

Corey Andrew Powell
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Nicole Phillips is co-founder of Qatch - with a "Q"- a retail tech startup that uses a tap back feature to capture individual style preferences and turns them into better shopping recommendations over time. Nicole joins me today to share the inspiration behind this new shopping platform. I'm Corey Andrew Powell, your host, and this is Motivational Mondays.

Corey Andrew Powell
Nicole Phillips
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I'm joined today by Nicole Phillips, co-founder of Qatch a retail Tech startup, that delivers, a more professional and personalized shopping experience to young female college students and professionals. So Nicole Welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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Thank you so much for having me.

Corey Andrew Powell
Nicole Phillips
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Well, it is my pleasure and it's funny. Just so, you know, I was doing my little research and when I get to the About Us section, at join Qatch.com, you have a very funny line there. And it begins with hey, an accountant and a lawyer walk into a bar. And of course that sounds like the start of a crazy joke. Tell me some of the frustrations that you found with the existing shopping platforms. That led you guys to have a conversation that now led to Qatch?

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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Great way to segment into this. So I'm a former attorney and I worked in the fashion space. So I have always loved fashion and retail. I made a career out of it. But from a consumer, I really hated the physical experience of shopping online.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell

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Because I felt it took way too much of my time. I was a busy professional. I was working in fashion. So I always had to be on trend. I was going to events and parties with some really, really big names in the industry. And every time I had to buy something for an event, this is what would happen. I would start at one website. Let's say shopbop.com, they have thousands of things, great stuff, but I always had to filter and then try to find something. And then I'd be like, okay, let me go to another website, do the same thing over again, right?

Nicole Phillips

Corey Andrew Powell

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Repeat that a couple of times. And then you look down at the clock and you're like, I just wasted an hour of my life and I still haven't bought anything, and I've got to go feed my dogs. I've got to go get my workout and I've got to make dinner. What is this, this is so crazy. And so I felt that there had to be an easier way with all the technology that is being developed in all of these other industries. I felt that retail and fashion and specifically online shopping was a little behind the times.

Nicole Phillips

Corey Andrew Powell

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So, Raquel who is the accountant in the story and I'm the lawyer — she's actually my younger smarter sister. Don't tell her, I said that, but she is. And so we grew up, there's five girls in our family. We shared clothes and share — loose term, steal, half the time but when we were in these professional relationships and making money for ourselves, finally, we didn't have to have hand-me-downs. We could buy our own stuff, but we weren't because it was just so difficult to do, to go out there and browse and do it yourself.

Nicole Phillips

Corey Andrew Powell

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And so we kind of there chatting over tapas one night. I had an event coming up. I really needed to buy something. She had an event coming up. She really had to buy something and we just thought, isn't it so funny. We love shopping, but we hate it at the same time. So we just started throwing some ideas around, wouldn't it be cool if... Imagine if we could do that? And so a lot of this is sort of a brainstorming session that we didn't know that's what it would become.

Nicole Phillips

Corey Andrew Powell
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It got us really, really excited. And then just for fun. We started building a business plan and things like that. And one thing led to another, and we really set out to solve the problem that we were experiencing of an overwhelming and really, just a not fun experience of online shopping.

Corey Andrew Powell
Nicole Phillips
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Give me like one example of one thing that you guys streamlined or modified in the process, that really you thought was a game changer.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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We have Partnerships with over 100 brands, everyone from Nordstrom to Shopbop to Free People, to Macy's and Banana Republic. And what we're doing is, it's almost like what GrubHub and Ubereats does. It's providing all these products in one place so that you don't have to go from website to website. And every time you interact with a product, say you will get 10 recommendations a week through text message. And we really tell our users to interact. So we use the tap back feature. So you just double tap the product recommendation in your text message and you give it a heart if you love it, a thumbs up if you like and a thumbs down, if you don't. So what we're doing is we're building a style profile on you of products that you really like and products that you don't like, but it's across all of these different brands. So we start to get really smart with the technology that we've built. So we are eliminating all these products. These hundreds and thousands of products across all of these websites so that you don't have to see it. You don't have to sift through that, you don't have to browse.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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And so, what you're left with is a really small amount of high-quality products that are super relevant to your particular style and, 1.) not only does that save time, but it also makes it really exciting. It's almost like a hunt. Oh, what am I going to see next? And the chances are, it's going to be something that is exciting and relevant to you and you're so excited. You don't have to go to page 75, on Nordstrom, to find it yourself. We did it for you..and one of the most unfortunate things about online shopping is, yes, you get served up these recommendations, but it is really a

one-sided experience. In the sense of if you click on a product, it thinks because you've clicked it, that there's something about it that you like now. What if you click a product and then you say, oh my gosh, that pattern is awful. I do not want that.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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You click away. There's really no way for you to say I'm clicking away because I dislike this. So now your "recommended for me" starts looking like these products that you don't like. With us, that thumbs down is actually the most important data point that we can get because we can quickly learn, okay, this is not for you. We will stop showing you these products.

Corey Andrew Powell
Nicole Phillips
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Right? Yeah, that's really, really smart and I am curious too, as well you mentioned, you are an attorney, and so you have this degree that's in fashion law. Now. Look, I've heard of the fashion police. Okay, but not fashion law. So I am curious to know what fashion law is all about. And also how that sort of prepared you for building Qatch.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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So fashion law is a masters of law program. I graduated from Fordham law school. So a masters of law is basically a very very niche subset of the law. So I had to get my JED. So I became a lawyer, I was licensed and practiced in Massachusetts and New York. And then I really wanted to become an expert in this very particular industry, which was retail and fashion. So the program is a year-long. Now, there's a bunch of law schools that do it. And what they do is they teach you not only a little bit about a lot of different parts of the law that are important to say, a big retailer or a small up-and-coming brand.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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Everything from trademark to copyright filings to, how do you negotiate a contract with a big manufacturer. To being aware of custom and import tax, right? So a little about everything, but it also taught me about just the insider business. What are terms that you can negotiate with Nordstrom? What is sort of industry, expectations? And what is just the way it is?

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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Right, so you're able to go into these negotiations and conversations with companies and collaborations and you really know your thing. You're not coming in as an outsider. And so that program, I worked in House of David Yurman, and then I worked for a boutique firm that helps brands up-and-coming everything from again, trademark and licensing agreements, and what it taught me is brands are in it for themselves, right? Obviously, they love consumers and that's how they make money.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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But it is an outdated business model, in the sense that they have a lot of inventory, and they need to sell it to the masses, and they need to get it off their shelves because new inventory is coming in. And so, as a result of that personalization to the consumer experience suffers, and so, I knew working in this industry, if I wanted a personalized shopping experience. It wasn't going to be a brand that could solve this for me. It was going to be an outside company or an outside startup.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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That would come in and work alongside very closely with the brand's to make it a better shopping experience for everyone. And so that's why I think Qatch is perfectly situated. We are not a competitor to any of the Brands. We are, actually we call ourselves their matchmakers. We are matching a product in their inventory with a user who will love it, who may not necessarily actually come across it themselves.

Corey Andrew Powell
Nicole Phillips
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That's a really important element for business because it shows you that sometimes what is perceivably an unrelated field can still give you information, right, for a future Endeavor. And I think that's a really interesting point about that because I was like, well, how does law fit into shopping and you were able to connect all these really great dots right to form your business?

Nicole Phillips

Corey Andrew Powell
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Yes. It's interesting. Law covers a lot of different Industries, but I think just the skill set and having worked closely with some of these brands. I really do understand what they are looking for and how we can work together to make it a nice cyclical experience that benefits the consumer and the brand. And I mean I am the target demographic, right? So we are targeting young, professional women who want to look good, want to feel good. Just they don't have the time to go out and find products themselves. So I sat one foot in both worlds and I kind of just opened up my mind and came up with this concept.

Corey Andrew Powell
Nicole Phillips
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Part of your profile, of course, is that you are helping young women gain confidence in the workplace. And so if anyone were to look at that and go. Well, how do they do it, exactly? That's really pretty much it. Like, you are allowing them not to have to spend their time as you mentioned, sifting, through website, after website, just to get the professional look that they want. Time-consuming, right? You're giving them their time back, their life, back in a way.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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That's right. There's a saying it's been around forever - dress for the job you want. Working in a really male-dominated industry, which law still is to this day, how you dress really affects how you present yourself and even how you communicate with others. And if you feel good, whether it is your hair looks good or your outfit, you really are, you're putting your best foot forward and your best self out there and you just do better work. And so, yeah, if we can eliminate hours of browsing and give that back to a young female, so she can focus on her career, focus on her relationships if she has family, I mean, those are the important things in life. Clothing? Sure, everyone needs clothing, but it really is more about how we can make you feel your best self and put your best self out there.

Nicole Phillips
Corey Andrew Powell
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Thank you to everyone listening today. And don't forget you can find us everywhere you stream and download your favorite podcast, will see you next week on Motivational Mondays.