? The moment they start telling me what those things are, and they don't include any mention of customers. I realize they probably are not customer centric.

Roger Dooley: What are some incorrect things, or at least non-customer things, that people have explained to you as what they're going to do to make things better?

Laura Patterson: Oh, we have a brand new product that's going to completely overtake the market. We're bringing that out next year, and we want to build brand awareness around this product. I haven't heard one thing about which customers, what markets, why they would want to buy it, what problem it's actually solving. They just have a cool idea. Or, we have a brand new service. We want to go get all of our customers to upgrade to this new service, or to add on this new service. Again, very little idea about which customers, or why these particular customers would benefit, or from this particular new service. So, those are just examples. Increase awareness, create

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demand, but really no indication of where they're going to get that from, or from whom.

Roger Dooley: Right. Yeah. Okay. Now, it's marketing's job to figure out who's going to use this thing and sell it to them. So yeah, I think that sort of product and feature focus is pretty common. Sometimes it makes sense, if the new features are geared towards a specific customer need, but all too often they're, "Hey, we can do this. Wow, we've got the technology to do this. Or, one of our people found this really cool thing we could do," and they're off and running with it before determining if there's really any demand. I think one of the failings that I see too, is that sort of lip service to customer focus, or customer centricity. But at the end of the day, it's all about trying to support the share price. This be true, particularly in larger public companies that are my really monitored on a monthly, and quarterly, basis to see how they're doing. They can get so focused on those things that those investments in customer experience just don't get made. I mean, they say, "Yeah, this is super important," but we don't have the money this quarter, or this fiscal even, or we'll do that next year.

Laura Patterson: I think you're right. A few years ago, you might know Dr. Ralph Oliver. He will soon be retiring from Penn State and I've known him for a very long time. He was at Texas instruments in the days that I was at Motorola. So we've known each other a long time. We wrote an article together on wall street versus main street. In that, customer centric companies are really thinking about their customers, in doing the right thing by those customers. And you might remember that book that came out in the nineties called Moments of Truth. Is that ringing a bell? It's an exceptional book. I think it was written by the guy

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that was, at the time, the CEO of Scandinavian airlines. The idea being that these moments of truth are really indications of just how committed your company is to coming through for the customer, and how you do, or don't, empower your employees to make decisions that are under the lens of, is it the right thing to do for the customer?

So, I was sort of raised inside Motorola that, do the right thing for the customer, you never get fired for doing the right thing for the customer. So I think that, that's really something important. Here we all are right now, in really trying times. We have customers who are facing trying times, and their customers are facing trying times. And we're all worried, I'm sure, about whether we're going to survive financially in this marketplace. So we can get worried about that, or we can say, "You know, let's just take care of each other and let's take care of our customers. And then those things will come to pass where they come to pass." But if you do the right thing, you can kind of sleep at night knowing that you're taking care of your customers. I think that's, right now, I don't know how many emails you get from people who are all saying how much they're taking care of their customer, but it's someone you hadn't heard from for like three years.

Roger Dooley: It's ironic that the author you cited is from an airline because lately airlines have gotten, rightly so, I think a huge amount of bad press because they needed a bailout from the government after years of record profits when they were not improving customer experience, they were packing evermore customers into smaller spaces on airplanes. They weren't really taking great care of their

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employees. Then suddenly, despite all those years of record profits, they had no money when they needed it, or not enough money. To me that's a great example of how businesses who say they're all about the customer and all about their people really aren't.

Laura Patterson: Yeah, you're exactly right. We can probably cite many industries that are in that boat right now.

Roger Dooley: Well, yeah. And I think the airlines in particular, they feel like, they are to some degree, in direct competition with each other. So nobody can sort of break from the pack and say, "okay, we're going to offer a better customer experience, may cost a few dollars more, but it's going to be measurably better." That just has not been a viable strategy, it seems, for whatever reason.

Laura Patterson: We wrote an interesting article.

Roger Dooley: A couple of players have tried it without all that much success.

Laura Patterson: Yes. I was going to say, we wrote an interesting article very recently called are you setting yourself up to become a commodity? I think that the customer experience, true customer experience today, is a huge differentiator. If you don't really figure out how to do that recipe right, you are on your way to becoming a commodity. In the article, or maybe it's a podcast actually that we did on our site, I talk about what happens. I used to get old fashioned gas stations, so Roger, you and I can probably remember old fashioned gas stations. Where you pulled in and someone actually fills your tank.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. We're dating ourselves there, Laura.

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Laura Patterson: I apologize. You saw it in movies. I saw the movie. Oh, I love that. Thank you for that. That will help me out. The point I'm trying to make is, look what happened. Once the customer experience went away, service stations became a commodity. It didn't really matter which one you went to, you just started looking at which one had the best price and was the most convenient to pull into and had open pumps.

Roger Dooley: Yep. So at one point in your book, Laura, you've got 23 questions to try and determine an appropriate sort of granular strategy for growth. We don't have time to go through all 23, but where are, maybe a couple of those questions, that you've found have most often been successful in teasing out a good strategy? Or is it just so totally dependent on the situation that none of them pop out?

Laura Patterson: That's a great question, and thanks for bringing that up. So one of the things in this book we really wanted to do was give people things they could actually use. I hail from the Midwest, I'm from Missouri, the show me state. But being from the Midwest, we're really very practical people. So I wanted to write a book that gave, really, things people could put into play, not just lofty ideas and concepts, but something that people could actually do.

And so in the book, and also for those people who, as you know Roger, who buy the book, we even have a free bonus item people can download from our website that will help them assess just how ready they are to embark on this journey of organic growth. But to your point, thinking about the questions we've used this assessment for many, many years, to help do a couple of things. I

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want to set that up. One is, it kind of is eye opening for the company to go through this process and have this conversation internally. Talk about how they each score their company on these questions. It's kind of interesting to see where there are huge gaps in agreement or disagreement, so to speak. That creates a lot of internal conversation. It also gives us a pretty good-

Roger Dooley: Sometimes a specific question isn't so much the thing as the different way different people answer it. That gives you some clues as to maybe why things aren't meshing as well as they could be.

Laura Patterson: Yes. And the other thing is it gives us an idea. It gives us an idea of where they think they are, and why they think that. So, even if we never get a chance to talk to anybody about their assessment, just this assessment for an internal conversation can be really helpful. But I wanted to point out that this is on, I was remembering around page 50, it's actually page 52. I really think, again, most of these questions will give you an understanding of whether or not you're paying attention to your customers. Are you in tune with your market? Are you in tune with your customers? This is the beginning place. So like the very first question it asks you, what's changing in your market, what's changing in your customer preferences, and you'd be surprised at how few people have been thinking about that.

So I think that's a really, really important question. Here we all are again, in this very unusual circumstance. I hope it's one that will not last a whole lot longer, but certainly things have changed a lot in the last three months and how people are going to do business going forward is

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probably changed too. Preferences are going to change, preferences about whether or not, just a simple thing, whether customers are going to want to come to your factory for a tour or not. Or meet, or not, or come to a major conference versus just sign up and join a virtual round table.

I think the next question really is understanding where your competitive advantage is. Because we talk with a lot of customers, in the B2B space, I'm talking B2B now. Because that's really my experience, is they want to talk about the features of their product. Here's the 10 cool things about our product, or here's the five things that make our product different from competitor X's product. Or, here's the three things that differentiate our company's professional services, or whatever. And I'm sure you can relate to these, right?

Roger Dooley: Sure. People love to talk about their product because they created that product. It's wonderful, it's awesome, it's better than everyone else's.

Laura Patterson: That's your baby.

Roger Dooley: Naturally, it's like talking about your child's great successes or something, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's right for the customer.

Laura Patterson: Exactly. So I think that, that's another indication. Can they really talk about their competitive advantage? What really is their differentiator? What really is the value that they're bringing to the market and to their customers. Then, I think the third question that I feel is really important is strategy. So one of the things that we see happen a lot is

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people have, "Here's what we're going to go do." And they have a list of things they're going to go do. Whatever it is, "We're going to do three of these, four of these, and 10 of these," whatever these might be. "Three new pieces of content, one new white paper, one infographic, and a new blog, four new videos with customers and two virtual round tables," and a partridge in a pear tree.

When we step back and say to them, "Well, what's your strategy," that's really again, a key place. I think those three things, do you really understand what's going on in your market? Are you on top of the pulse of the market, and your customers? Do you really have a handle on how you differentiate yourself from your competition? And what is the real value proposition you're bringing to the table, and what's your strategy? I think that's sort of where I would say if you needed to concentrate on the questions.

Roger Dooley: Well, yeah, and I think just the way somebody talks about something, for instance, if they say, "Well, our product is great because it's 25% more powerful." Than maybe that's great, but if they say, "Our product is great because it's higher power, lets customers get the job done in a quarter of the time," or something like that, then they're expressing what the benefit is. They're not just focused on their feature, which may be a great feature, but on what the customer is using that for, how they're benefiting from it. Marketers often overlook price as a strategy. In some cases that's because markets tend to set prices, at least certain markets do in commodities. But you have limited flexibility, but talk a little bit about pricing and how that might figure into analyzing, or developing a growth strategy.

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Laura Patterson: Yeah. And that's a really good point too. In the earlier days of marketing price was one of the key piece. Along with positioning and many other examples. A place, which today is now channels, so lots of different ways that people now talk about Ps and Cs. I've seen so many different variations on that thing, but to your point, marketing should be very involved in understanding what is the right pricing structure and pricing strategy. Oftentimes that's not what's happening. Pricing is set by a group outside of marketing because marketing isn't really a marketing organization. It's a brand organization, or it's a demand gen organization, or it's a marcomm organization. And so, price obviously wouldn't be incorporated into that function. But if you're truly a marketing organization, back to marketing with a capital M, and you are driving the strategic direction of the company, you're a key member of defining the strategy and bringing that to fruition, bringing that to life, then obviously price has to be a part of that conversation.

There are all different ways to look at price as you and I both know. Where your product is in its competitive set, and where it is in the adoption curve, has a huge implication to the price. That's something that a lot of people, when we talk with them, and I say, "How did you derive that price? Well, we added up what all the costs are, we stuck how much profit we want to make on it." Great. But what is the competitive marketplace going to be? Can you articulate value for that in exchange for that price? So, they haven't really thought about those questions. Are you pricing based on value? Are you pricing because you're the only ones with it, and into the market first, and you maybe have a three month lead time

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before you see some competition, or you're the last one into the market, but you have something really unique? What could you do with that? So to your point, a lot of people are not having a conversation about how price is part of their strategy.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. In some cases, price might be too low. It could be that you could actually earn higher margins and the customers would still be happy with the product. I work for an industrial company, but a different part of the company made products that were involved in abrasive handling. So, these things wore out pretty quickly because they were constantly being pummeled by abrasives. They were constantly trying to come up with stuff that would last longer because it took a customer's time and money to change these things out. They had to shut down their equipment, replace the parts and then put it back into service. So, they had, I thought, a rather brilliant value pricing strategy. If a part lasted twice as long, they charged twice as much for it and said, "Hey, look, the labor you're going to save." And it was actually very sensible and was pretty much unrelated to costs because the customer didn't really care what the product costs to make. It was what kind of value that could deliver for them.

Now, there aren't too many situations that are quite that clear cut. But to me, that was always just a good example of how a very sort of logical customer-focused pricing strategy could work. And it worked well for both parties. So the customers benefited from savings and the company often probably earned a significantly higher margin than had they just said, "Okay, well, we'll put our

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usual market on this and charge whatever for it. It made a lot of sense.

Laura Patterson: No, that's a perfect example. That's a really good example of why it would make sense to have a product that's priced different from the rest of the market, because you have a product that is really different from the rest of the market.

Roger Dooley: How would you balance, we've mentioned, not just customers but employees. But, these days we've got companies that are being pulled in sort of multiple directions. They're being told to be customer centric, they're being told to be employee centric. Then, of course, you've got to deliver value for the shareholders. How do you tie employee centricity into this process?

Laura Patterson: Okay. I think that's is a really good question. So here's a very simple answer. When you have unhappy employees, they don't do a good job, when they don't do a good job, or their unhappiness permeates what they're doing. Then it seeps into the relationships with customers. Then that affects the customer experience, which then will affect the relationship you have longterm with your customers. Because who is your frontline? Who are your best brand ambassadors? They are your employees. So if you think of employees as your ambassadors to the market, then you would certainly want to make sure that your ambassadors are feeling positive about what they are supposedly advocating. Because they're your first advocates. I think if companies would remember that, that every single employee is an advocate for your company, for your brand, for your product. So, if they're not happy and they're not engaged, they are not empowered. If they

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have strong negative sentiment towards the company, as opposed to strong positive sentiment towards the company, that's going to seep into everything they touch. That will include those moments of truth with customers.

Roger Dooley: I had Tom Peters on the podcast a few weeks ago and he threw a quote from, I think it was John DeJulius that your customers will never be happier than your employees. That's generally true. You can maintain that for some period of time, I think. But, in the long run, that's true.

We're seeing a little bit of that at Amazon right now, where customers absolutely love Amazon because their service is just so robotically perfect, it seems. If they say it's in stock, it's always in stock, but they say it's going to be there Tuesday, it's always there Tuesday. So, what's not to like, and their prices are competitive, but we're seeing with the pandemic crisis, a little bit of fraying of that perception that they're a good employer. You've got some walkouts and protests and such, and this doesn't seem to be super widespread, but you just wonder how long you can maintain a differential there. I think the answer is maybe not for too long, unless you get to the point where your company is entirely run by robots and you've got robot warehouses that load packages onto drones. In which case you can get away with it, maybe.

Laura Patterson: I think you bring up a really good point. We're kind of getting on a tangent, so I'll pull us back in just a moment. I'm going to use the word agreement, or contract, in a very loose way. Obviously there are not real contracts, legal contracts between employees and employers. I mean, there may be in some instances, but in most cases

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and we know here in Texas, this is a right to work state. But there needs to be a clear understanding of what the agreement and expectations are. And so when an employer sets out the expectations and you as an employee, except the job, you have entered into an arrangement, into an agreement. So as long as the employer is living up to their end of the agreement, I believe that employees need to live up to their end of the agreement. I think that in some times, I can't speak to Amazon.

I don't know enough about what's going on. We may have people feeling that, "Well, I want to change the agreement. I want to change the agreement," but that wasn't the agreement. So I think that's important. I think it's both sides. Both sides need to remember what they put out there as the conditions, rules of engagement, or the agreement for the relationship, whatever you want to call that. Now I'm not an HR professional by any means, so I want to be really careful to go down this path because I am way away from what it is I know. Seems to me that some of the things that are going on right now are interesting ripples that are more than just an employer not fulfilling their agreement.

Roger Dooley: Right. I think it's partly driven by the pandemic crisis that we're in the middle of, because whether the agreement was written or unwritten, the rules suddenly got changed for everybody. Coming into work now might qualify you for hazardous duty pay, where a few weeks earlier that wasn't the case. Amazon is really, to their credit, they've done an awful lot by setting high wage scales for their people. Even their frontline hourly people, the lowest paid people in the company do reasonably well compared to

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other firms. They have great education benefits in many cases, where people can take a class and get them paid for. I mean, they do a lot of good, but the virus thing just upset things where what people's expectations were, and what going to work meant has changed. So I don't want to take up your whole afternoon here, Laura. I will remind everyone that we were talking to Laura Patterson, author of the book, *Fast Track Your Business*. Laura, how can people find you and your ideas?

Laura Patterson: Well, thank you for asking that, and thank you again, Roger, for having me. So it's [visionedgemarketing.com](http://visionedgemarketing.com), is the website. They can always reach out to me by email at Laura, L-A-U-R-A-P for Patterson, at [visionedgemarketing.com](http://visionedgemarketing.com). I'm pretty good and open about accepting LinkedIn invites. I always welcome people to connect with me there. We would love to hear from anyone and be happy to answer questions that people might have. I hope people will pick up a copy of the book and find it helpful.

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, Laura, thanks for being on the show. It's been a lot of fun. We will link to those places on the show notes page, by the way, at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](http://rogerdooley.com/podcast). So Laura, thanks a lot. It's been fun.

Laura Patterson: It has been fun. Thanks, Roger. See you on the walk.

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](http://RogerDooley.com).

And remember, Roger's new book, *Friction*, is now available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and book sellers everywhere. Bestselling author Dan

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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).

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