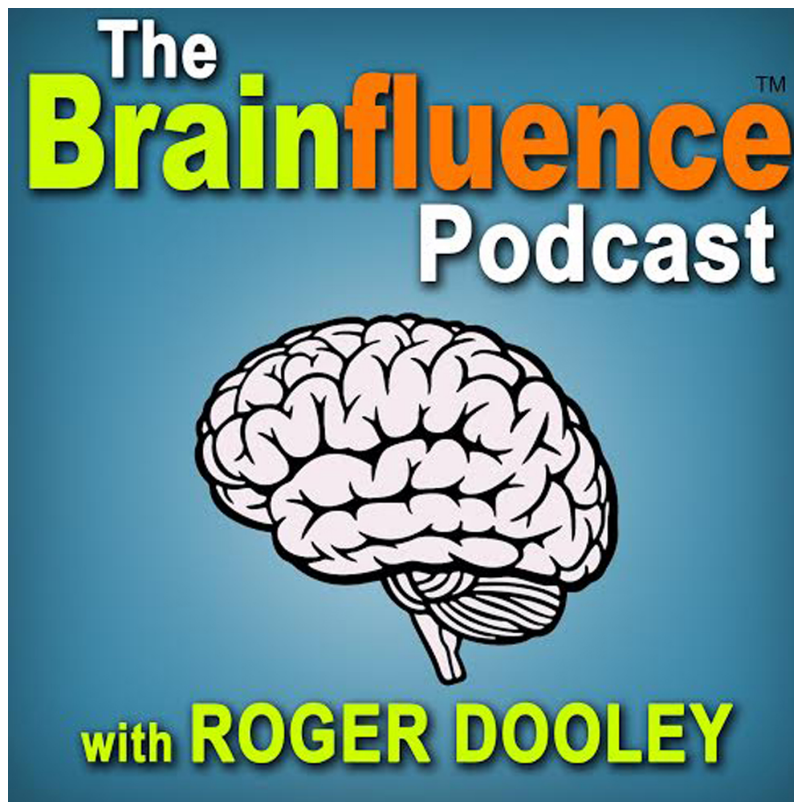


## Nine Ways To Ask For a Favor... And Get It!

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/nine-ways-favor>



Full Episode Transcript

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# Roger Dooley

The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley

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

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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 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. Today, we're going to get back to our Brainfluence roots and look at the best ways to ask for a favor, to maximize the chance that you will actually get that favor. As a jumping off point, I'm using an expanded version of the neuro marketing post I wrote a few years ago. The techniques I'm going to show you are not the only nine ways to ask, but I do think you'll find them both useful and effective, and feel free to let me know if you like this episode format.

The thing I enjoy most about hosting this show is talking to the really smart people who usually join me as guests, but I'm happy to throw in a few of these too. And if you're listening in audio format right now, you should know that this episode is available in video format as well, as many of you have seen my in-person keynotes and workshops know I get carried away with visuals, so the video version

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will have images in a virtual keynote format, not just my talking head. The show notes page at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](http://rogerdooley.com/podcast) will have the audio, video and text versions of this show.

So almost every day I get emails from people I barely know, or more often don't know at all, asking for favors. One is memorable, not because it was brilliant but because it was so ineffective. I got an email from a stranger asking me to write an article at Forbes about his startup. What persuasive language did he use? The only reason he gave was, "We're looking to announce our seed round and/or spread the word about what we're doing." Who wouldn't be persuaded by that? To my surprise, the email didn't even say what this startup was doing, a ride sharing app for jets, IOT enabled underwear, I would have had to open an attachment to find out. Who opens attachments from strangers? I deleted the email and forgot about it. Then two days later, the same guy sent me a second email that said only, "Just making sure you saw this." The good news for this sender is that his email did inspire me to create this content. The bad news is that I did not promote his company in it, sorry, maybe though it's not such a bad thing in this case.

The most practical and obvious thing that would have improved this awful pitch is a sentence or two explaining why my audience would be interested in the startup. Every journalist, blogger and content creator wants good stories. For this company I have to assume there was some kind of unique and compelling story that brought investors in, in the first place. What excited them enough, that they forked over a pile of their money? That might be a story. The follow up email could have taken a totally

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different angle to increase the odds of hooking the reader, but that's just practical logical advice. If you want to avoid the same fate when you ask for favor, there's plenty of behavioral science research to guide you. I'm going to show you nine of my favorite ways to maximize your chances of a favorable outcome.

The very first one is reciprocation. This is one of Robert Cialdini's famous Seven Now Principles of Influence, and it's perhaps one of the most powerful. It is doing a favor for somebody before you ask for one in return. And the important thing is that this should not be a quid pro quo. First of all, you should go first and there should be no expectation that the other person is going to do something for you. I mean, if you say, "I'll do this for you, if you do that for me." That's not necessarily a bad approach, maybe it will work, but it is not reciprocation, that is simply a quid pro quo.

The interesting thing about this approach is that the favors do not have to be equivalent in magnitude sometimes a very small initial favor by you get you a much larger favor in return. The classic research on this had a waiter deliver a check, the bill for a meal to the patrons and what they found was that including a single mint created a greater tip than the mint less bill and adding another mint, increase the tip even more. Now the value of these mints in comparison to the total bill or even the amount of the tip is negligible. Nevertheless, they did have a significant impact on the amount of the tip, they established that reciprocation.

Now, another interesting thing that Cialdini brought out in his newest book Pre-Suasion is that the timing of these

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favours can make a big difference. He tells a great story about a planned sabbatical at Stanford Business School. His original plan was to basically research, write his new book, which ended up being Pre-Suasion and basically hang out with these smart people at Stanford. Well, a couple of weeks before he was due to travel there, he got a call from the Dean of the school. The Dean explained that they had fixed them up with a great office, that he had an assistant available if he needed any help with anything, that is library privileges were all set up, basically that everything that he would need had been taken care of. Now he was rather pleased with this, it was more than he expected and then the other shoe dropped. The Dean said, "Bob, we've got a favor to ask of you. One of our professors can not teach the course that he planned to this semester, can you take it over?"

Now, this was not really something that Cialdini had planned, and he says in his book, if that question had been asked of him a week earlier, or a week later, he would have said no because he wanted to do his research, his writing and so on, work on the book. But in that moment, having just received this favor or batch of favors from the Dean, he gave in and said yes. So the moral there is that sometimes it's good to not get too far between your favor and the favor that you're asking for. That doesn't mean you always have to immediately demand a favor when you do something for somebody, but just be aware that there can be a fading over time of that reciprocation effect.

Now, another one of Cialdini's principles is liking, and this goes beyond the liking like, "Oh, I like a friend." Or something of that nature. This is having things in common

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with somebody else. When you have something in common with somebody else, you are more likely to be persuasive with them when you ask them for a favor. And the great thing is today, you can discover these areas that you might have in common, these shared attributes, even when you don't know somebody particularly well.

Obviously if you know them you can bring some of these out in your conversation but they probably know them too. But if you're approaching somebody new, find out if you have perhaps a school in common, some geography in common, perhaps you both lived in the same city or state for a period of time. Perhaps you share a common interest, a hobby, you worked in the same industry, almost certainly between all of the social media outlets that are available you can find some things that you could bring up in a conversation that would create that liking effect.

Now, there is a more powerful tool, unity, and this was the seventh principle that Cialdini added in his book Pre-Suasion and I'd say it's... First of all this is my term, not Cialdini's term, I call it liking on steroids. And by that, I mean that it is quite a bit like liking. People have asked me, "Roger, what's the difference between liking and unity, they seem the same?" Unity is more powerful because while liking our shared attributes, unity is shared identity. For example, familial ties an identity that is almost tribal in nature.

I think of examples like the US Marines, where you never retire from the Marines, once you are a Marine, you're always a Marine. If you have that in common with somebody that is much more like unity than liking and chances are you don't have that in common with

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somebody else. Let me give you a simpler example, and I have to say that I first presented this at a conference where subsequently I learned that Robert Cialdini was going to be in the audience. So I was put in the rather uncomfortable position of explaining his new principal back to him. And after my talk, I went back and talked to him and either he was very polite or he did actually buy my explanation because he agreed that it was a good example. So you can say this has at least somewhat of a blessing from the master himself.

Now, if you are from the State of Ohio, we have 50 States in the United States and most of them don't have a really super strong identity. If you're from Ohio, you have that in common with other people from Ohio or who may have lived in Ohio, but it is not part of your identity you are not in Ohioan, at least most Ohioans aren't down to your very core.

And I contrast that with the state of Texas, where I've lived for 10 years, if you have ever lived in Texas or known Texans, you know that their identity is tied up with the state. When you drive down a residential street here in Texas, you will probably see on almost every house a Texas flag, a Texas star, some kind of decoration in the shape of the state. People really consider this part of their identity. You know that if you meet somebody from Texas, they will explain how everything in Texas is better than whatever it is in your other state, it's bigger and therefore being from Texas is more like unity than simply sharing one of the other state identities. And I've given examples in the past of how some brands have really played this up as part of their marketing message, because they

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understand how being part of the shared identity works for them.

Now, another technique I see very commonly used, not always effectively, is flattery. And the reason it's so commonly used is because it works. When you flatter somebody, you become more likable and your message is more memorable, and so naturally it's very common to pay people a compliment. If you've ever had a salesperson meet with you, they may well say something nice about you because they've learned this works. Now, here is the interesting part, even fake flattery works. Some researchers tested those effects when the subject knew that the flatterer most likely had an ulterior motive as in a sales situation, even then the person was still more likable and the message was still remembered better. But I encourage you not to use fake flattery instead be sincere and be specific.

Let me explain what I mean by that. First of all, flattery should be sincere, that sort of goes without saying, you shouldn't just make stuff up to manipulate people. But often I get emails from people saying, "Oh, Roger, I love your book. I love your work and I always listen to your podcast." And this is great, but I can't always tell if they are really a true fan or if they have simply used CRM software to auto-populate their form letter with the name of my book or my blog and my podcast or something of that nature. And therefore bringing out some specifics in that flattery, so that it's clear to the person that you're talking to, that yes, A, you are being truthful and B, you really do know whatever it is you're flattering about whether it is the work that they're doing, what they've

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accomplished within their company, anything be just a little bit specific.

Now, this may be a little bit difficult these days, ask in person is the fifth technique. Now we know that we aren't doing too much in person meeting, but this worked before and it will work again. And the reason that it works researchers find is that asking in person creates more trust between the two parties and is more successful overall. When they compared in-person asks to email asks this is what they found, now today, perhaps an ask via Zoom or some web conference might be a little bit better than an email ask.

One very practical benefit of doing things in person is that there's a little bit more likelihood that the person that you are asking will not simply defer a decision. When you get an email where somebody asks you for something, you may agree to do it right away, or you may reject it right away, but there's also a chance that you'll have to think about it because, well, you're not really sure. And what happens is that sort of slowly sinks into your inbox until it disappears never to be seen again, so that's a little bit tougher to do in person.

Now, here is a way of asking that is counterintuitive, and that is to first ask that person for a small favor. Now, this seems counterintuitive because you would think, "Why would I ask somebody for one favor and then ask him for another favor?" But Benjamin Franklin, even if he didn't originate the strategy, he popularized it, it's called the Ben Franklin effect. He needed a favor from a political rival and rather than coming out and asking him for that favor, which he knew would not likely to be granted, instead he

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requested an uncommon book from this person's library. Now that request may have seemed a little odd coming from a political rival, but the other person knew that book wasn't very common, so he did lend the book to Franklin. Then a little bit later, Franklin came back and asked for the favor and indeed he got it.

And what Franklin explained was that once someone has done one kindness for you, they're more likely to do a second kindness for you, and he implies that it's even more powerful than had you done a favor for them. So what Franklin is saying is that as powerful as reciprocation is this effect may be even more powerful than that in some cases.

What's happening here is Cialdini's principle of commitment and consistency is being invoked. When somebody does that small favor for you at first, and then you ask them for another favor, denying them would create a little bit of cognitive dissonance. Your brain would be struggling with that, "Well, I did this one favor..." Not consciously, of course, but unconsciously, we say, "It seems quite... A little bit off." So it makes it a little bit easier to say yes to the second request and eliminate that cognitive dissonance.

And one practical application of this is when you visit somebody, once we're visiting people in person again, and they offer you a cup of coffee or some other time appropriate beverage, say yes. I started my career in field sales and I would often visit people and they'd say, "Oh, would you like a cup of coffee?" And I would almost invariably say no, because I'm thinking, "Wow, I'm already taking up this important person's time. I'm going to be

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asking them for an order or asking for another meeting or something, the last thing I want to do is put them through the effort of getting me a cup of coffee." But had Ben Franklin been around to advise me, he would have said take that cup of coffee, because it will increase the chance that your second favor will be granted.

Now, a wild way of asking for something is to provide any reason at all. And this comes from an experiment, but it involved a line of people waiting to make copies in the copy machine. The experimenter would try and cut to the front of the line, and when the experimenter offered an excuse that was valid like, "Gee, do you mind if I cut? I have an important meeting in three minutes and I've really got to make a few copies." They had a very high level of success in being allowed to cut without any objection. If they tried the same thing and offered no reason, they just asked if they could cut in line, they in fact were rejected much more frequently. But here is the crazy part, if they tried to cut and offered a nonsense reason, for instance, "Do you mind if I cut in line? I have to make some copies." Now that makes no sense at all, but they were just about as successful as when they had a valid reason.

It seems that the magic word here is because, the targets of their persuasive effort, they're cutting in line were simply processing the fact that, "Oh, they have a reason." They heard the word because, and because this was not a big ask, they didn't try and analyze the details. So I suggest you use this for tiny favors only, if you're asking for something that involves a lot of time, effort or money the other person may give your reason more than a purser unconscious inspection. But for something small,

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give it a try. Your reason always doesn't have to be incredibly persuasive.

Now, another counterintuitive persuasion technique when you're asking for favor is to give the person an out. Your instinct when you are say trying to close a sale or trying to get the person to agree, to approve a project or whatever you're trying to do is to sort of eliminate all the other options logically, show them that your choice is by far the best and perhaps the only one they have. Now, this seems to be a logical approach, but in fact, it does not work all that well. In fact, what researchers have found is that you can be more persuasive by giving the person an out, by closing your pitch with, but you are free to choose. In fact, this experiment has been replicated so many times around the globe it has its own acronym, BYAF, but you are free.

You may not have to use those exact words, but what you seem to be doing is instead of creating pressure where the person is trying... They know they're going to have to make a decision, it's uncomfortable for them, they've got this cognitive load going on, you are releasing that pressure by giving them an out and that counterintuitively makes them more likely to decide in your favor.

Now, the last way is to... So it cycles back to our very first one, reciprocation, and this is to set yourself up for a future favor. Now we talked about how sometimes hitting them for that second favorite right away was effective and certainly worked with the Stanford Dean and Cialdini, but you aren't always in a place where you can do that or a time where you can do that. So this one also comes from a conversation with Robert Cialdini and my friend, Guy

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Kawasaki. When you do a favor for somebody they will probably, if they are polite, say thank you. And your response will most likely be, "Your welcome, it was nothing." Or some other typical socially acceptable response. And what Cialdini advised Kawasaki was, don't say that instead say, "I know you would do the same for me."

You're doing a couple of things here, you were setting up that future reciprocation and you are also telling that person that they are the kind of person that does favors for people, that is generous with their time. And this increases the chance that what do you come to them for a favor down the road that they will indeed grant that. But be careful with this, you do not want to sound like Don Corleone in The Godfather who would give somebody a favor and then immediately let them know that at some point in the future, I'm going to ask you for a favor and you had better do that for me, or else. Do this in a very subtle way and lighthearted way.

And when you're using these techniques, you can stack them. Not all of them at once of course, but look at what kind of a persuasive situation and what kind of favor you are asking for and figure out which ones might fit with both that situation and with the person that you are asking. For example, you might start with liking. Find that thing you have in common, the school you both went to, the state you both lived in, whatever, just start with pointing that out. Then perhaps you might use a little bit of flattery and again, be sincere and specific. Let them know that something that they have done that has impressed you and give them a little bit of the information so they know that you aren't just making it up.

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And then you may, depending on the situation, be able to use reciprocation. If you were complimenting them on something they perhaps, you could say that you shared it to your LinkedIn following, your Twitter following, or your email list, or you used it in a training session for your team. Anything like that will be a favor to them, not a big favor necessarily, but it still shows that you are working to help them. Then finally, you can just about always close with the BYAF approach. Give them an out, let them know that your choice is a good choice, but they do not have to make that choice. They do have options, it's up to them and that will enable them hopefully to grant you your favor.

And when you're using these techniques, let me remind you, please do them in a way that helps the other person, not manipulates them. Every expert on persuasion from Zig Ziglar to Bob Cialdini, emphasizes that you need to use these techniques in an ethical way. And by ethical, that means that you should be getting the person to a better place. If you are helping them make a decision that they will regret after a few days or some a longer period of time, then you are not doing this in an ethical way, you were being manipulative. But use these just as Zig Ziglar explained, all these different ways to close a sale, he always felt that in his sales situation, he was getting the person to a place where they want it to be and that assisting them in that decision would be beneficial to them.

Now, I wish we could have done this in person. I encourage you to connect with me either via my websites or my social media channels. You can find all the versions of this podcast, show notes, links, et cetera at

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rogerdooley.com/podcast. Thanks for joining me, see you next week.

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](http://RogerDooley.com/Friction).

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