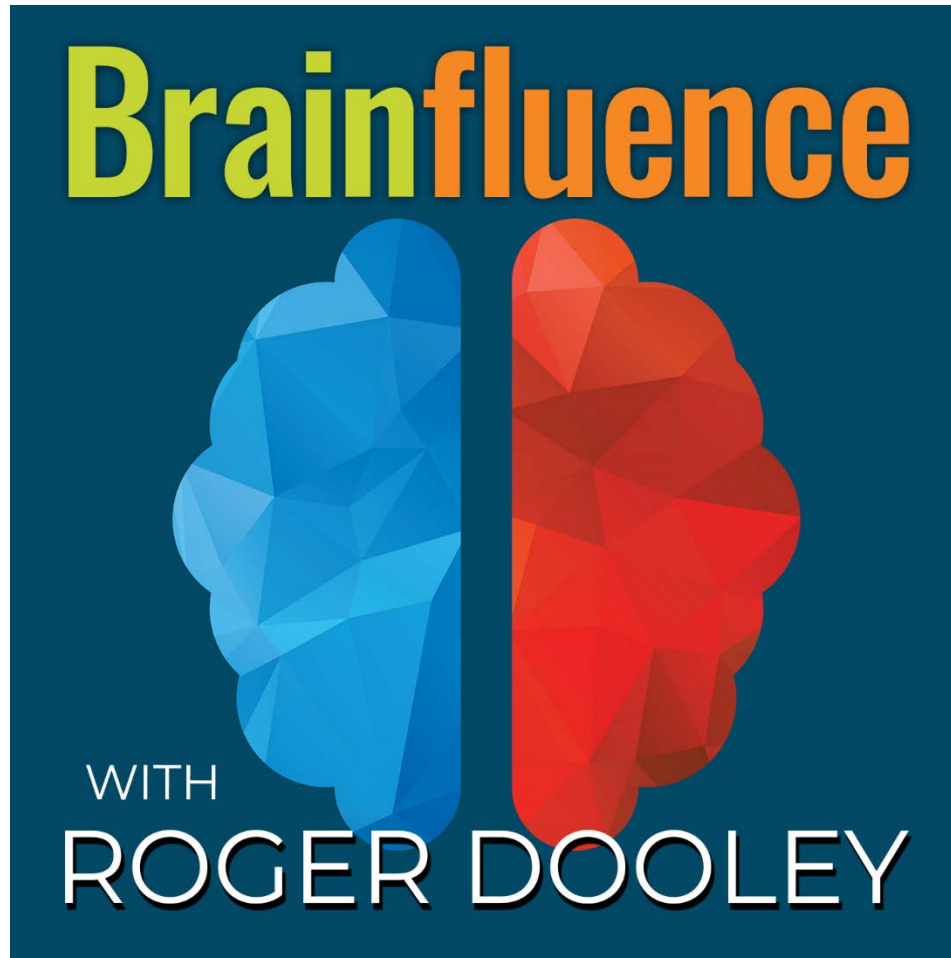


# Evolutionary Ideas with Sam Tatam

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### SPEAKERS

Intro, Roger Dooley, Sam Tatam, Outro

**Intro** [00:00:00]:

Welcome to Brainfluence, where author and international keynote speaker Roger Dooley shares powerful but practical ideas from world class experts and sometimes a few of his own. To learn more about Roger's books, brain fluence and friction, and to find links to his latest articles and videos, the best place to start is Rogerdooley.com. Roger's keynotes will keep your audience entertained and engaged. At the same time, he will change the way they think about customer and employee experience. To check availability for an in person or virtual keynote or workshop, visit rogerdooley.com.

**Roger Dooley** [00:00:37]:

Welcome to Brainfluence. I'm Roger Dooley. Sam Tatum is the global principal and head of behavioral science at Ogilvy Growth and Innovation. Sam has a background in organizational and industrial psychology and advertising strategy. Today, Sam and his global team of psychologists and behavioral economists develop interventions and shape the communications for some of the world's biggest brands and organizations. Sam work includes projects for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Facebook, Walmart, American Express, Ford, and more. Sam's new book is Evolutionary ideas unlocking ancient innovation to solve tomorrow's challenges. Welcome to the show, Sam.

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**Sam Tatam** [00:01:14]:

Roger, thanks so much for having me on. It's a real pleasure.

**Roger Dooley** [00:01:18]:

Well, it's so great to be here, and I think for starters, I'm curious before I want to discuss your book, but how did an.org Psych guy get into advertising?

**Sam Tatam** [00:01:28]:

Great question, actually. And as you go through sort of the psychology route in study, I found myself at a bit of a fork in the road to progress my study. And one fork in the road goes down more of a clinical route that tends to focus on abnormal behavior. So I know that's probably a loaded term, abnormality, but looking at anxiety and depression, the abnormalities of behavior, I was always more interested in normative, more normal behavior, sort of how we sort of stand around having a drink on a Friday afternoon. And the best route at the time was to go down organizational, which was more of a macro understanding of human behavior embraced in organizations, but moved into things like brand strategy. And that was the route that I took into sort of normative behavior through organizational Psych. And after a while working in organizations in organizational development, looking at things like psychometric assessment, I had an opportunity to join Ogilvy in advertising strategy, and I found that I did far

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more psychology in Ogilvy than I ever did working as a Psych in a specific role. And the rest is history. I've sort of loved it ever since.

**Roger Dooley** [00:02:53]:

That's a fascinating story. And I'm curious, too, about the Ogilvy story. We've had Rory Sullivan a few years ago, so we got part of the story there. But we think of Ogilvy, at least originally, as being in the advertising business. But you're focused on a variety of behavioral science, behavioral economics, interventions that aren't necessarily involved in advertising or maybe even marketing. How did that evolve, and what are some of the less obvious examples of the kind of work that you do at Ogilvy.

**Sam Tatam** [00:03:24]:

Of course, and you mentioned Rory. So Rory founded the practice almost 13 years ago, I suppose with Jez Groom and to use Rory's language, discussing Ogilvy as having all the capability of a general hospital, but tend to be brought in by clients for cosmetic surgery. So Rory's passion has always been to sort of better utilize some of the smarts and creativity that Ogilvy has to broaden the horizon of the sorts of problems that we solve. So I work within our consulting business, and more specifically, within the behavioral science there. We've been brought in to tackle challenges, from encouraging people to eat methane free beef all the way through to working with airport security lines to see how we can stop people taking liquid in their luggage, working with big social media businesses in Palo

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Alto to help them launch physical products. It's one of those jobs where the joy is the diversity of the challenges that you can solve. And for us, all of the problems have one constant factor, and that is that it's reliant on people interaction. And obviously our psychology is core to that. So I feel blessed to work in an organization surrounded by such interesting challenges.

**Roger Dooley** [00:04:51]:

Right. It sounds like a fascinating thing. We could probably discuss it to great length, and maybe we'll get into a few of those interventions in more detail as we go forward here. Sam, in your new book, which I am holding up for our video viewers, you talk about evolution. It seems like most business people, when they want change, they want revolution, they want new ideas, they want something that is going to break the mold. But you argue that isn't always the best thing, or maybe even most often the best thing. Explain that dichotomy and what your philosophy is on that.

**Sam Tatam** [00:05:27]:

Of course. No. Thank you. And one of the challenges that I sort of stumbled across around this appetite for the revolutionary, we always feel like we need big ideas to solve big problems and novel ideas to solve novel problems. We sort of gravitate towards viral campaigns and the next big thing, and I unpack a lot of the psychology behind that, why that's the case. And one of the central elements is around proportionality. We have a tendency to seek proportional solutions. If you

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Imagine in the physical world something creates a loud bang, you assume that it required a certain sort of input by which to generate it. When we boil a pot of water, it's safe to assume that it requires the same amount of energy by which to cause that. But in the realm of the psychological, it can be different. We know that big outcomes can be achieved by small inputs, and that's a large part of the world of behavioral science and nudge. But for me, I think, and where the book goes even deeper, is that we can actually find existing solutions to solve what appear to be novel problems. Just because it looks novel to you doesn't mean that you need a new solution or a revolutionary answer. Actually, the answer might be staring you in the face the whole time. You're just driven to try to seek something that's as obscure and potentially as scary as the problem that you're faced with. But it doesn't need to be so proportional there.

**Roger Dooley** [00:07:05]:

I think the recurring theme, and as you mentioned, Sam across work in behavioral science, marketing in particular, is looking for the small intervention that can have a big impact. I like the way the book is organized. There are a lot of short, sort of bite-sized chapters that talk about a particular topic. And one early on that caught my attention as being something that is such a simple, low-cost intervention that just about anybody can do, depending on what business they're in, and that is Quantity Anchoring. Explain how that works and how it really costs nothing, but can have a profound impact on sales. Yes.

**Sam Tatam** [00:07:43]:

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So Quantity Anchoring is a lovely one. So some of the original studies were conducted in Ohio, I believe, looking at in a supermarket of a discount of tin soup. And they found that and I'll forget the exact figures here, I think, Roger, but when they had a ten cent discount on the soup, they sold an average of three cans, for example. But what they did was add a quantity anchor. So they limited, essentially limited people with the number of soup that they could buy. So they said a maximum of twelve cans per customer. And once you give people a maximum of sort of tins that they can purchase, they found that people sort of bought an average of seven. So that reference figure, we navigate the world contextually, and by giving someone a relative figure, like a maximum of twelve, it gives us a bit of a steer as to what we think other people might be doing or what we should do ourselves. And that jumped there, the sales to an average of seven. And again, it's one of those transferable solutions that we've explored in challenges for other clients. So a business in Australia that we're working with had a value range that they were selling. Every few times a year, it'd be a promotion. The challenge was to improve the perceived value. And rather than finding novel ways in which to communicate the existing value, all we did was elevate. What was the disclaimer on every piece of advertising that we'd done for the last six years? It was just written in tiny typeface at the bottom of the ad, and we made that the headline to say a maximum of four per customer. And we ended up selling 56% more product and had, I think, an 84% increase in for sale transactions. So it's one of those you sort of confined it and transfer it, even if the problem feels like it's novel for you, chances are it's been solved elsewhere. And behavioral science and language, like, as you use Roger Quantity Anchoring, helps

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us to see or codify the style of solution that we can transfer. And that's the real for me. That's one of the real unlockers of behavioral science, that the language can help us to navigate the world slightly differently and therefore match up solutions with existing problems.

**Roger Dooley** [00:10:07]:

Right. I'll add a caution to our audience that these are things that you need to test, not just assume that twelve is the magic number. Obviously, if you're selling refrigerators or Ferraris, a woman of twelve isn't going to do very much for you, but by choosing that right number and then testing it to see if it does boost sales, it costs you nothing. And in fact, I think it's hilarious, Sam, that information may have been buried in the fine print anyway, as opposed to it being a strategy, it was an actual limitation, but, hey, let's make it very visible and suddenly sales go up. That's really great. But I think this leads us into the next thing I want to talk about, and that's the TRIZ Tr I Z framework that you advocate. I think we've had a past guest talk about it. It might have been Doug Hall, but that was a while ago, and I'm not sure we got into any depth. Can you briefly explain why a structured approach to innovation makes sense? Because, again, we often think about innovation as something that comes to us in a dream at night or while walking in the woods or something like that. And you really advocate for sort of a more boring left brain approach.

**Sam Tatam** [00:11:22]:

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Yeah, which is always a cautionary approach for me in a business like Ogilvy to talk about systematic creativity. But I'm a big believer in it. And TRIZ, as you mentioned, is a fascinating framework. It's a framework developed by a Russian engineer who was a wonderfully inventive teenager, found himself very quickly in the Russian Naval Patent Office, where he was surrounded by patents every day. And he actually realized that actually, most of the solutions that were being legally signed for patents or going through the naval system were actually replicating existing solutions that had already existed. So the team eventually audited about 200,000 patents to identify the level of inventiveness. And really just to see how innovative are these innovative solutions that we claim. And not many, about only about 1%, they identified as being true innovation, and up to sort of 95% just being different executions of the same engineering solution. So what TRIZ does then is look at these patterns of existing solutions. So if you imagine in the world of biological evolution, we look at species based on different features. We look at the presence of gills, or warm blood, or breathing through oxygen, or having a spinal cord. And that helps us to sort of classify different species. In TRIZ, what they've done is break up 40 different patterns of engineering or technical solutions. They call them inventive principles. So, for example, one inventive principle, I think it's number seven, is the Nested doll. If you imagine the classic Russian Nested doll, the Babushka doll, that's sort of the pattern of solutions that span telescopic lenses of a camera, that span a nail polish, that has the brush that goes inside the bottle. I kind of surprise they're all example of a nested doll solution. And the same. We can see things like segmentation, breaking things up. So turning curtains into Venetian blinds is an example of segmentation. Having a single lounge or sofa that's converted into a

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modular sofa, that's an example of segmentation. So what TRIZ does is identify these inventive principles. But the final step, if I'm not taking too long on this answer, Roger, but the final step is how these inventive principles are then used to solve problems. So the final piece that the team have developed is a matrix where they look at attractive outcomes or challenges that might need to be solved by innovation. So looking at things like length, weight, volume, speed, and so, say we're faced with the challenge of increasing the volume of something without increasing its length, that's a challenge that needs to be solved in innovation. And what the matrix does is help us decide, which, inventive principle, might we draw upon to do that? So Nested doll might be a good example of a pattern of solutions to increase volume without increasing length. Telescopic lens has an increase volume of lenses. I'm sort of going off on this one, but it helps us to sort of go, okay, to solve that problem. Look, first to, inventive principle, number seven, and I believe the same.

**Roger Dooley** [00:15:16]:

Let's let's take this back to, yeah, a real world problem for a second. Okay. Because one fine thing I found quite amusing is a real world problem is if you were at a pub and one person goes to the bar and has to carry back four beers for his or her three companions, and you can carry two pretty easily. Three, you can sort of do, you get to four, and there you're risking losing one or more. In this case, the solution was a super scooner. Explain that.

**Sam Tatam** [00:15:52]:

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That's right. So it's a great example of sort of chunking things or segmenting them in different ways. So the team in Australia, again, faced with the challenge of carrying too many beers in one hand rather than carrying four, converted it into one big schooner that just divides into four equal parts. So I love that as an example of just a slightly different way of thinking about things, but in quite a creative realm. And again, if we were to look in the realm of trees, it's a good example of segmenting differently. If we were to look in the psychological realm that you and I might be sort of more closer to that could be used as a term of chunking. We're just chunking up the schooner in a slightly different way to make it easier for us to carry. And that's the super scooter. Well worth having a look, having a quick Google. You'll never be faced with the same problem again.

**Roger Dooley** [00:16:46]:

Right. That's a major solution for a problem that plagued man for centuries. Right. That's really wonderful. That was the first time I've seen it was in your book. So there are quite a few photos in the book, by the way, for our audience. And that makes it fun because often there are photos illustrate examples like that, like the super schooner. Sam, these days a lot of companies are focused on minimizing effort automation. If they read my book Friction, that's what they should be doing, I guess. But you point out that visible effort is sometimes a sort of a customer benefit. Explain that.

**Sam Tatam** [00:17:27]:

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Yeah. So as you say, there's an attractiveness of efficiency and the work of technology to help us remove somewhat the customer from a service interaction could be seen as an attractive thing. But what Professor Ryan Broil, Michael Norton have found that actually by helping people to see the labor, a term known as operational transparency or they explore a concept known as the labor illusion and help reinforce perceptions of value and perceptions of trust. So for example, the pair, right, in a Harvard report on an automatic sort of telehealth call, for example, having the audio queue of someone typing in the background can help people feel like their queries are being better served. Having an electronic ATM that visibly shows your money being counted rather than just sort of popping out with the cash can help people feel more trusting of the service. So while there might be this desire for moment by moment rapid speed service and not showing the working, actually what we can find is we can slow things down, show what's happening and people value it more.

**Roger Dooley** [00:18:55]:

Yeah, just a couple of days ago, Sam, I talked to Soon You, who coincidentally also has a book called Friction, just released a month or two ago and he takes a different viewpoint that there is such a thing as good friction. I think that at first I expected us to have a debate but we agree probably a 95% of what constitutes bad friction and good friction. But he does point out that that visible effort thing too. And he had a great example in his book from the company TurboTax part of Intuit that does tax preparation software. And I think in my book I mentioned

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them as a friction reducer because at least in the United States, the process for completing your tax return for even normal people is so confusing and difficult that 90% of the people either resort to using a professional tax preparer or some kind of software. So in that case they are making turning something that's complex into something that is not, well, not pleasant. You can work through it pretty easily. It's asking a question here and it's encouraging you and it's fine. So it's a friction reducer. But one thing that I think fits in perfectly with what you're talking about is when they go to check your return or do various steps, they'll have a progress bar that says, okay, now we're checking all your mathematics, all your arithmetic. Then it goes to we're looking for additional deductions that you might have missed. And it goes through these processes where I'm sure that they could have instantly said, okay, you're done, click, submit. But instead they add value or add apparent value with those steps. So I think that makes sense. And that's distinct, though, from actually adding or having friction that affects the customer, frustrates the customer, confuses the customer. But when you can show that, you're working hard. One other example came to mind too, just now. In Texas, which is one of the biggest US states in terms of both geography and population, we have a supermarket chain called HEB, which does a lot of wonderful things from a customer service standpoint. People love them. They're very highly ranked in national customer service rankings. But one thing they used to do is they prepare their own guacamole, which is a specialty of Texas, and they used to have some ladies in like a little booth in the front chopping up avocados and chopping up jalapenos to show the effort that went into making their custom guacamole. And to me that was brilliant because it conveyed freshness, it conveyed the effort. Now, I think quite probably in the back room, they have a

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more industrial preparation process. But to me this was just, again, a brilliant example, as you say, of demonstrating effort going into a product and by doing that, adding value to that product.

**Sam Tatam** [00:22:01]:

I love that, firstly, because they both come from very different industries. So we're talking about tax claims and we're talking about Guacamole. But we're aligned on the fact that they're both embracing operational transparency. I write in the book about Monteeth, the famous New Zealand cider, and similarly, rather than fresh guacamole, their challenge was reinforcing the claim of freshly picked apples and pears for their cider. So what they did was put tweaks from the orchard in the boxes. When they sold a carton of apple cider, they had a tweak from the orchard. There's just a bit of evidence of the operations and that's I think you've touched on it there that we can find really disparate worlds, that the language in the book Convergenly evolved on the same solution. And that same solution is operational transparency. Whether it's guacamole, whether it's a progress line on tax claim, whether it's Kayak Travel website that tells you all the different airlines that it's checking, rather than just automatically giving you the right solution. We can see it across industry and that's really exciting and certainly creatively.

**Roger Dooley** [00:23:11]:

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Liberating Sam talk a little bit about choice. That's an area that's sort of perplexing because people like choice. They want choice too much. Choice confuses people, causes them not to act. Talk a little bit about that from your perspective, of course.

**Sam Tatam** [00:23:25]:

So choice is an element I go into in a fair bit of depth. In the book, I explore trust. I explore choice, action, loyalty and experience. And when we look at choice, as you say, there's that classic instinctive thought that more choice is better, the more choice we have, that the less likely we feel that we'll experience regret, the more likely we'll see all the available options. But as you say, we find that we're less satisfied, we're more delayed in making a choice. We have that paradox of choice. So in the book, I explore sort of multiple different ways in which we can start to aid. And many of our listeners will know this language of choice architecture coined by Cass Sunstein and Richard Baylor that we can. Design choice environments to help nudge people in different directions, or help remove some of the complexity of a decision without actually limiting the choice itself. And that can be using things like default choice decisions, that can be using things like decoys. You add a really unattractive choice to help reinforce the value of the choices that are available. There are many different ways in which we can start to think about helping people navigate this complexity. And again, just as we've explored with operational transparency from Guacamole to tax, we can find whether it's in banking institutions, whether it's picking the mode of transport,

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whether it's any old decision that we find on our day to day, we can probably learn a lot from the world around us in embracing that.

**Roger Dooley** [00:25:01]:

One of the topics I've been thinking about lately for no particular reason, just one of those things while you're walking along in the shower or something, is recycling and how sort of the behavioral science of recycling is really bad because what we are expecting normal people to do is really complicated. It's confusing. People are usually even operating in sort of default mode system one. So they've got some piece of something of trash they need to dispose of, and they don't really want to sit down and analyze the components of that and figure out, well, okay, does this go in recycling or is it garbage? Gee, it's paper, but there's this plastic label on it. What happens then? It's just too confusing. In fact, you cite one of my favorite examples of the Changi airport in Singapore where they have three giant recycling stations, one shaped like a newspaper, one shaped like a can, and one shaped like a plastic water bottle. To me that is great because here in Austin we were kind of a crunchy place and we see these things that are labeled landfill or compost or whatever it's like. That's too much thought. Do you have any insights on that? As long as I've got an expert, of course. Do you have any interventions that would help us?

**Sam Tatam** [00:26:30]:

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First, I think there is great evidence around even just the language of landfill does make a difference. Rather landfill rather than rubbish does make a difference. But when we look at the example you reference, and for me, that's a lovely example, I draw upon that changing example for concreteness, we find things that are concrete easier to process, and particularly in the visual domain, we've evolved to draw pictures, not necessarily write poems. So if we can convert something into something physical and tangible and visual, then that's beneficial for us, as you mentioned. And this is in an airport, where we can't guarantee that everyone speaks the same language. So by drawing upon a visual image of a newspaper, of a plastic bottle, of a cup, we can help people again make the right decision in context. And that can spread beyond the world of recycling and beyond the world of Changi. I write in the book around the concert, sampuru, some of your listeners may be aware, in Japan, when you go to have a meal, there are sort of wonderfully realistic wax replicas of the meal just really helps aid the decision. There's no abstraction, complexity. I kind of know what my noodle or what my dish will look like, because I can see the wax figure perfectly there in front of me. So if we can bridge this gap between sort of an abstract concept and a more concrete manifestation of what it is, then we can help people make decisions. Which is why something like rubbish versus landfill, like landfill, creates this salient emotive concept, where rubbish is a bit more of an abstract thought. It's a space, actually. At Oglev, we've done a lot of work in food waste, in recycling management, and it can be the small things like that, whether it's just the label or it's the visualization, or for complex recycling, like coffee. We've done a lot of work in coffee recycling, where it's not just you need to pick the right bin, you need to pour the liquid there, remove the cap and put it in that slot. And here, it

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can be simple things like just asking customers if they want a recyclable cup, not a takeaway cup that can start the journey even earlier. So really tiny nudges in the right part of the process can help us here. It's a fascinating world.

**Roger Dooley** [00:29:08]:

Yeah. I think the whole concept of visual salience for choices or steps in a process is critical, because if there's a set of text instructions for what people are supposed to do, they're probably just going to throw whatever they have in the nearest receptacle.

**Sam Tatam** [00:29:25]:

But if it's really obvious, there's no excuses for anyone. If it's a big newspaper and you put a plastic bottle in there, you can't hide away from the fact you've recycled wrong there.

**Roger Dooley** [00:29:35]:

The thing is, most people operate on autopilot. And there are some people who would throw a newspaper into a plastic bottle shaped bin without even processing. That was a plastic bottle bin. But in any case, Sam, how can people find you and your ideas find me?

**Sam Tatam** [00:29:55]:

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LinkedIn is a great spot. So, Sam Tatum on LinkedIn, also on Twitter. I think it's at S underscore Tatum. T-A-T-A-M. Probably the two best channels. And please do have a look at evolutionary ideas. It's an exploration of how we can start to borrow from existing solutions around us and really accelerate our innovation through systematic creativity.

**Roger Dooley** [00:30:21]:

Great. Well, we will link to all of those places and any other resources we spoke about on the show Notes Page at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](http://rogerdooley.com/podcast). Sam, thanks for being on the show.

**Sam Tatam** [00:30:30]:

It's my pleasure. Thanks so much for having me.

**Outro** [00:30:33]:

Thank you for tuning in to Brainfluence to find more episodes like this one, and to access all of Roger's books, articles, videos and resources. The best starting point is [rogerdooley.com](http://rogerdooley.com). To check availability for a game changing keynote or workshop in person or virtual, visit [rogerdooley.com](http://rogerdooley.com).

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