



Episode 21

Dr. Nicolas Lucas



Dr. Nic Lucas works with entrepreneurs, executives and professionals to master change in their own lives and lead change in others. He is unique in his combined expertise in health science, coaching, and digital marketing strategy. He enables people to understand themselves, resolve unhelpful thought patterns, and apply strategic plans to help them have a massive impact. He is CEO and Founder of Massive Impact International.

Voiceover

This is Business Reimagined. Every week, we talk with thought leaders and revolutionaries who are bringing innovation to their industries, like today's guest, Dr. Nicolas Lucas.

Nic

Life is about more than achievement, and when people only have achievement, they're empty in other areas of their life, and we know this from positive psychology and the theories of well-being. For me, the whole point is about becoming a whole, but also thriving.

Voiceover

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Danny

Dr. Nicolas Lucas is pioneering the application of neuroscience and behavior change research to world of life and business coaching. This builds on eclectic and impressive set of experiences and credentials. He was a musician, a doctor with multiple diplomas, and a brilliant networker and marketer. Getting to where he is now took a lot of steps and iterations, but the repeating pattern began with a very simple behavior that was first modeled for him at a very young age.

Nic

Like all little boys, I think we probably blame our fathers for it. My father when I was a young boy, say 5, he worked in the building industry, and he decided to throw all that away and actually pursue his passion, his life calling actually as a minister in a church. Even I don't anything like that really, I'm not involved in any church or religion, it's funny to look forward to where I am now and realizing that I've given up my safe career to pursue my passion which is still really helping other people in a completely different way than my father.

Danny

The first time that Nick made a radical change to follow his passion, he was too young to have a career to walk out of. What he dropped or rather dropped out of was high school. He was going to be a pop star.

Nic

As a jazz and funk combined with pop. I wanted to be a pop star, and in my mind, I was. Only about 15 people knew, but you have to absolutely believe that it's possible. Otherwise, you don't get up and do the work. I got to see into the lives of these people, and they were struggling so much because it was beyond their talent. Their success relied on so many other variables, and I thought ... While I loved music, it's not a life that I feel I'm going to have enough control over.



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Danny

Nick decided to go to college which turned out to be a challenge since he hadn't finished high school. He went back to school, and fast-tracked the process of getting his diploma, and then went all-in on his university studies for nearly 15 years, and earned numerous degrees.

Nic

Once you learn how to learn and learning ceases to be difficult, you can then apply yourself to anything and learn it quite quickly. It just becomes ... That's why you never stop learning once you learn how to learn. I stuck to human sciences. I specialized in pain medicine. I studied all about what they call evidence-based medicine and research, and statistics. There's a lot of psychology and human behavior change. It's just absolutely wonderful, and I spent a long time doing that.

Danny

When Nick finally left the university, he built a thriving medical practice and then branched out into several other business opportunities including starting a scientific journal that was acquired by an international medical publishing company. This taste of reaching and helping more people left him wanting more, so Nick once again decided to drop everything for one very simple reason.

Nic

I think it is because I had bigger dragons to slay. It's one of those things where when you created something that's actually really good, it is harder to leave that behind, and you've got everyone telling you, "Why would you leave that? You've spent all this time studying. You've created this great thing. You've got a great income, and et cetera. Why would you leave?" It's because I think we are creative beings, and we want to keep creating. When there's more opportunity, you go for it, and in fact, that's what my dad did. He went for it. He left that safe thing behind even though it was successful, and he said, "I can have more impact on people. I can help more people." That's the ultimate driver for me.



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Danny

Nick finally came full circle. Taking the sum of everything he had learned along the way and putting it into Massive Impact International, his new coaching organization that helps professionals and entrepreneurs with their careers and lives. This isn't just another life coaching practice though, because everything he does is based on the neuroscience that he had dedicated his adult life to studying.

Nic

It's brain science and also how that relates to human behavior change because ultimately, every single business owner is trying to change themselves, change their own life, and to do that, they actually have to have an impact on their customer. The lens that I look at business through is actually behavior change. If you're a salesperson and you want to have a sale, what you're really doing is wanting to change the behavior of your client or your potential client where they're not paying through to now where they're paying you. That is a behavior change, and there's a whole lot of theory and brain science. Well, not theory too. Really good research about how people can change, how to change someone's behavior, and that approach, that lens is not spoken about that often in the business circles that I have come across anyway. It gives me a unique perspective and unique knowledge to draw on that helps people see things differently. Like I said, not to mention the brain science that we've also learned about how to optimize our life which directly relates to business.

Danny

What does the brain science about behavior change tell us? What are some of the important insights that you bring to bear when you work with your clients?

Nic

One of the aspects about brain science that is ... It's like the elephant in the room is what we would call non-conscious emotion. Another term that they'll use in psychology is implicit memories, so if I talk about explicit memory, that is you



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remembered and I remembered to turn up today at the certain time because we ... That's a memory, or we remember it's Labor Day, or we remember the score of a certain sporting event, or whatever. That's explicit memory. Implicit memory is like non-conscious memory where it's an emotion, and all sorts of things can trigger these memories, and we can start feeling a certain way and not really know why we are feeling that way.

Danny

What's an example of that?

Nic

An example could be that as a teenager, you approached a girl that you liked that you wanted to have an impact on, and it didn't go well, and you got incredibly embarrassed and ashamed of yourself, and got made fun of, or something like that. That was when you were 15, and 20 years later, you're 35, and you're turning up to give a presentation, and it turns out that there's a woman in the room who you'd like to impress. You don't know why, but all of a sudden, all of your confidence goes out the door. All of sudden you feel like you're fumbling around at the projector, and you can't get the cord into your MacBook or whatever computer you use to make it work.

You know that you're confident. You're highly credentialed. You're successful. You've got a business, yet here you come to this pitch, and for some reason you're just feeling awkward. Then they feel awkward because you're feeling awkward, and this one meeting can have a massive impact on the outcome of your business, yet because your brain is triggered by a memory and it triggers that emotion that has never been resolved, it can have an impact very much on the outcome that you have. Of course, that's happening not just in that one meeting, but it's happening on a regular basis.



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Danny

It's not just that one experience either I would imagine.

Nic

Exactly right.

Danny

There's dozens or hundreds of these subconscious scripts running in parallel.

Nic

Absolutely right, and the word that I'll use is a neurotag. A neurotag is an output from multiple areas of the brain that produces a reliable output. Maybe if I use a ... What's a good example? Let's just say there's a manager, and that manager or CEO of an organization, whatever. Their leader, and they're usually very friendly, amicable. They really genuinely care about their staff's well-being, and yet when a deadline approaches, this person becomes distant, and diminishing, and authoritarian. That's just what happens, and they don't really notice that that's what's happening, but their staff do, and their staff don't like it.

The reason this neurotag, this deadline neurotag gets triggered each time there's a deadline coming is because in the past it's actually still being successful. The deadline has been met. A successful project was launched, and this CEO or the leader ... That's a success. Even though it wasn't optimal, even though it left the staff feeling bad and it could've been better, because it was a success, it gets laid down as this neurotag, and it gets triggered each time a deadline approaches. That is a pattern, because our brains work on patterns. While it has led to the success of that leader, it is at the same time limiting his or her success because they're stuck in the pattern and they can't get the best out of their staff.



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Danny

The issue with patterns is that correlation doesn't equal causation. If you do something repeatedly and you get an outcome, you could be getting the outcome in spite of what you're doing every time, but the pattern is still there.

Nic

That's exactly right. That's exactly right. What we're looking to do ... One of the most powerful and valuable things you can do is learn to escape your perspective. Learn to think differently. I call it trying to jump on your shadow. It's actually really difficult, but it's a skill that you can learn because we understand the brain is plastic. That means you can change your brain. That adage that people never change is false, because people do change. They're changing all the time, and the more you understand about how possible it is to change, you can then do an audit of your life, and your business, the way you conduct yourself, and say, "How can things be better? How can we improve this outcome?" Very often it includes taking a look at yourself and being able to escape the current way of seeing things.

Danny

I want to dig into this because I agree that people can change, but I've always felt that it's not that people can't, it's that it's very hard to change, and it's only going to happen if the person really wants to change and there's a concerted effort. Can you explain a little bit or talk a little bit about ... Because you said there's the fact that change is possible. How possible is it? How plastic is our thinking and our behavior really? Then I'd like to hear about how that is actually accomplished.

Nic

It is very, very plastic, and very, very changeable. There's a saying that came out of the last few decades called, "Neurons that fire together wire together." What that's really saying is the more you do, think a certain way and behave a certain way, the stronger those neurotags or those pathways in your brain become, and that's why it's hard to shift because these other patterns become so ingrained. We understand



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from neuroscience how that happens. The word for it is called long term potentiation, and it facilitates. Think of just water running down a track. The more it runs down the track, it creates a groove and there it goes.

There's also a process called long term depression which has nothing to do with depression as in feeling down in the dumps, but it is the process that the brain uses to change and get rid of that pathway, and form a new pathway. This isn't just a concept that life coaches and personal development people have come up with. This is an understood electrochemical process that goes on in the brain. The question you're really asking is, "How do you go about making that happen?"

Danny

I have a question first about what is the ratio of time spent creating a pattern and time spent erasing a pattern? If I've been engaged in an unconstructive pattern for 3 years, how long does it take to erase that proportionally?

Nic

It can happen incredible quickly. It can happen incredible quickly. I'm talking within minutes.

Danny

How does that work?

Nic

You've a very interesting question. It really is, and I'm trying to think of a way to illustrate it with a question back to you. Have you ever just changed? Have you ever decided for some reason that you just don't like a certain TV show and you just don't watch it anymore? Have you ever had a favorite band, and all of a sudden, you just don't listen to that band anymore?

Danny

Possibly. I'm thinking, and the thing is when I think of what examples might be, I think it's always ... Let's say it's a TV show, and I could see the same thing with



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music, and I can see the same thing with interpersonal relationships. A TV show that I like, the quality was good or whatever, and could be a relationship that I was getting a lot of value from, and great person, and so forth. Overtime, it was good enough to maintain the relationship. Whether the show was good enough, doesn't matter if I loved it or not, but it was good enough, whatever.

Overtime, the quality just diminished. The person and I grew out of touch, whatever the dynamic is, and I think that instantaneous decision it does happen, but it happens when you've reached a tipping point where you're kind of ticked off, and you're like, "You know what? This just isn't making sense anymore." I can't think of an example where I was really into something, benefiting from something, engaged with something, and then overnight it was just no without there being a strong reason for that to happen. Like a falling out with a friend for example.

Nic

This is only one way to approach a question which I think is fundamental of what you've asked, fundamental message. Even in that case where something's happened, you may have had a pattern of activity that you've been doing. A habit of always calling that person, or always looking at their Facebook feed, or always hanging out with them, or it's always Friday nights, we go out. Then all of a sudden, something happens, and because of that change, it's not like you might miss the Friday night, or you might go, "Oh yeah. I remember I used to do that," but there's no compulsion to do it. Even though it was a habit, the habit changed really quickly. I just know things like, I used to drive a certain way to the beach. One day, I decided to go another way. There was a pattern I could even drive automatically without thinking and arrive at the place, not knowing how I got there. You know when that happens, right?



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Danny

Yeah. My mind was going towards examples that are much more intentional. Like ending a relationship for example. You're used to calling the person every day, and there almost is a compulsion. You reach for your phone sort of thing, right?

Nic

Yeah.

Danny

In the same way that breaking digital habits can be difficult. It sounds like you're talking more about the things which make sense. If you're talking about these unconscious scripts that are kind of running in the back of your mind. It's like the route that you take to work until one day you try a different one for whatever reason, and then you like it better, and that's what you do forever.

Nic

That's right, and it's not like you can't go that way and automatically do it. Those things too aren't that emotionally charged. These are memories, these are neurotags that don't really have an emotion attached with them. Where they become more difficult to change is when there is an emotional charge associated with the pattern or the behavior that we're doing. Because there's even patterns of thoughts that are habitual like constantly ... A lot of people constantly have fear, or a lot of people have thoughts going around in their mind about not being good enough, or what if I fail?

Danny

Ruminating on past frustrations or something like that.

Nic

Exactly right. They're harder to change because they've got emotional charge associated with them, and especially when it's negative emotional charge. That triggers very basic emotions within us about survival, and our brain places a lot of emphasis on survival. That's why people are much more likely to ruminate about



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negative things than positive things. That's where there's an issue. Now, even when it comes to that about can people change overnight. Let me tell you a story.

I was about 16. We were in a large church here in Australia. Thousands of people. There was a gentleman in that church who had been an alcoholic after a horrendous accident took his family from him, and he'd been an alcoholic for about 30 years. Homeless. He came into this church. He went to, and this is quite classic kind of evangelical church. He went to the front, he got prayer, and in that instant, he stopped being an alcoholic. He turned up to church every single Sunday after that. He was one of the people who stood at the door, and greeted everyone, and handed out the brochures, and his entire life changed overnight despite 30 years of alcoholism and everything else you can imagine that goes along with that.

There were also lots of other people who came in who had all kinds of addictions who that didn't happen for at all. They came week, after week, after week. Tried to get prayer for it to get better, and of course they'd end up back, and it didn't change. As a young boy, young man looking at that, that frustrated me, and I was completely unsatisfied with the answer I was given at the time which is, "Well, God moves in mysterious ways." I didn't like that answer. That's what drove me a lot in my study in science and human behaviors because well I know there's these random things that are possible. For that guy to have had that outcome, there's something biological is going on that's created that. It's just that the people at the church don't know how to recreate that in the other people.

They're saying it was the prayer that did it, but I think there might be something else going on. I've been on a search for that type of thing throughout my career, and what's been wonderful about brain science is that we understand more and more



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about how people can change their behavior, how they can let emotional charge go, and how they can form new habits that help them thrive, and it can happen quickly. The issue is going to be how deep rooted the problem is, but I know in my own life, I've been able to ... Especially in recent years where I've been learning a lot more about advanced coaching techniques, there's been my own stuff. I've been able to leave behind very quickly and in very powerful ways, and I've been able to do it in a quick period of time.

Danny

How does that happen? What is the logistical speaking ... If you were to meet a client who has an issue, one of these scripts running in the back of their minds? How do you solve that?

Nic

I'd wish I discovered these techniques a long time ago. Because they would've been very useful. Okay, how do we best describe it? First of all, let's just go through the process, and then we can talk about why it might work. There's a saying in Buddhism, and it is completely reinforced in brain science. It goes that, "What we resist persists." The more you try to do positive thinking, and push down, and ignore, and soldier through negative thoughts, it keeps those negative thoughts alive, it keeps them going around and around in our mind. The famous studies that would relate to this. The pink elephant or the white bear studies where they've had people to try and not think about white bears or pink elephants, and of course, you can't not think about it.

I've put them in a room and say, "Don't think about pink elephants for the next 5 minutes," and people seem to think about it every 6 seconds. There's something about the way the brain is wired that when you try to stop doing something, when you try to not think about something, it seems to reinforce it and keep it present in



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the mind. What I come across with a lot of people is this resistance, is this trying to avoid the thing that is actually giving them so much grief. I'm not good enough. You're a failure. You're not worthy of this. You're going to fail, so they got this going around in their mind, and they don't want to face it, so they try and hide it. The coaching techniques that help people discharge this are those that actually have people walk into that and experience that feeling fully. In doing that through these processes, those feelings dissolve.

An example I have is one of my client's. Great friend as well. An incredibly capable man. The credentials out the wazoo. He's phenomenal at what he can do. He was doing a project, and he was really stuck on it, and stuck to the point of months, and months of procrastination from getting this thing done, and it really boiled down to the fact that it was so close to his heart that he felt incredibly vulnerable. He felt like he wasn't good enough. He felt like when he launched this project that it could really risk his reputation. You could logically put down on paper everything about why it would be a success, and why he had nothing to worry about, but logic can't fix a problem that wasn't formed in logic. This is an emotional problem.

We ran a process on him which was him totally moving into the feeling of not being good enough, fully creating it, getting rid of any other thought except not being good enough, and then moving into the feeling of what it is to be good enough. Then moving back to a feeling of not being good enough, and it was actually this alternating backward and forward. It's just one of the techniques in coaching you can use that ... In the end, the 2 dissolved into one another, and he couldn't access the feeling of not being good enough, and he hasn't been able to access that feeling ever since, and it's been month and months.



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That's an example of a simple coaching process that rather than trying to logically explain to someone why they're good enough. Have them actually face the very feeling they ... There was a fear associated with, there was negative fear with, and face it with a way that helped that charge, that loop, that neurotag lose its emotional impact. Now, I can't actually explain from a brain science point of view how that happens. We can sit down and I can point to the various nuclei in the brain and explain what must have happened for it to occur, but why it happened and the actual process, no one's been able to look inside a brain and see that happen. That's an example, a very real example of a business leader stuck because they didn't feel good enough and dissolving that in a short period of time.

Danny

That's fascinating, and does this have to be a coach led process? Can this be self-directed?

Nic

Absolutely. That can be self-directed once you know how to do it. Like anything, it's a skill, and you can acquire the skill. The real advantage of a coach, and this is me speaking about the coaches I've had. I've had a lot of coaches, and jumping on your own shadow is difficult. I personally find it a challenge. When I have a coach, it's having that other mind there to come up with ideas, or creative ways, or things that you're not seeing because you are stuck in a perspective. However, having said that, I definitely use these processes myself to work through things because I can. Because I've learned how to do it, and I think that's the key thing I was talking about before is that once you learn how to rewire your brain, it is a skill you can acquire and then apply, but if I get stuck on something, I'll still ask for help from my coaches, people who I know to help me get through this stuff.



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Danny

It sounds to me like your reimagination of business is as you said when we began to speak, your reimagination of business is to see basically all of business is boiling down to an effort to change behaviors. A lot of that comes down to understanding your own brain science and getting the help and facilitation from others to make that happen when you need. Does that ring true?

Nic

Absolutely. Although change in behavior is the process, it's not the goal. No one really says, "I want to change my behavior for the sake of it." It's really, what is the goal of changing behavior? What is the goal of all this? For me, the goal is not only to make people whole. Because I think that's what entrepreneurs are trying to do. They are wanting to make themselves whole. They are looking for something that is going to fulfill them, but life is about more than achievement. When people only have achievement, they're empty in other areas of their life. We know this from positive psychology and the theories of well-being is that there's a lot more to life than just achievement. For me, the whole point is about becoming whole, but also thriving.

This is so important. The example in psychology is anxiety, and the reason I'll talk about anxiety is because I've had it and I've written a book about it that's on Amazon. I've been through that process, so I understand it. A lot of therapy aimed at anxiety is about helping people get over anxiety, yet what I've found and now what the evidence points to is that it's far more effective to help people thrive as opposed to get over anxiety. If you understand the distinction, when you're trying to get over anxiety, it's like, "Well, here's this thing I've got to get over," and you're focused on that. If you're focused on thriving, you're not focused on anxiety. You're focused on an outcome that's highly positive, and that that focus on something that is highly



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positive actually helps to resolve the anxiety without you having to get over the anxiety. It actually takes the focus off anxiety and puts it on thriving rather than focusing on the thing you're trying to get over.

In business, it's the same thing. What is this better version of life that you can imagine as an entrepreneur, and a business leader, or whether you're an entrepreneur working in someone else's business? What is the better version here that is holistic, that is going to not only increase my well-being, but the well-being of my staff, and ultimately the well-being of my customers or clients because that's ... If I can do that, then I'm going to have an incredibly successful business that has a massive impact and a lasting legacy, and it's so different than, "Hey dude, can you help me sell some stuff?" That's fine. People make money doing that. When you're looking for people who ... When people are looking to thrive, then if they take on the attitude of thriving as leaders themselves, then that's what they infect their organization with, and then that's what they want to infect their organization with in relation to the outcomes they get for their clients no matter what it is they're selling.

Danny

That was Dr. Nicolas Lucas, reimagining business as behavior change, and leveraging cutting-edge neuroscience research to make it happen. His core lesson is powerful. Rather than obsessing about what might be holding you back, focus forward on the opportunity to make a real impact and thrive in the process. To learn more about Nick's work, visit nielucas.com. That's N-I-C-L-U-C-A-S.com.

Voiceover

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Danny

Today's reviewer is Tracy Matt, who says, "Danny in his approach to business is inspiring and thoughtful. His Business Reimagined podcast is a brilliant combo of insight, experience, and forward thinking. As an outside of the box thinker myself, I find the interviews and guests fascinating and have learned so much even in just a few episodes. A must listen for anyone who wants to succeed as an entrepreneur or business owner." Thank you very much Tracy Matt. That's exactly what we were going for. I'm so glad that you enjoy it, and I'm excited for you to hear the upcoming episodes.

Voiceover

This has been Business Reimagined with Danny Iny. Join us next time as we talk with John Corcoran.

John

There's this notion that's been popularized by Malcolm Gladwell, the 10,000 hours. The idea that all you need to do is put in 10,000 hours and you'll be a success, and I think that that's a really bad way of looking at things because I think as a result, people just think they just need to put their head down. They need to retreat to their garage, or their woodshed, or their office, or their laptop, and just work on creating their thing, whatever it is. Their blog, or their podcast, or whatever, and they don't go out and actively try and build the relationships that will be instrumental, and whether they're successful or not.

Voiceover

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