Corey Andrew Powell (00:00)

Hello everyone, I am Corey Andrew Powell and welcome to another episode of Motivational Mondays presented by the NSLS, now motivating over 2 million members nationwide. Now today we have a very special guest with us. He has mastered the art of turning passion into profit from jazz musician to English teacher,

to a language learning entrepreneur, Olly Richards has taken an unconventional path to success. He began a blog called Story Learning as a passion project, which he later transformed into a multimillion dollar online business. And now through his newsletter and various educational platforms, he helps online entrepreneurs scale their businesses to seven figures and beyond. And he's here today to share his lessons of what he's learned along the way about branding and scaling and creating a life that aligns with your vision of success.

Olly Richards, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Olly Richards (00:53)

Well, thank you very much. Fantastic intro. You're welcome.

Corey Andrew Powell (00:55)

Well,

it was just pretty much your life there. I'm sure

Olly Richards (00:59)

With all the boring bits taken out.

Corey Andrew Powell (01:01)

Well, if you did it, I could at least read it about it, know, really quickly. So I feel like an underachiever. I would just add basically when I read that. I am fascinated by the work you do because, and I have subscribed just so we're clear. Like I'm not just coming from the outside here. Like as an interviewer reading from a list of questions, I subscribe to your channel and I had been a passionate like language guy for a long time, mastering none of them, mind you, but always with good intention.

I love that you break down so many sort of like, I don't know, these little intricate things that we don't really think about when it comes to the intimidation of learning languages, which I'll be happy to get into in a little bit. But first, as I mentioned, you've had a really unique career journey, musician, teacher, entrepreneur. So I'd love to know what inspired you to start story learning and how did it become a $10 million business?

Olly Richards (01:54)

Yeah, well, I I've always been someone I'm not a creative person. And I always have been and I've always followed my nose really with the, creativity and, you know, I got it. I played music since I was a child. I, I, when I discovered that I could go to music college, that was the only thing I thought about. just loved playing, music. was a jazz pianist and I was obsessed with that, lived the life for many years. And then I kind of fell out of, out of love with it for.

for various reasons, which is a whole other conversation. But it was time to do something else. think I'd realized, it took me a while to realize that it was time to cut ties. I was in my late 20s. So I decided to go and.

get on with my life really. I thought, what have I always wanted to do? And I've always wanted to travel the world. I always thought that teaching English abroad was quite a romantic vision. And so I did it. I trained, I got a CELTA qualification. I went to teach English in Japan. And then I lived there for four years. I moved to the Middle East, spent a year and a half in Qatar and then a year in Egypt. But throughout that whole time, I had another passion in the background, which was

learning languages myself. it, you know, living in London in my 20s was just fantastic because I was surrounded by people from all over the world. It must be a bit like living in living in New York or somewhere like that. And I just, I became this person who, who didn't enjoy being a monolingual Brit. I wanted to be able to communicate with the rest of

the people I met. And so I started learning languages. I went on to learn eight languages. And then one day when I was living in the Middle East, it was a hot Saturday afternoon and I had nothing to do. I decided to start a blog. And the blog was that was on language learning. And the way that I think about it now really is that it kind of combined my experience learning languages with

what I had learned about teaching from my English teaching experience. And I was able to combine those two things into something that was quite unique. There were many people who talked about language learning already back in the day. This was 2013. But it was always very kind of anecdotal. What I was able to do was to actually bring a bit of academic rigor to this and actually talk about what's happening when you're learning languages, why that's happening. And I think that was one of the reasons why my blog became quite popular.

You know, I never really expected it to do anything, but I, I'm the kind of person that takes things seriously. So when I started the blog, I then went off and learned how to grow a blog. so, you know, I, so I did that. And then, you know, a couple of years later, I was in a position when, when my daughter was born, where I was able to quit my English teaching and then go full time on, on, on, on the blog. So it was all really like, there was no grand strategy. There was no master plan. It was just.

following, you putting one foot in front of the next and seeing where it takes me.

Corey Andrew Powell (05:07)

That is fascinating. And especially with this being a leadership platform where very often people who are successful have had a similar path where it was actually unconventional. As we said in the intro, there's no necessary linear path that's going to be the same for everyone. so very often following your dreams and your passion is a way to find that independence, find that career. But I think we're going to program differently to think, OK, I have to go to this. I got to do this.

Gotta have degree and then you could be miserable doing something you don't even love.

Olly Richards (05:40)

Yeah, but you could also be broke following your passion. mean, you know, I think it's, I think it's, it's, it's, I don't know how I feel about the advice to follow your passion. think it's, it's, I think it's, you have to combine it with something else. You know, know plenty of amazing jazz musicians who are broke and it's not, it's not nice to see. I think the, one of the things I see often is that people who succeed tend to have

to that they're not necessarily the best in the world at that thing. I know I'm not the best teacher. I'm not the best linguist, but I am very good at learning languages and I'm very good at teaching or good enough rather. so by combining those two skills that I'm very good at rather than being exceptional, combining those two makes a whole and it's like a one plus one equals three. So I think if you're gonna follow your

passion, you have to combine it with something else. And in my case, I was teaching and then later marketing as well. Because if it's passion alone, then then, you and you see this a lot in the music world. You know, everyone goes to music college wanting to be the best, but there's only room for the top 1%. So if you're gonna follow your passion, Scott Galloway makes this point in his recent book as well, if you're gonna follow your passion, you better make them sure that you are

best in the world because there's a long line of people who have followed their passion and it hasn't worked out great.

Corey Andrew Powell (07:08)

Yeah,

sure. Well, it's funny too, because like, as I mentioned before, we started recording. I'm also a musician and songwriter. And so I went to New York and did that whole artist life and like, you know, I, know, well, when I was in New York, I didn't go to college for music. My mom wanted me to get a formal degree. I was in my mind, I was going to become the next Michael Jackson. So who needs a degree for that? And, that was like one after the other audition, audition, audition. And I'd always get the call back and not the part, you know, that

Olly Richards (07:18)

Where did you go?

Corey Andrew Powell (07:35)

on Broadway, for example, as a vocalist. And that got tiring. Like, well, how do I get the big part? And then, know, then finally I just said, you know, and I was doing, you know, jingles, singing on demos and different projects. But what I realized, which I talk about often, and I think this is really important to what you're saying too, is like, passion for creativity is not what died. You just, you pivoted, you changed your dream. Still creative outlet, still the ability to create something. You didn't let it.

your spirit completely as a creative. That's what I think is really important about your story. It's mine as well.

Olly Richards (08:09)

Yeah, I absolutely recognize that. feel as creative now. I'm going to be 40. Hell, I'm going be this year. I'm to be 44 this year. I'm as creative now as I ever was. I'm just channeling it in different ways. Yeah. So, you know, I always found, you know, I always had this feeling with music, which is probably an unusual feeling, but there was

something about the fact that you play music and it's lost forever unless you happen to be recording it. You play music and then the moment's gone and you have nothing to show for it. Yeah, there's something always not quite right about that with me. And it's similar if you're teaching it teaching a lesson, you know, you have you can have an inspirational lesson where you can be absolutely on fire. Students love it. And then you walk out at the end and it's just gone up in a puff of smoke. Yeah, the wonderful thing about writing and blogging and

know, making YouTube videos is that when you put your creativity into the thing, it lives on and people can come back to it later. And then you couldn't, you you can disseminate it and edit this. It seems to do something to the ego where whereby the thing that you've put poured your heart and soul into is still there and is tangible. And that was something that I think really appealed to me.

Corey Andrew Powell (09:27)

Yeah, I mean, we're artists, so there's a performative part of our personality where we want to show off a little bit, but not from an arrogant place. We want to show off our ability to have to show what we do with words, which is our specific way of creating a vernacular, which is not going to be like anyone else's. And so I again, as I'm talking to you and as I was researching again, the parallels because my parallel universe was as a copywriter and advertising. So that was what.

allowed me to still have a voice. People can see my voice, even though they weren't hearing it. So, you know, I wasn't Michael Jackson. I was able to then write and then that work would be in national campaigns or that work would be. And I just talk to young people all the time about that is how you pivot the dream and don't give up completely. You know, so it's really important. And I love that, you know, you have that same story. And I do want to ask you when it comes to

in your opinion, when it comes to entrepreneurs who are struggling with like defining their brand, you know, what are some of the key strategies that you use to attract the right audience to what you were doing?

Olly Richards (10:29)

used.

Yeah. Well, you know, my world is very much because entrepreneurship is a very big, big topic. know, you, you have entrepreneurs range from, you know, people that start, you know, hardware stores in local, in the local town through to, uh, you know, Silicon Valley startups through, through to what I do, which is essentially, um, building a brand around your expertise. So I, what I've done is I've

I fit it broadly into the category of education, online education businesses. And, you know, by far the easiest way to get started is by actually using your personal brand to get traction online. Because if you are teaching, taking in my case, I'm teaching languages. Well, there are many people teaching languages. And if you want to learn Spanish, you know,

why learn from me as opposed to any other person. But people tend to gravitate towards people like them or people who they are drawn to for whatever reason. And your personal brand is completely unique. can't be replaced by anyone else. You can be imitated, but you can never be duplicated. And so for many people now, it starts with the personal brand. You can do anything from

you know, it's the whole content creator pathway, right? So whether it's whether it's making YouTube videos, whether it's writing on LinkedIn, which is increasingly popular these days, they're starting a podcast, you can rely on your own personal charisma, and, and your own personal voice to in the early stages, connect with people who gravitate towards you as a person. Now, where you can get into trouble is when that go when you try to grow that too far.

because personal brands generally can only get you so far because you then have to be at the center of everything as a personal brand. So if you have the brand of Corey and you offer some kind of products or service at some point, everyone wants Corey. That's what that what's what they're coming for. And that was the problem that I had when I first started story learning. was all about Oli. And so what I eventually did was I defined the method that I was using to teach languages. And I've always taught languages through stories.

and it's a method that I, you know, I didn't invent using stories, obviously, but I did put together, and codified this particular method of languages using stories. And I called it, surprise, surprise story learning. and what that did was it allowed the brand itself to grow to a place where it wasn't Olly that the customers were looking for anymore. It was the story letting method because the testimonials that we have of people who have learned languages with us.

they have learned not thanks to me, but thanks to the story learning method that we use. And so as a business grows, that shift from personal brand towards a proprietary method or system allows the founder to step back and have other people in his or her place start to deliver the product itself.

Corey Andrew Powell (13:40)

Well, in that regard, of course, that's sort of how it became successful. So I do wonder on the flip side of that, what were some of the challenges you faced while you were trying to scale this business and get it to where it is today?

Olly Richards (13:52)

So the challenge, the challenges were everything I didn't know. And this is the other thing, because all of us who, you know, who use the harness, the wonderful magic of the internet to start education businesses, we typically don't have backgrounds in business. So I didn't know anything about branding. I didn't know anything about hiring. So I made some terrible hiring mistakes. I didn't know anything about financial management. So I, you know, I, one of the most stressed I've ever been was when the business had grown and we were

you know, we were making seven figures a year in revenue. didn't I couldn't tell you where the money was coming from, where it was going. It was completely chaotic. But no one had ever taught me about basic, basic financial good, you know, best best practice. And so I had to go off and learn about it. But until I until I learned about it, which essentially meant hiring people that could help me get the finances in order, it was very stressful because, you know, with money flying everywhere in and out, it's not it's not a comfortable place to be.

The, you whenever you, when you start a business, you'll, I feel like you're paying down an ignorance debt for many, many years. There's all the things that you don't know. And you just have to kind of go through the ringer a few times, touching all the edges in order to understand what the, what the, real scope of being an entrepreneur and running a business actually is.

Corey Andrew Powell (15:16)

I think that's like a metaphor for life in general, right? Like we are all pretty much like, if you have a growth mindset, that's wonderful because we're never finished learning, but you pretty much are going through life making a lot of errors and then correcting them. And if you're smart going, well, I know that didn't work. Won't be doing that again. It was like marketing training that you got for free. Well, or not free if you invested money, but you know what I mean? It's like you get market research response back and you know that didn't work.

Olly Richards (15:45)

Right. Yeah. I mean, it all has the benefit of existing. Everything you do has the benefit of existing in the real world, which is, if you imagine, you know, it's very difficult for entrepreneurs to, it's a bit of a cliche that entrepreneurs often don't take MBAs very seriously because, business school graduates very seriously because, you cannot know anything in theory. There's a such a gulf between knowing something in theory and knowing it in practice. know, so doing

doing stuff out in the real world, it has the benefit of, as the famous saying goes, no battle plan survives contact with the enemy. When you're doing these things out in the real world, everything is contact. so whether stuff lives or dies based on how the market receives it, how actually, whatever you're doing, how it performs out in the real world. And so if you can stay

attentive and if you can stay attuned to what's happening when you try things, when you run experiments, if you can stay agile enough and motivated enough to try things, to test things, to not be too put off by failure and keep going, eventually you do learn the lessons. it is a difficult process. based on the many entrepreneurs that I see these days, the first five years,

are just one, it's like being in the, being stuck in a washing machine or dishwasher. You're just getting spun round and round and round, grabbing onto whatever you can. And it's almost like a rite of passage you have to go through.

Corey Andrew Powell (17:30)

It's funny though, when you mentioned that it makes me think of how organizations, big corporations, they are typically following the structure of always believing that, when it's time to get a new director of this or a director of that, they've got to go get like the C-suite people who went to Harvard. And I'm like, that's great. But you know, probably internally you have worker bees who've been in the organization, tried and tested. They've seen the failures. They've seen the attempts that.

different campaigns that didn't work and what to know. And so they're often sort of overlooked for this notion of there's this piece of paper that will validate everything that we need in a new executive. I'd love that you just stressed the fact that there's a lot of things that you cannot know unless you are out in the field, out as a warrior, having those battle scars at the end of the day. And if I were an organization, I'm going to go with that person. That's just me.

Olly Richards (18:22)

Yeah. I think the big difference between the, the, the scrappy entrepreneur and the, and the fortune 500 company is that, you know, when, when you have, when you were an entrepreneur and you're starting something new, you don't have anything to lose for the most part. You know, when I started my, my, my, my, my website for the first time, I mean, I had my, I had a job, you know, I, the, if the blog didn't work, I was okay. Right. You know, cause I had to, if you were a, you know, a billion dollar company,

you've got a lot to lose. so there's this other dimension whereby when you, when you have to, when you, when you, staff these, these, these important roles, when you bring on the VPs and then the C-suite, there is, there is a lot to lose. so you, there's, know, no one wants to be the person who screws up and who, who, who, tanks a huge company. And so there tends to be a bias or so I've heard, cause I've never been in this environment, but this is, this is what I've heard from people who have.

tends to be a bias towards safety and, and, sure. It's a, it's a choices because, right. You may not, you may not become the next Amazon, but at least you're not going to sink the ship. And so there are, there are a different set of incentives. And, know, if you promote the kind of, uh, the, the, the, the, the people that have been in the company for a long time, I suppose the risk is that, um, you know, if they don't have them, the requisite management skills, because there is a big difference between.

being in the organization and managing. I management is a whole other thing. If that person doesn't have those management skills, you can do real damage and lots of consequences from there. Entrepreneurs are not particularly stable people on the whole. It's difficult to be when you're first starting, you're playing the role of everything. Marketing, operations, finance, customer service, you're doing it all.

Corey Andrew Powell (20:08)

everyone

Olly Richards (20:13)

It's crazy. You have to be a glutton for punishment really.

Corey Andrew Powell (20:16)

Yeah, I know. It's one of those things too. It's like a labor of love. mean, like you said, it's a passion for your, that you have that drives you. But then once it, if you are lucky enough to get successful, you do have to then begin to delegate. I interviewed a young Gen Z young girl who started like an Amazon store. I think she was like 20 years old and she had in three years had hit like a million dollars in sales and she was not even, she was barely 20. And so I, know, it was fascinating to talk to her, but she was like, but yeah, there was a point where I was like,

a teenager going, mom, there's a million dollars in my, what do I do with that? I don't even, she said it was just coming in so quickly. She didn't even know how to process it. And finally she just said, you know what? I'm no longer a teenager. I am now a business woman. She said, I Googled, I researched, my mom and I sat down. I knew I had to hire this, had to hire that. Cause there were things I needed in place with people who knew what they were doing. I can't do it all. I think that's the other thing people are hell bent sometimes on thinking.

They need to do everything and they don't know how to delegate. And how do you manage that?

Olly Richards (21:17)

Yeah, and that can carry on forever. I mean, I know many entrepreneurs who are still battling against that thing right now. I think entrepreneurs will develop at different speeds and at different rates depending on two things. think it's depending on their personality, but also to their access to other people. And one of the things that happens that's really unfortunate is people just work in silos.

especially online, it's possible to build a business from your, you know, from your, from your kitchen, your kitchen table. but, and, if you're lucky enough to have success, often that means that you, then hunker down and you, and you keep working away. And if you don't know anybody else, you don't actually know any better, you know, no one ever tells you this stuff unless you're seeking out, seeking out help. And so it's completely possible to just keep, to keep taking on more and more roles. It's often referred to as superhero syndrome.

you know, taking on taking on more and more roles. But then this this goes right back to, to the idea of the the the ignorance that that we spoke about before, hey, well, you at the beginning, you just don't know. And so one of the things that correlates very, very strongly with success is the is is entrepreneurs willingness to get help to hire coaches and mentors to help to help just speed up the rate of learning.

because there's absolutely no reason to figure it out all by yourself. But many people do. And the less willing you are to spend money and time on your education, the less likely you are to move forward.

Corey Andrew Powell (22:59)

No, exactly. Great advice. And one of my favorite interviews here I've done thus far was with a woman named Kara Goldin. And Kara Goldin is the CEO and founder of a major, major beverage called Hint, Hint water. And it's literally something she made in her kitchen when she didn't want to get her kids to get addicted to sugary drinks early on when they were like really young. So she just started squeezing fruit into water. That's pretty much what she did.

And the kids loved it, right? They didn't even get programmed into soda and they were like babies almost. she said, Hmm, this is interesting. She had no idea at that moment that the beverage industry is probably the most, if you're ever going to say there's a place you're not going to succeed. you go, it's that industry. Right. And, anyway, but to your point, she educated herself. She didn't get, she didn't back down. She had a product. She sort of had a little proven test market already with her own kids. And so she went forward. And anyway, today it's, one of the.

Olly Richards (23:43)

Right, yeah.

Corey Andrew Powell (23:58)

biggest success stories in the beverage industry, like a disruptor against Pepsi and Coca-Cola, like amazing, right? So I love that same like Kara, know, basically you are an example of two, just have a vision, go for it and just get all the ducks in a row to help you execute. So I think that's a great lesson. And you also talk about designing a life around freedom and fulfillment as well. So I'm wondering like what, you know, what does that mean to you? Is that like a work life balance or how does that?

translate.

Olly Richards (24:28)

I

have real trouble with the, uh, with the term work life balance as it relates to entrepreneurship at least, because the thing about entrepreneurs is that they tend to do the things that they really believe in and that really inspired them. And it doesn't really, it's, it's, it's not work in the, in the sense, in the traditional sense, it is. I mean, that doesn't mean you're not working long hours. You're often working extremely long hours, but, it, is certainly for me, you know, the,

the businesses that I run and they are me and they are kind of at one with my life and I don't think about trying to balance my life with work because they are one and the same thing. And so rather than thinking of it as this zero sum game, it's much more about intentionally designing how you want your life to look. Now for me personally, because I'm a creative, I've always

always had lots of things that I like doing, know, even these days, languages I want to learn, there's, there's all kinds of exercise I want to do is this, there's, there's, there's, there are all these, all these skills that I still want to spend time learning. And, and so, and I've been through periods where my business has been all consuming. And so when I talk about the idea of designing your lifestyle,

I am starting from the point of view that contrary to the hustle culture that is just pervasive online where everyone says you should be working 25 hours a day and posting a million times a day on social media. know, what do you mean you're not trying to 100X your company? Contrary to that, for me, a business has always been something that I feel privileged to be able to run because I get to do my own thing every day.

But I also try to design it in such a way that it allows me to do the things that I want to do in my life. And so for example, in my business story learning, I recently handed over to a CEO who now runs the company without me. mean, I'm still around, but I don't actually work inside the company because that allows me to spend time on own, on other projects that I'm interested in. I'm writing my business newsletter, for example, at ollyriches.co I'm spending time on that because that's what enthuses me. I'm also.

But I'm very deliberately designing that business so that I don't have a team because I don't want, because teams are stressful. I don't want another team. So I'm making decisions that will keep the business smaller than it needs to be. But it gives me the life and the flexibility and the, and the peace of mind that I've, that I, that I'm looking for. So, so I suppose it's about intentional choices that allow me to, to live the life that, that, that I want.

Corey Andrew Powell (27:23)

So I guess it's like a balanced manageability in a way. I know we don't like life work balance, but it's managing the business in a way that allows you to still be hands-on as much as you can be and also still have a fulfilling life outside of the office. So it's like a balance in that regard.

Olly Richards (27:43)

It's just, I think it comes down to intentionality, right? Because if you, for most people who are in a, who are in a nine to five, you, most people will prefer to spend time outside the office. They would, they prefer their time at home doing their own thing to, work. So it feels like a zero sum for a lot of, more conventional entrepreneurs. The, the, the route to success in a business and a startup is to make it as big as possible, sacrifice five, 10 years of your life for the.

the big exit event at some point in the future and exits in a business are align eyes and idolized and say, you're really the only people who you consider successful are those who have sold their business for tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars. And this is very, it's just the way that we're conditioned to think about work is very much like sacrifice. Whether it's sacrificing your time for a job you don't enjoy.

sacrificing many years of your life. and many of my entrepreneur friends have done this. They've started startups and they say, look, I didn't get my twenties. My twenties just passed me by because I was taking investor calls and investing in lesser updates and, you know, laying off my whole team and raising for all these things. I spent my twenties on a beach in Brazil, living in, living in Japan and, you know, learning languages and things like this. feel so privileged to be able to do that. and so.

So when I, when I think about the business and how I want to run my business, I'm not thinking about the office competing with home life. I'm not thinking about sacrificing years to build a business that I can sell. I'm thinking about right now, what does the optimal version of life look like? Can I, can I take my family on, on holiday? Can we go and eat in nice restaurants? Can I have afternoons off to do nothing but sit in the garden and read a book? It's intentionality.

And I feel that from all the, all my various entrepreneur friends, I feel that it's, I mean, it sounds very counterintuitive, but people often don't know what they want. If you sit down and ask me now, what is exact, what do want life to look like? People often have just not really thought about it. There's this, this is idea. Well, I'd love to sit on the beach and drink martinis. Yeah. So maybe for a few days, but you get bored before long. And you won't feel great.

And, you know, people say, want to, I want to live on and run a remote business on the beach. You know, well, if you tried looking at a laptop screen with the sun glaring, it's not with sand in the keyboard. It's no people have just often do not really have a conception of, of what life would look like. Were they able to intentionally design it? But, but again, one of the, one of the magic, one of the bits of magic of, part of the magic of, of online businesses is that you, you

do have the ability to construct the way that you spend your time in a way that's very special and was never available in the past.

Corey Andrew Powell (30:49)

Well, know, speaking of your language learning or story learning platform in general, I would like to ask you to what's the biggest myth about learning a new language that you help to dispel through the work that you do?

Olly Richards (31:02)

Hmm.

Well, there's many. For some of the most common myths are that you have to have the language gene to learn a language that you either have it or you don't. Another one is that there's an age cutoff. I'm too old to learn a language. Another very controversial one is that, you know, kids soak up language like a sponge and kids are just natural language learning. Well, they might be natural language learners, but they don't soak it up like a sponge. I mean, have you spoken to a six year old? They're not exactly articulate. know, kids

take 10, 12 years to become highly to become natively fluent in their in their first language. So you know, should we be learning like kids learn? really. Doesn't make sense. So there's a lot of a lot of misconceptions about about language learning. But I think the one from a learning perspective, I think there's a mindset that I see a lot, which is that

People tend to treat language like any other school subject, like maths, where you can learn a certain view, learn Pythagoras theorem, you can, you can then use it to calculate things. If you, if you learn equations for something else, you can, you can then do something. If you learn the rules of science, then you you've, you've learned the periodic table and you can et cetera, et cetera. People see language as almost like a formula where if you just learn the vocabulary and you learn the rules of the grammar,

then you can piece together your sentences word by word in an accurate way. But that's not how language works. We as native speakers break the rules all the time. We stop and start our sentences. We use the wrong words. We speak with terrible grammar. And language is not...

is not constructed word by word, it's constructed in blocks, are known as chunks. So when you say good morning, or you say how are you, you're not building that sentence one word at a time, you're regurgitating chunks of language that you've learned from elsewhere. And so what I'm getting at is that language is a skill that you develop, much like learning to control the ball in football, or learning to hold a snooker cue, or...

or the, you know, what separates, you know, Picasso from the next artist. It's highly intuitive. It involves understanding the person in front of you. It involves integrating non-verbal cues, body language. It involves things like confidence, knowing how to read the room, you know,

All of these things. so for people who find language learning very frustrating, one of the most liberating things can actually be to forget about this conception of learning to speak fluently and actually treat it as more of a human challenge. Go and do a language exchange with somebody, sit down and spend an hour speaking in Spanish and an hour speaking in English and just enjoy the time. If you make mistakes, it doesn't matter, keep going.

try to express yourself some way, speak to the person in front of you. It's this, if you learn to treat languages as an extension of your own humanity almost, then it releases you from needing to be perfect and fluent because when you can communicate on a deep level with somebody, on a human level with somebody, it doesn't matter if you make a grammar mistake, that stuff is all out of the window.

So I see, this is why I write books with short stories because people spend all their time in textbooks, but actually if you've been learning and struggling with French for five years and you freeze up every time you try to have a conversation with a native speaker, well, if you can sit down and read a short story in simple French and get from the beginning to the end, you're gonna feel so empowered and you're gonna feel so motivated because you've actually done something

useful and meaningful in the language and you've enjoyed it and you've succeeded at something. So that's very long way of saying that I think people should worry a lot less about the details and much more about the humanistic side of languages.

Corey Andrew Powell (35:32)

That's fascinating Olly and I love that man because I do that little small wins when it comes to Spanish. I pick up native newspapers fully in Spanish like, know, unless you, know, like there was when I said, love, I forgot the name of it now in New York City, but I always like get it for free on the little stand and, or I make sure I would watch like an hour a day of Telemundo or Univision or, know, just, and

those small wins when you understand, even if it's a couple of sentences of the newscaster, because they're going like, you know, but it's it's like, wow, I understood that. And that's like what I go to, I used to keep going. So that's very, very great advice. And it's a fascinating conversation in general. And I'm really happy that you were here today with us. And I'd love to ask you, where can people who are interested in your language work, where can they connect with you online or elsewhere?

Olly Richards (36:23)

Absolutely. Well, if you are interested in languages, then you can find me on my website, storylearning.com or on my YouTube channel, which is, which is growing all the time and great fun. That's a story learning on YouTube. And if you want to follow me for my business stuff, you can again, find me on, on YouTube, although it's kind of dwarfed by the language content. was a bit fiddly to find me on YouTube, but you can go to ollyrichards.co and that's my website. can

You can join my newsletter where I have a very long case study of about 120 pages. And it describes exactly how my language business works from top to bottom in a lot of detail. It's completely free. And you can go and download that and read that if you're interested in that kind of thing.

Corey Andrew Powell (37:12)

Excellent words of wisdom from Mr. Olly Richards, who is the founder and I guess the guru of story learning, his passion project, which later became a $10 million online business. This is a great conversation and I'm going to take a lot of it in as I start to get myself back on track this year with Spanish. It's my resolution for 2025. So Olly Richards, thank you so much for being here today with us on Motivational Mondays.

Olly Richards (37:37)

Thank you so much. Great questions. I really enjoyed it.