

# Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



**Roger Dooley** 

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: Welcome to the Brainfluence podcast. I'm Roger Dooley. My guest this week has lived and worked in forty-three countries. In his words, "This was part of a global quest for learning, selfdiscovery, entrepreneurship and inquiry." Today he helps entrepreneurs and individuals achieve success in business and branding. He's the author of Brand Identity Breakthrough: How to Craft Your Company's Unique Storage, Make Your Products Irresistible. Welcome to the show all the way from Armenia today, Gregory Diehl.
- Gregory: Hi Roger. Thanks for having me.
- Roger: I understand that you've also got not a travel book but a book about how enriching travel can be. What's the title of that one?
- Gregory: That's my new book coming out on November 1st called The Travel as Transformation: Conquer the Limits of Culture to Discover Your Own Identity. It's sort of a combination practical travel advice but more so about the personal growth elements of expanding your cultural identity.

- Roger: Very good. We can cover a little bit of both of those topics today. Gregory, start off by telling us what turned you into a digital nomad.
- Gregory: I didn't really know I was a digital nomad until a few years ago actually even though I've been traveling for the last ten years, since I was eighteen because I didn't know that being a digital nomad was a thing until a few years ago when I learned about guys like Dan Andrews and Tim Ferriss and the 4-Hour Workweek and this whole social movement that's erupted.
- Roger: Before they were just nomads. Only recently they became digital nomads.
- Gregory: Exactly. I was just a traveler because that's what I had to be. I was so bored and stifled just living in one place. I was so frustrated growing up in Southern California, so I went to Costa Rica as soon as I got out of high school. From there I became obsessed with seeing as much of the world as I could.

Eventually I got into getting really serious about making money online while I traveled and realizing there was this whole movement of people doing similar things so that I could learn from some of their strategies. Eventually I started writing books and teaching other people how to do the same thing.

Roger: What countries outside the U.S. have you spent really

significant amounts of time in?

Gregory: I talk about a few in particular in my travel book that stand out to me. A lot of them I was just there for a few days or a few weeks. The ones I've spent a lot of time in that I definitely want to return to throughout my life would be Ecuador, where I plan to retire; a great slow pace of life and very welcoming inclusive culture emerged with nature.

> In Asia I prefer the Philippines, again, for a lot of similar reasons; great weather, people speak English. They're probably the friendliest people on earth that I've ever met, not to say that it doesn't have its frustrations like slow internet. Probably most surprisingly in Eastern Europe is the Republic of Georgia just below Russia and above where I am right now in Armenia which is really a rapidly up and coming relatively unknown country where you can get a very high quality of life for very little cost of living.

- Roger: Interesting. I actually know about Georgia. I was friends with a fairly well-known pianist from there. He would tell people he was from Georgia. He had, of course, a Slavic accent, but they would always ask Atlanta?
- Gregory: Exactly.

Roger: It seems to be relatively unknown. One of the things that creativity experts tell people to do is travel. I think that relates to

the concept that if you're going to create new products, it's rarely a single flash of insight that generates this amazing fully formed idea. More often creating innovative products involves combining existing things in a new way, taking something from one place or one field of endeavor and applying it in a place where it hasn't been applied before and it ends up being a breakthrough.

Traveling, almost of necessity, exposes you to different places, cultures and different ways of doing things, different products that don't make it outside their national borders and so on. Have you found that travel has inspired creativity, particularly in a product sense for you?

Gregory: It's definitely forced me to grow in the sense of how I could contribute as an entrepreneur to the world. That was part of why I was so obsessed with it when I started. Nothing else in my life had forced me to learn or to grow so much so rapidly. Nothing else exposes you to so much new information you have to take in and adapt to.

I think people who travel a lot and get really good at that cultural adaptation process, not traveling as a tourist where you essentially keep living as the same person in a new environment, tend to be a lot more creative because they're a lot better at mixing information around in their head in a new way that people who only lived under one set of conditions ever would.

There are some mixed blessings that come with that. Maybe if you've only lived in one city or one state or one country your entire life, you're probably more in touch with the people who live there and exactly what they're looking for. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the more novel circumstances you've been exposed to probably the better you are at creating a wide range of things.

My specialty has become branding and unique selling proposition development and helping people communicate what is specifically unique about what they're doing. In a combination with traveling to as many different cultures as possible, I've now consulted with and helped so many different entrepreneurs and so many different niches that I initially knew nothing about that I had to become laser focused in my ability to immediately pick out what was uniquely compelling about what a person was doing.

Even if it was something like sports that I have no inherent interest in, I had to figure out if I was a person that liked football, what would I like about what this person is offering or if I was a person from Miami retiring and living on this much money, why would I be attracted to this. I think that's the kind of thing that new cultural experiences really help you do. When you suddenly show up in China or Argentina and you have to start living like the Chinese or Argentinians, you get into that same method of psychological adaptation.

Roger: Do you find that your own experience is changing as your business shifts from, say, offering local personal services to

being more of a digital marketer? It seems like I could imagine myself visiting any country that had fairly acceptable internet and working out of an apartment or a hotel room or something and basically I would be in tourist mode even if I worked there for six months or a year or forever because I wouldn't necessarily need to interact with the local culture that much. Comparing that experience with saying I'm in this new environment and somehow I have to find a way of delivering value to people that's going to allow me to live here. Have you found that change?

Gregory: Yeah. It really depends where you are. Every culture is different in how much you can actually really immerse yourself into it. Some places I've stayed for almost a year. Others, again, it was just a few weeks. Obviously in a few weeks you can only immerse yourself so far and you can only become so much of a functioning part of the cultural ecosystem.

> Some places don't really seem to want your inclusion. They seem to really just have their thing that they're doing. The friendly American who shows up is just an oddity whether for better or for worse. Either they love you or they hate you. They don't really see you on the same level and it wouldn't be very easy to suddenly integrate into the society.

> Others it's the opposite. They seem to really want foreign influence. Georgia's a good example of that, like I mentioned before, both on a political level. They seem to be really encouraging tourism and foreign entrepreneurs to come in with a lot of their policies. With the locals it can be hit or miss. Some

of them seem to really appreciate, too, the outside influence and others feel the opposite. Let's just say that in a nice way. They don't really want the foreign influence coming in.

It really entirely depends on where you are in the world and how much the locals are willing to let you be part of their culture. I find that's the most rewarding way to travel when you can really function with people. At the same time, my business is run through email and Skype. I work with people all over the world. They self-select if I'm the kind of person they want to hire.

- Roger: A few weeks ago I spoke with perhaps the prototypical digital nomad, Esther Jacobs. She really lost her Dutch citizenship because of a bizarre law that mandated how many nights you had to sleep in your hometown, which relates to another project I'm working on. It was such a strange story, particularly since she had gone beyond just being a regular citizen in Holland who had been knighted by the queen. To have this strange turn of events that even the highest level of government ministers couldn't fix because these were the rules and to follow them. It was a totally crazy experience. Have you had any weird things like that happen by virtue of just not living the way most folks do which would be to plant themselves in their home country in one place for months or years at a time?
- Gregory: One of the things I definitely talk about in Travel as Transformation is how much your national identity really affects your cultural identity, how people perceive you and also just functionally how you can interact in different countries and your

relationship with your home country when you're not there fulltime.

I was born an American citizen. Earlier this year I acquired Armenian citizenship by decent. My grandmother was from here. Armenia happens to have a decent program for citizenship like a handful of other countries do. There are other ways to get other citizenships, which I highly recommend people look into. It's very good to diversify your identity in this way so that you're not subject to the arbitrary whims of any one country on earth. You never know. Even the most progressive forward-thinking nation in the world could have some crazy law.

I did listen to your episode with Esther and I did meet her in Thailand too. It's crazy that you could just wake up one day and because your country decided to implement some rule, your entire life has changed and your ability to function has changed. As an American, that's things that I worry about. We've got this election coming up soon. Whoever wins, Trump or Hillary, I don't know how their existence as my president is going to affect the way I live and the way I do business.

As an American, I'm taxed on worldwide income. No other country in the world does that except Eritrea in Africa and apparently they don't even enforce that. America just passed a law saying that if you owe more than fifty thousand dollars in back taxes, they can revoke your passport; things like that that are completely unpredictable. You are subject to the whims of the people in charge of where you happen to come from. You have to be aware of that.

I think part of making your identity more than the culture you came from also means playing the games of the rules in place of the countries. I think that's part of the adaptation process of becoming an independent entrepreneur. Your business is going to run in different ways than if you had a brick and mortar shop in your hometown and just the way you operate as an individual from a laptop. You're going to have to learn to be flexible and work with the rules and the tools you have at your disposal.

- Roger: That makes a lot of sense. Do you have dual citizenship now?
- Gregory: I do. I'm working on triple, in fact, at the moment.
- Roger: Pardon my lack of knowledge here, but are you allowed to have more than one passport or if you would get an Armenian passport, would you have to give up your U.S. passport?
- Gregory: It depends on the countries that you get your citizenship. Some countries only allow one passport. If you were to try to become Singaporean, which is considered one of the best passports in the world, you would have to first give up your other citizenships. In general, most don't have a problem with dual citizenship.
- Roger: Very interesting. I'll look forward to your travel book when it comes out soon. I'm curious of the election. By the time this

airs, we'll probably either be just about there or perhaps having recently concluded. I would imagine that, at least my experience in travel in the last six months, has been that people in other countries are actually really following the U.S. election. Everybody wants to know about the candidates and what's going to happen. Are you finding the same?

- Gregory: I heard it's very entertaining, definitely, maybe this election more than any other. People tend to care about American politics just because America has such strong worldwide presence and influence. I think more than anything it's just the personalities of the people involved at this point.
- Roger: They are definitely more visible celebrity light than usual. I'm sure that nobody outside the country ever heard of Mitt Romney before, for example. Both of these characters are quite wellknown. Let's talk about your book, Brand Identity Breakthrough. Who's your target audience for that, Gregory?
- Gregory: My target audience is for entrepreneurs who like to chew their food. By that I mean really think about why their business is the way it is, why they've chosen to do things the way they have. I tend to take a really educational hard-nosed approach to everything I do. I'm the kind of person who will make you think about every little detail behind what you thought was an obvious concept or something that didn't need to be thought about.

The driving force behind everything I write or every conversation you ever have with me is why do you believe what you believe. Why do you think what you think? If you're willing to go through that process, which is uncomfortable for a lot of people, you can start to understand why it is that maybe your customers don't see your business in the way you want them to see it. Almost every either wantrepreneur or mildly successful entrepreneur is sitting there complaining, "I see what's so great about my business. I think my service or my product is the greatest thing in the world. Why aren't people buying it as much as I think they should? Why aren't they paying as much money as I think they should?"

Either you're completely mistaken and it's not as valuable as you think it is or you're just really bad at communicating that value to the right kind of person in the right way. If you can dissect what that is and the right way to communicate it, you can be much more successful with that.

Roger: That's a really good point. I was just working on a couple of speeches and added a new slide to my deck about Clayton Christensen from Harvard's quote that ninety-five percent of new products fail. Of course, product failure, everybody has different numbers for that because when is a product a failure? If it doesn't actually get introduced completely, does that count or was never even a product and so on and so on. It's remarkable the number of products that fail.

I pretty much ask the same question: Is the product concept itself bad? Is it just not what people are looking for, in which

case that's a marketing failure of sorts because you've misidentified what people want or is it simply bad marketing? As you put it, are you not communicating the true benefits very well?

Pretty much sums up why products fail but it's remarkable as simple as those two things sound, how many new products and, of course, many new entrepreneurial ventures are basically a product or service. They haven't had time to develop a whole suite of products yet. When the product fails, the company fails.

Gregory: I keep coming back to this idea of identity which is a strong theme in both of my books although it talks about them in very different ways. A business is more than just even if you only produce one product or one service. Your business identity is more than just that one product or service. It's the story you tell that gets people engaged with the concept of product or service and what place it has in their life.

> Taking the assumption that whatever it is you're producing has some legitimate value to it, it's not just a completely broken product, you have to assume that there is somebody somewhere on earth that is going to find that uniquely and extremely valuable. Assuming that's the case, why isn't that person aware of your solution and why aren't they begging you to have it in their life? Why aren't they shoving money in your face saying, "Please, please let me have this?"

- Roger: That would be a failure to communicate part. I think, too there's a psychological bias when it comes to an entrepreneur and his or her product concept or service concept. It can become very attached to that and then confirmation bias kicks in where you basically reject evidence contrary to your assumption that people are going to love this thing and find a reason that that evidence isn't credible or it's simply wrong, and at the same time, really placing a lot of stock in that positive feedback that you get. You end up with a very distorted picture. That's something that just about every human does. Pretty difficult to avoid that unless you can really step back from what you're doing.
- Gregory: I think everyone is subject to a subtle form of narcissism granting a lot of importance unto themselves and their own ideas and their own products. That's why they're biased and that's why they hire people like me to help them point out things they might not be seeing in their own stuff because they are biased.
- Roger: That's a good point. Also, it reminds me of the IKEA affect where when you create something yourself, even something as simple as assembling a dresser or maybe not so simple in the case of some IKEA products, but you attach a much higher value to that product than you would another similar product that you didn't assemble or that some other person would assign to it if they looked at the product and said yes, and what that was worth.

It doesn't just apply to physical products. Certainly if you've got

this idea that you've nurtured and created, then that is probably a lot more valuable to you than perhaps many other people would see it.

- Gregory: You've invested part of yourself in it. It's an extension of your own identity at that point because you have put your conception of yourself into this thing. It's the same reason we think our own kids are the cutest, our spouse is the most attractive. Anything that we've put physical time and effort or money into is the best because it's ours and we are the best.
- Roger: Following up on this identity piece, when we're talking about branding, small entrepreneurial venture could really go in a couple of directions. One would be to focus the brand on the person, the entrepreneur, himself or herself or conversely focusing on the product or service. It seems like both could have certain advantages and disadvantages. What's your take on that question?
- Gregory: There are a couple of different approaches to take. The first one you said the personality of the people behind the business?
- Roger: Yeah, just focus on personal branding and building up your name. Even big brands have occasionally done that where they've got a very visible spokesperson that's the CEO or the founder or somebody associated with the brand and they put that person front and center. Occasionally it's been effective. In other cases it's been perhaps just sort of a narcissistic effort

that didn't really pay dividends in terms of increased sales.

Looking at the fledgling company, the solopreneur or the entrepreneur with just a small business, is there a persuasive reason to build the company's brand, which I guess one thing that would make it more transferable and scalable perhaps. If the company is built totally around your personal brand, you're probably never going to be able to sell it very easily. On the other hand, if you've got a compelling personal story, that personal brand could be quite powerful.

Gregory: Every business in the world needs to have a personality of some kind, whether that's an actual person that's involved in the company in some way or a spokesman that you hire like a celebrity, there are certain adjectives that if you've done your job well, people are going to associate with your company. It needs to go beyond something really simple like fast and easy and efficient and customer satisfaction guaranteed. Those are the lowest common denominator that everyone promises no matter what their product or their services.

You need something more specific that could only be applied to you or just not very easily applied to other people. When you talk to me, just by my choice of words and my tone of voice, you're probably getting a pretty good idea of what my overall personality is even though we've only been talking for about twenty minutes. You could guess certain things about me. You're either going to like those things or not like things. A certain kind of person is already being target.

Roger: You're doing okay so far, Gregory.

Gregory: As long as I have your approval, that's all I care about.

Roger: We still have a few more minutes to go so ...

Gregory: That's the point. Very quickly we form a large mental impression of a person or a company's personality. When you think of Starbucks versus Dunkin Donuts, is there a personality difference in your mind even though they both ostensibly make a similar product, they both make coffee. Why is a certain kind of person drawn towards Starbucks and why is a certain kind of person drawn towards Dunkin Donuts? It's more than just the quality of the coffee. You could argue that they might like the taste of one brand's coffee over another but a much larger part of it has to do with just how they identify with the personality attributes that have intentionally been put into the brand.

> If you're trying to figure out should I be the face of my own company, which is a fair question that a lot of entrepreneurs ask, you really just need to ask, does your involvement in the company have a lot to do with the specific value they're getting from it? If you're selling widgets or tires or something, probably not unless you were somehow an authority in the widget or tire space that would make them somehow trust what you were saying about your tires or that the quality of your tires comes with a guarantee of an acknowledged authority and expert in

that space. If you don't have that, why do you think it needs to be used? Is there something about your personality that's so trustworthy or so charming or so endearing?

Like you said, that obviously affects the scalability and the saleability of the business unless you're planning to loan out your services of continuing to be the mascot or the spokesperson. I wouldn't start with that question of do I need to be the face of my own company. I would start more with what does the personality of my company need to be to most effectively speak to the kind of person I'm trying to sell to.

- Roger: That's fair enough. Gregory, how would an entrepreneur build emotion into their branding process? You mentioned that a few times in the book. I think that emotion is really an important driver. That's basically what I write about a lot non- conscious motivators and so on. What are some practical steps an entrepreneur could take to tap into the emotional side of things? There's a real tendency, I think, of most business people to focus on features and benefits and so on.
- Gregory: There are a few questions I ask several times throughout the book. The top three are who are you, what do you do, and then the third and most important one, why should I care. That is the one that is most often neglected. The why goes back to some kind of emotional root, sort of like how our intellectual mind tells us how to get what we want, but our emotional mind or our heart tells us what we should want. The heart or the emotional center tells us what is important to us. The mind formulates a plan to go and get that thing.

If people aren't already convinced that your product or your service or your personality is what is needed in their life, you're going to need to use emotion to make that shift in their mind. Very few people are purely rational beings or anywhere close to that. I might be the exception, but most people are not. You need to-

- Roger: We all think we're the exception. It's just those other people that make emotional and irrational decisions.
- Gregory: Of course. Yes. No one is as perfectly analytical as me, of course. You have to figure out why it is someone cares about whatever solution you're offering to their problem. Every product is a solution of some kind. I give the example in the book, a rather obscure example of convincing people to adopt stray cats on the street. I don't know if you got to that part of the book.
- Roger: Yes, I did. In fact, that was going to be my closing question. I've talked to a lot of marketers on the show, but I believe, with quite a high degree of confidence, that you are the first marketer of street cats that I've spoken with.
- Gregory: I have this rather obscure habit of adopting stray cats everywhere I go in the world even if I'm not going to be there very long, even just a few days or a few weeks. I'll take them home, I'll clean them up. I give them a bath, feed them, take

them to the vet so they're looking a bit nicer than the dirty, mangy condition that I typically find them in. Then I have this rather difficult task of finding a home for them before I leave the country.

If you've ever tried to do this before, you'll recognize is usually a difficult thing to do even if you already know people in the town you're in. You can imagine it might be much more difficult if you're a complete stranger and don't speak the language and don't know the customs or how things work there. I have a way of building emotional connections with complete strangers by taking this cat I've adopted out and doing some good old fashioned street marketing with it, carrying it around the city I'm in, engaging in conversation with strangers who have their attention and interest piqued by seeing me carry this cute little cat around.

In the course of a very short amount of time, telling this really engaging story about how I took this cat off the street. I'm a traveler and I need to find a new home for it before I leave. By the end of a few minutes of conversation with me they've created an emotional attachment, a form of engagement with me, this complete stranger they've only known for a few minutes and this cat they've only known for a few minutes.

Suddenly, even if they can't give it a home themselves, they're very interested in helping me find a home for it. They're calling everyone they know saying do you know someone who wants a cat or can take one in. Through a couple hours of this practice, I can almost always find a home for a cat in a completely foreign

city or foreign country because that's emotional engagement. If I just asked the question, do you know anyone who needs a cat, that's a purely intellectual process. Either yes or no. You think about it. You either do or you don't. Do you want a cat, yes or no?

That only works if that person has already gone through that thought process themselves and has identified as the kind of person who wants a cat or knows someone who wants a cat. If you've created this emotional attachment to this specific cat I'm carrying and this specific story I'm telling about it and a specific personality attributes I have displayed as the person caretaking the cat, it's going to be a completely different thought process in your mind and you're going to take completely different actions than you otherwise would.

- Roger: A pet with the story is always more salable than one without one. That's how we ended up with our puppy who, even though we weren't quite ready for a new puppy, he was a rescue, he was near death. It was if this poor little thing survives, he's going to need a home. Of course, two days later after we said okay, he was up and running around like a little maniac. He's been great to have around. He's now probably six or seven years old.
- Gregory: Your emotions change your mind completely.

Roger: It wasn't just, "Do you want a dog?" "No." It was, "We've got this poor little thing this lady brought into the vet's office. He's near

death. He got her to give him up and so on. The whole story, as you say, involves emotion. It makes it much more effective as a sales process.

Gregory, let me ask you just one last question. I don't want to steal any thunder from your unpublished book yet although it might well be on the market by the time folks hear this or it will be pretty close. Do you have any favorite travel hacks that are maybe a little bit off the wall but would help those of us who travel quite a bit to be a little bit more effective or productive?

Gregory: There are the common packing tips, how to pack light and cut down on your non-essentials. At this point I'm living out of the one full-size suitcase and one carry-on and a laptop bag. Some people go even lighter than that, but that's enough for me and still easy to carry around.

> The biggest thing I think that stops people is the flights because flights are expensive. It's a hassle trying to search for them. I used a company called Flightfox several times. You pay them fifty bucks. They'll find the cheapest possible ticket between any two destinations or give you your money back. That kind of stuff, the more efficient you become as a person, as an entrepreneur, you start outsourcing more and more stuff.

Searching for hours for a flight that's a hundred bucks cheaper to wherever I'm trying to go is just not a productive use of my time. If I can pay someone else to do it, stuff like that is absolutely essential for the phase of travel I'm in where I'm just

every month or so it seems like I'm getting on a plane.

Roger: That's a tip that I could probably make better use of. I tend to, not always, but occasionally go down that rabbit hole where I'm trying to optimize my arrival time, the mileage accumulation and the total duration of the flight and the intermediate stopovers and whether the airport is a pleasant environment or an unpleasant one and so on. The more variables you add, the more you can simply get lost in the weeds. That's a good tip.

> Let me remind our audience that we're speaking with Gregory Diehl whose latest book is Brand Identity Breakthrough: How to Craft Your Company's Unique Story to Make Your Products Irresistible. Gregory, how can people find you and your content online?

- Gregory: You can go to my website which is Gregory Diehl dot net. Diehl is spelled D-I-E-H-L. You can look on Amazon to find either of my books, Brand Identity Breakthrough or Travel as Transformation. Brand Identity Breakthrough is an Amazon bestseller doing quite well. I anticipate very similar results for Travel as Transformation based on early feedback I've gotten.
- Roger: Great. We will link to the books, your website and any other resource we talked about in the course of our conversation on the show notes page at Roger Dooley dot com slash podcast. We'll have a text version of our conversation there as well for those folks who want to read it offline or disconnected. Gregory,

it's been great having you on the show. Thanks.

Gregory: Thanks for having me.

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 <u>RogerDooley.com</u>.