Corey Andrew Powell ([00:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Hello everyone. I am Corey Andrew Powell, and this is Motivational Mondays. Of course, I'm joined today by Blake Johnson, a Los Angeles-based entrepreneur and philanthropist, who was founded and successfully sold a variety of businesses throughout his career. His latest venture Byte was founded in 2017 and named by Forbes Magazine as one of the fastest growing companies. Uh, but it was the fastest growing company, uh, going from zero to 1 billion in valuation that was bootstrapped and not funded by venture capital. So he just kind of did it all on his own. So Jake heads the Blake Johnson Alliance as well that provides Los Angeles-based youth with a safe, healthy, supportive environment, all of which helps them, of course, to prepare to be more successful in school and in life. Blake, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Blake Johnson ([00:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank You very much. Good to meet you, Corey.

Corey Andrew Powell ([00:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Thank you. You too. I mean, did I get that bio right? Because you've done a lot of stuff, so I don't wanna get it wrong.

Blake Johnson ([00:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Good. You did it well, thank you.

Corey Andrew Powell ([00:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Okay, <laugh>, you're you're very welcome. So thank you. So you're very passionate about the philanthropy work, and as we were just speaking off camera a few moments. I know a big part of that, and a big part of your brand mission is anchored in your own background growing up, which does include, uh, a wonderful story about how you had a special mentor that inspired you, and I believe it was your principal. So speak a little bit about what that experience was like, like how it changed you, pre mentorship, post mentorship, and then how it led you on the trajectory that you're on today.

Blake Johnson ([01:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Sure. I grew up in a small farming town about two hours east of Tijuana in El Centro, California. El Centro. Not many people know it, but it is, uh, it has a number one ranking and one thing, and one thing only. It has the highest unemployment rate in the nation. It has been that way in- indefinitely for, I think, as long as I can remember. So very poor community on the Mexican border and relatively, you know, little opportunity outside of farming and agriculture. It was going, growing up there. My grandparents moved in the late sixties to basically start the school system down there, um, and brought my whole family from, you know, the Wyoming area at Cheyenne, Wyoming, down to El Centro. And they went from the hottest place, excuse me, the coldest place in the, almost in the US to the, the god awful hottest place.

Blake Johnson ([02:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

It was regularly one 20 plus in the summer. So, uh, it was interesting growing up there and really a blessing, I think, 'cause it created a lot of perspective, um, in later life of kind of having that environment and kinda recognizing, you know, the little opportunity. It was, it was, you know, very present, um, in that community that there wasn't very many people that got out of there. And, you know, the, the ones that got lucky, you know, moved 120 miles west to San Diego and you maybe work econstruction. But, uh, having kind of been down there and growing up in the eighties was, was a blessing because, you know, in, in that time it really allowed kind of a lot of exploration and, and to see and be a part of the community, albeit small community. Um, and I went to a small country school.

Blake Johnson ([03:09](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

It was miles from the nearest structure, um, in the middle of fields. And it, I luckily had, you know, a, a teacher and a principal in high school, or excuse me, in, in grade school that flagged, you know, that I could, should be thinking about something beyond the small farming community. And it took, it took kind of seed and it kinda later grew his, his daughter, he was, he was a very interesting guy. His daughter was a year older than me. He was from Washington, DC and a member of Mensa. It was the kind of the first time I got exposure to a really, really academically smart person. He kinda grew up in the, in the wrong part of DC. His teachers recognized that he was, he was, you know, extremely smart growing up, and they just sent him to study on his own at the, uh, library of Congress.

Blake Johnson ([04:01](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And so he just immersed himself in, in books and reading, and in fact played a game with us and, you know, brought in a dictionary and he would pay us a dollar for every word he didn't know in the dictionary. I think, you know, all year he would do this once a week, but all year I think he paid out $1, you know, that whole year.

Corey Andrew Powell ([04:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

<laugh>Yeah. Yeah

Blake Johnson ([04:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

But, uh, luckily he flagged, um, and he had actually sent his daughter [inaudible] Brown to a boarding school, very good prep school in California. It was only three hours away by car, but we took the Greyhound bus, so that meant it was seven hours with a lot of stops. And I took the bus up there, interviewed to the school, they miraculously let me in to this day, I'm, I'm, you know, still thankful and surprised that I got in, but followed his, his daughter there, um, and had the opportunity, you know, in high school to get exposure to a completely different world that kind of opened up my eyes to a number of different other possibilities and opportunities that, you know, I was later kind of able to guide myself towards.

Corey Andrew Powell ([05:05](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. And that, that's such a loaded experience that you've shared there because it speaks to how very often you mentioned in that particular area, it was unlikely for people to get out and be able to change the path of their lives because of lack of resources or even just lack of having people who could help guide them. And we see that everywhere really, when there's a community that's depressed or lack of resources, it's sort of like a cycle that you never get out of. And so that definitely makes sense why that would fuel you to then go back and, and make that a part of your life. So that gets us to your college years. How was that for you sort of transitioning from this small, you know, community and now you're in an academic environment that there's, I guess I would imagine a lot more diversity, a lot more new experiences, visually stimulation as well? What was that like for you?

Blake Johnson ([05:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Uh, it, it, well, it was interesting. I actually had just set my sights ironically, on going to the Naval Academy in Annapolis. I had a, uh, a somebody older, um, who was assigned my big brother when I was a freshman at, at, at this boarding school. I really looked up to him and admired him and, and was focused on following his footsteps. He ended up going to Annapolis and later became a Navy Seal and had this kind of illustrious story and career that really sounded appealing to me. And I had my site solely focused on that. And despite having the grades and all the recommendation letters and, you know, the, the resume for whatever reason, I didn't get in. And I kind of look back at that and, and say, that was a, a pretty pivotal break in my life in a, in a lucky way.

Blake Johnson ([06:43](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

One of those things that at the moment I was crushed. I had plans to go play tennis there, I thought I was gonna get in, but in, in retrospect, it was somebody looking out for me on, on that one, which I, you know, have a lot of faith that's happened too many times to explain through my life like a weird pivot will, will, you know, inadvertently steer you in a better direction that you don't, can't recognize at the time. So, had all my chips there, didn't get in, was devastated. But the only other tennis coach I was really speaking with at the time was a gentleman by the name of Bill Wright. And for context in my small little farming town of, of El Centro, California, all we did, we had cattle school and we had an asphalt tennis court. So this little neighborhood turned out this uncanny hide number of division one tennis players.

Blake Johnson ([07:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And so I had aspirations to go, you know, play tennis. It was, it was decent at it. It wasn't, you know, you affiliate tennis with, you know, an affluent sport. It's quite the opposite. I was too slow to play soccer down there. And, and so by nature it was, uh, it was the only other thing we really had available. So I ended up going to the University of Arizona out of there and, and most of my classes were going off to small liberal arts schools or Ivy Leagues. It was a pivot that, you know, was a little different for me at the time, was a harder pill to swallow, given kind of where my head was at. But again, one of the luckiest breaks of my life was, uh, despite the, the reputation of Arizona, it was an excellent academic institution, studied a lot, had a, had really a good foundation, and it kind of thrust you into the more, uh, realm of developing eq, which we all know in, in business and, and life really, you know, carries a lot of weight, you know, IQ versus eq.

Blake Johnson ([08:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And so the, the college experience was interesting because I had three jobs simultaneous. I worked hotel at night, I started a landscaping company. I went to play tennis. I ended up getting hurt shortly after getting there back home, working cattle, and had, uh, broken my tailbone, sat me out long enough, I kind of got on a path of, of teaching tennis as one of my three jobs and going to school full-time. But that, that whole, you know, four years of, of going there was, was interesting. And it kind of thrust me into a different environment where I could, when I look back, was able to kind of hone in a lot of the skillset that played, you know, well in later life and specifically in business that I, I wouldn't have gotten at Annapolis and I wouldn't have gotten at a smaller liberal arts school had I kind of followed the peer group of my kind of high school crew. So that was, that, that was, uh, another kind of, you know, hard critical cornerstone, you know, kind of shaping life and shaping, you know, your perspective and skill sets.

Corey Andrew Powell ([09:36](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, when I have these interviews and conversations with successful people, very often, of course CEOs or people who have just done really well in business in general, I always find these common denominators between them. And you just tapped into quite a few there. One is the idea of, at the time, things that are happening for you. If we step outside and look at it differently. It may feel awful at the time, but I spoke to a survivor of the Boston bombing, uh, marathon Bomber, and she had this whole amazing story about how it, it changed her and made her a more compassionate person, and all these great opportunities came from something as awful. And she said, you know, things that are happening to you sometimes in life were happening for you.

Blake Johnson ([10:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Right.

Corey Andrew Powell ([10:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And, um, that sounds very much like that. But then also the other thing is too, the other big leadership lesson that you just shared is the pivot, right? When you have all your eggs in one basket, you're like, this is it. I'm going to this school, I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that. And the people who really are successful are the ones who are able to pivot and not get stuck in the moment.

Blake Johnson ([10:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Correct.

Corey Andrew Powell ([10:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Right?

Blake Johnson ([10:40](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. I I I've seen that. Yeah. Time and time again, the ability to be nimble, uh, the ability to kind of fluctuate and, and being okay with that when things don't go your way. Having, you know, the faith that you a, have the ability to kind of persist through it, but b it often creates new opportunities, uh, without hitting roadblocks. You know, it, it roadblocks are absolutely necessary in the path. And if you're not hitting them, you're doing something wrong. You're not on the right path, the right path often is one that you're not anticipating. When we start businesses, and I'm now launched my sixth business started from scratch, conceptualized funded in the last five and exited all five, just launched number six on August 28th last month or last week, excuse me. But I always say whatever you think the the right path is, you're absolutely wrong.

Blake Johnson ([11:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You know, uh, when you start something, you know, that, that whatever your plan is on going forward, it's, you know, the only guaranteed thing is at that is not gonna happen. You need to understand and welcome the pivots and the roadblocks and, and, you know, really embrace that as they often create new opportunities and, and leads you in a direction that will ultimately put you in the right place long-term. I always also often say there's a lot of paths up the mountain. You know, everybody has their own path, but you just gotta keep focused on going to the top and what's right for you is not right for me and vice versa. And, you know, everybody kind of, you know, will, will, will proceed, you know, through life in a different path. But just keeping your eye on the true north and, and getting to whatever goal it is, is kind of the most important. And recognizing that, you know, there's no one way up. It, there's a lot. And when you give yourself the, the flexibility of seeing multiple paths, you can often choose a better one as you start walking, walking up or walking up the road.

Corey Andrew Powell ([12:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, I think that's a great bit of advice too, because so many young people in the college age or young college age, I mean, we have kind of older, non-traditional students too, but usually the younger ones are the ones who are following sort of like this path that a parent ha ha has laid out for them.

Blake Johnson ([13:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([13:03](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Or, you know, they are going to the same school, their ki- their friends are all gonna go to after high school. And I'm like, well then you're just like in the 13th grade if you do that, right? Like, you're not, you're not really expanding like you did and meeting all these new people 'cause you got out of the town, you know? So yeah, it's really, it's really easy, uh, you know, because it's comfortable I guess, for us just kind of to stay with what we know. But yeah, I think to your point, the best learning happens when we are uncomfortable forced to be nimble, as you said, and, and land on our feet in adverse situations. That's pretty much what's worked for me.

Blake Johnson ([13:38](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. I, I, I see that as you, you talked about common denominators, that that is one, uh, you know, they, they say always get outta your comfort zone, but, but it's not about solely getting outta your comfort zone, it's being okay with the unknown. It's okay, you know, risking something and, and being very good at failure and loving failure. It, it's a weird thing, but I still struggle with it, but I preach it to my kids, like, you gotta be really, really good at failing and, and completely comf- you know, have this like just peace and and sense of comfort when, you know, you try something and it doesn't work, but it's all about the effort and trying repeatedly, repeatedly.

Corey Andrew Powell ([14:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah.

Blake Johnson ([14:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And, you know, I always talk a lot about, about playing the curve, you know, and to your point where, you know, the 13th grade oftentimes, I mean, the world is so dynamic, it's shifting. So, you know, it takes so long for you to get from one place to the next in terms of growth and goals. That if you're, if on the clock, you know, 12 three, you know, nine, six, I'm doing this opposite for you. But you know, if you're running at 12 o'clock and everybody else is running at 12 o'clock, the world's gonna shift so that by the time you get, you know, to that place, the world has already kinda shifted. So I, I talk about playing the curve and thinking about not where the world is today, but where the world's gonna be at in a year from now, two years from now, three years from now, and then running out at the three o'clock position and, and this, and by the time you get to three o'clock, it's shifted into like that true north, that true, you know, 12 o'clock position. Hope that makes sense, but

Corey Andrew Powell ([15:22](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

No, no, it does. And there's so many examples like right now that we can look at one that when you, as you were speaking about that, one thing I thought of was this sort of like coexistence between generations. So you have like this sort of, like always, there's a strange rub of like the, the Gen Z generation.

New Speaker ([15:38](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

New Speaker ([15:38](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And like the, you know, gen X generation, right? And the older Gen X people are, and, and boomers who are still working are sort of like, you know, resistant in many ways and many times to the Gen Z generation that is just very, just very different thing. That quite honestly is one of the most, I think, sort of like unique and impressive generations that we've seen in our, our history because they grew up completely with this, this digital age. So I tell a lot of people, like, you know, the older X generation, I'm like, you kind of need to learn how to communicate with those guys and they need to understand how to bring you forward and somehow, 'cause you're kind of both being left behind, right? Because there's knowledge that they're gaining from older Gen Xers as well that they're not getting if they shut them out. So yeah, I mean, in many aspects, you're right. The world sort of will be misaligned if we're not all figuring out how to kind of move forward together.

Blake Johnson ([16:33](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And you see that, right? I mean, you, you go back to, you know, the generation when kind of America came into power post, you know, industrial Revolution and, and went through World World War I and then World War II, and I always think about the generation of World War II, you know, those people were hearted as a, as a generation. I mean, they were gritty. They faced a lot of adversity and they faced a lot of turmoil and difficult times. And then, you know, the next generation of the baby boomers came in and, you know, the night late 1960s and the seventies of the hippie era. And, and I always imagine what that prior generation thought about the next generation, but then those people came into, you know, they, they matured and they created amazing companies and, you know, some of the, the best companies that existed in the history of the world.

Blake Johnson ([17:20](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And now, you know, you get the next generation kind of, you know, they're like, oh, that next generation's not as good as we were. I think human beings, specifically Americans are always looking down at the next generation, but give it time that next generation, the world shifts and they create great things. And so I'm really fascinated on, you know, the differences between the generations, but when it, when you boil it down and it, it's really, you know, perspective, right? It's the perspective that creates, you know, gratitude if you've only known nice things your whole life. And, you know, you certainly see that in Los Angeles, a lot of people that have just had kind of lived a very sheltered life in this certain income levels and certain perspective there. I, I found like they're not that happy. But you have people that have kind of covered the spectrum, started in a place and really experienced one side versus the next.

Blake Johnson ([18:16](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And I think that that really creates a lot of, you know, more kind of balanced people that they always have the, you know, the recollection of, you know, it could be different for me, you know, and I, and I fear sometimes, you know, with in, in this day and age, you know, people are kinda losing perspective or their perspectives are shifting or they're getting manipulated because they're watching something fake on Instagram and saying, Hey, I think I need to live this life that doesn't really fundamentally hold a lot of the characteristics that, you know, create balanced human beings.

Corey Andrew Powell ([18:50](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's definitely one of the biggest issues we face now is that people can project what is this ideal scenario on Instagram, and then you have millions of people trying to aspire to be it without realizing that that yacht was perhaps rented or it wasn't theirs and it was all staged and the clothing was borrowed and there were like 1 million photos you didn't see where they didn't look look so great, and they were all the outtakes and yeah, it's really, I think it's funny, um, I'm not sure if it was HBO, but I think it was HBO or Showtime, they did a film, I think it's called Famous or Insta-Famous or something, and they chronicle how they take 10 unknown people and they create Instagram influencers like in a month, <laugh> or something crazy all through manipulation, like, you know, fake clicks. And they had fake clothes and, and like by the end of like two months, they all had like 10 million followers and were, but it was all just completely manufactured. So, moral of the story, if anyone's listening, is do not get caught up in what you think people's lives are when you see them on Instagram 'cause nine times outta 10 it could be bs, so.

Blake Johnson ([19:53](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Correct.

Corey Andrew Powell ([19:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

There's that, you know. Um, and so, but with your journey though, after college, of course you founded Byte, so what is Byte exactly, and um, my goodness, one bill- like $1 billion. Did I, is that AC <laugh> a b, right? Not an M. So talk about that. Yeah. What's going on?

Blake Johnson ([20:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

So, you know, it was interesting, uh, for, for Context Byte was the fifth company I started and I had a few others. And, and while you know it, it is true and accurate that it was the fastest growing company to reach a billion dollar valuation. And we ended up selling the company for over a billion in, in cash. And that journey was three and a half years. I always say it was a 15 year old startup because the learnings that I learned from the previous four, you know, the first one was not glamorous. It nearly went bankrupt in 2008-2009, during the financial crisis. I didn't take a day off of work for three and a half years, not a Saturday or Sunday. I was just digging myself out, trying to keep my nose above water and, and not, you know, go bankrupt and squeaked it out.

Blake Johnson ([21:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Got it. Kind of back healthy a number of years later, but really got religion on metrics and what constitutes healthy businesses and unhealthy businesses. And you know, I, I have, can speak for hours on that, but each subsequent business got a little bit better, got a little bit stronger, and was literal to leverage the last one into the next one and so forth and so on. And so by the, the time, you know, Byte came around people, you know, I was traditionally a finance guy. What did I know about Orthodontics? Absolutely nothing. My peer group thought I was crazy. They were all thinking I was gonna fail. But what I didn't share without anybody is the dna with Byte with a, uh, direct to consumer invisible aligner company. So if you're familiar with Invisalign or Orthodontics Byte

Corey Andrew Powell ([21:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, I've had them <laugh>

Blake Johnson ([21:56](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Sold, yeah. Got great Teeth Byte, sold the, uh, the, the aligners, which subsequently moved your teeth into place and, and gave people, you know, smiles that they wanted. Um, but what was <crosstalk>?

Corey Andrew Powell ([22:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Oh wait, lemme just stop you right there and make sure I, let me, I'm sorry to interrupt. I just wanna make sure I understand that 'cause I did have Invisalign. So you mean, so you, so your product was not like the actual system itself. You tr Byte was like the tray, the the tray component of these systems, and so it could have been Invisalign Smile Director.

Blake Johnson ([22:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Sure. I was having, I was having, uh, dinner with a, a buddy of mine who is a professor of orthodontics at the local, uh, university of Southern California USC. And he was going through a tough time in his life and he said, you know, not only am going through this tough time, but I'll probably be out of business in eight to 10 years from now. I said, what do you mean you're an orthodontist? There's always gonna be teeth to, to straighten. He said, the advancements in technology, uh, were getting so great that software was able to better predict movements of teeth than a traditional orthodontist could. And subsequent to that, he said, you know, these, these Invisalign, which was started in 1997, these pieces of plastic you put in your mouth. And as you know, kind of these, uh, sequential trays that each tray moves your teeth just a little bit and put the next one in.

Blake Johnson ([23:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And the next one and the next one like is really fascinating. They're, they're doing and moving teeth faster and better than wires and brackets in the vast majority of cases. And specifically in the mild to moderate cases, which in his world, where 80% of the, of the cases that he saw as a big orthodontist and as a professor. And then at the end of Saki we're having, or excuse me, end of sushi where, and we had a little Saki, he said, and by the way, the Invisalign patent is coming off in about 18 months. And I said, what does that mean? He goes, well, in the majority of cases, dentists can treat patients remotely. And I said, okay, so if they can treat remotely in any part of the US. And then I started to ask financial questions, well, how much does it really cost to, you know, produce as a manufacturer, these trays, there's very little, and it just, the light bulb went on in that moment.

Blake Johnson ([24:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I'm like, okay, I'm really good at marketing to the masses. I'll figure out all the disciplines in orthodontics. I'll recruit the, you know, everybody I need to do this, and I can bring this product to the masses for a fraction of the cost. And for context, this was a really, really important thing for me because I would've given up anything as a youth to have braces, wasn't in the cards, had crooked teeth, lived with those crooked teeth for many, many years. And, you know, I was really passionate about teeth 'cause it, it, it, I felt, it plagued me kind of growing up and it was a big effort, a big thing I was very self-conscious of. So when I kind of, those light bulbs went on and, you know, our product was a hundred percent the same as Invisalign, but 30% the cost. You know, we stripped out all the, the, to be blunt, we stripped out all the expenses, you know, associated and all the people associated with, with delivering a traditional Invisalign.

Blake Johnson ([25:23](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And it was, it was really great. Um, we were able to serve a very wide population. Kerry Washington came on board and bought an equity in the company and, and in turn was a spokesperson. And we were really, really, uh, you know, it, it, it was just a really wonderful story. You would walk in our call center some of the times and, and see our customer service agents crying of the stories. You know, there was, there was mothers thanking us 'cause they're children, you know, were contemplating suicide and now they were able to straighten their teeth and they could afford it. I mean, it was, it was really crazy. But it was one of these things that we, you know, it's been kind of, um, we want to bring, you know, typically what's been reserved to certain demographics into the masses. We're doing that next with their, our, our next company alter alter me.com, which was, it's a similar model to Byte, but bringing health and nutrition, you know, into what I would say is the flyover states of America that, that don't get the access that other other cities do. So

Corey Andrew Powell ([26:28](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, I I, no, I was just gonna say, I thought of like places like Appalachia for example, or yes, you know, mountains where people don't really have access to healthcare, dental care the way the rest of the country may have. But, um, okay. But I'm so amazed by, by that story because, um, yeah, Invisalign and not that we're gonna do a commercial now and talk about products, but yeah, it's, it's, it was like the first that was in that space, so it was really expensive. But, um, I didn't know that, like you just said, so basically more like 80% of the, your friend told you like maybe 80% of the orthadontal cases, they were the ones that really could be sort of corrected or modified without the orthodontists, uh, having to actually do a, a braces procedure that many of the, of their cases.

Blake Johnson ([27:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Yeah, and, and most importantly, you know, we, we treated only mild to moderate cases. And the ones that were too complex, we referred off to the orthodontist. We actually, in, in most cases, really increased orthodontic visits to the traditional office, um, when they, you know, studied the metrics. We were, we were a positive impact for the community of traditional orthodontists. But, you know, in, in the case that there were mild to moderate cases, which are, were surprising to me, the vast majority were able to move the teeth, you know, quicker with the invisible aligners than and you would ever anticipate and, and bring the solution into, you know, these communities that didn't have access. I mean, it's shocking to see how many people we serve that would've never gone into an orthodontist office ever, because they just couldn't drive that far. And, and also doing it worldwide.

Blake Johnson ([28:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I was having dinner in Colorado last week, um, with a, a guy from Argentina who's a well-known guy who plays polo, and he walked in with aligners in it, and I said, are, are those Invisalign? Uh, he and his wife both. And they said, no, it's a company named Byte, I got a quietly chuckled. Uh, but, uh, it, it, it.

Corey Andrew Powell ([28:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

<laugh>

Blake Johnson ([28:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

You're really seeing it now all over the world, um, serving people and the, and we sold it and the company that bought it is the largest dental conglomerate on the planet, and they've done a tremendous job, you know, with taking it and advancing it well beyond our capabilities.

Corey Andrew Powell ([28:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

That's amazing. Well, that's good 'cause I lost my retainer from my Invisalign. Yeah. So I'm, I'm, that's good to know. Uh, <laugh>, I think I'm.

Blake Johnson ([29:01](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

<laugh>.

Corey Andrew Powell ([29:01](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Just saying I might have to Yeah. Find another alternative there. I'll be emailing you, uh, <laugh>. So, gosh, well, we're almost at the end of our time, but I do have two, um, really great questions. I think for our audience who might be inspired by, uh, philanthropy and, and being an entrepreneur themselves. Uh, first question is about the, uh, the, the Blake Johnson alliance that you created in 2015. So, uh, share what that organization is about and what you guys do.

Blake Johnson ([29:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Uh, absolutely. And, and wanted to, to kind of make one note real quick. You know, gr- growing up where I did, I I was very sober all along at, at, you know, at the hands extended down to me to gimme an opportunity. And thankfully I was, you know, wise enough to take those and, and try to learn and, you know, get to a different place from that. But there were countless people that, you know, that helped me along the way. Some weren't even realizing they were helping at the time, but I've always, you know, had this kind of clear idea of, of of where my life would've been without those people extending a hand and always told myself, you know, when I'm in that place in life, I'm gonna try to repay that first thing I did, literally when I got outta college and, and moved out Arizona to California, uh, was where I went down to the local Big Brother's, Big Sister's office, and at 24 years old signed up to be a, a big brother.

Blake Johnson ([30:25](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

So, and then that's always been a real driving force, I feel like, and to this day, the more I can give back, the better everybody holds it be in, in, in general, and me included. And so that's been a kind of a pervasive thing that, you know, we've had not only kind of within our family, but within our, you know, companies and, and really consistently trying to pitch in as much we can. Um, so I had sold kind of the third company in, in two th- in September, 2014. It was in a position financially to what I feel have a greater impact. And so we started this alliance. I truthfully, I don't like the name, we, I wanna name it something else. I hate that it's named as my name in it, but it, it was named by somebody else and it just kind of set in and took hold.

Blake Johnson ([31:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

But it was really focused on children's based charities specific in, in Los Angeles community. And, you know, we tend to focus, we, we do more than just, you know, children, but we we're most passionate about children and really, and really focusing on what I, what I deem is, you know, I pour concrete during the summers and during college. And so I always give the analogy I want to, I want to get it when the concrete's wet. You know, I find like we can move the needle the most and have the biggest impact when we reach the youth at the appropriate age. And so we initially established that and really kind of tend to focus on, you know, 12 to 15 charities here locally that have, you know, a, a not only a focus on children, but a really good track history on, you know, on putting dollars to work and really moving the needle in specific, you know, lives. And so that ranges from, I'm very passionate about Big Brothers, Big Sisters, you know, entrepreneurship in, in children, in really teaching certain skillsets that will later, you know, once instilled, give them, give them kind of the right perspective and the right focus to, you know, have the greatest chance to, to, to make an impact.

Corey Andrew Powell ([32:38](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

And is that the, is that the, the big careers, which is the name of sort of like the, the mission driven portion of the alliance,

Blake Johnson ([32:45](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Really interesting that, that came up. The CEO of Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Orange County, which is the 800 pound gorilla in, in that universe of all the regions in the US it really, you know, hats off to them. They've really crushed it. I was having a conversation with their CEO at a lunch a year ago, and, you know, I was saying that I love the organization, spent time doing it, time, money, et cetera, et cetera. And I saw this weird kind of gap where they bring in all these kids and, you know, to, to be blunt to various degrees of success, right? And getting them, getting the kids through, you know, some, some do well, some do better than others and, but there was no real vehicles, so to speak, to take the all-stars to that next generation. You'll see some just winners come through.

Blake Johnson ([33:41](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I mean, these kids are so smart and so passionate and, and they, they can articulate and they can think, and they clearly, I mean, are built differently genetically, but there, there was not a point that identified the ones that really had the greatest potential in taking those kids and then really getting them in a metaphorical vehicle, so to speak, to really take 'em to the next level. I mean, it would be the equivalent of a sports team. You see, just an absolute allstar, you know, that has the craziest athletic ability, but yet that Allstar is still grouped in with all the other decent athletes. There needs to be able to identify that Allstar and put them on a path to become the next, you know, greatest thing in the world talks about. And so we, we sought to fix, fix that problem. And we have, and it's been great so far.

Blake Johnson ([34:40](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

I get really fired up on this. And so with my kind of background and being in, you know, the Los Angeles area and having access to a lot of these, these CEOs of these major companies, I was able to go handpick specific CEOs and pair them up with these kids. And then, I mean, uh, last night I was at dinner and I got a, a guy who I mentored a long time ago, Hugo Gomez, um, I, he went off beyond me and to start this great company, CEO of a great company, but I got a text from him at dinner last night saying, this has been so rewarding. I got this kid, he was telling me all about it. Incredibly smart. And you know, we've, we've done this and we're, we're growing it right now. So it's, uh, you know, we'll, we'll come back to it at some point, but I, it's, it's been, it's been fun.

Corey Andrew Powell ([35:34](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

Excellent words of inspiration from Blake Johnson, Los Angeles-based entrepreneur and philanthropist. And, uh, it's been, uh, wonderful. Just inspirational. Again, I use that word. It's a really inspiring conversation. I love what you're doing and it makes a difference in the world. So thank you for being here and telling us your story today and sharing here on Motivational Mondays.

Blake Johnson ([35:52](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

That was great to meet you. Thank you so much for having me.

Corey Andrew Powell ([35:55](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/u2FjqUXypWhkaooMrLCunpjxhpYNO2b6fNl7yqTMRGa_cMm9CpT7anwxFtUEt9M5SVhiEPLAUV3xSgjZsqePPNG_W7w?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink)):

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