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With Your Host



Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley, author, speaker and educator on neuromarketing and the psychology of persuasion. Every week, we talk with thought leaders that will help you improve your influence with factual evidence and concrete research. Introducing your host, Roger Dooley.

Roger Dooley:

Welcome to the Brainfluence Podcast. This is Roger Dooley and our guest this week is author, Jonathan Gabay. Jonathan has worked for global brands and news organizations as well as multiple advertising research design and PR agencies. He's the author of multiple books about copywriting and marketing and his latest title is Brand Psychology: Consumer Perceptions, Corporate Reputations.

Jonathan has appeared frequently on global media including CNN, Bloomberg, Sky, BBC and many others. Jonathan, now, you can cross the Brainfluence Podcast off your bucket list and now add us to that list. Welcome to show.

Jonathan Gabay: Thank you very much, Roger. It's great to be here.

Roger Dooley:

Jonathan, you've been around marketing advertising for quite a few years, I guess like me, but I was surprised to see that a lot of first illustrations in your book was a shot of prehistoric cave paintings. You weren't actually involved in that creative, personally, were you?

Jonathan Gabay: I'm old but I'm not that old.

Roger Dooley: Why don't you explain your evolution, another cave

painting reference or maybe explain your evolution as a marketer and what led you to write Brand Psychology?

Jonathan Gabay: Well, I've spent quite a few decades in marketing and as you said, I've been involved with all aspects of marketing, working for some really big brand, big agencies. I've also taught around the world for various universities, but you know what, I always call myself just a copywriter because

I'm interested in learning stories and then retelling the stories in a way that people understand it.

I got involved with neuromarketing because I've always been fascinated with psychology and why people want to buy things or not want to buy things or even deeper than that, so then I covered in another book of mine called Soul Traders which is why they believe brands, whether they'd be political brands, social brands or culture brands or what they've done.

That led me to take an MA in psychotherapy. I'm looking at this in quite a practical way in terms of what people say they want is not necessarily what they really want.

Roger Dooley:

That's certainly the premise I think of a lot of the work involved in neuromarketing, a lot of my writing and other folks in the space that people are simply not capable of articulating what they want in many cases. Sometimes I won't tell you but in a lot of cases, they simply can't tell you.

Jonathan Gabay: Absolutely. You're absolutely right, but more than just looking at it from a chemical point of view, which I do as you know in the book. What I do is I look at it also from, as I said, this therapeutical point of view. I know that might sound a bit odd but I think ... Well, for me, it got me hooked totality because I thought this is a fascinating way of how people think.

Let me give you an example, rather than go around the houses as we say over here in London on that. There was a study in Massachusetts about politicians. It's very interesting because over here in London, this is the time of year where ... and the time anyway, a sense of period generally for the general election.

We're having our election over here. What they said was that they found that when they spoke to people and they told them the facts about the political cause whichever that political cause may be, if the person wanted to vote

for somebody else, even though you told them absolute, solid facts about the alternative party, all that would do is rather than dissuade them, it would persuade them that actually they're right and you're wrong.

Let's put this in a different way. I'm telling you a fact about something, but because you absolutely believe in something else, the more I tell you an absolute solid fact about something the more you believe in something else because you are invested to believe in that other thing. Now, does that make sense?

Roger Dooley:

Right. Well, I guess if you believe Bob Cialdini makes sense, there's certainly a bunch of his work that would support that although it does not seem logical. You like to think that you could logically persuade somebody simply by telling him the facts.

Of course, they don't necessarily believe your facts because it disagrees with their preconceived notions and they've got conformation bias going on. Cialdini used commitment and consistency going on. It's just certainly one great example of why simple, factual persuasion doesn't always work.

Jonathan Gabay: Absolutely. As I know we've listened to, I think all of your podcast actually. We've listened to other guest that you had. You know it, I know it and the listeners know it about the consciousness subconscious that most of the work goes on down there in the subconscious. It's all about priming that.

Once you prime that bit, so that people naturally are inclined to be persuaded about something which they've already been pre-primed for, then what happens is that, well, the rest of it even I tell you the fact on top to your conscience, it may not actually be going in there.

This is really important from the view of advertising. As I said, I've been in advertising for quite a few years now and when I started off in advertising, it was all about

behavior. It was all about repetition, repetition and so on and so forth.

However, what we now know is that repetition for repetition's sake, going back to what I was just speaking about before, well, that's not necessarily going to work because although you may recall a brand name or a logo or whatever, it doesn't necessarily mean that recollection of it is the same of actually wanting to do something about it.

What you've got to do is that you got to set it up in such a way that beyond the superficial shallowness of the conscious, you're actually looking at the subconscious.

Roger Dooley:

Right. I think that's something that often is lost on folks who are creating advertising, who are focused on just cramming the features and benefits of the product into the admin. When the customers don't get it, they say, "Our customers just aren't smart enough to get it or we're not hitting it hard enough. We need to reiterate what our great features and benefits are," when it's not going to work.

Jonathan Gabay: You know what, I've seen these for decades, after decade, after decade of people saying, "Where are the features? Where are the benefits?" and that's it but really it's about sweating the small stuff, isn't it really, Roger? It's about the small details. These details have things that people can emotionally connect to rather than the obvious stuff.

It's a bit like this. I gave a lecture last week. Here's one. I gave a lecture last week on customer excellence in psychology. I gave this lecture in this place which is called the British Film Institute. It's got beautiful views of the River Thames over there. While I was there, it made me think about movies.

I was saying to the people in the audience, I said, "Look, if you think about a movie ... because we're in this film institute here. If you think about a movie, there's

sometimes those movies that make you cry, make you laugh or make you feel connected in some way."

The interesting thing about this, and I've often thought about this, is that I've never met the guy who wrote the script, who directed it, who filmed it, and so on and so forth, yet these people who I have never met, have managed to tap into something in me. In most cases, the things that they're tapping into are to do a combination of the good, old amygdala, the usual suspects which I know you've spoken about in many of your podcast.

It's very human. Let me put it like that. It's very human. Otherwise, what happens is that you're going to get a movie which it looks like the same as the other movie, that looks like the same as the other movie and there are a lot of those around as well but the really great ones are about looking at the small detail, intimacy.

Roger Dooley:

Jonathan, let's talk about, now, your book just a little bit. Let me add for our listeners who insist on audio podcast they can't see the book, it is a full 430-page volume which is really large for a business book and it's packed with detail. How do you intend readers to approach Brand Psychology? Do you expect it to be read from front to back or more as a reference that people can navigate to topics that interest them?

Jonathan Gabay: Well, as you said, Roger, it's a really big, this one.

However, don't be daunted by that because I've tried to

write it in such a way that makes Brand Psychology

accessible. You'll know that throughout, I give anecdotes
about what's happened to me or clients, or experiences
and stuff like that that puts it all into context.

In fact, the publisher allowed me to update it to the very, very, very last moment so it really is very current in terms of case studies and stuff like that.

Roger Dooley: Right. Well, as a copywriter and storyteller, you understand the value of stories. It does make text far

more readable when you can make a point and then immediately illustrate it with a story or a case study or case example or a picture.

Jonathan Gabay: It goes back to basic psychology. Look, we all know for years and years and years everyone's been going about the boring, "What's in it for me?" The acronym of what's in it for me. I think that that's being the place now. I think it's replaced by I know what you want from me. I know what you, the brand wants for me because consumers today has got nothing to do with educational intelligence one way or the other.

It's got to do with the fact that today's consumers are born into the world of advertising. They're so overexposed to all the data that's out there and all the messages that's out there that they understand the tricks of the trade. Things like clickbait headlines. Do you want me to explain that?

Roger Dooley: Well, probably most of our listeners know what clickbait is.

Jonathan Gabay: Okay, fine. I'm sorry. I didn't know. Things like clickbait headlines and stuff like that, I think they remind me of a little kid who keeps on nagging you, and nagging you, and nagging you to look at something. When you look at it, there's nothing there to look at. Do you see what I mean?

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jonathan Gabay: After a while, I think that kind of stuff from a behaviorism point of view, I think it's very shortsighted. I don't think it's going to be working long term. I think it's going to go actually in the way of some banner ads have gone in terms of people just don't look at them anymore.

Roger Dooley: Right. It's clickbait blindness, if you will in the same way that people talk about banner blindness which it makes sense although I guess it depends on how well the

promises are fulfilled if you see something that sounds like it's going to be really funny and so you click.

The delivering on that promise, maybe you'll be inclined to click again. I think the big danger in these that everybody follows that rule about where you should spend as much time writing your headline is the article and you end up with people writing clever clickbait headlines for content that's pretty mediocre.

If that happens too much then I think you're exactly right that people would just stop being fooled and say wow, that's yet another promise that'll be broken so I'm not even going to click.

Jonathan Gabay: I know that your background was in catalogs, wasn't it?

You did a lot of stuff doing that.

Roger Dooley: Yes. I was in direct marketing catalogue type for about 13 years or so.

Jonathan Gabay: Really, I use to work for a company called Great
Universal Stores in the UK and they're a huge catalog
company. In fact, I cut my teeth in copywriting working on
direct mail. The direct mail was one of my ideas. The
interesting thing about that is that with a lot of the letters
that used to write in those days to customers for these
people.

They were very, very long letters. Today, when I'm teaching content, I would call it copywriting but they want to call it content. When I'm teaching content and cognitive aspects of content, and I say to people we used to have a letter. It was one that would had which was 3 pages long and they're like, "What? Who's going to read the letter that's 3 pages long?"

I mean, we can't get anyone to read beyond a couple of paragraphs anymore in terms of online, et cetera, et cetera. I think, Roger, that it's about the quality of the content. I'm not saying that I'm a great writer than the

letter. I'm talking about in terms of the offer. In terms of the relevance of that offer to the person who's actually reading it.

I think if the offer is good, if the story is good, if it is engaging, if it is well-balanced between the emotional stuff and as I said before the factual stuff, I think people will read it otherwise no one in the world would ever have read war and peace for example. A great novel.

Roger Dooley:

Right. That's really true and if you look at the great direct mail ads from history whether it's Wall Street Journal letter that told the story of 2 young men, another classic or they laughed when I said down to play ad with. I occasionally use those as examples still.

Not the current audiences are familiar with necessarily unless they're students of advertising but those violate all the principles that people think about what you would have for an effective ad, long text, hard to read. People get the attention span in that today so you can't do that but as you say if a story is right. If you can get them going in and it's relevant.

In fact, you do see even today long form blog post content is actually what tends to get shared more than the little pithy 300, 400 word post people are sharing some of the longer stuff where there's actually some meat in it.

Jonathan Gabay: That's exactly what I found as well, Roger. A lot of people that I speak to especially I've noticed over in the last 8 years and it's got worse to be honest with you. They are very, very, very processed driven. In fact that's another reason why I was so interested in neuromarketing because they would do things by the book, in terms of big data collection and stuff like that.

When you suggested them that maybe, just because someone clicked before, that the reason they clicked isn't the reason that you think that they clicked. It doesn't really matter how many times they clicked or didn't clicked.

When you say all this to them, they just don't get it. I think that the next stage in terms of sophisticated, insightful, intelligent marketing and branding is really going even further with neuromarketing.

As I said, not just from the point of you saying where dopamine does this and that does that and which part of the brain is activated which is of course absolutely essential. It's going into as I talked to about this idea, the psychotherapeutically aspect of psychology which I basically like I put it. It's about listening to your audience and actually talking to your audience and thinking about your audience.

It's not doing things that just because some other customer does something, a process in one way. That becomes best practice. Everyone follows it and ultimately what happens is that the whole appearance of it, the whole delivery of it is what I would call a blancmange and a blancmange is like wibbly-wobbly jelly or, Roger, what do you call jelly over there. I don't know what you call it? Jell-O, is that what's it called?

Roger Dooley: Jell-O, It's actually a brand name but it's become generic

now for gelatin desert.

Jonathan Gabay: Is it?

Roger Dooley: Gelatin dessert would be the generic term but nobody

calls it a gelatin dessert.

Jonathan Gabay: Hello. Can I have a gelatin dessert? No. It's a bit like that. It's a bit wibbly-wobbly and not with any substance. Look, everyone talks about authenticity that the client is looking for authenticity. How can we be authentic?

Now look, from a copywriting point of view, and I've written 4 books in just copywriting. The old data would say it's all about just the emotive words. That alone will not cut it. It's like this. It's not just putting yourself in the

client's shoes, perspective client shoes. It's going this far and support yourself in the client's socks.

Now, not many people would do that but that's how intimate you have to be because you've got to understand as I said before that from a psychological point of view, people are doing or not doing or saying or not saying things for reasons which do not appear to be transparent which basically they're not transparent. Despite what I think all the big data is saying. I mean, what's your view on that?

Roger Dooley:

Well, I agree. I think that the data now is really beneficial because I'm sure it's true when you were in direct marketing back in the golden days and when I was doing catalogues, the exciting thing about it was that we actually had data to work with where most advertisers had extremely sketchy data.

If they were on radio or TV or even newspapers, often they've simply had to guess whether their ads were working. I mean over a long period of time, you could say well, this campaign was not particularly effective in increasing our market share but in terms of measuring the effectiveness of a particular ad or anything like that, that is impossible.

Now, with the tools that are out there, you can really test minor variations, major variations and get so much data. I think that really changes marketing and obviously performance marketers are doing it right now. People who are in the conversion space and what not but it's certainly going to permeate, I think all aspects of advertising.

Jonathan Gabay: I agree, Roger but I go back to that conference that I was at last week. One of the things that a marketing director of an insurance company over here was saying that she's got so much data coming in and being shared between this one and that one all the rest of it. She doesn't know what to look for. You're right.

Roger Dooley:

That's the challenge of big data, Jonathan, I think is you've got all this data but what do you do with it. In some cases, you may get some great insights like when Target was able to predict which of their customers were newly pregnant.

Maybe that's actionable advice and if you could do that across a hundred or a thousand different purchasing situations, you could really become really effective at delivering your marketing for each customers' needs but getting from this massive fire hose of data coming in, into these actionable insights, that's a challenge.

Jonathan Gabay: Exactly. That's why we go back. Well, I go back to not how or where people click. It's more than that. It's all about why they clicked. For example, here in UK, we still are reeling to be on this review from the recession, from the global downturn. We're still reeling from it. The thing is that despite all that, people set credit companies, right?

They're still getting those people applying for credit and they're giving the credit but a lot of these people is about understanding that they're applying for credit because from a psychological point of view, they are in an environment which says especially to the youngsters. I'm talking about in England here. I don't know what it's like over there.

Says to the youngsters, look the chances that you're not going to be able to afford to leave home even if you get married until you're just under 40 years old. You're going to have to repay your educational subsidies probably the rest of your life and these source of messages are going round, and round, and round and so people are, "What's that going to do with a credit card?"

A hell of a lot because people get to the point and saying, "You know what, I don't care if I ran out there because what difference is going to make? I'm going to be broke anyway." Now, that kind of thinking from a psychological

point of view makes you really open up so many areas of how to speak to people and indeed services to people that wouldn't be obvious simply by someone saying, "I'm going to click" or "I'm not going to click."

This isn't about AB testing alone. Of course that's important. Of course we want controls in terms of the advert which one work, which one didn't but what I want to go to now, what I urge everyone to do listen to a lot of your ... First of all is listen to all your podcast because the guests that you've had on there.

You continue to have on there, excluding me of course, they really, really come up with some fascinating insights into why neuromarketing, honestly, it's the way forward. It goes beyond what the data can tell you because it understands people and that's what we're trying to do.

Roger Dooley:

It helps to get to the why is what you're saying, Jonathan that it's not just the what, it's the why.

Jonathan Gabay: Absolutely. It's always going to come back to why. He did this. She did that. She said this, he said that but why did they really say it. That to me is so fascinating. It's endlessly fascinating.

Roger Dooley:

I think that's one of the promises of neuromarketing although it's maybe not a hundred percent fulfilled yet. It's getting past the what happened? What did they do or what was their reaction and staring to shed some light on the why. Unfortunately, it's not quite the mind reading phase yet which should be really handy for marketers if it worked but it's gradually getting closer. Well, let me challenge you on something here, Jonathan.

Jonathan Gabay: Please.

Roger Dooley:

You've got this amazing 400 plus page book in branding. If you talked to some experts, they would say that branding is doomed that the brand is now out of the control of the brand owner. It enhanced the consumers.

Trying to tell people how to create a brand just it's not going to work going forward. How do you respond to that?

Jonathan Gabay: Everyone keeps on going on and on and on about voice of customer and that's so important but from the point of view that the customer owns our brand. Come on people get real. Do you honestly, honestly, honestly, honestly think that if you were to take the idea of brand democracy to the limit?

You're going to say that well, actually all the customers own the brand. Someone's got to be telling them about what to do next. Someone's got to be giving them psychological or otherwise clues about why they need or why they don't want the brand. We go back to one of the greatest branding manufacturers, advertisers, everything all in one and that was Ford.

We know that he's said, "If I would have listened to just what my customers want, they would had just wanted faster horses, literally horses not cars because they didn't even know that they wanted cars. That's why although we have this idea, we have this idea and this notion that it's all in the customer's hands."

Yes, give the customer an outstanding service. Yes, speak to the customer at every touch point of their journey. Absolutely, yes, speak to not just the customer but if you're going to be, let's go back to that idea of a car insurance for example.

If you you're going to be subcontracting to someone who's going to be fixing the car and someone who's going to be, I don't know putting on new tires, whatever it might be or painting the cars. All these subcontractors, they also have to understand the brand so that's when you get the customer going to say, "Yes, this is our brand," because they share in the whole thing.

Which brings me to another point, I've always said that branding is about 2 markets. It's a bit like the right load

and the left load. Not from the point of view of we know that they're both interconnected and you just can't say what's right or left. It's not that.

It's to do with the interconnectivity part of it. Side A whether it's right or left, it doesn't matter. Side A is going to be the employer brand and side B is going to be the brand to the external market. However, I truly believe that unless you get the employer brand right from a psychological point of view, you're not going to get the other one right...

You know why, because these are the people who are your ambassadors I was involved with the Olympic Games in 2012, one of the people who were involved with recruiting volunteers for the games. They had 1.2 million people who applied to actually become a games volunteer. Okay, fine.

They whittled it down and their problem there was how do get people to do very, very menial jobs although that they were expecting to do amazingly, glitzy jobs, an all do it for nothing. It was all about going back to what I said before listening to people, talking to people but most of all, giving people a purpose and giving people a meaning and then they felt that they were part of the brand 2012 Olympics.

It's about who owns the brand. We all own the brand if the brand cares for us or we believe that it does that it's not about monetary stuff it's much deeper than that.

Roger Dooley:

Obviously getting the employees in sync with the brand is important. I think that gets to a larger point. I certainly wouldn't say that branding is dead and brand building is dead. I totally agree with your point of view but what I would say is that you cannot fool people with your branding efforts anymore.

In other words, if you try and create a brand that's in consistent with the product or the service that you're delivering, then you're going to be in big trouble because

there will be a disconnect and people will massacre you via all the channels that they have available to them where there is a time when an amazing branding effort could carry a poor product for quite a while.

Jonathan Gabay: I've always said even back in the days when you open the conversation caveman days, I've always said that if you've got a lousy product or service, there's only so much you can do even back in those days. There's only so much you can do because as Ogilvy said, he said it in a different era so you got to take what I'm about to say in context.

He said the consumer is a stupid she's your wife. In other words, to say that into 2015 language, these people are very, very shrewd. They're very intimate with the brand. They know what you are up to which is what I spoke about before. In fact, if we go back to Maslow and the good old hierarchy of needs.

I've got to the point in my career that I decided I would never write anything in any book mentioning that man again. I got fed up of this man, one of your other guests. I'm sorry but his name goes out of my mind at the moment but of your other guests was talking about that Maslow have fell out of favor because the marketers, the advertisers could never really reach the pinnacle which was fulfillment.

The thing is that I have to disagree with that guest because what Maslow actually said was that you are never going to be totally fulfilled and that's why it works from a point of view of advertising is a bit like this, the Apple smart watch has come out. There's going to be a lot of people going to say great because they have said it's the greatest watch technology on all the rest out there.

Does that mean that next year, apple won't be saying ...In 18 months time, Apple won't be saying actually this is the greatest smart watch ever. That's the whole point of

marketing. It's the whole point of creating a demand. If you do it in the wrong way from a psychological point of view, you're right.

You're going to get customer fatigue and basically people are going to get fed up with you. It's a delicate balancing act and with so much data around there. We really should be looking at it at a more in a deeper way.

Roger Dooley:

Right. Jonathan, you mentioned Maslow. You've got your own goodbyes hierarchy of needs. We're almost out of time but why don't you briefly go through what your hierarchy is for the modern brander?

Jonathan Gabay: Listeners out there, draw a triangle. We're going to do this together. You're going to draw a triangle. You're going to put it into 1, 2, 3, 4 different sections.

Roger Dooley: For those listeners who might be driving in their car, don't draw the triangle.

Jonathan Gabay: Don't do it on the iPad either. When you get back, draw a triangle. At the foot of the triangle, I want you to write the word, belief. Belief is that the brand will at least be available as advertised. I mean it's a very basic belief. I mean there you go. That's that one.

Next one up. Next section is going to be trust. Trust is that the brand will fulfill the promise beliefs as advertised at the bottom. You understand? First, being it's going to even be there and the second one is that I trust that it's going to do what it said it's going to do.

Now, the third one is my favorite one and that's faith. Now, faith from a neuroscience point of view and you're marketing point of view, is particularly fascinating because faith is when someone truly, truly has faith in a brand or ... By the way, a brand can also be a religion or a religious brand. That's fair enough.

When they have faith in whatever it might be because maybe they're invested in the brands ecosystem, then it doesn't matter whatever the other brand is going to say because their faith is so strong, they're going to stick with it. Imagine getting to that point.

You must be thinking, Jonathan, that must be the pinnacle. No, the pinnacle I believe is hope. Hope is that this brand, whether it's going to be a political brand, culture brand, commercial brand, whatever it might be, it's going to be giving you a future.

A future in terms of new product development, in terms of neuromarketing insights, whatever it might be but you cannot have that hope. You cannot have that shared belief. You cannot have that faith unless you understand that you're speaking to people.

Roger Dooley:

Very good. Let me remind our listeners that we're speaking with Jonathan Gabay, author of Brand Psychology: Consumer Perceptions, Corporate Reputations. We have links to Jonathan's book and the other resources we mentioned on the show notes page at Rogerdooley.com/podcast. Jonathan, how can our listeners find you and your content online?

Jonathan Gabay: I'm going to arrange that any of your listeners who actually go online to a website called Brandunderstanding.com. That's the website for the book. I'll arrange that if they mention your program, that they're going to discount any way for the book. The other thing my main website is Jonathan Gabay, G-A-B-A-Y dot com. Of course you can follow me in Twitter @JonathanGabay.

Roger Dooley:

Great. We'll of course have links to those in the show notes page. Jonathan, thanks so much for joining us on the show today all the way from London.

Jonathan Gabay: It's seriously been a privilege, an honor and I salute you, Roger.

Roger Dooley: Well, thanks so much. Bye now.

Thank you for joining me for this episode of the Brainfluence Podcast. To continue the discussion and to find your own path to brainy success, please visit us at <a href="RogerDooley.com">RogerDooley.com</a>.