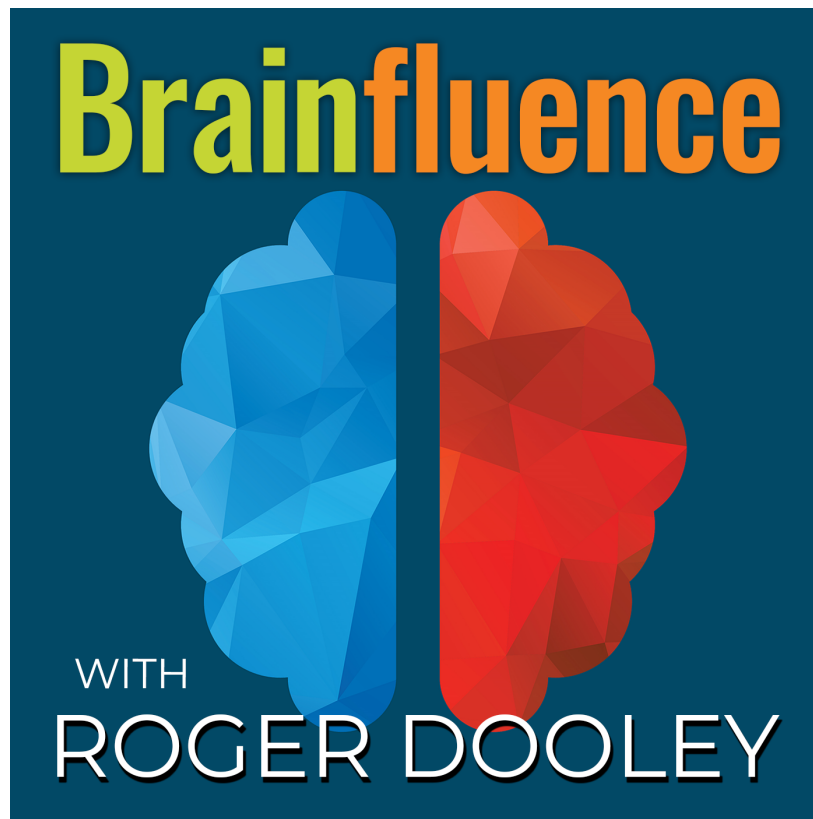


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Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



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.

If you happen to be listening to just the audio version of this, I encourage you to jump over to my Roger Dooley YouTube page or the show notes page at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](https://www.rogerdooley.com/podcast), because there is a video for this and not only is there a video but it is me accompanied by a whole bunch of visuals. If you've ever seen me do a keynote or a workshop you know that I love visuals to go with what I'm saying, and there are several dozen just in this short podcast.

This is the first one of the new year, the first episode, and there's a good chance that you have created one or more new year's resolutions. We all tend to do that, it's the time of year to do that, our friends are talking about it. Unfortunately, they tend not to be very effective. In fact

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one study found that 80% of them had failed just in the first month of the year. By the time you got to the end of the year, the number of people still holding to those resolutions was in the low single digits.

The problem is that resolutions really just don't work very well in part because they tend to be vague, they tend to be goals. I'm going to exercise more in the new year, I'm going to lose weight, I'm going to finally write that book and so on and so on. Instead, what we want to talk about here today are behaviors that will get to those goals. By focusing on behaviors we can get beyond those general vague things and do things that actually work.

Now, that's not the goals aren't important, I encourage you to set those big goals for, say, exercising more, for writing that book you've been meaning to write for the last several years, whatever it is. Perhaps a new project, you're going to redesign your website, launch a new business, develop a new product, whatever, establish that big goal. But then we have to do something else to employ behavior design. Now, we can't talk about behavior design without first mentioning BJ Fogg at Stanford. He is one of the pioneers in this space and he is famous for his Fogg Behavior Model, which says you need three things to create or change your behavior.

You need motivation. The person has to want to do it or want the result of doing the behavior. There has to be ability, which translates into not too much effort, not too difficult. And then finally there has to be a trigger or as he now calls it a prompt, something to get the ball rolling so that when that prompt happens, that the right combination of ability and motivation will result in the behavior. If there

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is not enough ability, if it's too difficult or if there is not enough motivation, then it won't happen.

Let me give you a more practical example you can probably relate to from the business world. My friends had AppSumo offer software deals to hundreds of thousands of customers. And if you go to their homepage, appsumo.com, you will see a huge prompt to subscribe. Their entire page is a prompt to give your information to them so then they can send you deals and you can become a customer. You can't go there without being prompted, so this is... In that respect it's an extremely effective prompt. They provide motivation by promising that you will never pay full price for software again and that they will send you the hottest deals. They could increase motivation even more if they said, "Hey, do this today and we will also include a \$20 coupon on your first purchase," but apparently they haven't found that necessary, this is sufficient motivation.

And then finally, when it comes to ability they make it as easy as possible. All you have to do is type your email address in and chances are your browser will type it in for you if you start adding just a character to and hit that send me deals. That is all, you don't have to type in your name, you don't have to type in your address or company or other stuff, they make it as easy, as humanly possible for you to subscribe. And this is why they do have hundreds of thousands of people on their mailing list.

So it's important that after you set your goals that you define the specific behaviors that are going to get you on the road to achieving those goals. For instance, you could say, "Well, I'm going to write my book this year." Well, that

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is not a behavior, now that's more of a goal or an objective. Something that productivity experts often talk about is breaking it down into tasks. Like the first thing I do is make an outline for the book. Again, that is a good thing to do, it is not a behavior though, instead it's a milestone, it's a minor objective.

Instead, what I encourage you to do is be very specific with behaviors. For example, if writing a book as your objective say, "Every weekday at 8:00 AM I'm going to open my word processor. I'm going to do nothing else until I have written at least 500 words. I want to keep going, that's great, but I will write those 500 words uninterrupted every day." Now, that doesn't sound like a huge commitment of words, but if you do that for 120 days you will have 60,000 words, that's enough to populate a book. Now, maybe it's going to take extensive editing, maybe you're going to throw some of it away, but regardless simply following that behavior and turning it into a habit will get you well on your way to that particular kind of objective.

Another objective might be say to start running in the new year. Again, that isn't very specific behavior, instead what I encourage you to say is something like, "Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, I am going to walk or jog or run," whatever your fitness level is, "For 20 minutes as soon as I wake up." And of course you can adjust these behaviors over time as it becomes easier but the important thing is to specify the exact behavior that is going to get you to your goal. And then to put behavior design to work start using Fogg's teachings to get it done.

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Now, the first aspect is motivation and there are lots of ways to motivate yourself, I could give you dozens but I'm just going to touch on a couple today. One is start with your why, why are you doing this? Now, some of the behaviors may not be really pleasant. Working out at the gym isn't very pleasant but if you then think about why you're doing it to improve your fitness, to improve your health, to live longer, to look better, whatever your key objectives are, then that's going to make it a little bit more palatable to go in and do that work. Another thing that you can do is make a commitment of some kind. I've written several books and I guarantee you there is nothing that focuses me on completing the writing behaviors better than having signed a contract that commits me to providing a manuscript of a specific length on a specific date.

Now, I was motivated before that, but that commitment provides additional focus and additional motivation. And it doesn't have to be a signed contract, you can make a commitment by telling friends or family publicly. You can do things like for instance, one crazy example is agreeing to donate to a cause that you hate if you fail to complete your behavior. So whatever political party you are not a member of saying you're going to make a \$100 donation to them if you don't execute on your behavior over some specified period of time. There's all kinds of commitments that you can make, even just writing it down and leaving that paper on your desk is a form of commitment.

Something else that I've found is somewhat effective is to use a little rewards as part of your habit formation process. After you complete that writing task then it's time for a morning snack or a Starbucks, whatever your reward

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is. Perhaps after you complete your morning jog you can stop at the coffee shop, whatever works for you. But knowing that at the end of this activity that you may not find intensely enjoyable, there is a reward waiting that can help build that habit and make the whole process seem a little bit more palatable.

Now, what I want to focus most on here today is ability, and it's important because that might be even better than motivation. In fact, BJ Fogg says, "Don't focus on motivating people to do something, focus instead on making that thing easier." Richard Thaler, Nobel Prize winner in this space says, "If you want to encourage some activity, make it easy." That's a pretty simple concept but it more or less won him the Nobel Prize. Now, there was a lot of research to back it up, not to mention some pretty astonishing real-world results in terms of getting people to enroll in retirement plans and such, but basically it's all about the desired behavior and making that desired behavior easier.

This is pretty much the concept that underlies everything in my recent book, Friction. I define friction as any unnecessary effort to perform a task, and the thing that I repeat over and over again is that friction changes behavior, friction changes behavior. So, if you have a desired behavior you want to make it as easy as possible, you want to reduce friction. You can add friction to an undesired behavior. My friend Art Markman at University of Texas here in Austin, had an undesired behavior of consuming those little pint containers of Ben & Jerry's ice cream, and he found that he was able to cure himself of that habit by not having it in his freezer. He knew that he could go to the store and get it if he wanted it but that was

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too much effort. He added friction to that process and as a result stopped what he considered to be an undesired behavior.

Something else that you can do is prepare in advance. For instance, if your intention is to work out in the morning, have everything ready to go the night before. Your workout clothes, your downloads in your smartphone, your shoes, any gear you need, have it all ready to go in one place so that you don't have to hunt around for it. If you start the morning saying, "Oh gee, this is the morning I'm working out," and you start reading through drawers for workout clothes and such you are less likely to do that behavior over time.

Something else that you can do is eliminate distractions. If your activity is one that requires thought, for instance say writing, designing, creating, then eliminate any distractions that could sidetrack you. All those notifications about, oh, you have an important email, or 15 new likes on Instagram, all these things are going to attempt you to look because they are important to your brain. It likes those things, "Oh, I have an important email, maybe it's a new client, maybe it's something important," but you've got to eliminate those during your behavior.

My friend James Clear in his excellent book, Atomic Habits, points out that eliminating any extra effort is really critical. He says, for example, that if you are going to join a gym or workout club and plan to work out on your way home from work on your commute home, be sure that gym is right on your route. He points out that if you have to deviate, even say a five minute detour to get to the gym, perhaps they're a little bit cheaper, maybe a little bit

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nicer, the locker room or something, that's great. But over time that extra effort to get there may result in you starting to miss more and more and not completing that behavior each time the way you want.

And finally, you should really focus on starting small. This underlies BJ Fogg's Tiny Habits method in which he says, "You should always start with the smallest element of a behavior you can manage that requires almost no effort." My favorite example of his is flossing. We all hate flossing, it's effortful, it's not pleasant. And typically our motivation is really high a couple of days before we go to the dentist because we know we're going to get hollered at if we haven't flossed, and when we get back because we got criticized by the hygienist who told us we should floss better. But in between times our motivation fades and fades and we stopped doing it on such a regular basis.

He says to build that habit don't start out by saying, "I'm going to floss every day no matter what." He says, "Floss one single tooth and keep doing that night after night after night until this very low effort process becomes habitual, then add a second tooth. And that won't seem like much extra effort at that point. And of course over time you build that up to the point where you are flossing to a level that your dentist will commend you for, but you're doing it by these little low effort increments, not trying to tackle it all at once, that's his Tiny Habits method.

The final element is the prompt. And this is one place where your distracting technology can help you. You can use your technology for... So if you have behaviors that you want to perform at particular times of the day or on

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particular days, put that in your calendar as a calendar item with a notification. First of all, your electronics will prompt you that, okay, it is time to go for your run, to start writing, whatever it is, and also it will block out that time so that neither you nor anybody else will schedule something to conflict with that desired behavior.

You can use triggers. If you're going to run first thing in the morning, put those running shoes right by your bed so that you'll practically trip on them when you get out. That will be an immediate prompt for you saying, "Oh, today's my morning run day, I'm going to do that," and you can build habit chains. James Clear talks about it in Atomic Habits and BJ Fogg talks about it as well. In fact, one of my really favorite examples of his is how he got himself to do dozens of pushups per day.

Now, setting a goal of dozens of pushups does not sound very pleasant, I would find that to be pretty daunting at the moment. So what he did was he said, "Every time I use the bathroom at home I am going to do one pushup, just one single pushup, that's all." And he did that, it all became habitual. Just about everybody can do one pushup without it feeling like too much work or too much effort. And over time he added a second pushup, and then a third, until finally he was doing a dozen pushups and it didn't really feel like too much work and it was a habit. And I've tried this and it actually works. I did that specific thing and I too got up to a dozen pushups and it was a lot easier than you might expect. So, remember, motivation, ability and prompt.

Now, to help you on your journey with the new year behaviors that you want to adopt, I will help you make

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your commitment. I encourage you to drop over to my YouTube page, Roger Dooley, and after you click the like button, please do click the like button that really helps even if you're not going to make a commitment, then in the comment area state what your commitment for your behavior is for this year, I will be sure to respond and give you a word of encouragement. If you don't want to do this publicly, now public commitments are always the best, they are more powerful than commitments you make to yourself in your head. But if you don't want to do that then please feel free to drop me an email at roger@rogerdooley.com, and let me know what your behavior commitment is for this year and I will drop a word of encouragement in reply to you.

Now, I want to leave you with a few resources to help you on your behavior journey this year. The first is BJ Fogg and his Tiny Habits book. I've alluded to it already, this stuff really works. His website is tinyhabits.com and there he will let you participate in a free five-day program. Now, first of all, I have no affiliation with BJ or with the other authors I mentioned in here and I have not done this five-day plan, but if it comes from BJ I am sure that it is based on sound science. James Clear, his Atomic Habits book has sold 2 million copies because it is such an amazing guide. So full of practical advice, very readable, full of stories, full of research. I allude to multiple ideas of James' in my book Friction. And if you go to jamesclear.com he will give you a free chapter.

And finally, one I did not mention yet, but my friend Nir Eyal's most recent book is Indistractable. This has been an amazing bestseller and if you go to nirandfar.com his website, and that's N-I-Randfar.com, little pun there, he

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will give you a free 80-page Indistractable workbook to start you on your own path to limiting distractions. And of course, I encourage you to drop by rogerdooley.com and you will find show notes for this podcast. You'll find links to all the resources that I mentioned, there will be a text version of it there as well as the other media that you perhaps haven't consumed yet, as well as links to my social media accounts and my various blogging sites. I wish you a great behavioral journey this year, and I'm sure that this year will be better than last year. Have a great new year.

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](https://www.RogerDooley.com/Friction).

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