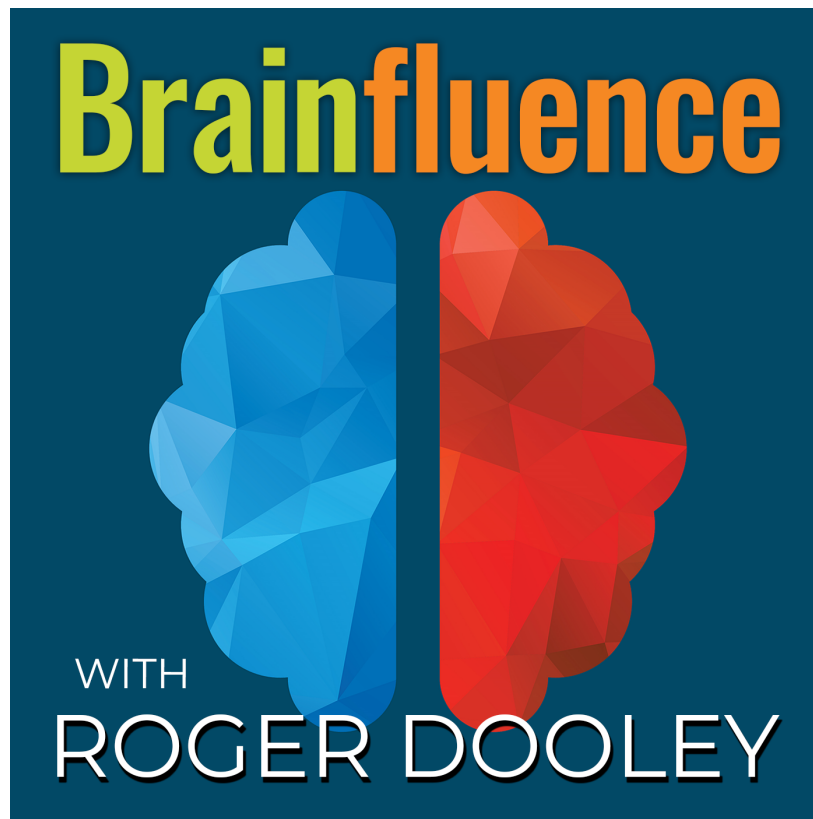


The Creator Mindset with Nir Bashan

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/nir-bashan-creator>



Full Episode Transcript

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Roger Dooley

The Brainfluence Podcast with 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 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.

Joining me today is Nir Bashan, a fellow McGraw Hill author and an expert on creativity. Nir's won a Clio, been nominated for an Emmy, and his work with Hollywood and music stars like Woody Harrelson and Rod Stewart, and he's found out something interesting. These creative superstars aren't all that different from the rest of us, but they have mastered a handful of repeatable methods. And Nir has taught lots of leaders and individuals around the globe how to harness this same power of creativity and apply that to business topics like increased profitability, higher sales, and better customer experience. And now he has put his great methods into a book, *The Creator Mindset*, and he will be describing at least a few of the ideas in there for us today. Welcome to the show Nir.

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Nir Bashan: Hey thanks for having me Roger, this is going to be fun.

Roger Dooley: Yeah Nir okay, explain this Emmy nomination. That's pretty rare for the Brainfluence show. I have had Alan Alda on, so he's an Emmy winner but how do you overlap with that creative space?

Nir Bashan: Yeah definitely, so I spent many, many years working in Hollywood in the music business. At first when I started working with people in that industry I was at awe, in awe of them. Wow, it's Woody Harrelson or these famous singers and stuff. What I've noticed is... I was very young at the time. I think it was just right out of high school or college, and I noticed at the time that what I thought was amazing creative moments of lightening bolts coming out of the sky and these amazing creative epiphanies were not that at all. They were people who had a notebook, who'd come into a recording studio or a movie set, write out a couple of things, perform, and change it, and then write out and perform. I discovered that they're very similar to us in that creativity is something that can be learned and executed. It's not this great mystical secret shrouded mountain top where you need to bang the three tones of Solomon in order to get in. This is real actionable things that anybody can do to become more creative.

One of my favorite stories Roger is I worked on a hip hop album with a famous rapper. Hard core from the streets and all this stuff, and he's on the microphone, we're in the recording studio, and he's doing his thing. I remember it like he finished, "How was that everyone?" We were like, "Whoa, that was amazing. The flow and the rhyme and all that stuff." He was like, "Great, great, great." He's like, "Can we take five?" "Yeah, yeah of course we can take

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five minutes." He got on the phone and calls his wife, he's like, "Yes, yep, yep I'll pick up diapers on the way home. We're wrapping this up at 4:30. Yeah, I'm trying to beat traffic on the way home. Yeah I'll see you, no problem. Yes bye, I love you too honey." And he hangs up.

We're all like thinking that this is some great amazing talented person, which he was, but it wasn't from this divine inspiration, it was work. He literally worked on becoming a really good musician, and I started to cherry pick these things from different fields. I did furniture refinishing for a while, I owned a production company where we were nominated for an Emmy, where we won a Clio, and I sort of cherry picked from these different businesses, a guide on how to be creative.

Roger Dooley: Yeah I would guess that creativity has to be structured or there has to be a method for at least some creative professionals. I'm thinking somebody like a singer songwriter where every year or whatever frequency you've got to come up with a whole new album full of songs. You're writing country western songs, well okay, start with a pickup truck maybe or something or a dog.

Nir Bashan: Right, prison.

Roger Dooley: Right.

Nir Bashan: Mama.

Roger Dooley: Keep on doing that.

Nir Bashan: And drinking.

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Roger Dooley: Time after time coming up with something different that doesn't sound exactly like the last thing that you did or have the same idea as the last thing you did. I bet it's got to be a real challenge.

Nir Bashan: Yeah, and it is but there's a methodology to it and I write about in the book how creativity's really about the concept, the idea, and the execution, and how... And I've done workshops, just like you have, to thousands of people before where everybody get a pen out and I'm on stage somewhere at some conference and people get a pen out and a piece of paper and they write down what their execution is, they write down what their idea is, they write down their concept. They start to make connections of creativity that is a manufacture of creativity. It's not about waiting for inspiration to strike, it's about making it strike and that's what my platform is all about and that's what my book's about too.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), well jumping over to the business world, one early point in the book I think is that creativity isn't just about big ideas. The big new product, the iPhone, the Mac computer or something, but instead it has a lot of applicability just in very small areas, whether it's trying to make customer experience a little bit better or solving an internal problem or whatever, but it's really... You got to have a process you can do everyday. Not something like okay, we're going to do a three day retreat in the woods and think about this, but it's something that you can just replicate with very little effort, right?

Nir Bashan: That's right, that's absolutely right. You wrote a McGraw Hill book that's incredibly successful and really wonderful, right? I'm going to bet that you didn't take six months out

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and get a cabin in the woods somewhere with a big roaring fireplace and snow falling down and you sat there and sipped scotch and had your favorite cigars and wrote. You probably got an hour here, an hour there, you were on a plane-

Roger Dooley: That's my next book Nir. That's my plan. Cabin in the woods, roaring fire, plenty of scotch.

Nir Bashan: I'm in. Are you kidding? I think that it really is about an hour here, an hour there, 10 minutes here, 10 minutes there. We're all really busy. We need to have a system where we can go to over and over again, I learned that from the famous musicians and actors, and I've learned it from the business community. Different people in the business community are also incredibly creative. It's the same creativity that those musicians had. It's the same thing, it's just how do we continually tap into that source, use it in our product or service or use it in our career, and come up with different ideas to get ahead? You're absolutely right. Sometimes they're little tweaks. You don't have to think of creativity as being a revolutionary new product or a service. Whoa, wow that's really creative. Sometimes they're little tweaks. Marriott's really good at the little tweaks. I travel a lot, or used to at least, and they'll send me an email saying-

Roger Dooley: Didn't we all?

Nir Bashan: Yeah right, remember? They've tweaked this check-in process or that, and it makes it just so much easier. So it is really about leaving no stone unturned in your business no matter what you do. Not about sales, it's not about finance, it's not about operation, it's about looking at every

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single pipeline component of that business and seeing what can I do to become more creative, thereby improving customer service, improving the ease of use, the profitability, the revenue, so on and so forth.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). You make the point that there is an analytical mindset that sometimes works against the creative or creator mindset, and I'm guessing that many of us both... I probably have an analytical mindset much of the time at least and many of our listeners do because we talk a lot about the science of marketing and the science of business and a very sort of left brain approach, not so much driven by experience or intuition but by data. How do you resolve that conflict where you don't want people just going off a direction that has no basis in reality, but at the same time not being over analytical about things to the point where their creativity is stifled.

Nir Bashan: Definitely, so the best data in the world means nothing unless it's turned into information, and we are in a love affair of data right now. Why? It's because it's easily accessible. I can go on Amazon and see how many books I've sold. I can see who's buying it, what region, and all this stuff. Websites, your website, your listeners website, their businesses, their customers website, their client, I mean you can get so much... It's out there. There is so much data everywhere you look. I saw a documentary on Netflix about I think it was Tinder and they collected something like 90 pages for one particular woman of just raw data, and unless that data is turned into information it doesn't mean anything. I'm sorry, it means nothing, and for me it is very important to understand how creativity plays into that part. Creativity is something that we're all born with. We're all creative

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human beings, it's what's kept us alive 40, 50, 60,000 years ago. The first creative woman on earth put a sharp object on a stick and was creative about combining two objects that would never have any relevance to each other, but she was creative, she saved her life, and therein by we were all sort of born with that creativity, we have it in us today.

The ability that we have to be creative is our identity, it's who we are. What data does is it has no identity, it is what it is, and when we take that data and make it into information Roger, we inject our own biases and your biases and my biases and your listeners are going to be completely different because I believe that creativity is literally half of our mind. Yeah there's a lot of inner play between the two portions of the brain but it is literally who we are, and it'll allow us to interpret that data and make it into information that is incredibly relevant, and niche, able to be applied to where we want to apply it. And I think that is insanely important today.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), so how would you start by telling our viewers or listeners, and for you audio listeners this is on video so you can check it out at YouTube or just go the show notes page at rogerdooley.com/podcast. What would you advise somebody to do who's in business and feels like they aren't necessarily doing very well on the creativity side of things? They've got the usual assortment of problems, they could use more sales, they could use more loyal customers. They've got maybe some internal employee issues or something. How do you get somebody changing their mindset to become more creative?

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Nir Bashan: So I think it's a system of one, understanding that we're all born creative and understanding that creativity lies within you. And two, it's listening to your gut once in a while because that for me is creativity trying to get out into the world. Now I'm not saying listen to your gut all the time, and I'm not saying to meditate and align your chakras and all that stuff. If you want to do that that's fantastic and if it works for you, drive the truck through it, I mean keep going. But what I am advocating for is some balance and uniting your way of thinking your mentality and your mindset to become more effective as a leader, more effective at work, more effective as a professional. We have far too long ignored the creative side in favor of analytics, spreadsheet logic, numbers, facts and figures, but those facts and figures and numbers mean nothing. Roger, how many people have you hired in your life? How many people?

Roger Dooley: Oh I don't know, hundreds probably over the years.

Nir Bashan: Hundreds, right? And have you had somebody with a perfect resume, a perfect resume. You're like, "Oh my God, this is going to be the best hire I've ever had. Their experience and they line up and then this and oh, charity work, amazing." And you've hired that person and they didn't work out. How many times has that happened to you?

Roger Dooley: I don't know that I've had too many perfect people, but I've found that people that appear really good on paper sometimes they are good in person and they pan out and worked out great, other times not. One little thing that I've found over the years, if I was running a smaller scale business, if somebody had too perfect of a resume I

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would almost question okay, well why are you talking to me and not Microsoft or whoever the ideal employer would be because something didn't quite add up. No, anyway finish your thought and your...

Nir Bashan: Yeah, so basically I think that that is a small example and I think it might resonate with your listeners because analytically things should be perfect, but in real life you need a different thing, you need some different way of looking at it and for me that comes from creativity, it comes from a part of the mind that we have really ignored or just shoved down in favor of the analytic. We love when things can be expressed in numbers, we love the quantification of things, but there is a different way to look at things. I'm advocating for people to come more to the middle. We've been too far on the analytical side and both probably have that really creative friend that still lives in mom and dad's basement and he's 58 years old. I'm not saying go all that way either. I'm saying come to a happy medium.

One thing your listeners can do today is to start to celebrate their little victories. They're all around us and you and I, and I don't know, I am very guilty of this, maybe you are, but I just steamroll past them because I set a goal and it's this many sales by year five or three and I steamroll past all these other little victories that happen. Just having the realization that those little victories are occurring and they might just tweak that main goal to a bit of a different direction, has incredible creative potential. There was an ice cream salesman many years ago who sold a bunch of ice cream machines and his method was analytical. Volume, volume, we're going to do volume, and I'm going to get a list and I'm going to contact the

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people on the list and we're going to sell a bunch of machines.

He did well for a while but then didn't, and he realized that there was a restaurant that was buying a bunch of these machines because they were breaking, they were making a lot of milkshakes. So he went out to see what the restaurant was doing. There was a line around the block, stood in line, ate the food and had the best hamburger he's ever had in his entire life. The guy's name was Ray Kroc and the restaurant was McDonald. Had he of stuck to his main goal he would have been, maybe, an ice cream machine salesman, but he realized that there was little victories that were telling him to go a bit of a separate route and he capitalized on those things and that's what I want your listeners to do, to look at those little victories. They could do it today and see hey, what's been really working for me in the last few months and what are those things telling me and finding incredible creative wealth in those decisions.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I've personally found that sometimes it's celebrating those small wins is valuable, like taking a moment and just doing some tiny little special thing for yourself or for somebody else or whatever, but recognizing that because to me that sets up sort of a reward anticipation circuit in your brain that helps you focus on those. Because all too often it's like, "Wow hey that was good." Now you go on to the next thing instead of saying, "Okay hey, that was a win, let's somehow commemorate that." Maybe it's just going to a different restaurant for lunch or something or-

Nir Bashan: Whatever, yeah.

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Roger Dooley: Yeah, whatever but just somehow recognizing that so that your brain feels that and says, "Okay, well I like that. Let's do that again." In the book in there you talk about empathy, and to me this is something that has come up in multiple conversations with really smart people. Tom Peters was on the show, I don't know, a couple months ago and talked about the importance of empathy. Martin Lindstrom, the great branding thinker has a new book coming out, it won't be out until January but empathy is one of the focal points in it, and it's all about putting yourself in the other person's place.

You talk about internal empathy and external empathy. External empathy being with customers, and to me this is so important in so many ways. How often have we had a bad customer experience that if you said, "Wow, if the VP in charge of customer experience ever went through this, there would be heads rolling and changes made right away." But people can get so divorced from reality. The airline CEO who had never sat in the back row of basic economy says, "We have a good value. Our customer experience is really pretty good." Yeah right.

Nir Bashan: Exactly.

Roger Dooley: So talk about empathy and how that effects creativity.

Nir Bashan: Yeah, you know I wish I was as smart as some of your other listeners. You named some very impressive people. You know for me empathy's really about-

Roger Dooley: I'm going to name you on the next show Nir.

Nir Bashan: There we go, yeah. I'm going to listen for it. So for me when you look at it creatively there's three very important

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attributes. It's humor, empathy, and courage. And I've gotten emails about this already. The book's only been out a month and people are like, "Really humor? Are you kidding me?" Those people are obviously not very funny, but the point being is that those three things kind of work together for me. I've seen time and time again in different industries even that those three things hold together. Empathy's incredibly important these days. A lot of people are talking about it Roger, and I feel like we're a little bit all over the place about what empathy really is. At its core for me it divides into two components. It divides into internal empathy, which is what you do with yourself and your team, it's realizing who you are as a human being and what your values are that you want to apply to your products and service. And once you realize what those are that's kind of the core of your creativity, trying to get out into the world.

As soon as you realize what those are you communicate it with your internal team and you're able to get on the same page and move forward as a unit. It is incredible to me how many businesses out there that I've consulted with that just don't do that. They're a mid-sized sort of company with a very involved owner and there was never a conversation about why they're doing this and what their story is and what their identity is so that the customers, business to business, business to consumer, whatever it is, that the customers can understand who they are. So that internal sort of empathy allows communication, it allows for better meetings, it allows a whole host of things that can improve by realizing and executing it properly.

External empathy is all about realizing how your product or your service is effecting others, and it's not really about

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going, "Yeah okay, we think they feel this way," and moving on. It's really about experiencing literally the sensation of sitting in the last row by the bathrooms, row 32 of a flight and seeing that that's a pretty crappy seat. Then understanding that this vendor providing this product, they really can't keep up with what we are expecting them to provide us because of A, B, and C reasons. That, for me, is what external empathy is. The two work together in a very sort of cohesive way because they're required to build a construct of really being able to relate back and forth, and it really comes down to information and not data, it's not about listen, I've worked with this client before and I love them, but there's a very famous website where you go and you're buying a product and beneath it says, "You might like," and it's got options.

How many times are those options right? I mean at least for me almost never, and there's been billions spent on getting that algorithm to print out or to show you what those things are that could be... And I've been in meetings with people who have developed these things and they're like, "Well I mean look at the analytics, look at this. Research shows." Human beings are inherently flawed Roger. We're inherently just not a perfect system, and no matter how much you love analytics, if you don't inject analytics with some human bias of who we are and why we do stupid things often, then you can't really have a machine do these types of things. So for me empathy is incredibly important and understanding that empathy gives you a peek into real information, real human biases, is incredibly valuable.

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Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah I think in that example you really need two kinds of data. You need the analytics data because if you're presenting people with some information like here's a product that you might like, and .01% of the people are clicking on it, that's probably the wrong product for that situation and you need to fix your algorithm. But also you need to watch the human beings as they're doing stuff.

Nir Bashan: Yeah.

Roger Dooley: Where are they slowing down? How are they confused? Some of those things you can get from digital tools, but in other cases you probably just need to watch customers. I wrote a post at Forbes a month or two ago about the mom test for customer experience. If you think your website's so easy to use, have your mom do something on it, or if she happens to be really digitally savvy find somebody else who is not and see where they're slowing down. There's a huge tendency to blame the customer. Well they aren't clicking on this stuff because they're too dumb to click on it. Well maybe not, it's probably your fault. One term that I hadn't heard before that I found in your book here was micro-listening. What is that?

Nir Bashan: Yes, so I worked with a wonderful CMO of a Fortune 500 company who was spending millions of dollars testing things in the market. Focus groups, research, all this stuff, and he found that he had a much cheaper and more effective method. What he did was he listened to only a select group of people, some were his friends, some were acquaintances, sometimes it was an intern who was out of college, and he would take a very, very small group, then he would micro-listen to that sort of environment and

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see what it is that came out of that sort of deliberation. It wasn't about spending a lot of money and then getting a sheet of analytics that would help you make a decision. It was more about using a little bit of creativity to sort of extrapolate hey you know, these three or four or six people felt this way. Maybe I have enough of a slice that will give me an indication of where I need to go next.

That's really all it is, and using micro-listening is a very effective tool because like every tool in my book, it's free. It costs nothing, you just have to ask somebody to do it. It's not about buying a new piece of machine, it's not about hiring a department and staffing it, it's really about shifting your mindset and working on looking at something differently.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah that reminds me of Martin Lindstrom. I just mentioned him but he came out with a book a few years ago called Small Data and it was all about going into environments and observing carefully. What are people doing? And coming up with some really interesting insights about how people actually use your product or your service, but simply are not going to get from traditional market research techniques. It's actually sort of embedding yourself in that environment.

Nir Bashan: Yeah, and it's cheap.

Roger Dooley: And paying very close attention.

Nir Bashan: Yeah.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, it's fascinating stuff. So something that we encounter occasionally as authors are inflated egos. Probably some of us have those or you go into a store

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and you see a pile of your books on the shelf there, that makes you feel pretty good. But inflated egos tend to be the enemy of creativity. Explain about that and what to do about it.

Nir Bashan:

Yeah, so we talk in the book about how egos are sort of a destroying factor of allowing creativity to happen. Why? It's because you sort of load the problem with the solution before you've had a chance to really explore what the problem is. That's why I'm a little nervous about accepting the title of expert. You know what I mean Roger? Expert, I mean if you're an expert at something it means you've been doing it for a long time and you've seen a bunch of stuff, which is really important. But I'm afraid sometimes that because you're an expert and I'm afraid that I do it myself, that I approach a new company that I'm working with or a problem that I'm working with and I say, "I already know what your problem is. I already know what you're going through. I know because I've seen it elsewhere." And what ends up happening is I lose that ability to be creative and to really solve problems there on the spot because I'm pre-loading it with my ego.

It's something that I have to monitor everyday and it's something that I wrote about in the book to almost help me understand that this is what I'm doing and this is what I need to be doing less of. So I think just an awareness, just an awareness of it, and I know you have a very rich listenership and you got a lot of really great people involved with the podcast. I think that we can all use that hint once in a while to go, "You know what? Time out, maybe we don't know what the solution is." Look at COVID. Who predicted that? I didn't. I thought that everything would continue to grow and things would

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continue to be on that track and that threw us all into a complete loop. That is one of those things where ego prescribes a problem before it allows it really the opportunity to solve it.

Roger Dooley: Right and I think now that you mention COVID that's a pretty interesting space for inflated egos because I've seen a whole bunch of folks who probably didn't take a science class after 10th grade or so who are now epidemiologists and statisticians.

Nir Bashan: Isn't it amazing?

Roger Dooley: Yeah, you know it's pretty phenomenal. I think true experts tend not to talk too much and listen and observe and then look at the data perhaps and look at what other information they can collect to make a reason judgment. But anyway, it's been amusing and it's really afflicted all sides of that argument I think. Everybody, whether you're terrified or whether you think it's kind of a mild flu. Regardless, everybody's got an opinion, everybody has statistics to back up their opinion.

Nir Bashan: Right, isn't it amazing?

Roger Dooley: Nobody's listening to the other people, or for that matter many people aren't listening to the reasoned experts who are probably steering probably a middle course in many cases. I want to be respectful of your time here. How can people find you and your ideas?

Nir Bashan: Yes sir, so there's three Nir Bashan's in the entire world, so pretty easy to find. I'm not the one uploading Call of Duty clips and doing video game walkthroughs, that's not me. It's N-I-R B-A-S-H-A-N. The book's on Amazon, it's

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called The Creator Mindset, 92 Tools to Unlock the Secret to Innovation, Growth, and Sustainability. I have a website NirBashan.com. We have a community Roger, which might be interesting to your listeners. It's about sort of asking questions and getting answers. It's Wayne Baker's and Adam Grant's brainchild, and Daniel Pink is on there and he has his own thing. They offered me my thing and it's a really wonderful. We have C level all the way down to student, and people are asking, "Hey, this is what happened at work today. How do I get more creative about finding the next CFO of my company?" It's that kind of stuff, so I'd love to see you and your listeners on there. And I'm on Insta, Facebook. I would love to hear from all your listeners.

Roger Dooley: Great, well we will link to all of those places on the show notes page at RogerDooley.com/podcast, and next week we'll have the game playing Nir Bashan on the show. No actually we won't do that.

Nir Bashan: You should.

Roger Dooley: That's not our topic, but it is good to know that there is somebody out there who is an expert at Call of Duty if we ever need one.

Nir Bashan: Right.

Roger Dooley: So in any case Nir, thanks so much for being on the show. It's been fun.

Nir Bashan: Thanks Roger, thanks for having me. I'd love to be back if we can deep dive into something else.

Roger Dooley: Excellent.

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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."

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