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**Roger Dooley**

## Digital Persuasion with Erin Gargan

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. I am Roger Dooley. Today's guest has over 214,000 unread emails in her inbox, and she admits that publicly. While some people may consider that a major failing on her part, she owns that number, and uses it as a jumping off point, to explain where most marketers go down the wrong path.

Erin Gargan is an entrepreneur, best-selling author, and digital persuasion expert. She sold her first two companies, Jump Digital Media, and PMS.com, before the age of 30. Eight years ago, she founded The Socialite Agency, a social media firm, whose clients include The Oscars, ABC, Disney, Visa, Target, Hitachi, and many others, and she's also a former world championship Irish step dancer. Erin's new book is, "Digital Persuasion: Sell Smarter in the Modern Marketplace"

Welcome to the show, Erin.

Erin Gargan: Hi Roger, thanks for having me.

Roger Dooley: So, Irish step dancing, is that like River Dance, and they really have world championships?

Erin Gargan: Yes, exactly. It's Michael Flatley's style dancing, and I do a lot of public speaking, as a keynote speaker at several conferences, and I will confess that I incorporate teaching my audience a basic Irish jig, as part of my interaction part of my program. I'm trying to make evangelists out of people, and bring more Irish dance into everyone's life.

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Roger Dooley: Yeah, no I don't think I could kick my legs up like that anymore. I might fall off, but that's great. I'm now visualizing one of your talks, where you've got the whole audience trying to do that. It'd be fun.

Erin Gargan: Yes, it's a lot of fun.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. So I take it Erin, that you have not caught the inbox zero bug yet?

Erin Gargan: No Roger, I have not. In my talks, I ask people, "How many of you have more than 500 unread messages in your inbox?" And about two thirds of the audience raises their hand. And then I say, "How many of you have less than 500 unread messages in your inbox?" And only about a third of the audience raises their hand. So, 500 is the average number of unread messages. Right now, I currently have come down from 214,000. I have about 186,000 at this point.

Roger Dooley: Wow, that's real progress.

Erin Gargan: Thank you. How many do you have, by the way?

Roger Dooley: Actually, I don't know exactly, but I don't have that many, because in your parlance, I think I am a swiper, because ... And actually, I do most of my email reading on a desktop, because I can process larger volumes more quickly that way, but what I try and do is, quickly glance at the sender, and the email subject, and very quickly delete probably 90% of them, because I know what they are, and either they're sales pitches, or newsletters I don't care about, or ads, or whatever.

Then, the balance, some I might archive without reading too, in other words an invoice, or something that I know I

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don't want to delete, but I don't need to read it, and then the small number of remaining things, I'll actually open, read, and do something with. In most cases, I'll either reply, or take some action, or delete it, now that I know what it is, and I don't need it.

Unfortunately, there is a remaining category, and that is an inaction category, where I can't quite decide what to do with it. It's not important enough to reply to right then, or to take some kind of action, but I don't quite want to delete it, so that's what I end up with in the bottom of my inbox. I don't know that Gmail tells me how many I have. I use Google Apps, but I think it says something like, "Many messages" or something.

Erin Gargan: We've stopped counting. No, it's tough. I'm not proud of my high inbox count. Oftentimes people hear that, and they assume that I'm a bad person, I don't pay taxes, I regift, maybe I don't floss. None of those are true, and it's one of those things where my title, as founder, and CEO, means that I am shark bait on LinkedIn, and I get hammered with anywhere from 15, to 30 completely cold, emails, LinkedIn connection requests, and messages, from people I don't know, trying to sell me things I don't need.

So, like you, my brain has learned to make a split-second decision, from that notification preview that you described earlier. Within the first two seconds, I can tell if it's just another sales message, and I just scroll right by. I'm a scroller.

You're a swiper. You open and take an action. I'm a scroller. I just scroll by and ignore. So, definitely not proud of it, but I just can't keep up with all of these messages

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anymore. Life's too short to spend eight hours a day checking email, right?

Roger Dooley: Yeah, well exactly, and I guess I should add your third category of reader, people who actually read all their emails, and I'm guessing that, that's like one in a million these days.

Erin Gargan: That's right. That's right, and it just really depends on where you are in your career. Obviously, if you have less than maybe five years of experience, and you're more junior in your profession, you get harassed a lot less online with emails, because you don't have the buying power yet, but as you move up through your professional journey, you start to see more and more, and then when you change your title to anything C level, or above, man, it's just game over. You're just drowning in emails, and messages of people wanting things from you, so it's a necessary evil, and everyone manages it differently.

I just scroll by, and try to do the best I can, but I don't know if it's the best approach, but it's my approach so ...

Roger Dooley: Yeah. One thing I like, are the categories that you say people divide email senders into, by either glancing at the headline, or maybe reading the first few sentences of the email. What categories do the typical email recipient ... and I guess I should add too, that based on your analysis of where you are in your career and so on, anybody who is worth contacting to you, probably, who can make a difference in a company, is inundated with email category. The people that you might actually read your emails are at the bottom of the totem pole.

Erin Gargan: That's exactly right. Yeah. So, part of what our brains are doing, is we're deciding friend or foe? We're getting over

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300 messages a day, whether it's emails, notifications, social media posts. So, our brains are trying, they're rewiring faster and faster, to make decisions on what do you want, what do you want, what do you want? So they can move on, and keep you ahead of the curve.

So, in a couple seconds, our brain is deciding is this person trying to sell me something, or are they trying to help me? So, what I talk about in my book, are ways that you can ensure within those first two seconds, those first 10 words, that preview, that you are communicating to someone, that you are there to help, that you are different, and to ultimately persuade them to take any action, besides ignore you, which is unfortunately what most people are prompting with the types of messages they're sending out on LinkedIn.

Roger Dooley: Yeah, so to set the stage for the ideas in your book, you started your business, The Socialite Agency, a while back, and not long after you began it, you landed a huge financial services client, that really became by far, the biggest client in the agency, with more than half the business, and that enabled you to staff up, and get a great new office. And I know that some of our entrepreneurial listeners will identify this, going through that flush of expansion and success, then I'll let you pick up the story from there, Erin.

Erin Gargan: Well, let's just say I got a little too big for my britches, as some entrepreneurs do. We had a big, fancy, oceanfront office, in Laguna Beach California, and I made the classic entrepreneurial mistake of hiring several of my friends to come working this beautiful office. We were running social media campaigns for some of the largest brands that you've heard of, particularly this one financial services

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company, that you probably have a credit card of one of theirs in your wallet, at this very moment, and I was very confident in our ability to continue to grow the account, based on my personal relationship, when suddenly, one day, my point of contact left the company.

I had made the classic mistake of having a single-thread relationship with just that person. I had not socially surrounded that individual, by developing a relationship with perhaps their boss, or their coworker, or even anyone that they worked for. So, when my contact left, we ended up losing the account, so I had to fire the majority of my staff. I had to bail on the very expensive commercial real estate lease, and I essentially had to convert my apartment, which was 800 square feet, into our new office, with my guest room becoming the conference room, with our big conference table, basically touching each side of the wall of my guest room, and I had to blow up the company, and start over with what is our model, and how can we scale smarter the next time?

So, in doing that, I had to do some business development, and do some reaching out, and what I discovered was, I was sending out a lot of messages that were not getting answers. And the message I was sending, was very similar to most messages that we all get from someone who's trying to sell us something that we don't know, and it's a message talking all about themselves.

I call it the, "why I rock message" So, here's who I am. Here's why I rock. Here's who else thinks we rock. Here's how I can help you rock, and are you interested in meeting with me, to let me tell you more, about how I rock, and can help you? So, that's a very classic,



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standard message, that most people are sending some version of. So, I was not getting any response, and then suddenly one day, I was very frustrated, and it was getting down to the wire. I had payroll due in a couple days, and I knew if I didn't get a new deal coming through the pipeline, that I was going to have to make further cuts, and it would be just basically me, and my assistant, back at my kitchen table, where we started the thing a few years before, and suddenly I got this message from someone.

I didn't know who they were. I opened it, and I found myself agreeing to a meeting with this person. I went back to feeling sorry for myself, and no one was answering my messages, when I suddenly thought, wait a minute, what did that person just write me, that made me open their message, and give them a chance? What are they doing differently that I'm not doing? So, I started to go back through my messages, and analyzing all the messages that I opened, as the decision-maker, to see if I could detect any patterns, and use those patterns to create better messaging, which I did, which ultimately allowed me to rebuild my agency, land incredible clients, and now we have 50 employees all over the country. We have incredible clients, and it was all because of this moment of survival, and desperation, and analysis, which led me to outline the formula that I talk about in my book.

Roger Dooley: Right, and really, one of the most powerful messages you got was from somebody who just gave you a heads up on a software change that was important to you, and they did it without any expectation of you hearing their pitch or anything, it was just, "Hey, heads up on this." And you found it useful, and then contacted them to thank them.



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That really fits into Robert Cialdini's Principle of Reciprocation, where somebody does something for you, and the important part of it, is that they don't expect anything in return, or at least they don't imply they expect anything in return. It wasn't like, "Hey, here's something useful for you, and by the way, would you like to hear about how I rock?" Or whatever the case might be, and instead, it was just a helpful note that caused you to reply, and ultimately get in contact, and schedule with the person.

Erin Gargan: That's right. So, this person reached out and said, "Hey, there's an API change happening with the software that you use to manage your social media posts, and if you don't get out in front of it, it's going to essentially put you in jeopardy with one of these clients." That was a huge healthcare corporation, so if I lost that healthcare corporation, now we were really going to be back to square one, because they were our second biggest client. So, this person reached out, then offered me something that was helpful to me.

I reached back to them, and I ended up buying their social media management software, because they had taken the time to look up my clients, think through a solution for me, and offer something that was of value to me. So, it was, it was Cialdini's principle of reciprocity in action, where I felt so thankful this person had reached out, that I leaned in, I checked out what they provided, I needed it, I bought it, and they are still our vendor, five years later. So, it was pretty powerful.

Roger Dooley: Well, that's great. You know, this isn't a totally new strategy. Way before email smart sales people would clip an article that had good information, and send it to a

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prospect, with just little hand-written notes saying, "Hey, you might find this interesting" or, they might clip an article that actually mentioned the prospect, and send it with a little note of congratulations, and in one case, you've got reciprocity going, in another case, a little bit of flattery going, and that kind of soft outreach really made ... people were receptive later on, even though I would say not one in a thousand sales people actually used that, but there were a few that did, and I think it worked well for them.

Erin Gargan: That's right, and it's something that we know to do in person, so when we're ... as sales people, or marketers, we behave a certain way in person, that we don't behave that way when we're behind a screen.

There's a concept in my book that I talk about, it's called, The online disinhibition effect, and I'm not sure if anyone on your show before has talked about this, but it's basically what psychologists use to explain why we behave online, in ways we would never behave in person.

Essentially, we behave badly online, and that there's two pieces, one is invisibility, because we can't see the person we're talking to, we tend to almost behave as if we're writing in a journal, we just show up, and throw up, and we're not really having a dialogue.

And the second piece is asynchronicity, so because a lot of communication on social, and digital still isn't in real time, there's still a delay. We don't physically have to face the music if we're treating someone a certain way. I call it buyer bullying, you have cyber bullying, but buyer bullying can be just as bad, where you're just drilling 100 people with the same message, and hoping that one or two give you a chance. So, this online disinhibition effect, is really

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important to be aware of, because we greatly overestimate how persuasive we are from behind a screen, especially when we're trying to persuade someone we don't know to give us a chance.

So, if you look at digital, and technology, the digital can be your best friend, your buddy, or it can be a barrier. It's the new gatekeeper to getting in front of someone, and while technology has changed so much, the way we communicate and do business has changed more in the last five years, than the last 50. Although that's true, people have not changed.

Like you said, classic principles of persuasion, like Cialdini's liking, and reciprocity, which both of those are invoked with this type of an approach. Even the classic Dale Carnegie, "How to Win Friends, and Influence People" he talks about how important it is, to make someone else feel important. Well, making someone feel important in today's age of 300 messages a day, is to spend time on them. If you spend time on researching someone, for example, before we got on this podcast, I was looking up your profile, and I saw that you like barbecue, and that you're from the South, Tennessee, and I saw your history with Forbes, and all these different things you've done, so taking the time to get to know someone before you reach out, whether you're having a conversation like we are here today, or you're trying to create a compelling message, that influences someone to take an action, either way, investing that time in someone, and making it evident from that first preview, that you did invest your time, that you are trying to offer, and that you are trying to serve in that cell, all those principles work together, to build a way that people can digitally

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differentiate themselves. Like you said, that people just aren't doing, for whatever reason.

Roger Dooley: Well, I think the asynchronicity plays a role too, because in person, I think there is a tendency to socialize. In other words, if I walked into somebody's office, or met them at a networking event, at a conference, I would probably start with some small talk, either if I knew something about them, perhaps a football team they're a fan of, or where they're from, I might bring that up, and that's just a natural social interaction. There's a lot of research showing that just a few minutes of socializing really works wonders, in terms of outcomes from any kind of a persuasion process, or negotiation process.

But in an email, you can't really ... You don't want to start off, "Hey, how about them Aggies?" Or whatever, because the person can't respond, and it seems kind of weird. It doesn't lend itself to that sort of introductory social interaction. So, given the fact that people are only gonna read the first sentence or two of an email, how do you start out in a way that manages to personalize it, and make it seem socially friendly, but actually gets them to keep on reading, and then reply?

Erin Gargan: That's right. So, a couple things ... First of all, the majority of people completely destroy the opportunity to use that preview to their own power. They basically blow the preview. They say, "Hi Roger, how are you? Hope you had a great weekend." Boom, that's the whole preview, and you didn't capitalize on it. That's what everyone else is writing.

So, the challenge is that, in the old days before social media, people would use email, similar to how you use

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letter-writing, for centuries, right? Or pen pals, "How are you? How was your weekend?" People would write back.

Well now, it's 2018. If I want to know how Roger's weekend was, I can just scroll his Instagram feed, and people aren't taking the time to write back, and type out how their week was, and if you don't know them, you don't really care. They know you don't really care. The whole exchange is very vapid, and it's very different from in person, because to your point, in person, you would never just jump into a meeting, and start trying to sell something to someone, without building rapport.

Roger Dooley: Oh, you'd be surprised. It happens.

Erin Gargan: Oh, really? Well, if you're any good at what you do, you don't.

So, people, they try to do this fake banter. It's all very generic, or they'll even go a little bit further and say, "Roger, I saw your profile, and it seems like what you do could be a really good fit for what we sell." Which is a pretend personalization. They didn't really take a good look, so things that are polite niceties in person, are actually rude from behind the screen, because they waste my time, they waste your time, and they don't actually get you to stop the scroll, because that type of generic messaging alerts our brain, that this person is probably trying to sell you something.

Which is why you ... like you even said earlier, you delete messages that from the preview, from someone you don't know, you're pretty sure they're not trying to help you, so you don't even give them a chance. You don't even get past the preview, right? They don't even get a chance at that with their message. So, not matter how great their

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message is later, by not maximizing that initial exchange, they don't even get to tell you who they are.

So the problem is, that if you're in a meeting, if I agree to a meeting with you, we're sitting down. I'm leaning in. I'm open to getting to know you, but when we're talking about a digital message, I have not invited you to reach out to me. I have not asked you to tell me about you and so, when you show up and throw up in these messages, you try to do too much. It's like you don't know who I am, and I'm reaching out to you, and I'm adding to your inbox clutter, that you have to get through, and I want to introduce myself, tell you what I do, and I want to ask you for your time, this day. All of that is too much for one message. And in the old days, before social media, like your book, "Brainfluence" came out, I think it was about six years ago, right?

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Erin Gargan: And even just think about how much has changed since "Brainfluence" was published. In just six years, your classic principles still hold, but just the evolution of how we uncover what's important to people, and what they care about, even six years ago, some people didn't have a large online footprint, and it wasn't a big deal. It was still okay to try and hold onto some semblance of an illusion of privacy.

But today, if you don't have a picture on your LinkedIn profile, if you don't have a footprint, people think your sketchy, you know?

Roger Dooley: Definitely.

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Erin Gargan: People think, what are you hiding? So, even in just six years, we have access to all this information, so for so long, we had no other option, but to just reach out to as many people as possible, and tell them what we do, with hopes that one or two out of a hundred, might have a need. There was no other way to do it, but now, we know exactly what's important to someone. We know exactly what they like. We can find out how we can help them. We can show them what we need.

So, it sounds so instinctual, and intuitive, but even this morning Roger, I got a message from a Fortune 100, B to B sales rep, that sent me a copy and paste form, why I rock message, and it's just ...

You can find out. My whole life is online. You can find out anything about me, so I actually rewrote the message, and I'm going to send it to his boss, and I'm going to say, "This is what I would have written, had I been on that sales team, because they're actually selling a solution that I do need." All they had to do was a quick Google at my clients, at what I'm working on, which is all over my Twitter, and they could have quickly personalized that first sentence, those first 10 words, to say something along the lines of, for example, we're working with Target right now, and part of their software is about data analysis so, I would have said something like, "Target, looks like they might be a tough client. I ran a quick analysis of what they're doing on social, through our software. Here's a snapshot."

That's all they had to do. It would have taken them five minutes, and I would have loved to have seen a quick snapshot of running Target through their software. That



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would have convinced me to lean in, and meet with this person so much faster than any kind of form message.

So, even the biggest brands in the world, the biggest sales organizations are scrambling to evolve their approach, for this new way of operating, and they aren't using that first 10 words, that first preview, so that it's personal, and maybe it's useful, and that it's very, very brief, with our attention spans being so short. So, it's something where I don't know why more people aren't doing it, but if you can, just a little bit of effort goes such a long way to differentiating yourself, because there really is an opportunity here, and it's a short window, for those that could be the first mover advantage and capitalize on it, especially before AI gets into the picture. That's a whole other ballgame.

Pretty soon, AI's going to be able to copy and paste the same message over and over again from a person, and then what are you going to do? What makes you different is your creativity, is your ability to make it a human relationship connection. And for some reason, people are still stuck in the same sales methodology from 15 years ago, when I first started, so it's very interesting.

Roger Dooley: You know, I think now too, there are even software tools that will skim through a person's public information, and social profile, and give you a short briefing memo on the person that could do that. So far, I haven't seen amazing results from that. Some of the stuff that I ... I was using one for a little while, and it would either get the wrong person, or the information wasn't particularly useful, but I think that as we move forward, that definitely going to be tool.

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You know Erin, I think one thing you're saying ... I used to have a business partner that was an entrepreneur, and I had managed sales teams before, and his mantra for particularly if he had an under-performing sales person, was to engage in more sales-related activity, and basically by that, he meant okay, set your goal, whether it's 20 calls a day, or whatever the metric might be, and make sure that happens, and he found that actually that was pretty effective, that in most cases, he was able to take a sales person who was performing somewhat below average, and turn them into a decent performer, just by having them focus on doing this, but I think here, what you're saying is the key metric, isn't the volume of contacts that you make, and in fact, you'd be much better to scale down that volume, but to do it in a much more effective and personalized way.

Erin Gargan: That's exactly right. So Roger, I've listened to a few of your podcasts over the last few days, and you have some very smart people on this podcast, that have done incredible data analysis, and I have not done academia-level research, but what I have done, is worked with some of the biggest sales organizations in the world, to actually AB test their messaging, within their organization. So, while I don't have a sample set of, here's what happened across 5,000 sales reps, what I do have is, I've worked with these sales teams, anywhere from 500 to 800 sales reps, and we AB tested.

For example, one healthcare organization that I've worked with for years, and they're a Fortune 500 company. We AB tested with their sales organization. We took half the sales organization and had them send the same classic sales message that everyone else was sending, not very custom, not very person, very marketing copy approved,

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et cetera. And we had them send that out. And they spent, like you said, sales activity, they spent maybe half their day. I think they spent three or four hours a day, just hammering that message out, and it would get between a one and three percent return rate.

The other half of the sales organization for this healthcare client, we tested the option B, which was for them to send out a personal, useful, brief message, highly custom. Takes a little bit more work, take more creativity, takes more effort. However, what we found was, we had them basically taking about one to two hours a day. Obviously their volume went down dramatically but what we found, was instead of a one to three percent action rate, we were getting anywhere from 40% to 65% action.

What I mean by "action" is, the person clicked on a link, viewed their profile, responded, agreed to a meeting. They were persuaded to take any kind of action, besides ignore.

Roger Dooley: So, what would one of these emails look like, one of the effective emails? We know what the ineffective emails look like, but what would one of the effective emails look like?

Erin Gargan: So, the formula that we used, was personal useful and brief. I call it the PUB method, P-U-B. Back to the Irish right again. So, the PUB method, Personal Useful Brief. So, what we did, was we actually had them irradiate any personal greeting. We had them irradiate "How are you?" "How was your weekend?" We also had them be very aware of not using the word, "I". 90% of the sales messages that we've analyzed over the last four or five years, 90% of people use the word, "I" as the opening word. "I wanted to reach out." "I wanted to let you know."

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"I thought you might be interested." I, I, I, so I, is putting you first. It's putting you at the very beginning of the exchange, so right out the gates, subconsciously, your recipient knows it's not about them, it's about you, and they don't care about you.

So, even just deleting "I" made a big change in terms of their results.

So, we would delete all those things. So, instead of doing that, we would have them lead with a proper noun, or personal significance to the recipient. Earlier, you used the example of saying, "Go Aggies", which sounds random, because let's say I like the Ravens, for example, and if you just sent me a message that said, "Go Ravens", but I didn't know who you were, I would not necessarily think that we're now best friends, because you know that I like the Ravens, but what I would do, is I would stop my scroll.

I would stop scrolling, and I would actually take a second, and say, "Hmm, who is this guy?", because is pertinent to me. And I would at least click you open, and give you a chance. So, the goal is to stop the scroll, because the higher up the decision-maker, for example, I get like I said, between 15 and 30 messages a day, so step one is just get them to stop scrolling, and just give you a chance, right?

So, that proper noun of personal significance stops the scroll. So, you lead with something, either a person, place, or thing that you have in common, or a person, place, or a thing that you can comment on, based on the content that they're sharing, or what you can learn about them in their bio. So, you just lead right with that word,

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maybe you do a question mark, maybe a dash, but you just get their attention.

From there, you want to offer something useful. So again, we're trying to keep it as much as possible, in that first 10 words, or that preview. So for example, with this healthcare organization, we offered something useful to that particular buyer. In this case, their buyer was hospital administrators of large healthcare organizations. So, they would share something useful. Like you said, it might be an article of something of value. One of the marketing pieces we tested was, an infographic of five key trends to look for in their industry over the next six months. We offered something of value, and no, talking about what they were trying to sell, did not count as useful, because it wasn't invite, right?

So, we just offered something of value. So from there, what we would do is, from there, this is where the art of digital persuasion comes in. This is the part where it's the human spin. It's what works for you. So, either we would just leave it at that, and just say, get their attention with the personal, offer something useful, and then they would just send the message. They wouldn't ask for anything. They wouldn't ask for a time to meet, and what it did, Roger, is it made people lean in, and say, "What's the catch? I don't get it." That scarcity, that mystery, that curiosity. Why didn't they ask me for any? What does this person want?

So, what would they do? They would click on their profile, and check them out. So, the goal was to insight the action of curiosity. So that was the one piece, was the brief, how we ended it.

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Roger Dooley: Right, and then that's also the reciprocity thing there too, because if that helpful infographic was immediately followed by a request for a meeting, or a phone call or something, then it would be transparent that okay, this is just a sales pitch with a little sugar coating on it.

Erin Gargan: That's right. That's right, but in some of them, we had some of the old school sellers, that had been doing this for 30 years, and it's so ingrained to ask for the business, to ask for the sale, they just couldn't ... They weren't okay with that. I call it the, "Be cool, man." I'm like, "Okay, just be cool. Put it out there, and this is 2018. If you can get their attention, if you can persuade them to lean into you in any way, shape, or form, they'll look you up. They'll lean in. We're in a search society. You don't always have to be this pushy, aggressive, brass person, and the more you try to tell someone what to do ..." I mean, when someone tells you what to do, it makes you want to do the opposite. We don't like being told what to do. We don't like being called to action anymore. That worked for a long time, but now everyone is shouting at everyone, and millennials in particular, are experts at tuning out anything we haven't invited, or sought to understand on our own. So, for those old school sales representatives, I would allow them to then do a very direct ask.

So, they would basically make an ask, and they would make it very clear. So, they would say A or B, "Love to explore, learn more about you. Tuesday at 11:00, or Thursday at 10:00?" So, it was very A or B, black, or white, yes, or no? So, that tended to do well also, but we saw much better results from the people who actually reached out, something personal, offered something useful, and then just dropped the mic, didn't ask for anything. It was so unique, and so different, and so

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counterintuitive, that those reps saw profile reviews, they saw content clicks, and it ultimately allowed them to open the relationship to begin to work towards that message that earns the meeting.

Roger Dooley: Right, and I guess it's obvious from what you're saying, that they emails that they sent, had attractability in them, so that if they recipient did click their profile, or click through to their website, or whatever, then that would show up, and they would know, okay, well this person was at least interested enough to do that, which then might allow for a follow-up email, or a hone call, or something else, right?

Erin Gargan: That's exactly right. That's exactly right. So, it was just the fact that when you look at the way people are communicating on digital today, they're trying to do too much in one message. They're trying to do too much, so it's about breaking it down. Just get their attention, to start. Then persuade them to click on a piece of content. And then when you've earned the right to ask for a discussion, try to make sure that it is face to face. Make sure. Are you using Zoom? Are you using ... Zoom Conference in incredible, or FaceTime, or Hangout, or Skype, or whatever your preferred method, even gosh, if you can get the holy grail of everything, which is an in person meeting, which is almost unbelievable in today's day and age, right?

Part of my book, I talk about a study that I found in my research, that the Harvard Business Review published last spring, and they found that obviously not only are we more persuasive face to face, and in person, than we are from behind digital, but that we're actually 34 times more persuasive in person, than on digital. They found that it



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took 200 digital requests, to equal the power of just six in person requests. So, the study also found that we tend to greatly overestimate how persuasive we are from behind a screen. So, being aware of this, and figuring out how you can use digital to ignite dialogue, as opposed to trying to do too much from behind a screen, where yes, it's easier probably, and you don't have to face rejection, and you don't have to get too creative, but just as it's easier for you to hide behind your screen, it's just as easy for that person to scroll by, and ignore you.

Roger Dooley: Great, so I suppose the most effective email subject lines, or openers are personalized. Is there any starting point, or are there a few common ones that you've found work across industries as being able to get their prospect's attention, and at least stop them from scrolling, and maybe read the message?

Erin Gargan: Yes. So, we've tested dozens of different opens, and obviously each case is unique. One this we did find, was that the personalization technique of the last 10 years, where if you see an email, and it says, "Roger, blah, blah, blah, blah." Whatever the subject line is, you would see greater open rates, five, six, seven, eight years ago, but now, people have reconditioned their brains to know, that, that's probably an automated marketing message, so now we saw that actually doing the inverse when it came from a person, versus a brand.

So, for brands, personalizing it with your name, is still more effective in a subject line, but for sales people, we found that it did the opposite. It made them associate that interaction, that attempted outreach, as a spam, as a marketing method.

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So, what we found works really well, over all different types of opens, was just one word, with a question mark, and that word was either a person they had in common, a school name that they went to, a sports team, a place, anything that was a person, place or thing, that they had either in common, or could comment on.

So, for Roger, if I wanted to get your attention, and I didn't know who you were, I would just write you a message that says, "Austin Barbecue fan?"

Roger Dooley: Right, and I would certainly pause at that, and say, "Hmm, okay. Do I know this person, or how do they know me?"

Erin Gargan: Right. So, there's an element of this again, that people are like, wasn't that creepy-

Roger Dooley: Now I'm going to get a million Austin Barbecue fan emails.

Erin Gargan: Yeah, but it's the idea that I took some time to ... It's what's inherent in that subject line. Whoever sent this to me, took their time, to get to know who I am, so immediately, you know I'm not a robot. I'm not spamming you. I'm not automated, right? I'm not someone that is just doing what I call "digital drive-bys" and just send out a thousand. So, that type of being able to show that you spent time on someone, makes them feel important, it makes them curious, and at least gets them to open the message. So, that was the technique that we found the highest open rates, when it came to person-to-person persuasion on social and email.

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, I could go on and on, and there's a lot of other great ideas in your book, Erin, but I think what I have to do is, cut this off here. If people want more, they

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can get the book. I'll remind our listeners, that we're speaking with Erin Gargan, founder of the Socialite Agency, and author of Digital Persuasion: Sell Smarter in the Modern Marketplace. Erin, how can our listeners find you?

Erin Gargan: They can find me at eringargan, E-R-I-N-G-A-R-G-A-N.com.

Roger Dooley: Great, well we will link there, and to any other resources we talked about, on the show notes page, at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](http://rogerdooley.com/podcast), and we'll have the handy text version of our conversation there too.

Erin, thanks so much for being on the show.

Erin Gargan: Thanks Roger.

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 [RogerDooley.com](http://RogerDooley.com).