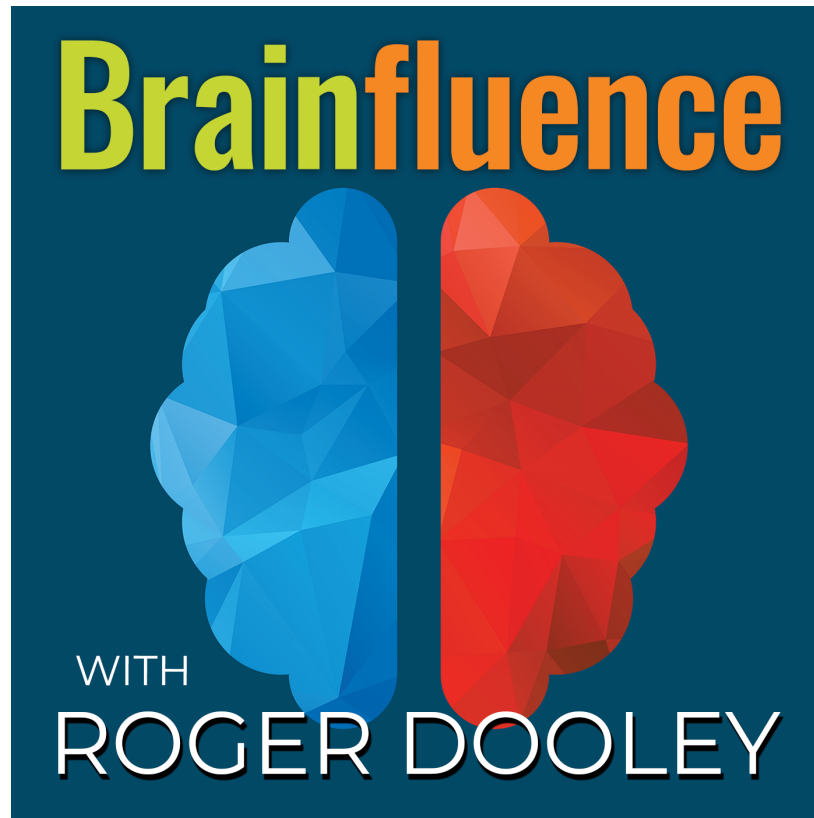


**Pandemic-Tested Leadership Lessons with Joseph Michelli**

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



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**Roger Dooley**

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# Pandemic-Tested Leadership Lessons with Joseph Michelli

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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. I'm excited to have Joseph Michelli back on the show. He is a certified customer experience and speaking professional. He's the author of 10 books on companies like Airbnb, Starbucks, Zappos, Mercedes-Benz, and he is a Wall Street Journal and number one New York Times bestselling author. His new book is very timely. It is Stronger Through Adversity. Welcome to the show, Joseph.

Joseph Michelli: It's great to be back. I'm a huge fan, so I'm always enjoying the opportunity to speak with you, Roger. Thanks.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. So just to set the stage for our audience here, this I think will be airing very shortly, but for posterity's sake, we

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are recording at a time when vaccines in the United States have just begun to be approved. The first one was approved a few days ago, but is not yet in distribution. So we still have the pandemic upon us in full swing. We are about to have the Thanksgiving weekend occur, which may or may not turn out to be a super spreader event. And we have a new president, but that new president will not take office for almost two more months. So we're in a really interesting time of flux here. And so, Joseph, your book is really timely.

Explain just a little bit of the backstory of how you decided to do this and what your methodology was for collecting the content.

Joseph Michelli: So I'm a consultant by day job, and a writer as a supplement to my life and my opportunity to share my stories. But I literally was working for Godiva Chocolate at the time they had pivoted into the space of cafes. I had worked previously with Annie Young-Scriver when she was over at Starbucks and then she came to Godiva, and she literally was trying to turn Godiva into a rival of Starbucks. So you could go to a Godiva cafe in the morning and have an incredible mocha. And so she was working on that mainly in New York city. I was going to be doing a book about them in 2020 and heading to the plant in February. Everything closed down out of an abundance of caution in February. And I was fortunately at the same time on many task forces for other clients, as they were trying to get their arms around this phenomena, and it was clear to me there was not going to be a Godiva book in 2020.

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And I was learning a lot from the leaders that I was hanging out with in those taskforces. Some were very effective, some were panicked, some were flailing. And so the goal was to try to understand what were these effective leaders doing and how could I get them to help me understand their fears, their anxieties, their thought processes, so that maybe we could learn something to get us through this, because who knew how long it was going to be? Certainly most of us weren't guessing this long. And then maybe even passed it into the beyond pandemic world.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. You know, you open the book with the concept of self care being important, which really surprised me because I really anticipated sort of diving right into taking care of your customers, taking care of your people, and so on. You start off with taking care of yourself. Explain that concept, and why you and some of your leaders that you spoke with thought that was so important.

Joseph Michelli: Well, I was probably not doing it when I was writing the book. So maybe it was for myself. But really, frankly, most leaders weren't doing it. That's what was the epiphany for me, is that I would talk to somebody like Stacy Salvi from Fitbit, and she would say, "Look, I work for a company that encourages people to move around and track their movement. And here I am in these Zoom meetings, worrying about the gravitas of what we're doing, and could we use it as a device to potentially detect our exposures to other people? We're so into what we're trying to accomplish and so mission critical that I wasn't getting up out of my seat. My device was buzzing me

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telling me, 'Take a breath, rest.' And what was wrong with this picture?"

So I think a lot of leaders had to come to the conclusion that for a short period, adrenaline was working for them, but once this got out of the sprint zone, they needed to get back to taking care of themselves because they were giving a bad message to their employees about what it takes to be successful and how you can't balance your life.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. And obviously the demands of the pandemic have been enormous on some people. I mean, there are some folks who really, probably haven't noticed that much difference. A lot of people were working from home already, either as freelancers or just a work from home employee, as I have been for 10 plus years. So all these "How to work from home effectively" articles were a little bit amusing. But for many people who suddenly not only had to work from home, but they had kids at home that they had to be homeschooling more or less, and all this other stuff going on with employee crises, and no doubt, occasionally, an ill relative or ill employee and so on, it's easy to get to an overload situation in a hurry.

Joseph Michelli: Yeah. Just today, Gala put out an article that says, "Work from home is showing a decline in engagement levels in ways they hadn't anticipated." So we kind of knew, in general, that engagement was declining in the last three or four years. And then we had the pandemic and we just expected it to go down. But in the old days, work from home was a perk and people liked it and they tended to be more engaged if they got to work from home maybe

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one day a week. But now we've been incessantly working from home, and for a lot of people, they're seeing a real steady decline in engagement levels because there isn't the human connectivity that was part of what fostered employment engagement in the workforce.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I probably started seriously working from home maybe 15 years or so ago, and I initially saw a huge jump in productivity because even though in my old office, I did have an office, it was not an open plan or a shared table or some of those really horrible ideas, just the general background noise, if the phone's ringing, people walking by talking and stuff, even that was a distraction, where I was working on some kind of intense project and I woke up after two and a half hours of being continuously working on this and was like, "Holy cow. So this is what flow feels like." But I'd never really experienced it in an office environment. So that's a plus.

But at the same time, later, when I was working with a large company and attending various Zoom meetings, which then were probably WebEx meetings, but the same concept, boy, it was really easy to be disengaged in those because you've got somebody droning on about something or other, and you can hear all the people typing in the background. That was really a recipe for disengagement. So I guess you—

Joseph Michelli: I mean, all the leaders had to deal with virtual workforces in settings that they did not have it, furloughs as potential realities. In the midst of the pandemic, we also had racial division. We had looting. I mean, this was not necessarily a time of a single threat. It was multifaceted. It kept

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changing its form, regulations kept changing in terms of how you could operate your business. So from the leadership perspective, there was crisis after crisis after crisis. And the adrenaline fatigue, the activation of burnout was very much a reality. So self-care became an important conversation for leaders and it was foundational to understanding, "You have to lead yourself if you're going to lead your team or your organization."

Roger Dooley: Right. And in a really divisive political environment too, because I think that people on both sides became ... Not everybody, but certainly many became really invested in the process. And that seemed like all they could think about and tweet about and post on Facebook about, was their objection to what was going on from the other side. And that I think induces its own stress levels.

Joseph Michelli: And it was subtle, you know? I was talking to the president of the PGA, right? And a lot of the PGA clubs and just the general clubs, just the mere mention of whether or not you had to wear a mask into the clubhouse was kind of subtext for political dialogue. When all most of these leaders were trying to do was, "How do we keep this building open and maximize the use of this and the safety of our team members?" And it became even embedded into things you weren't intending to be political at all.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, I mean, like if you were at a golf club and it says "No cleats in the clubhouse", then everybody pretty much does that. Nobody says, "Well, I'm going to defy this rule and go clomping in with spikes on my feet." Something like a mask, as you say, Joseph, it ends up being a

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political thing where, you know, "It's infringing on my freedom", or whatever. Who knows?

Joseph Michelli: And the other half said, "Why didn't you impose it earlier?" So even the ones that you kind of think are going to support you, they're like, "Well, about time." It was really an odd time for leadership and it continues to be. I mean, it just twisted around. So maybe we went from masks, then we went to reopening, and then we went to closing down again, or, "How much do we throttle it up or down?" So all I can tell you is that this Stronger Through Adversity reality for me was, "Lead yourself. But realize that what is on your plate is going to galvanize your character as a leader for generations, probably."

Roger Dooley: So what were some of the insights that you got from this living-in-a-Zoom-world? While we were talking, Joseph, I just had a great idea. You know, we were talking about the Fitbit executive who was not doing anything to stay fit. What we really need is like a little webcam that could sort of dangle in front of your face a few inches so you could be walking and Zooming at the same time. You could be walking the neighborhood or through a park.

Joseph Michelli: Right. With a nice gimbal on it so that it stabilizes the camera so you can run, you can ... Yeah. Well, I'm actually doing that right now, Roger. You saw through my camera I'm right now exercising.

Roger Dooley: It looks like you're really in your office there. So that's great.

Joseph Michelli: Yeah. I'm glad that it's ... I'm fooling you. I'm really not—

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Roger Dooley: That image stabilization is great.

Joseph Michelli: Yeah.

You know, I think that some of the key takeaways for me are so aligned with what you do, right? This is a time of emotion. Leaders, I think, who had emotional intelligence and who could process on the emotional level, just not on the practical, tangible, plan-oriented, linear focused level, were the ones that I think shined in this. And some of them found a gear they didn't know they had, they gave themselves permission. The pandemic was humbling and so they didn't have to know it all. They didn't have to have the spreadsheet. They could operate from a different zone. And I think that was one of the powerful things. I mean, you've been a champion, I think, of the emotional drivers of human behavior. Certainly were they in play in every single interaction that leaders were facing today, because there was a heightened state of emotional arousal for most of us.

Roger Dooley: One thing that is kind of interesting, and you bring that out when you talk about putting employees at the front of things, because so many companies are customer centric, and that's been a point that I've been making for years, that so many companies claim to be customer centric, but really aren't. They're profit centric or board centric or shareholder centric or something when push comes to shove.

Now what we've seen is that companies that could have perhaps a little bit more transactional relationship with their employees ... And somebody like Amazon comes to

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mind ... I think Amazon is not a bad employer, they have some great employee benefits, they tend to pay well above average, they're rather demanding of their employees, particularly their executive level employees, but they've always put the customer at the center of things. And this to me explains much of their success. That's why they grew like crazy. They had obviously good management, good decisions. But by always saying, "Is this going to be good for the customer or not?", and making that the decision point.

But now we've seen so many situations where even your local supermarket, you know, it's being staffed by employees who are pretty low wage people in most cases. Often they've only been in the workforce for a year or two. This is a starter job. Suddenly they're being put in a somewhat perilous situation by being constantly in contact with other people and strangers for not very much money. And we're telling them to put the customer first and they're trying to put the customer first. But how did you see leaders resolving this sort of tension?

Joseph Michelli: Well, I just think the insight has to just sit there for a second because it's pretty powerful. I mean, Jeff Bezos has obviously said they want to be the most customer centric company in the world. So he's been true to that. You know, I worked with Tony Hsieh over at Zappos, who's also in this new book, and Tony was always an employee culture guy, and so it was interesting to watch when Zappos got absorbed by Amazon.

Also, in the book, I talked to Andres Traslavina, who's with Whole Foods, which got absorbed by Amazon, and

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everybody's been absorbed by Amazon in the end probably. But it's been fascinating to watch because at Whole Foods, again, you're talking to the same group of people, the folks who are putting their lives on the line for commerce to happen. This is the first time in the history of my lifetime where going and buying something could kill you, or going and transacting business could kill the person, transacting the business at scale. I mean, there's always been those one-offs, but at scale, this could happen.

And so what I saw happening, and I'll use yet another name in this, but John Gainor, who I used to work with at International Dairy Queen, was always the one kind of trying to referee the battle between customer centricity and employee centricity. And he would say, "Richard Branson at Virgin, it's not all about the employee, and Jeff Bezos over at Amazon, it's not all about the customer." And he was, "It's all balance. Balance it out." And I talked to John, who's now on the board for Jack in the Box and Saia and some other companies, and he said, "I've changed my whole position. It is definitely time to be employee obsessed. Never before have we been completely reliant on people being willing to go through the fear and danger and anxiety in order to make our business viable. That is why I am now", as he put it, "employee obsessed."

And so that became my mantra, is that, "Leaders in this time need to be employee obsessed." Let's get our employees through this. If you take care of them and communicate the importance of them taking care of the customer and solve problems for the customer, voila, you

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can get through this. And that's a big, big takeaway I got from leaders during this time.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. I had Tom Peters on the show a few months ago as the pandemic was in its earlier phase, and he basically said the same thing. I mean, he's all about taking great care of customers and great customer experience, but that you've got to put the employees first. And I think in the case of Whole Foods, they seem to do a pretty good job of it. I've had exposure to their operation locally here. I'm in Austin, which is their headquarters, but I know just in visiting their local stores, they really responded, I think, very well to customer needs and concerns with providing a safe environment for customers, providing senior times for those folks who are particularly at risk and so on, and just doing everything they could to reassure the customers. And the employees too seem to be always part of that program. In other words, they didn't look like they were objecting to being in there. They saw themselves as part of this mission. So they did a good job.

And a different chain that isn't perhaps quite as exclusive as Whole Foods is H-E-B, that's only in Texas. And they too took some very employee centric steps at the very beginning. They immediately bumped the wages, they began pitching in. They sent their headquarters workers into the warehouses, distribution centers to work next to the employees who normally work there. That's something that most companies wouldn't do. They wouldn't send managers and office people into these other locations just to take care of the customers. But if you're trying to show that, "Hey, as a team, we are taking

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care of the people who really need us. Because if we aren't there, people are not going to have food. They're not going to have diapers. They're not going to have those things that they need to survive." And just sort of telling people that, "Yes, you are an important part of that team", is not nearly as effective as standing next to some guy from headquarters who's helping unload a truck with you or something. That tells you, "Okay, this is real."

Joseph Michelli: And that really reminds me of a principle I have in the book, which is called "Shift, front, middle and back." And this book has 140 leaders in it, and people like ... I can't even tell you. It's kind of like when you were talking about Tom Peters. Those are the moments you go, "Wow. I talked to Tom Peters." To me, I had that experience with about 140 amazing leaders. You know, these are Brian Cornell, CEO of Target, or Hans Vestberg, CEO of Verizon.

And Michelle Gass, who's the CEO of Kohl's, was talking to me about the way she led through the pandemic, and it caused me to craft this principle around "Shift, front, middle and back." And it's inspired by wild horse herds, which is not normally where we go for leadership wisdom. But in the wild, horse herds are led by an alpha mare. The rear of the herd is an alpha sire, and he's kind of keeping the pace. The mare is setting the direction. And then there are these forces in the herd that shape herd behavior so they don't get too wide and they're kind of manageable.

All of that said is that Michelle Gass really talked about, there were times she needed to be in front. She needed

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say, "This is my vision. This is an honest lullaby. It's not going to be easy, but we're going to get there." Then there were times she had to get in the pack. So to your point, she said, "I needed to be there when we reopened the Kohl's stores. We had had them locked down. The message was, 'It's dangerous to walk in this building', and now we're going to start reopening them, and I had to be in the pack right alongside of everybody else, saying, 'I'm not going to ask you to do something I wouldn't do myself.'"

And then there were times she had to back off. And this really, I think, gets to innovation and reducing friction and all of it. Sometimes leaders have to speak last. They have to assume a position toward the rear of the organization and watch people ideate and innovative solutions that reduce friction or create value to customers. And so there were times she said, "I needed to just not speak until I could let others have the space to ideate and innovate."

Roger Dooley: No, I think it's a pretty common thing that if you want to find a better way of doing something in your store, in your factory, in your office, you don't sit there as the executive and think about ways that might be better, and then say, "Here's what we're going to do." You don't necessarily even bring in a high priced consultant. Instead, you ask the people that are doing it right now, "How would you do this? How can I make your job easier? What would make this overall task less effortful?" They are the ones that know, they know when they're wasting their time, but you've got to ask them that. And I think that many managers think, "Well, hey, the onus is on me. I'm the manager. I'm getting paid the big bucks. So I've got to

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figure this problem out", instead of going to the people that really know how to figure it out.

Joseph Michelli: Well, the point is, as a high price consultant, what I do is I go ask those people directly because the leaders may not have. And then when I tell them that, it sounds good because they paid so much. It's cognitive dissonance in action, I think.

But yeah, in the book I have Howard Behar, and Howard was one of the original founders of Starbucks. So Starbucks really, besides the early early founders, when Starbucks became what it was, when Howard Schultz came over, there were two H's and O. We called it H2O; Howard Schultz, Howard Behar and Orin Smith. And Orin was the bean counter logical guy. He's since passed; Howard Behar was the soul of the brand; and then Howard Schultz was the visionary. So I had Howard Behar in conversation, and he said, "You always, always have to make sure that the person who uses the broom is the one who gets to select it." And I think the messaging here is that, too often, we get far away from the solution, and unless we're willing to enable the people who are near to the problem to come up with solutions, we can really do damage as leaders.

But I just think it's important to realize, in the flow of the pandemic, you are much more in need of changing your posture as a leader. You couldn't get comfortable in being upfront all the time, nor could you be comfortable being in the back all the time. You had to be very fluid.

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Roger Dooley: Yeah. Your broom story reminds me of something I experienced at a conference in those days when we were going to conferences. This was last year sometime. And there was a lady there who had to fill up the coffee urns in the break area, in the lobby, and she wasn't real tall and these urns were on a table and they were pretty tall, so she could not easily pour the hot coffee into the top of them. So they had apparently given her some kind of a thing to stand on that was really tippy. She ended up bringing a stool from home into work because that was safer. And it's exactly what you're talking about. They shouldn't have said, "Well, okay, hey, we checked online, we've gone onto Amazon and found this little stepladder for you", that she didn't feel comfortable on. They should have said, "Look, find something you think is going to work and we'll reimburse you for it or just tell us where to buy it and we'll buy it", instead of-

Joseph Michelli: Amen. She was only carting around hot coffee. I mean, what could go wrong with a wobbly stool really?

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, not only that too. I mean, what's the cost of a workplace injury, a lawsuit, workers' comp, all that stuff? But somebody got a \$20 stool or something and said, "Oh, this'll be fine. That'll work. It's good enough for her."

Joseph Michelli: I just wrote a blog recently about, I guess it was a newsletter post, but it was about, can you have pandemic gratitude or is it an oxymoron? Are these contradictory concepts? Pandemic and gratitude. But I think for many leaders there is, after the obvious trauma and loss of life and all of the stuff that we know, beneath that is the opportunity to be grateful to see some things differently,

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to not, in my case, be on planes all the time, but maybe value some other things with that time that is more meaningful to me, more purposeful.

From a business perspective, I think that's what we saw a lot of, was people saying, "Maybe I don't need to solve all these problems. Maybe I need to turn this back to people who have a more vested interest in the solution." And frankly, I saw credible innovation, real meaningful innovation going on out of necessity, the mother of the greatest invention, right? And you've heard many, many leaders who talked about friction removal, both through technology and embracing technologies that the brand had been resistant to do, and friction removal because they just had to find a way to give their customer any kind of an access point to a brand that was otherwise not accessible.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, well, I think it has really highlighted the brands that were well along the digital transformation path and those that were more or less faking it. Because I saw that with supermarkets, I saw that with the big hardware store chains. There were some players that were demonstrably better before the pandemic hit at doing things like online ordering and pickup and so on. And those folks just hit a scale when the pandemic came along. The ones that had been sort of giving it lip service and had a semi efficient system in that didn't really work all that well, but it didn't matter because nobody was using it much anyway, those were the folks that really had to play catch up and lost sales because of that.

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Joseph Michelli: Yeah, and I love that awareness. For me ... And you're the expert on friction. So I almost can turn this one back on you. But I sometimes think that legacy brands pick up friction along the road. Like they just keep putting more and more onto themselves instead of debriding themselves of some of this stuff. And then entrepreneurial brands, they're just moving so fast that sometimes they don't consider what's creating friction.

But I think the entrepreneurial mindset was more helpful to taking off some of the legacy baggage than anything else. And I also think that what happened is, you created something patchwork and then you had to go back and look at what were some of the unintended friction points that you created so that you could optimize that? So I saw brands pivot to curbside pickup, and at first it wasn't necessarily frictionless, but they were optimizing as they were going along because they knew they had just thrown it together out of necessity.

I just love your take on it because a lot of my legacy brands behave more like entrepreneurs, and then many brands were much more about test and learn iterative design and seemed to be removing some of the friction along that journey.

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, I think the legacy versus entrepreneurial situation is probably best exhibited in the financial industry where you've got the traditional big banks and then the Fintech firms. And there have been some great studies. Peter Ramsey in the UK is a user experience guy who has done some pretty phenomenal comparisons about the processes. And in general, the Fintech firms

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have way more efficient, quicker processes for things like setting up an account, money transfers and so on. Not a hundred percent. What we've seen, and I've seen some evolution, is that some of the traditional brands have indeed embraced the concept that, "Wow, we really have to focus on customer effort."

Part of the legacy thing is you've got VPs of compliance and IT infrastructure and a million lines of legacy code, and all this stuff that can be pretty hard to shed. And I think that the pandemic has, in some cases, really accelerated that process.

I mean, this may seem strange, but I don't get that many physical cheques to begin with anymore. None of us do. And I had never bothered to learn how to take a picture of a cheque with my phone to deposit it, because there were so few anyway, I was just like, "Okay, well, I'll just drop it off on my way to the supermarket or something because it's right next door." There's very little effort associated with it. But suddenly, you're faced with, "Well, okay, am I going to drive and go into this bank?", which maybe the branch may be closed at this point or have limited hours or who knows what? And so I said, "Okay, well, hey, this process exists. Might as well try it out." And, "Wow, that was really simple." I did this in about 20 seconds where even the minimal effort required to create a deposit slip and drop it off at the branch was eliminated.

So I think it's true on the customer side as well. The customers are getting trained in some of these processes. I think we're going to see going forward that people who had never thought about doing curbside pickup at either a

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supermarket or a department store or a home store, now, suddenly, they're going to be doing more of that because it takes away so much of the effort involved.

Joseph Michelli: I know I pay a premium when I use Instacart and I run to my supermarket and they are sitting there waiting for me, and then I pop open the trunk and they put the items in. I could care less. And I think when I first started Instacart, I go, "Oh my God, how lazy can you be? I love going into a supermarket. I love shopping. You got to be kidding me. This will never work." I probably didn't say that, but I definitely was a cynic. And here I am now, they should make me customer of the year. I think that's what I should get, is that award.

I wanted to tell you that I remember your article, and I don't remember what you wrote it for, but you were talking about lifesavers and you were talking about packaging, and you were talking about that whole emotional reality. But when I was working with Godiva this year, and while I wasn't doing a book about them, I did include them in Stronger Through Adversity because they had come up with an observation of how customers normally eat a chocolate bar. And the average person would, you know, they'd break a piece off and they'd eat a piece and they'd wrap it back in the foil and stick it back in their purse, and it's melting in their purse. It was just not a functional usage. So they came up with very much like the gum sticks, you know, that are individually wrapped inside of a package, and they just repackaged it.

So I'm kind of taking back to your article on packaging, in the candy industry. And they did it in a way that now

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makes it shareable. So I wouldn't break off a piece in the COVID day and hand you a part of my candy bar, but you could select from my foiled candy, and it's the same bar, it's just laid out now in a shareable, aesthetically pleasing and healthier way.

I saw those kinds of friction removals. More of a sensitivity to use and safety and hygiene. I don't know. It's been an interesting, interesting year, and listening and watching leaders face those challenges, that's what this whole book has been about, is how do we come out stronger through adversity? How do we come out with individual pieces of chocolate in our chocolate bar?

Roger Dooley: Yeah. It's funny you should mention that, Joseph, because I do have a couple of a high-end chocolate bars, the kind that are sort of flat and the size of a dollar bill, not exactly, but that shape that you get the sort of premium kind of things, and they are packaged exactly like you described. They are foil wrapped, one solid piece of chocolate. So you break off a piece and you got all these little crumbs everywhere. You try and seal it back up, but the foil is ripped and you can't really seal it back up very well. So just those little things. I mean, there's so much. We could spend a couple of conversations on friction in packaging.

Well, one other thing I wanted to get back to though. I mentioned Tom Peters; one concept that he had popularized way back when was "management by walking around", where the manager doesn't sit in his or her office, he gets out and walks around and talks to people. And one of the stories in your book was about

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how Zoom actually increased one executive's engagement with different teams, because when people were meeting in-person in different conference rooms, in different places in a building, or maybe even in remote buildings in a different place or different city, he would never walk, I think it was a he, he would never walk in on those meetings.

But when everybody's meeting on Zoom, he could jump in to a random marketing meeting or some other type of meeting with little or no effort, be there, be available for questions, see a little bit of what was going on. Not necessarily take over the meeting, but just to absorb a little bit and contribute if somebody asked. And to me, that is a really good example of how, even though we all complain about Zoom technology and Zoom meetings, there are some advantages, for sure. Not to mention—

Joseph Michelli: You're talking about Steve Cannon. And he was formerly the CEO of Mercedes-Benz when I did that book over my shoulder. He was the CEO at Mercedes-Benz in those days. And then he's now in charge of Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta and the Arthur Blanc Foundation. He's in charge of PGA Superstores and the Atlanta Falcons football team. He's an amazing leader, but not only did he make those observations, but he said, "I could also tactically forge deeper relationships with people. Not only could I be more available, but I could drive deeper connections. So people who would never have lunch with the CEO, I'm having lunch anyway so why not invite them to a Zoom call? And when I do, why not ask them to bring something of personal value, like show and tell, so they could say, 'That's a picture of my dad, and I could show it

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to you and tell you my dad's story, and now you get to know me not as a human resource, but as a human being with a dad and an important story to tell about it?"

So I loved his use of it from a functional business perspective, but also in a relationship enhancing perspective as well. And God knows, Zoom has its limits, and how much of a relationship you can really create here, but let's maximize it for all it's worth.

Roger Dooley: We could probably chat for hours here, Joseph, but let me remind our audience that we are speaking with Joseph Michelli, author of the new book, Stronger Through Adversity. It is not probably going to be on sale when this podcast drops, but it will be available for pre-order. And this is such a timely topic. We did not want to wait for the book to come out because I think that we can all learn from that.

Joseph Michelli: We're really within a few weeks of it getting there. So if you just order it now, it's like 15 bucks plus shipping, and I'll send it to you signed. So go ahead and do it now. You'll get a better deal than what you'll get on Amazon. That's just a fact.

Roger Dooley: Well, how can people find you and your ideas online, Joseph?

Joseph Michelli: Sure. So you can find me at josephmichelli.com, M-I-C-H-E-L-L-I.com. And then you can, and it's probably right there on the Zoom bottom there, but beyond that, you can find my book, strongerthroughadversity.com, just strongerthroughadversity.com.

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Roger Dooley: Great, well, we will link to those places and to any other resources we spoke about on the show notes page at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](https://www.rogerdooley.com/podcast), where we will have text, audio and video versions of this conversation.

So Joseph, thanks so much for being on the show, been very timely session.

Joseph Michelli: Thank you, Roger. You know, I'm very grateful and I am deeply respectful of what you do and your thought leadership. So thanks.

Roger Dooley: Thank you.

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](https://www.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."

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