

**Jacob Morgan** 00:00

Have your title and everything correct. I'll do a longer intro before it goes live. But for now I have Lauren Nordgren, a professor of management in organizations at the Kellogg School of Management and best selling author of the human element, overcoming the resistance that awaits new ideas. Sounds great. Okay. Did I say your last name correctly?

00:20

Yep. Nordgren.

**Jacob Morgan** 00:21

Okay. Yeah, you never know. You got it? Yeah, of course. All right. Cool, then unless anything else, I'll jump right in. Let's do it. All right. Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of leading the future of work. My guest today, Lauren Nordgren, Professor of Management and organizations at the Kellogg School of Management. He's also the best selling author of a brand new book, which is called the human element, overcoming the resistance that awaits new ideas, something I feel like we all struggle with. Lauren, thank you for joining me.

00:52

Thank you. It's great to be here.

**Jacob Morgan** 00:54

Why don't we get started with just a little bit of background information about you before we jump into some of the cool stuff from the book? So how did you get involved with this stuff? Looking at innovation, organizational change leadership, is it's always been a passion for you.

01:12

I suppose so I, the behavioral scientist in me would say I probably don't have introspective access to answer that question. But how did I begin with innovation and change? I've always been interested in human behavior. And it seems to me that the like, all complex systems are running on. Adaptation. So whether we're talking biological systems societal, organizational, what's determining what succeeds in what fails is the process of adaptation and the success of adaptation. And much of my research has been focused on that process of how individuals groups change how they embrace new ideas. And I think, as I gained more experience as a practitioner, not just a scholar, not just someone studying these questions and aloud, but really trying to implement these ideas, I think the thing that became very apparent to me, and I suspect that it will be a familiar narrative to all that are listening is this notion that very often, the quest isn't often the identification of the better path. It's the implementation of that path. And, and in the abstract, that's a curious thing. Like, why is it? Why wouldn't people just embrace what is a clearly unquestionably good idea? And I think that was a has been an enduring fascination, both just as an idea, but also, as a practitioner of trying to create change

**Jacob Morgan** 03:12

it at what point did you realize there was something here in the form of a book like, were you researching and working with a lot of organizations, and you just identified these similar patterns that kept coming up? Or how did this all kind of come together?

03:26

Yeah, I mean, this I think you got to be real sensitive about what your motivations are to write a book. And I really never had a desire to write a book. And it, it felt as though I kept seeing the same thing over and over again, which was the thing that was having the biggest impact was the very thing that no one was talking about. And I didn't feel like whether it's popular writing, whether it's research, etc. I didn't hear anyone talking about either in like a scholarly way or in a more kind of business community books sort of way. And yeah, really, there was the sense of, there's something here that I feel is worth sharing, I suppose is really and very much for me feels like something almost stumbled into

**Jacob Morgan** 04:28

Yeah. And we have the same publisher, which is widely so to company be working with. Alright, so you mentioned something which I thought was interesting is you were interested in this idea like why aren't people accepting ideas that just everybody thinks are good? And is there a lot of subjectivity in that or are these like objectively good ideas? Because I hear a story right? You hear stories about like, art and musician and like the Beatles got turned down several times by record labels when they first got started and no I'm looking at it now. It's like how could you turn them down? Or you keep hearing about ideas? And you're like, of course, that's a good idea. But a good idea according to who does that subjectivity play a role?

05:13

Sure. Sure that it does. I guess I would say when you have a group of people that would collectively recognize that something is a better path would be, then I would say, this is one that would generally regarded as a good idea. I mean, if the would it be a good idea for us to burn less fossil fuels? Yeah. Like, there could be disagreement about that. But I would say a lot of people would see that as a better world. If we did less of that. I would say a lot of people would consider that to be unquestionably good idea. Yet it is an I do that there is a there is movement on but not robust movement where we see tangible action and outcomes and results in the way that we would want. So for sure, yeah, very, very subjective. But within that subject, but But I guess the, my broader point is that that's not the issue. Like it's not the issue that people don't believe in the value of the idea. That's not what is holding the idea.

**Jacob Morgan** 06:39

So it's people who know that there's value in the idea. They know, it's a good idea, and probably that they should be doing it. But for some reason, they still don't. It's kind of like, trying to get somebody to eat healthy or to stop smoking. When you're like, I know, I should do that. But you still don't.

06:57

Yeah, it's akin to that. Okay.

**Jacob Morgan** 06:59

All right. Got it. So I know in the book, we talked about four frictions. But before we jump into those four frictions, I think one of the earlier things that you talked about in the book is this concept of the law of attraction, which I was very interested in, because I think people have heard of that concept and idea, you know, from movies and books, like the secret. And a lot of people think about it in terms of, well, if I

think of something I'm going to manifest it. How do you think of the law of attraction? And why is that such an important element for this?

07:31

Yeah, I mean, it's, it's foundational to, to the framework that I'm trying to put out into the world that I call friction theory, and the the what what I mean by it in this case, and other people may may mean it in different ways is that people operate on this assumption that the way you bring new ideas, the way you create change the way you sell is, and I think this is an assumption that is so deeply embedded, we don't even realize it. The way you do that is to elevate appeal. Like that's, we think that like what is the job of the person trying to sell or create change, they think that your job is to elevate attraction, appeal, motivation, magnetism, and it is this kind of instinct intuition that if you elevate appeal, high enough, eventually there is some altitude, there is some place where you will then get people over the line. Like your job is like, if you're single, and you want to attract more people, what is your job to make yourself more attractive, and it's the belief we think that is our job, when we're selling products, internal change initiatives, whatever that thing is, we think the job is to elevate appeal and attraction. And that's, that's what I mean, by that.

**Jacob Morgan** 08:58

I think we all experienced this. I mean, even when writing books, when trying to sell courses, when companies create products or services, everyone always thinks, well, let's, you know, let's make it more attractive, let's add more features in there, let's drop the cost, let's increase the cost, let's, you know, do all sorts of things to it, to try to get people to want to buy it. And you're right. There's this kind of perception where if I give people enough value, eventually they're gonna buy it. And if they're not buying it, it's because they don't see the value in it. And so it sounds like your theory is it's not about that. It's about the reasons that keep them from buying which are these these frictions.

09:43

Yes, so the, the fundamental idea is that when we when we think about selling innovation, creating change The human mind thinks about elevating appeal. And the language I use for this. We call this fuel. So when you're trying to elevate appeal in some way, motivation, incentives, all of that, anything that elevates appeal, something I call fuel. And the basic notion is that we operate with this fuel based mindset. And so the metaphor for this, it's a nice kind of thought experiment to demonstrate this point is, if you ask people, and we've asked 1000s of people this seemingly simple question, which is what? So if we focus people's attention on a bullet, and what is it that enables a bullet to fly? Simple question. And if you ask people that question, basically, there's only one answer that you will hear. And what people will say is, well, that gunpowder gunpowder is why bullet flies and why, you know, breaks the sound barrier and can fly so far, etc. Now, that's not wrong, but is a very incomplete answer, because it's really only half of the story. Because gunpowder explains a bullets, initial exit velocity. But the reason why a bullet is able to fly so far, and so true, it is equally because it is aerodynamic. So a bullet has been optimized to reduce the fundamental barriers operating against it. And this metaphor is super helpful, I think, for understanding the traps we fall into when we think about selling marketing change, we think about the fuel, we think about the gunpowder, we think the way you sell a new idea is to add more gunpowder. But in the context of a bullet doing that only increases drag, adding more gunpowder does not help you at a certain point, because for more gunpowder, you add, you're simply creating

more resistance. So we call that habit of the mind like this reflex to think in terms of attraction value fuel, as a fuel based mindset and fuel is necessary. It's important, but because it's the fixation, it's not where the value is, generally, in my experience, what we want to start seeing like the blind spot, like where the where the real opportunity is in is in the barriers, or what we call the frictions. And these are, these are the things that are holding ideas back. In essence, the fundamental argument I'm trying to make here is that so this would be akin to like, what we do around sales and change would be akin to building an airplane, thinking only about the engines thinking only about propulsion, and not thinking about weight and aerodynamics. And of course, if you did that a plane would never get off the ground. And our argument is, this is in essence, what we do when trying to bring new ideas to like,

**Jacob Morgan 13:01**

if we were to think about this practically, from like, an organizational perspective, is the you tell me if this is the right analogy or not, let's say I'm an employee trying to drive change in my company, it sounds like the most common approach for people is to say, you should buy into this change, because it's going to do XYZ, it's going to allow us to do this and that, you know, maybe you don't get a lot of buy in on it. So you go back and you say actually, it's also going to do this, and I've added this, and you know, here's the extra benefit that we're gonna get, and you keep focusing on like you said that gunpowder, but the reality is what you should be doing is trying to find out well, why aren't you buying into this? What what is keeping you from from wanting to say yes to that change? Is that kind of the right analogy, the right way to think about it?

13:51

It is absolutely that I mean, if you another way to frame this is classically we've thought about value is that of benefits and costs, costs and benefits and what we see again and again, both in practitioner work as a more formally studying it, our fixation is on the elevation of the benefits of the process. And there it's that quickly creates very diminishing returns like elevated like fuel is costly. Fuel is very costly, generally, and it's necessary, but what we tend to neglect are the barriers because the frictions holding an idea down and so that my message in most cases is our job. Like if we want to if we want growth if we want our product to sell if we want to spread our ideas through word of mouth more effectively if we want greater social change, whatever that thing is. Our mission is to make our idea more era Dynamic not to add more thrust.

**Jacob Morgan 15:02**

Let's talk about what some of those barriers are you have four of them in the book inertia, and effort, emotion and reactance. So let's start off with inertia. What is inertia?

15:19

Yeah, so frictions are anything that stand in the way, but we can get more specific about them. And a good way to do that. So we talked about four. And these aren't just for random frictions. A good way to understand frictions is to think about the fundamental structure of an idea. So there's an we could think about the anatomy of an idea. And one dimension of any idea of any change initiative innovation, is what is the degree of change represented in this idea? So are we talking transformative change? Are we talking talking a light tweak? The answer to that question will determine the level of inertia that likely inhabits that idea. So inertia is the idea that the human mind favors the familiar over the unfamiliar. And

think about what the fundamental act of innovation is. It is the attempt to get people to, to embrace the unknown. Yeah, and that means that inertia is an ever present friction. Now the strength of it varies. But inertia is the notion that the human mind favors the familiar over the unfamiliar. So the greater the change, often the greater the resistance. But notice that that resistance really has nothing to do with the data, the evidence, the idea itself, it is fundamentally rooted in the unfamiliarity of the idea. So telehealth is a great idea. And I don't think, but it's a concept that's been around a really long time. But it took the pandemic for it to really manifest itself. And a big reason it took that kind of major events to spur change is not because people needed to believe in the concept. It was the it's never how we've done things, and the never how we've done things. The it's not familiar, it's not what I've known, that is a major impediment not to all change. But when we think so for me inertia is the my antenna goes up for inertia as being the source of the resistance, when what you are trying to bring about is some radical change. Well, place we see this all the time, for example, is in digital transformation groups that are trying to bring in a new process. That is, that is an abrupt change from what they have always done. So much of the resistance isn't going to be because people don't believe that that's ultimately going to be a better process. It's the unfamiliarity that creates the resistance, well,

#### **Jacob Morgan 18:23**

maybe we should have actually taken a step back and talk about what those four elements are. Let's just wrap up the theme with inertia because as you were speaking, it kind of gave me an analogy, or a visual of like, a sprinter going at full speed. And you know, we're we're kind of behind them just chugging along. And it's only when we catch up to that sprinter or if the Sprinter slows down, does it kind of make sense. But if you know, if the gap is really big, and you're racing against Usain Bolt, and he's way far ahead of you, it's kind of like, why bother? He's so far ahead. I'm never gonna catch up. But if you're kind of neck and neck and the gap isn't that big, you have more of an incentive to run and to try harder, because it's, you know, you feel like you can make some kind of change happen there. That's just kind of what popped into my head as far as like the gap and trying to close it. But you're right. I think a lot of people struggle with that. The bigger the transformation is, the more scared probably people become.

#### **19:17**

So So take for example. A question we've asked a lot of people is what's the music of your childhood like? So for me, that would be like 90s grunge? Maybe Nirvana would be the sort of archetype? How much do you like it? And how objectively good is it and then we ask them to think about the generation of music before and after. And then we ask them which of these three is do you think is objectively better? And we find that 70 80% But is over overwhelmingly people, not just favor But believe that the music of their generation is objectively better than the music that comes before and after. This is, of course, absurd. But what does that speak to? Its why do they believe it is objectively better it is because it's what they know. It is why one of my favorite examples of this is why think about why Americans are socialists and why Europeans are capitalists, when it comes to their brands of football. So the NFL is like a Scandinavians dream, right? The NFL is a decidedly socialist system. So we, if you're a bad team, you get the first pick. There's a very strict profit sharing like we're trying to create economic parity across all the teams we're trying to, we're working very hard, the system is really set up to not allow dynasties and runaway teams. And Americans really like the way the NFL works. European football could not be any more different. You have mega clubs that run everything, Real Madrid,

Manchester United, these clubs have resources that are exponentially greater than all of these minnow clubs. And Europeans love their systems. And if you would ask them, Hey, would you like that American system for your football? And vice versa? They would say no. And of course, this is funny, because our political realities are the mirror opposite. And if you were to, they don't envy the other side. And what that reveals is, so much of what we favor isn't because it's objectively better, we often favor it's because it's the system that we know, it's the system that we've been in, and therefore we support and defend it, because it is what we know. And that makes change hard.

**Jacob Morgan** 22:02

You might get some very angry football fans out there, we're gonna be like, oh, like you say we have socialist NFL?

22:09

Well, I'm happy to have that debate. I love it. It's

**Jacob Morgan** 22:12

funny. I never thought about it like that. But you're right. It's so different than the way things are done in. In European soccer teams, it's the exact opposite. Alright, so let's talk about these these four elements of innovation before we get back to the four friction. So we talked about inertia as a friction. And you mentioned that one of the elements of innovation is the degree of change. So kind of the bigger the change we're trying to get, the more inertia, it seems like we have. The second element of change, I believe is cost, which I think a lot of people can wrap their minds around. But maybe you can talk a little bit more about that.

22:50

Yeah. So what I would think about when you're when you're trying to anticipate whether there are these barriers are traps that await your innovation. So the first question I would ask is, is the change I'm trying to bring to the world? From my audience's perspective? Is it big or small? You know, the second dimension of any idea is what is the cost of implementation? Almost every change has some action cost, like if it's a new internal initiative. Well, I have to unlearn some habit and I have to learn a new process and procedure that is a cost of action to go vote, that's an implement, there's implementation costs, like I have to build something new into my schedule, I have to take time off work. So the second dimension of any idea is, what is the cost of action? Is it great? Or is it easy? And the answer to that question will determine the level of effort which is our second friction, so of inertia and efforts that awaits that idea and the second friction is the notion that there are very few things that the mind is hypersensitive to but one of them is effort expenditure. The human mind is hypersensitive to effort expenditure. And like think about what is what is the number one goal of basically every meeting we have ever been in at some level, right? It is not good outcomes. It is to get out of the meeting, right? If you propose, hey, I've got an idea, but it's gonna we're gonna have to stay here for another 45 minutes. No one cares. What they care about is another 45. So a big source of resistance is effort. And, and to me, this is where often my biggest practitioner wins are in this domain. I would argue, it is probably the strongest force operating on human behavior like anything we're considering the effort calculus. And it has tremendous implications for innovation. Although we rarely talk about it, and we rarely see it, because we're so focused on benefits, we're not really understanding how sensitive people are to cost.



So that's the second dimension. The third relates to the relationship, like, the reactions are innovation or idea provokes. So obviously we want, we want our product, we want our idea to produce positive emotions, excitement, content, etc. But even good ideas, even ideas that do produce those positive emotions can also produce unintended negative emotions. So the third friction we talked about is emotion, emotional friction, it's the idea that even great ideas can trigger feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, fear, etc. And when those are present, they're like a handbrake on change. And the fourth and final dimension of any idea relates to the relationship between the innovator and the audience. So is this does the audience feel as though this is their idea? Do they feel like they've freely picked up this idea? Or do they feel as though this is being imposed upon them? Do they feel as though they've been left out of the process, etc. And to the extent that is true, then it is likely reactance inhabits the idea. So the fourth friction is reactance. And it is the idea that when we feel as though we are being pushed in a particular direction, our instinct is to push back against that change. And here again, this is a paradox for the innovator. Because in essence, that's what the innovator is attempting to do, you spot a problem, you find a solution, and you're trying to move people down that path. But the trick is, the challenge is, the more people feel pushed down that path, the more they will fight against it. So you have inertia, effort, emotion and reactance.

**Jacob Morgan 27:12**

And then we talked about degree of change cost audience reaction and creating the change. And so are the frictions directly aligned with one of those four elements? Like do they each kind of pair up together?

**27:27**

Yeah, so inertia captures that. So you ask the question, is this a big change or small change? And that will help you understand whether inertia is in the idea of big change inertia? That in the question I would ask if people do what you want them to do, is that easy? Or is it hard? Is it costly or not? That will determine the level of effort or based friction that inhabits the idea? What are the emotions that this produces? That will help us understand whether emotional friction awaits the idea? It's inhabiting the idea? And then finally, does the audience feel pressure to change? And that will determine whether reactance inhabits the idea. So each, each dimension has a corresponding

**Jacob Morgan 28:22**

got it? It actually reminds me of a story I had Lauren thurible, I think his name is he's the CEO of US Cellular. And people who listened to the show might remember the story. But he told me this kind of goes to your point. He shared this one story where he was brought in to transform this organization. And he was brought in to lead a company in a prior role to turn the whole business around, which he did. He did a great job, the company was profitable, everyone was happy. And he gets called in to a board meeting. All the top executives are there, the board members are there. And he's going into this meeting, thinking that they're going to be congratulating him, they're going to be like popping open bottles of champagne and toasting all the amazing work that he did. And he gets in there, and they're like, Laurent, you're fired. He's like, What the hell, I transform this company, I did everything that you wanted. And the feedback you got was you didn't take anybody along with you in that journey. You, you basically pushed everyone you alienated the team, you create a lot of disconnection, you achieve the business goal, but you didn't do it in a very sustainable way where people felt bought into the vision and

the mission and the direction of the company. So that kind of reminded me very much of your, your reactance and the kind of the audience reaction and creating the change because just because you make the change. How people feel makes a big difference.

29:54

Yeah, and this is, it is hard to overstate the power of intimate. And at times, I think it is easy for even very experienced leaders to underestimate the importance of bringing people along for the ride to use your language like to co design the experience to allow people to feel heard. Because when they don't, they will all of a sudden you are transforming what might have been pragmatists or, or even friends of the initiative, you're transforming them into foes to resistors. And I think that, in my experience, if when a company wants to create change, a step in that process that they often find odd or they find the emphasis unwarranted is identifying who are all the key people that are touched by this change, and making sure that they feel heard in the process. Yeah. Because so much about their reaction to it, again, will not be about the idea, like that's the, like fuel is just all about the product, the idea. And what friction is so much about is the audience. And under that, that's the phrase I'm always using is that is like the human element, the human side of this story. And we just tend to underestimate how important it is.

**Jacob Morgan** 31:48

One thing that I was also thinking about when we were talking about inertia, and you were mentioning that the bigger the gap is the kind of the harder it is, does this mean that big transformations and big goals are bad, because you hear lots of stories of CEOs and business leaders who have these, like really big transformative ideas and visions. But if those are really big things to do, and the gap is really large, Does that just mean that they're never going to happen? And we should only focus on kind of like small incremental change?

32:22

Yeah, I mean, it's a great, it's, it's a really important, it's a really important point. And because there's a lot of value in big ambition, big dreams, big aspirations. I think the good news is we don't have to be less ambitious. But there are other ways to shrink the change. And part of part of inertia isn't so much even about the, the level of ambition, but really about, we can be ambitious about things that are very familiar to us. So you could, you could have a sales team and you say we're doubling our, we're doubling our sales goals. And that might feel ambitious. But this process of aggressive goal setting and targeting that's going to be that's extremely familiar. I mean, in some way, it's kind of the status quo, maybe we change this bar, but that's what I would label it really kind of a small change, even though it is ambitious. So really, this is about instead, like if you are a motorcycle company, you might sell create a big ambitious growth target. That doesn't necessarily trigger inertia. But imagine you've always been about what a what a motorcycle company has always been about is the roar of the engine. But now you say, moving forward, we are going to be electric. And now what it means is we sell silent bikes. That to me is what is going to trigger this feeling of resistance because it fundamentally challenges what we've always thought this thing is, like fundamentally, we've always thought that the motorbike is a big loud thing. And it's part of what you do. When you ride is like the noise the Rumble is inherent to the experience. But now imagine you as the CEO, you've seen projections, in your mind is very clear that the future is maybe electric. Part of the challenge is even when you're giving people that data etc. is



much of the resistance to your bold vision is the fact that it is such an unfamiliar idea. It's it's never what we've been about before. And that's where I think we can now start to see opportunity, which is not to necessarily water that down but What we want to do is find ways to make this unfamiliar things seem like a like a familiar friend. And there are a lot of creative ways to do that. And one of the things I heard you, you said, incremental and notice, small is different from incremental and incremental is, but one way we could think about, well, how would you get people to embrace that change, right? So to get to get a company to embrace Evie, motorcycles, I don't know why this example, in my head, but let's roll with it. Part of it is to know is to meet them where they are at and to understand to get them to embrace, going from rumble and roar, to clean and quiet in one step is probably too great, and is probably going to provoke too much resistance. And so one of the ways you could try and break down some of that resistance is through incremental steps. But notice, you're not shrinking the ambition. You're just creating a different path. So it's not one giant jump. It's small steps. And actually, I think, if you look at how America has embraced cannabis, like the shift from illicit to largely legal, I think it has it's very much that kind of incremental store.

### **Jacob Morgan** 36:32

Well, the one thing kind of related to the cannabis, one that maybe that popped into my mind, Philip Morris, the tobacco company, you know, their their whole branding now is to develop to deliver a smoke free future, which had they told you that a couple of years ago, you would say they're, I mean, they're a tobacco company, right? Their whole business is built on people smoking, but now all their branding, if you go to their website, everything is all about delivering a smoke free future, which I would imagine when they pitched that idea internally, people were like, you guys know where tobacco company, right? Like, what? What are you talking about here? But I wish I could get kind of the insides of how they did that. But it kind of made me think of that too similar to going from a gas, a motorcycle to an electric one. It's like exact opposite.

### 37:26

Yeah, and you could, yeah, that's a really interesting context. And you can imagine, it sounds like, I don't know what the level of Biden is around that. But you could imagine, even if the most compelling data of we have to go smoke less, still, there is going to be this resistance, because it's not fundamentally who we have been. The think of all the companies who this notion of we've always been in person, and now we're going to be without, like, much of the resistance about that is just because it's a break. It's such a significant break in tradition, it's not that we've been, and one of the the ways we break that down is is to, there are many ways to kind of shrink that change to make the unfamiliar, feel familiar. But if you can imagine if Philip Morris had had something in its deep DNA, that would say that No, in fact, embracing new ideas is fundamentally how we are like, imagine in the motorcycle example. If, if leadership could say, you know, what, we, we began as a bicycle company. And then when it became clear that the motor was the next wave of the future, that's what we embraced. And so now, this is the next step we're taking. And so in fact, this isn't a betrayal of our ideas. In fact, embracing this change is fundamentally who we have always been, and it's rooted in our first it's rooted in our origin story, like now, all of a sudden, psychologically, this doesn't feel like some betrayal, it feels like a natural step in the evolution of who they've always been. And that's part of the challenge is trying to, rather than water down the ambition, think about what are the ways in which we can make this thing feel from

**Jacob Morgan** 39:24

Yeah, no, I like that. Okay, so we have 15 minutes left. And usually the last 15 minutes of the show, I like to focus specifically on the action items and things that we should be doing. So the first thing that I think a lot of people would be really curious to understand is, how do you know which friction you're faced with? So I'm inside of an organization? I'm trying to get an idea implemented for a product or service? I don't know something. How do I know which friction I'm confronted with?

39:54

Yeah. Well, so the good news is first, we because we have blind spots for friction, because we think in fuel because of this fuel based mindset, often just beginning to look reveals the things we haven't been seeing. So if if you want to forget all the details, all the language great, here's the thought experiment I would recommend people do. I would say, let's just assume for a moment, because you're always having this conversation, because something's not going as well as you would like it to. And so let's assume for a moment that actually, people love this product. People love this initiative, people are fully bought in. But there is some thing holding them back. Let's just assume that's true for a moment, what would that thing be? And often, if you pose that question to people, in the course of just a couple of minutes, they start identifying the friction. So I mean, step one is if you just turn your attention to them, often they reveal themselves. But as you are going to go deeper into that process, once you start thinking in terms of frictions, it really is those four questions I would ask, Is it bigger? Is it small? Is it easier? Is it hard? What are the emotions people might feel? What is our approach event? Or ideally, what is our approach going to be? And that's a very important point. Is it been two? Have we gotten their buy in? Or do they feel heard? And those four questions will give us some feel about what to prioritize. And my number one piece of advice is do this before you implement frictions are so much easier to deal with, if we can anticipate them and remove them before. Then, once we put our foot on the gas, the tires are smoking, because we got the handbrake up. And now we got to deal with that problem.

**Jacob Morgan** 42:05

Can you ask these questions to the people who are stopping the change? So instead of just asking this question of yourself, let's say you have a leader or a team of leaders who are like no, no, this isn't going to happen. Can you go to them and ask them these questions?

42:21

Yeah, I mean, I would recommend engaging with them and trying to understand their perspective on these questions. What another reason we think in terms of fuel and not friction, is because, again, fuel is about the ideas. Friction is about the audience. And therefore it requires perspective taking and empathy. Now, sometimes that simple thought experiment, helps you see it from their lens, and now things that were the the obvious stuff that you just weren't attending to emerges. But particularly with things like emotional friction, like what is standing in the way. It requires insight and understanding it requires, if you're thinking about, like, why isn't the customer embracing this new thing? It's not so much about what are your frictions, it's about others and understanding theirs. And even at times, they don't fully understand, like they haven't fully articulated, it's like, a vague, acquired anxiety. And so you have to engage, you have to ask, but it's a process of, of, of trying to reveal what what those concerns are

**Jacob Morgan 43:46**

almost like a business therapy session, because it sounds like sometimes people may not always be aware of what the frictions are. Like, if you're coming to me with an idea, and I'm telling, you know, oftentimes, I might not even be aware of the fact that I'm just scared of change, or the fact that I don't know. So I like that point of sometimes people don't always have the awareness themselves to know what the friction might be.

44:10

Yeah, and but I mean, for the person who's failing, like, but I don't want to do that work. Some a lot of friction is on the surface, and you can really anticipate it what it is, and then others is not at all on the surface. And so just when you're thinking about if you want to build more aerodynamic ideas, it's really important to understand the focus, and whether that means asking questions, engaging with them. Sometimes what it means is inviting them in, right like, do we hide? If these are the people we serve? Maybe we hire these people, because now it means we have their perspective when we are trying to make these decisions, but the better we undo Stand the audience then the the more the, the easier it will be to uncover some of the more deeply buried for

**Jacob Morgan 45:10**

okay. Alright, so now let's talk about some action items for depending on which friction you are faced with. So let's say it's inertia, you know that inertia, is that friction? What do you do? What do you do?

45:23

Well, every friction has a set of remedies. And some of those remedies are a little more intuitive than others, some of them less so. So let's imagine you have inertia, I mean, there are basically three broad solutions for a new inertia one would be. So if the problem is that this thing is big and unfamiliar, then at some level, the solution is to make it more comfortable and familiar. And one way you can do that is something we call shrinking the change. And we just talked about a few examples. Another way we do that is by giving people time to acclimate, like almost all of our influence, intuitions are problematic. And one thing the innovator tends to do is use the innovator, you find the product, you spot the problem, you go and search the solutions, you find the best one, you sell it to people and then expect them to embrace change. And the problem with that is, you're asking them to buy in at the precise moment where this thing is the most unfamiliar. And I think a nice way to see that is most people's first, like, if you think back to the first time you tried alcohol is not a good experience for most people, like most people's first sip of beer, booze, whatever, it's unpleasant. And it's unpleasant, because it's a it is a sensation taste. Unlike anything else you've had before. It's it's highly unfamiliar. And that unfamiliarity triggers this kind of aversive response. And then for a lot of people, that unfamiliar thing very quickly becomes a familiar friend. And but imagine if the beer industry basically said, the first time you take a sip of alcohol, we are going to ask you to decide whether to endorse or reject beer. Right? That would be terrible for them, because a lot of people would needlessly reject it. But in essence, this is what we do very often. So another way we can confront inertia is to give the mind time to add limit. Like there's something really interesting about time and repetition. And simply the notion as we bring up ideas, now, if this, if this idea is deeply misaligned with your own interests, well, you're going to your resistance is going to remain constant. But very often simply giving people time to acclimate time to consider helps

remove this feeling of unfamiliarity, so we can give people time to acclimate. And there are other strategies as well. The best, my favorite strategy is what I would call harness relativity. And, you know, the other real problematic thing we do and we try and bring change into the world, is what we almost always do is we give people one option, one path. And the fundamental problem with that is when you give people one option, one path, that's not how the human mind encodes the circumstance, it's really a choice, but you're creating a choice for people. And the choice you are creating for people is what do I prefer to do here? Do I prefer to do what is known what is comfortable? What is familiar that is the status quo? Or would I prefer to embrace this unfamiliar thing? And that is not for the innovator? That is not the that is not the right. Yeah. So we want to create multiple points of comparison that put our innovative idea in in a more favorable,

**Jacob Morgan 49:29**

okay. Let's go with effort. So if you don't effort is the friction. How do you overcome that?

49:38

Yeah, so these are at the there are different approaches. You're at the biggest level, I would ask myself, How do I make it easier? And the reality is, we don't really do that. I would say There has been an awakening in maybe the last 10 years about new, more psychologically human centered forms of fuel, like the importance of why think about all the messages we hear about. Show them why this matters all good. But I would argue, we should give equal time and attention to how. So a good example of this is in, in teaching executive education classes around change in innovation. The number one thing I hear from executives, like their pain, the thing why are they why have they come to this Kellogg program is there's a few themes, but one of them is innovation, they want more innovation. And they're telling me this is the biggest thing, they want to work on the biggest challenge. And if you say, okay, so this is your biggest thing. How are you trying to create that change? How is it you are going about your motivating innovation at your company? Maybe they're doing incentives, but really what they're doing is basically pleading hand wringing emotional appeals. So really interesting question to ask them is, okay. So when in the week precisely is innovation, does that happen? Like his innovation a Tuesday morning from 9am to 10am? activity? And, of course, what gets revealed in that there is no time. And that is, that's really interesting, right? Because this is the most important thing, but they think the way they're gonna get it is through fuel through importance. Yeah. No one doesn't think innovation is important. It's just, it's not easy. They don't know how to do it, there's no windows of opportunity. So there, there are a lot of strategies that we probably don't have time to get into details of these strategies that you really liked. But in essence, what I would encourage people to do is think about, do a user journey map. And look at all the steps people must take for them to do the thing you want them to do? And then try and remove a few.

**Jacob Morgan 52:35**

Okay, that's simple and straightforward enough. All right, we have two more to get to the next friction is emotion followed by reactance. So if you know emotion is the friction, any suggestions on how to overcome that?

52:55

With emotion once you understand, so, I think the way I approach this a little differently is to say, once you understand what the thing is that's getting in the way, very often the solutions are pretty clear. And so that's really the good news about friction theory, the good news about thinking in terms of friction. So if you like, if you are in the guitar business, if you what you do is sell guitars. There is an army of each generation of teenagers being dream of being a rock star being of a musician, like if you're if you don't have the guitar sales, like your issue isn't fuel. The issue is for most people, like no one needs to be convinced it would be cool to learn how to play the guitar. The reason though, there's this tremendous gap in terms of the number of people out there who would love to play the guitar, and the much, much smaller group of people who actually take that step. And a big reason maybe there's some financial constraints. Sure that is a part of that story. But I bet it's a really small part of that story. I bet a much, much bigger part of that story is that there are anxieties in taking that first step what I would call the fear of the uninitiated, like you walk to walk into the guitar shop as a newbie is scary to people. And the music store does everything it can do to amplify that anxiety because who do they hire? They hire experts. They hire basically semi pro musicians that they support their bands through this. So we did some mystery shop. Guitar stores said I'm brand new to This, it's always been a dream of mine about buying your guitar. And basically the first question you will get is, so what kind of guitar Do you want? I think that is such a bad question. If you've got beginner anxiety, because you've just put your finger on my exact anxiety, I don't know, I don't speak the language. I don't know the categories have already been unmasked. I already feel dumb,

**Jacob Morgan 55:26**

very vulnerable and exposed, vulnerable and exposed.

55:30

Yes, there are some kind of more advanced solutions to dealing with some of these things. But I want to shrink the challenge here. And really it is, if as the guitar store, you realize why don't more people come in here. Like, it's not because we have to convince them that guitars are cool. It's because there's anxieties about being the newbie, once you understand what that anxiety is, the solutions generally present

**Jacob Morgan 55:57**

themselves. And last one I know we're just about out of time, for reactance the impulse to resist change any suggestions or advice?

56:14

codesign the experience of invite them in and invite them in more than you think like that, too. And notice, that doesn't mean people need to be invited in at every single stage of the process. It could be deciding what the problem is, or maybe you've identified the problem. And now it's helping to identify what potential solutions are. Or maybe you've identified the problem and you found the solution. But now there's room to bring people into thinking about what specific forms should that solution take? My piece of advice is to engage people early, seek their advice, make them feel heard in the process. And here's why most people listening will not do what I'm recommending, they will not do it because of effort. Right? The thing that's working against all of this is it requires an extra step. I think this is a such a big reason why reactance is the downfall of a lot of great ideas. Like most like when you say yeah,

you should invite people in like them, make them feel heard. That resonates with a lot of innovators and leaders. But we often skip past it because it's another step. It's more meetings. It's more time. Don't succumb to the path of least resistance. Allow people to feel heard in a meaningful way. And you'll find that a lot of people begin to

**Jacob Morgan** 57:47

my listeners and viewers are not lazy. They're gonna take that extra step extra step. They're gonna prove you wrong. Oh, this isn't a fantastic conversation. Lauren, why don't you let people know? Where can they go to learn more about you grab your book, anything that you want to mention for people to check out?

58:04

Check it out. Yep, you can check out the human elements. We have a website called the human element book.com That has really great tools for analyzing friction. So a good next step would be to go to the website, click on the Tools and you'll find a number of different tools that help you analyze the friction. This is free. I'm pushing really the process here. And then reach out to me on LinkedIn or social media. My name makes me very easy. Very

**Jacob Morgan** 58:35

cool. Lauren, thank you so much for taking time out of your day. Really appreciate it. Thanks, everyone for tuning in my guest again, Lauren Nordgren. His book is called the human element overcoming the resistance that awaits new ideas. It's available everywhere. I had a chance to read it. It's an awesome read and I hope you guys get a chance to check it out and I will see all of you next