

# Ep101 - Inside Hacking the Human Mind: lessons from the world's most effective brands

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** [00:00:00] Welcome back to Behavioral Science for Brands, a podcast where we bridge the gap between academics and practical marketing. Every week we sit down and go deep behind the science that powers some of today's most successful marketing. I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

**Richard Shotton:** And I'm Richard Shotton.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And today, episode 101, we're dedicating to Richard and my's biggest project.

Together yet our new book, hacking the Human Mind, let's get into it. So Richard, we had this vision many episodes ago, long before even episode 50, I bet two and a half years ago. What if we took the success of what we were seeing on the podcast and we committed to doing a bigger, deeper partnership together?

What if we wrote a book and. Now it feels good. I have for, [00:01:00] for everyone listening at home, I have a book on my, on my plate here. We have the book, it's really here and it just feels so good to have it in, in hand and to have it in market. It launched September 30th, 2025, so it's been in market a few months.

Let's start at the beginning. Why was this important in your mind to take what we were doing on the podcast, advance it and put it in a book?

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, I, I think it's really important 'cause thinking back to experience of being in an agency, working as a, as a marketer, and that fundamental question of how do we know what to do next with our, our brand.

What most people do, what most marketers do, if they're looking for inspiration, they turn to successful brands. They think, what has Apple or Tesla or Amazon, what have they done that I could learn from? And I think that's [00:02:00] probably the most common source of inspiration in the industry. And it sounds

really, really sensible, but there's a fundamental flaw, which is even a phenomenally successful brand like Apple.

They. Do lots and lots of things. They do thousands of different actions and strategies and tactics. Some of which work, probably the majority work, but there's quite a few duds in there as well. And if you just randomly copy the things that they do, you might be picking something that has limited impact because of course, a business is not a science experiment, a business is interested in.

Growth, not providing learnings for other people. So they'll do hundreds of things concurrently. It's very hard for the observer to work out what's effective. So what we did with the book was think, well, how can we move on from that situation? We still look at lots of super successful brands. We started by looking at all the different tactics they had, but then we do [00:03:00] the next crucial step.

Then we overlay those behaviors with a behavioral science angle, so a filter. We looked at which of the tactics the brand had used, which of the strategies they'd used were also proven in experimental peer review conditions and that. Makes it much easier for people to copy successfully. We've identified that the secret ingredients, the, the, the, the magic formula that these brands are using that can be used in many other different situations.

It's that overlay of behavioral science principles and amazingly successful brands,

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** and I think something that. You and I agreed early on in the project of the book was we don't need to validate that the folks making the marketing at the time actually knew the behavioral science they were taking advantage of.

In fact, it doesn't matter if they knew the key heuristic or the pratfall. What's important is that we can [00:04:00] identify that the work took advantage of a human insight, that we can then back up with the study. Because if you could see the work in market taking advantage of that psychological insight, and then you can understand the peer reviewed academic study behind it, it gives you that confidence that you can then use that creative application for your own needs and in your own business.

Settings.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. There's a really famous example from DDB, Bill Burbach whose agency in 1959. They ran the VW ad Ugly as only skin D 1962. The agency did Avis, we are number two, so we try harder. You know, they were regular users of what. Is known as the pratfall effect. They would admit a flaw in the product to make themselves more appealing.

Now, that definitely wasn't inspired by the academic work. The academic work wasn't done until 1966. It was done seven years later by Elliot Aronson. But what Bill Burbach and his team knew was [00:05:00] instinctively the power of admitting a flaw and Burbach said a small admission. Gains a large acceptance. So absolutely there is a route for entrepreneurs, brilliant creative directors through very careful attention to what other people are doing to understand these psychological principles without knowing the name.

The value though of the research is it weeds out. Which of these insights from brilliant entrepreneurs and brilliant creative directors, which ones are genuine and replicable and which ones were unfortunately on their, their kind of bad days and, and weren't actually helping towards the success

**Michael Aaron Flicker:** and a build on that.

It's one thing to see. Like in our example of Apple and their use of concreteness, we can go maybe, we'll, we'll add that to our conversation today. It's one thing to hear how Steve Jobs took advantage of it, but it's another thing to understand the [00:06:00] underlying. Insight that the study reveals because it teaches you more about concreteness and concrete phrasing and abstract phrasing in a wider sense.

You've got a great example in what Steve Jobs did on stage with Apple, but, but more importantly, the academics teach you about the human. Insight, the human behavior that you might take advantage of in a slightly different way when you apply to your brands. So to us, it was a pairing. You had to have the brand example.

It's easy to remember. It helps you recall the principles in a very practical way. But you also have to have the academic study because it gives you the breadth of the knowledge. It gives you the deeper understanding.

**Richard Shotton:** And that deep understanding has a practical purpose. It makes it easier to harness the same insight harness, the bit of the idea that has the power, not the superfluous bits around the, the, the creative idea.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Then [00:07:00] we end each chapter with three key takeaways that you can use in your business or your brand today. So we really tried to make sure that every chapter was actionable and and that to us really made sure that we weren't stuck in academia only. We weren't stuck in brand examples only, but we were really focused on how can this be useful for people.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, that, that, that's actually crucial. I think it's a real waste of an amazing opportunity if people just read about experiments but don't apply them. The purpose of the book is a very, to be a very practical manual. Anyone who's interested in persuading other people, anyone who's interested in selling more, anyone who's interested in more effective marketing, there's so much in there that they can use.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Yeah, and one other thought that I was having was. Different folks learn differently. And for many listening to our podcast, they're listening [00:08:00] while they're driving to work, they're listening at the gym, and it's a passive experience to pick up the nuggets of good ideas to help widen your worldview, change your perspective, but a written book.

Is almost more like a practical field guide. You can come back to it, you can put post-it notes in certain pages, you can underline and underscore, and it can become more of a resource that you use throughout your career that you use throughout your days at work. And for us, having that more. Physical manifestation of our ideas we felt would be very helpful to people.

And I think a, a very lovely unexpected thing that I learned after we published was it was not just brand managers and CMOs that were giving us praise and good feedback, CEOs. CFOs said, oh, I now see what the marketing department is coming to me with in different ways. And lots of small [00:09:00] business people, you know, companies with a few employees that are looking to get an edge in the market.

We've heard from both, if you consider that a spectrum, you know, both ends of the spectrum. Lots of different users have gotten value out of the book.

**Richard Shotton:** Behavioral science is the study of how to effectively influence people, how to effectively change their behavior. Now, a marketer can use that to change the copy that they use, the in-store ads, the TV ads they create, but someone in HR can use it to persuade a colleague to adopt a new behavior that the company wa wants to be happening more regularly.

So, so, so if, if you're in any job that is trying to influence people, there's a role for behavioral science.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Have we, have we made the case of why we were so excited about it? I think we've, I think we've, we've, we've made the argument of why it was so exciting to us to write it. Shall we get into maybe some of the insights from the book?

**Richard Shotton:** I think that's a good idea. I think that's [00:10:00] a good idea. So how about let's start. What is your favorite chapter? I know in many ways that's like asking people to pick between their children, but if you were forced on pain of death, what would you put down as your, your favorite chapter

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** would put That way

**Richard Shotton:** I

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** revert to my childhood and a comfort food.

So many American children is craft, macaroni and cheese. Like walking down the aisle, you see that blue box. And I think for our American listeners, they know even where it is in the grocery store, it's such a central part of growing up in America is eating some type of macaroni and cheese at some point in your childhood.

And so, you know, it was a really a twofold pleasure for me to write our chapter on Kraft Macaroni Cheese. One, because I got to study and learn about the history of the brand, which is how we start each chapter, usually very small. Just a page, 2, 3, [00:11:00] 4 pages of the history of the brand. To set up what we're gonna talk about, but that, that grounding is always so interesting to me.

So I love stories of brands, histories. We do it in every chapter. I love doing it in Kraft Macaroni and Cheese. And then the second part was they had a, just a fantastic application of behavioral science. It, when they made a, a recipe change for the brand. So let's, let's give the backstory here. So.

Kraft Macaroni and cheese was not always that famous blue box in the grocery store aisle. In fact, it was originally started by a pretty ingenuity salesman who took. Dried pasta dried cheese, rubber bands them together and selling them door to door. Kraft sees the success of this and develops the idea into a consumer packaged good.

And in 1937. Just before the outbreak of [00:12:00] World War ii the brand is first sold as Boxed macaroni and cheese, and it's an immediate hit, and it's an immediate hit for some really interesting historical reasons. First it's during the war and one coupon gets you two boxes of Kraft Macaroni and cheese.

So right away it's a real deal. You can feed your family using two boxes of macaroni and cheese. Mm-hmm. But two, think about the country in the late thirties, early forties, men were off at war and women were much more likely to be in factories away from the home. So convenience, foods of all types were taking off.

Macaroni and cheese also did not require a refrigerator to store it. So really a, a perfect product for that time. The first year of the launch alone, 9 million boxes are sold and its popularity has not dipped. [00:13:00] Today. Kraft reportedly sells 1 million boxes a day, 365 million boxes a year. It's a lot of macaroni and cheese, so just love that brand story.

Love that history. So our. Interest in how they took advantage of behavioral science picks up in 2016. And if you can think about 10 years ago, the world was starting to be more aware of healthy food choices. What was going into the food that they were eating, and craft makes a decision that they're going to.

Trade out artificial ingredients like preservatives, flavorings, and coloring. And they're gonna, instead of like a yellow dye, they're gonna bring in paprika, turmeric, they're gonna use natural colors and flavors, but they have this insight that what if this ingredient change [00:14:00] could hurt sales in the long run?

So they make a marketing decision. For almost two months, 50 million boxes are sold. They do not make public that they have made an ingredient change. Yes, the boxes showed the right ingredient on the ingredients list, but they do not make a big deal. They don't put a new on the package. They don't run an ad campaign.

Now with new natural flavors and no artificial preservatives. So they wait till 50 million boxes are sold almost two months in market, and they launch their campaign, the world's biggest blind taste test. And on the day of the big reveal, they ran ads with headlines like You, weed. We, we would invite you to try it, but you already have.

And the social hashtag, hashtag didn't notice. And the campaign was wildly well received. [00:15:00] People were already enjoying the new recipe and so they

were already more receptive to the idea that they were getting better things in their, in their, in their macaroni and cheese without sacrificing taste or quality.

And for us, I think that was that moment where we looked at it, we said, wow, they actually had a real insight into human psychology that we could back up with some academic data.

**Richard Shotton:** Absolutely. And it's something other brands, especially people who work on a food brand, it's something that they can apply. So I think, I think the key bit of research here is around an idea called expectation assimilation.

It's essentially the idea that what people taste is not just a factor of the physical ingredient. It's also determined by what they expect to taste. So the idea being if you think something is gonna taste brilliant, it probably will. If you think something's gonna taste awful, it probably will. It's a self-fulfilling proxy.

Whatever expectations we have [00:16:00] now that relates to craft, because certainly in America, certainly in Britain, people assume. Healthy food is bad tasting, and that becomes a self preventing prophecy. So not speculation. There's a, a lovely study by Han I think it's in McCoon School of Business. Does this study back in 2006 amongst a group of Texans.

And he sets up massive buffet of Indian food. So there's nam breads, there's baati rice, there's curries there's Make me hungry. Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's a bad time to be doing it. I'm trying to salivate. And crucially, there is a Mango Lason offer.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Yeah.

**Richard Shotton:** Now everyone is asked to try the food and then rate it.

Most of the food items are a smokescreen. Ragin doesn't care about the ratings for the curries or the non breads. All he cares about is how people rate the Mango Lassie. So this is a Indian yogurt drink. [00:17:00] Now for the Lassie, when people try it, he sometimes says, this is an Indian health drink. Other times he tells people it's an unhealthy Indian drink.

Everyone has the same yogurt drink. The story though changes. So it's just a wrapper around that changes. And what Rag finds is that if people think the product is healthy, they will rate that product 55% worse than the people who think it's unhealthy. People assume health equals bad tasting. And then.

That becomes their actual experience. They go out and look for confirming evidence. So the brilliance of Kraft mac and cheese was change the recipe, make it healthier. Let people try it. They didn't notice the difference. And only after do you reveal it's super healthy and that way you [00:18:00] can keep on, as you said, comically reminding people they've already tried this stuff, they, they already like it.

You can remove the steam from this improvement in their, in the recipes credentials.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** We made it one of our first chapters because of the final thing you said. It was a great one-two punch. It was a great insight into human nature to not share the healthier ingredients upfront for fear. It could have consumer backlash.

That's great. And, and, and that is why we chose it. But the successful creative that engaged people hashtag didn't notice, you know, we would've invited you to the blind taste test, but you are already in it. That wonderful creative execution is what brings it over the top. So it's not just the human insight, it's how you then creatively turn that into great brand building.

Great engagement with the customers. That to us, brought it to the [00:19:00] top of the list is really one of the great, one of the great examples.

**Richard Shotton:** Absolutely. Right. Knowing about a behavioral science principle is not the final thing. It is a great step. It tells you about a human insight. Which has the potential to make for brilliant marketing, but the behavioral insight alone isn't enough.

You can imagine another situation where another company knows about Han's work and they say, okay, well let's just announce that we've improved the recipes now much healthier, and we're gonna have to spend an extra five or 10 million pounds counterbalancing that effect with more advertising. Talking about appeal and tastiness.

Now that would've been probably a quite successful campaign and a reasonably good use for of a human insight. But absolutely the way that Kraft Mac and cheese deal with this, it's the same insight, but by adding this dash of lateral thinking, this dollop of creativity, they get so much more outfit and that that's a great way of thinking about any of these experiments.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** You know, I, I've seen that at the [00:20:00] ad agency I run Method one. They've used behavioral science to spark that greater creativity, that greater, that greater overall effect of the campaign. And so our listeners at home are at agencies. This is one way to just bring this in and think about how academics can inspire.

Lateral thinking can inspire other ways of doing great creative work. But if you're on the brand team side, if you are at a brand, if you're in a small business, using these to inspire your creative partners is a great way to give them a sandbox to plan. So I think widely this can be used to spark the right next creative move for your branded market.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, it, it, it's definitely the best way positioning behavioral science. If a behavioral science specialist goes into an agency or a company very arrogantly saying they've got all the answers, they're just gonna put the marketing team and the creative teams [00:21:00] back up and little will come of it. Yeah. If they're a bit more humble, I think, and say, look, these are really powerful insights, but they require your expertise as Mark is your expertise as copywriters or, or art directors then I think you are, you are gonna end up with far better results.

You need to work hand in hand with the creatives and marketers.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** I hadn't thought about it, but I think that's why we've gotten such a wide reception to the book because while you and I, we had our, you know, as good marketers, right, Richard, we had our target market, we had our secondary goals of who would like the book.

We had our target narrow catch wide strategy. But actually. Lots of people find these insights really applicable, even if they're only connected to marketing, even if they're not in the, the career profession of being marketers because they. Primarily reveal the [00:22:00] insight into human nature and the opportunity that it gives you.

What to do with it is a marketer's job. What to, how to activate against it, as we're saying, is the creative work to be done?

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. Yeah. And this is why the examples are so nice because it's, you've got this lovely range of 17 brands who've put some amazing Craig spins on some powerful long-term behavioral science principles.

Yeah,

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** well said. So. Kraft Macaroni and Cheese. Yeah. One of my favorite. I'll turn it to you, my friend. Okay. Of all of the chapter babies that we had, what was one of your favorite stories from the book?

**Richard Shotton:** I, I think my, probably my favorite, ironically was Dyson. And the irony will become apparent because for many of the brands.

It took an awful lot of research to understand what the brands have been doing to understand what behavioral science they'd used, whereas Dyson was a little [00:23:00] bit different. Can remember opening James Dyson's autobiography. I think it's called Invention My Life. And on the very first page, the very first paragraph, the very first sentence, it says, I went through four years and 5,127 prototypes before I came up with a Bagless vacuum.

And I can remember spying that and thinking, oh wow, this is amazing. This is a behavioral science martial class. In a sentence, he's packing in behavioral science biases that that other people could, can use. Now, that might feel a bit random, it's just his autobiography. But actually that theme of constantly reiterating the 5,000 hundred 27 prototypes, it runs through Dyson's work again and again and again.

You know, his biography. The website, the PR press releases the very first ads, all of them double down on this number, [00:24:00] 5,127. And to me that is an amazing piece of behavioral science because it draws in this idea of the illusion of effort. So longstanding idea from behavioral science. And it's essentially the argument that the same product like a vacuum.

Will be rated very differently if people believe lots of effort has gone into it. So if people think James Dyson knocked this vacuum out in five minutes, they might give it a go and rate it as been quite good. If they think he spent four years and five and a half thousand prototypes getting there, they will cap that, use that vacuum and they'll rate the experience much better.

Now the original experimentation was done by people like Andrea Morales and others, but often they did it in quite bizarre areas. So some of the experiments were done around poems or art pieces or estate agents. And when we read about those experiments, [00:25:00] and we do include some of them in the book, don't, don't get me wrong but when we read about them, we felt that there was a bit of a gap between the existing academic literature.

And then the challenges marketers face. So this was one of the chapters where we ran our own experimentation.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Mm-hmm.

**Richard Shotton:** We went out, created 2 78 Americans, randomized them into two groups, and half the people saw a fake brand. This image of black sheep vodka, beautifully designed bottle of vodka. And half of them just saw that image.

Half of them were told the designer went through 143 iterations, and when those two groups were asked how much they liked the design, we saw a very clear difference. So no story about effort. 17% of people liked or loved it. Story about the 143 designs. 23% of people like to unlock it, so you get this 35%. [00:26:00]

Mm-hmm. Uplift in appreciation for a piece of design. If people know the story of effort that's gone into it now, remember exactly the same design, but the impact it had varied according to whether people. Had heard about this effort. So I think that's the principle, and we do talk about others in the chapter, but that's the really exciting principle that can be applied far, far more broadly.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** You know, Richard, this conversation is reminding me of an episode we just completed a few weeks ago, episode 98, with Tara Austin, and she's from Ogilvy Change. She talks about behavioral science. Bias stacking, like, can you use multiple biases at the same time? And when you were going through the story of Dyson, he's making his illusion of efforts so clear.

But what struck me was he's also doing it consistently in his autobiography in the first ad, in the press [00:27:00] release on the website. And for a long period of time, they still talk about the 5,127 prototypes many years after launch. Consistency is not necessarily a behavioral science bias, but we're stacking marketing best practices here.

Do, do you think that when you're so consistent by showing the illusion of effort in in all the touch points that has a compounding effect? I,

**Richard Shotton:** I, I think arguably, I think there certainly is experimentation about the power of consistency. There's the Zion work around the mere exposure effect.

So what he showed was that if you got people to flick through an album and that album had faces in it, and people would go through to the end and then say how beautiful they thought the faces were. If the album had had, say, a face repeated

three times, people tended to think that was more beautiful than a face that had just been repeated once.

What he showed [00:28:00] was. Simple repetition breeds contentment rather than contempt. So he called this the mere exposure effect. So the longer you go out with an idea or an argument, the more likely it is to be received positively. I think that would be a fair extension of science's work,

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** which means that you can have a really great insight like, hey, if we told people four years, 5,127 prototypes.

That will likely make a big impact. But if you use it consistently and you keep showing it, it will make it more relatable. It will like it more likable just by the fact that you're harping on this I idea. So I think you can use this stacking in, in ways to make it more effective.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, I, well, there's two ways of looking at it.

There's, you can make the biases more effective through repetition and consistency. Absolutely. And then I think the other part you can do is stack [00:29:00] multiple biases on top of each other. So you could argue the Dyson line 5,000 hundred thousand prototypes is so effective. One, because it emphasizes effort and that taps into the solution of effort.

But the other thing it does is use precision. It doesn't say 5,000 biases. It doesn't say nearly 6,000 biases. It says 5 1 2 7. And there's some lovely work by people like Schindler that show believability of a number of a claim is boosted. Not a huge degree, all about five or percent or so, but it's boosted if you use a precise number.

So I think he's stacking. Precision and illusion of effort on top of each other, and he's consistent and repetitive as, as, as you mentioned.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** So if that's maybe the first 70%, maybe 50% of why, I love why you chose this one. The other part of what to me was so brilliant [00:30:00] about the marketing team's decision of how they delivered this claim.

They decided when they made the product to make the bin that collects the rubbish transparent, and I think that might've been the first time in any vacuum cleaner that they showed the. Garbage that was being picked up and that clear, transparent bin in the show notes, we'll put, the original ad is prominently featured.

The design of the, the design of the of the vacuum cleaners against a stark black background, if I'm thinking of the right ad, and you could see how transparent the bin is. It's a critical component of the, of the advertising and of the product design itself. And that is a way of showing the effort, right?

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. A a absolutely. And I, I always think, well, you know, the Black Sheep Vodka experiment we discussed is quite a big leap to say from that experiment, it [00:31:00] proves the power of the transparent bin. But there are other studies that, that do it very well. There's an amazing study from 2015 by Ryan Burwell and and Kim I think Burwell's at Harvard or Harvard Business School.

And what they do is work with a cafeteria and they serve people the same dish, but some of the diners can see into the kitchen and some of the design diners can't see into the kitchen. And even though they're rating. The same food. Everyone's got the same food in front of them. The people that can see into the kitchen, they'll rate it 7% better than those who can't see into the kitchen.

So absolutely. The design of a situation, the making the work that's going on behind the scenes, more salient, more visible, more obvious. I think that study from Kim is a very good proof point that the design changes Dyson did would also harness this effect

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** to me. You and I have talked about [00:32:00] literal applications, lateral applications, yeah.

But we are often talking about that in creative campaigns. To me, to build into the product itself, the effort that's happening was a revolutionary idea and I Would you consider that a lateral application of the effort, or would you just consider that? Like practically showing the effectiveness of the work.

I mean, how, what, how would you describe what they're doing there?

**Richard Shotton:** I think that's a, that's a very good point. I would say it goes back to the, the point you were making right at the beginning of the podcast, which was these principles are not just for media planners or masters or creative directors.

They're also for anyone who's trying to influence behavior. Others. Now, that could be a product designer, that could be a CEO, that could be an hr. Director, each of them has their own challenges in their own kind of palette and tools

they could use. The principles are the same, it's just those specialities have got different [00:33:00] techniques to use them.

So this is an example of a technique being used by a copywriter and then that same technique of de illusion of effort being used by the the product designer.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Yeah, and there's something about, we have a Dyson at home, but my whole childhood and my whole bachelorhood, I had a bag vacuum, and the least pleasant part of a bagged vacuum experience is.

Undoing the hose and taking this dirt filled bag and putting it in the garbage, where inevitably a puff of dust will come up.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. Facing

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** your face versus, yeah. I had your face versus the experience of a Dyson where you see all of the dirt and grime and dust captured and the actual. Motion of pushing the dirt into the garbage is like ejecting it from the machine.

It's a very satisfying motion. And, and to me that's kind of the ingenious of the Dyson user experience, the product, human product [00:34:00] interface. Every bit of it is built on this idea that you've accomplished something. By doing the vacuuming, you could see it. And then even in the ejecting of the. Of the rubbish, you get this sense that you have you, you've completed the effort.

**Richard Shotton:** Well, that, that, that's, I, no, I'd never thought about that. So not only a ton, I didn't quite know that that like trough of the products experience has been removed. And that's a super important thing to do. As marketers, we're always thinking about how do we make the great bits of our brands better? But actually behavioral scientist would probably say, well, before you do that.

What's the worst bit of the brand? What's the real shoddy bit of experience you wanna be lessening that, that trough? I can never quite remember the academic. It's either Pratto or Feldman. And they did two different studies all in the kind of same area, but one of them was around this thing called the negativity bias.

Essentially, negative [00:35:00] information sticks with us. We remember it more. It's more powerful than, than positive information. And one of the studies was just to give people a list of adjectives. Some were positive character traits

like generosity. Some were negative ones like meanness or rudeness. People read the list.

The list is taken away. Then a few minutes or hours later, whatever it was, the audience are asked to try and remember as much as they can, and again and again, it's the negative stuff that sticks in their, their mind. Now, negative information has a longer half life than positive. Information. So if you are trying to create a brilliant brand experience, removing a little bit of negativity will have a better impact on experience than removing the same vol, sorry, adding in the same volume of of positivity.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Signpost as you and I say to an old episode from 11 Madison Park, our friend Will [00:36:00] Guera. This is episode 56. Thank you. Search feature of my browser.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Episode 56. This is what will Gera. Famously does in Unreasonable Hospitality, right? He goes, and instead of looking at all the best Michelin rated restaurants at what they do, well, he looks exactly as you're saying for what they don't do as well.

And that's where he tries to make 1111 Madison Park stand out. And that's really what he becomes really well known for.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, so, so he talked about that. His wonderful book, unreasonable Hospitality, and then. Rory Southern builds on some of those ideas. Wil Dara talks about by coming up with this phrase called reverse benchmarking.

'cause he essentially says, look, we are so interested in copying the successes of other brands. What we should also do is find out where they're really weak and then double down ourselves in those areas. Because if every other Michelin star restaurant is, has got an amazing wine list, it will [00:37:00] take gargantuan Titanic efforts to beat them.

But you can create lots of positive energy and memory amongst your clientele if you have an amazing beer sommelier or a coffee sommelier. Now the, the benchmark is lower. So you, you can, you can succeed much more easily. So I think, yeah, those episodes will well be worth people referring back to.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Lovely.

So we could go through so many other brands, but I'm watching the time here. I'm just gonna read out for everybody a few of the other chapters. 'cause I think it would be interesting for folks to know some of the other brands we covered here. We start with five guys and we talk about this brilliant insight that the founder Jerry Morrell had about the gold dilution effect, about how if you focus on one thing, it's gonna be much more powerful than talking about multiple [00:38:00] benefits.

We also covers Starbucks, pumpkin spice latte around scarcity and nostalgia, Snickers. Around humor and using trigger moments. Apple, you know what, Richard, maybe, maybe we said we'd come back to Apple. Let's, let's just talk about Apple for a minute. I'll just give people very quick highlights. Amazon Prime, AALL, Haagen-Dazs, red Bull.

Guinness, which was our first episode ever. Good to note for everybody. We made sure that if we did cover it in a podcast, our book went deeper and more meaningful into the topics that we wanted to. So you get lots of good new information. Liquid Death, Dyson, we talked about Facebook Klarna, the Got milk campaign, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pringles, a wide variety.

We asked ourselves, was [00:39:00] there one thing that if we could edit the book, now that it's live, is there one thing that we would add or do differently now that it's published?

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah. I mean, two minds about this, but there could be an argument that we should have included a B2B brand, because often people will say, oh, these behavioral science principles, they'll work on small purchases like cans of coke and bags of crisps, but they're not gonna affect multimillion pound decisions.

Now, that is a widespread belief. But just because it's widespread doesn't mean it's true. Doesn't mean it's true. It's, yeah, it's a myth. All the evidence points in the other way. All the evidence suggests that most of these principles that have been proving on citizens, on on shoppers, they're just as powerful on professionals.

So I think there could have been an argument for having a behavioral science dedicated chapter [00:40:00] on a B2B brand. However, I think the reason we didn't do it and the complexity is when we go into pumpkin spice latte for a chapter or when we talk about Facebook immediately, everyone knows what we're talking about.

You don't have to spend pages after pages explaining the category, the setup, the background. You can go straight into the experiments and the implications, and that's the difficulty. I think it's a writing difficulty with behavioral science brands. It's hard to make it both readable to everyone and pithy and practical.

If you use a B2B example,

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** and we're nothing, if not pithy, and we're nothing, if not pithy in our writing. Yes, keep please going.

**Richard Shotton:** Maybe one of those chapters in, in hindsight could have tried to grapple with that because I think it's a real damaging myth. This. Belief that paper science doesn't apply to B2B.[00:41:00]

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** We're gonna talk at the end of the EPs at the end of the episode. You and I. Then after writing the book decided to do one more big new project, which we're announcing on this podcast, we made a masterclass that takes the ideas of the book and puts them into short form seven minute instructional videos that folks can listen.

I'll tell, I'll talk more about that at the end of the episode. But the reason I raise it now is because we actually. Address some B2B brands in our masterclass. I believe we, we covered zoom and the buyers and how Zoom started really in the B2B space long before it was a B2C brand.

**Richard Shotton:** Yeah, absolutely.

So I think that's probably an example of a brand that you can describe Pi Italy, because it, it, it, it's transitioned from B2B beyond, or so many people use it across, across industry. So, yeah, that now if we'd [00:42:00] thought about it earlier, we could have done a chat from and the power of, social proof and other such biases and ease.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** But for those that are interested, the masterclass has some of that. And of course we have previous podcast episodes where we talk more high level about it. So this really interesting. Richard, as we come to a close, let's give everybody a recap of what we've covered in today's episode.

**Richard Shotton:** We've covered three big areas, I think in this episode.

The first one is the craft story and their use of this idea of expectation assimilation. It's essentially the argument that people taste what they expect to

taste, they experience, what they expect to experience. Your job as a market is to set. The most positive possible expectation of your brand, and that will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Now, crafted that in a very specific way. They avoided the over early referencing of their health properties. We know that was the right thing to do 'cause of the Una an experiment. The [00:43:00] second thing we talked about was Dyson and the illusion of effort. So the illusion of effort is the argument that the same product, the exact same product, will be more appreciated if people are aware of the effort that's gone into their creation.

And we talked about some of our own experimentation in that field. We talked about our experience with black sheep vodka, showing the design of a vodka bottle could be more appreciated if people knew the number of iterations it had been through. And then finally we talked about B2B. You know, it's a massive misnomer.

People clinging within marketing to this idea that B2B buyers are completely different from B2C buyers. But when it comes to the behavioral science principles, there's experiment after experiment after experiment showing professionals are affected by exactly the same biases. So make sure you're using these principles.

Yes, influencing. Your consumers, but you can also do it on your colleagues or [00:44:00] professional buyers.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Thank you for that wrap up. So for everyone listening, if you're watching, the book is Hacking the Human Mind. It's available on Amazon, it's available at all your local book sellers. And if you wanna get more details about the book.

Hacking the human mind.com is the website for you to learn much more about the book, get a download of a free chapter if that would be helpful to you. And of course, sign up for our newsletter and stay up to date on all that we're doing. Richard, in the middle of the episode, we teased our next big project, and I wanted to talk about it a little bit here because when we finished the book.

We really felt that there was so much knowledge packed in, but 230 odd pages is not everyone's cup of tea. As we [00:45:00] know from the podcast, lots of people like to listen. They like to watch. They're not learners through written word alone. So if you want to go deeper into the written word. The book is your best bet if you learn through listening and through and through watching.

We've put together our first joint masterclass. We're calling it Hacking The Human Mind, the Masterclass, and if you go to [www.hackingthehumanmind.com](http://www.hackingthehumanmind.com), you can click and see the tab for the Masterclass. 42 lectures. 32 brand case studies, over 35 biases, and we present many that are in the book, but with 32 brand case studies, many more that were not in the book.

All in short form lessons, lots of visuals on the screen, lots of animated. Onscreen [00:46:00] visuals. There's a promo video if you wanna see what it's like. There's even a watch, a pre a preview episode on the website. So for those that would really like to go deeper and go engage with the content in different ways and get a lot more brands with a lot more studies inspired by the book, hacking the Human Mind, the masterclasses for you.

Any other, any other. Additional information you think would be helpful for people to hear?

**Richard Shotton:** Oh, I think that was, I think that was perfect. Yeah. Go there now. That'd be the thing.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Go there. Go there now. And we hope that serve, pull over

**Richard Shotton:** to the side of the road. Yeah.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Avenue. No accidents. No accidents, but safely navigate your way there on the road.

**Richard Shotton:** Okay.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** And with that, we want to say thank you to everyone for all your support of our first a hundred episodes. Thanks for your support. If you've already gotten the book and if this is the first time you're learning about it and it's helpful to you, we'd [00:47:00] love for you to pick up a copy of the book.

Please leave a review on Amazon or on your bookseller. It helps others learn about what you got from the book, and as we said. If the masterclass could be something of service to you, [hackingthehumanmind.com](http://hackingthehumanmind.com). And until next time, I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

**Richard Shotton:** And I'm Richard Shotton.

**MichaelAaron Flicker:** Thanks for listening.

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