

EPISODE 607

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:36.3]

FT: You're listening to So Money everyone, welcome to the show. This is going to be a fun one because have you ever wondered what happens behind the scenes at a TV network? Do you ever dream of having your own TV talk show or being on reality TV? Come on, you know you want to be famous right?

Well my guest today has played a leading role running popular daytime TV programs including Hoda and Kathie Lee on The Today's Show as well as The View. Brian Balthazar is here with advice on how to strike out on TV as well as his own personal journey of rising the ranks and television as a programming developer, and executive producer.

Brian takes us back to the days that he was working in retail then living in his car, not sure what his future would hold. Today he is the Vice President of Programming and Development for Scripts Networks where he creates and directs a variety of shows for HDTV, DIY Network and Great American Country.

You may also recognize Brian as the fun and funny personality who appears on numerous shows including the Wendy Williams Show, discussing pop culture and media headlines. Ready to have some fun? Here is Brian Balthazar.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:52.9]

FT: Brian Balthazar, you are So Money, welcome to the show.

[0:01:57.0]

BB: Thank you, thanks for having me.

[0:01:58.5]

FT: Has anyone ever told you that you're So Money?

[0:02:00.8]

BB: No. There's a first time for everything.

[0:02:04.4]

FT: Well, here we are, you have an incredible career and we were just talking about how we – it's funny you and I have not been in the same room before although we have had – I've been on many of the shows that you've executive produced.

Let's go back because I think your career and people just heard the introduction, you have so many – notches on your belt is that an expression?

[0:02:28.3]

BB: Yeah, I'll go with that, yes, I do. I'm just trying to look a little worn.

[0:02:35.0]

FT: For as young as you are, you have such a diverse history of experiences working on all these different kinds of shows, launching Hoda and Kathie Lee, being at The View, now you're at HDTV correct?

[0:02:46.9]

BB: Yeah.

[0:02:48.2]

FT: Alright, let's go back to when you graduated at Sierra Cruz, did you know that you wanted to be such a big player when it comes to television programming?

[0:02:57.4]

BB: I went through a really – that's very kind of you first of all, thank you very much.

[0:03:00.9]

FT: That's why I'm here.

[0:03:01.9]

BB: I think I went through a really kind of murky period which I think a lot of people do in college. I think as a kid, I always wanted to be in television both on it and behind the scenes and then I kind of – I was the first kid in my family to go to college so I didn't really have a guide book like get an internship, do this, do that.

I didn't have a great advisor in college, I'm not going to lie. I really didn't have any direction so I ended up working in retail for about five or six years and by the way, it's not a bad path.

[0:03:34.6]

FT: Where did you work? The Gap?

[0:03:36.2]

BB: I was at William Sanoma which actually, if you're going to work in a store, I think it should be William Sanoma because there's great food all around.

[0:03:40.7]

FT: They feed you.

[0:03:43.1]

BB: I learned how to cook at William Sanoma.

[0:03:46.4]

FT: I love going in there just for the free samples, I'm not going to lie.

[0:03:47.8]

BB: It's true, hey, that's the point you know? Get people in because it smells amazing and maybe they'll buy a \$6 spoon, who knows?

[0:03:56.1]

FT: You're at William Sanoma, what? For five years. At what point did you think, you know what? It's time to move on and then where did you go from there? How did you move on?

[0:04:04.6]

BB: Yeah, that was the tricky part. I was at the Sierra Cruz William Senoma, got promoted and moved to Buffalo, then got promoted again and moved to Boston and that was finally a city I felt like I could do something with writing and television. No, not that you can't do it in a local market, but I didn't know what I was doing. The truth is I first said, I'm going to quit this job and I'm going to be a freelance writer.

I'm in a city that I want to be in and can see myself settling down and it wasn't quite that simple as in result but that was my aspiration. From there I had about every job known to man for about three to six months. I worked customer service for an insurance company, I worked for psychic medium booking her appointments.

I worked on a boat singing and dancing and serving lobster. You name it, those are all true. You know, it was that classic case of I'm finding myself, kind of scared to death, I remember putting – poking holes in checks that I would write to build companies because I thought if you poked a little hole in the little number at the bottom, that it would slow down the processing on the check.

I remember that because one, I didn't know if it worked and I didn't know if it bought me a day but it's such a stark contrast to where I feel like I am today and where I don't have to worry about my finances like I once did.

I hope that the message is like, not to poke holes in your checks but in fact to hang in there and keep working hard and being nice because I think that's equally part of the formula, at least for me.

[0:05:33.2]

FT: Well, it sounds like you did a lot of things scared, it also sounds like you never stayed still, you were always busy, maybe not doing what you thought was your "passion" or calling but there's – I mean, even when you were at William Senoma, I'm sure there were lessons learned.

[0:05:48.7]

BB: For sure. Every job I had taught me something if not multiple things. Ultimately the lesson was true. I mean, sometimes I will say, the fear of failure can be paralyzing, emotionally paralyzing, and it can stop you from making an effort or trying something, fear of not succeeding at it.

I think not doing something is far more painful than trying it. I tried to get in a mindset of like – what can I do today? One little thing, even if it's one thing and it's little, you know, the smallest piece of clothing piled on top of each other, hence my laundry analogy becomes a really big pile eventually you know? I've been doing that, it adds up.

[0:06:31.5]

FT: What's the scariest thing you've ever done?

[0:06:35.3]

BB: Well, I would say, really, it was confronting the fact that I did want to do things on television and I did want to – one of the ways I did that was to take a standup comedy course just because I knew it would force me out of my comfort zone and so doing standup the first time was pretty scary.

[0:06:55.6]

FT: I think so, I've thought about doing standup. I don't know, I'm scared to death, tell me how you got over the fear?

[0:07:02.7]

BB: I took the course because lots of people can – tonight, you can go to an open mic night and try your act. I knew it wasn't – I think that I wanted to learn technique, there's more to being funny than just telling a story, although telling a great story is really – can be very funny but the structure and execution of humor is – there's actually some technique that can be applied.

Really, the ultimate reason was, I knew that if I put money down on the table to do something, I was going to see it through and usually these courses culminate in a performance at the end. I will do that performance, I won't just go do it on a Tuesday night because I feel like it.

I needed the person that said hey, it's Thursday, do it, you know?

[0:07:43.1]

FT: Right. Then of course, paying for something you feel like you just really have to do it.

[0:07:46.7]

BB: Absolutely, yeah.

[0:07:49.0]

FT: Okay, now let's fast forward, you are in Boston, you're learning your craft, you launched Hoda and Kathie Lee. Congratulations because that's kind of like, it's so hard to have a show that lasts.

[0:08:02.6]

BB: Yeah, it's amazing and I will say, first, thank you and foremost thank you to Hoda and Kathie Lee because it's a testament to truly the importance of chemistry on television, it's so key. I think Hoda and Kathie Lee have reached such a point where they could just sit down in front of the camera without a single segment planned out and be amazing.

However, you know, that's not really how TV works, it just take more than just the chemistry but their chemistry is everything and I was fortunate enough to be working hard and in the right place at the right time.

Sometimes the stars all have to come into alignment and I was very fortunate and grateful but you know, I was able to apply a lot of my experience leading up into that moment.

[0:08:46.4]

FT: Someone may be listening to the show right now, I think there's some people out there and myself included and I have had the luck and privilege of having shows, even if it was just one season, hey, it aired, that's always a good feeling.

This concept of I want a TV show or I want to be a talk show host or I want to be the host of a show, it's a pie in the sky dream but then it happens for some people. Tell us how it happens, how do you actually, if someone comes up to you and says Brian, one day I'd really love to have my own TV show. I'm a great interviewer, I'm an expert, I have, whatever.

What do you say other than “good luck”?

[0:09:30.4]

BB: Well, a lot of people say to me, a lot of people say, everyone tells me I should have a reality show, that’s how crazy I am and crazy my life is. Hopefully, you know, that can happen occasionally but what consistently amazes me is that is their only pitch. Everyone says I should have one.

There’s this whole other subset of people who are doing a lot of work to establish an area of expertise. You know like, what are you focusing? If you can narrow your field down to something, it doesn’t even have to be one thing but just to say, “I should have a TV show”, there’s a long line of people who think they should have a TV show and a long line of people who probably would be great on TV.

There’s another group of people and join that group where they are learning something, that they can speak expertly on. Now, granted, you may still get that reality show where you just get to kind of act foolishly and be a big personality or you could say, okay, I’m going to be the first and foremost expert on fill in the blank.

You can get it that way, there’s more than one way to do it but I think by establishing some credibility, you can first of all start to get yourself in newspapers and magazines because sometimes that comes before TV.

Everyone wants to jump right into network television, a lot of people, when I was at the Today’s Show. They’re like, “I want to be on the today’s show”. I’m like, well have you done any TV before? No, well I said, pursue your local markets, there are TV shows, there are morning television shows in every city in the country nearly.

Go after some of those because most network TV shows are going to want to see what you’ve done. You can do that now more than ever with your phone back 10 years ago when I was

doing Kathie Lee and Hoda. That really didn't exist yet and people were using video cameras and it was hard to edit. Now you can do so much on your phone.

If you don't have anything to show what you can do, it's going to be very difficult to move forward.

[0:11:26.3]

FT: Right. Yes, I think you know, 10 years ago, you needed a "reel" with lots of different examples but now people are starting their own YouTube channels with huge following and that's social proof. I think that's what the networks want to see now more than ever is that you have a following or not somewhere else that they can leverage.

[0:11:47.5]

BB: Absolutely. Because there still is you know, this amazing social world where you can have tons of subscribers and tons of traffic but so many of them really do still want that kind of cache and the broad distribution of a TV show and it can be done, I think it really is about getting yourself out there.

Don't just wait for something to happen, you just can't wait for things to happen in life, you really have to go after them and have the courage not only to go after them but to say out loud to people that that's what you want to do.

When I started out, I didn't really have the courage to say what I wanted to do and it slowed me down because there are a lot of people out there that will help you or give you suggestions or advice or connect you with someone so first, have the self-confidence to say, "this is what I want, this is what I want to go after."

That's okay, there's no shame in wanting something. Then you'll get the people to help you and you'll have the ability, if you can say it to yourself, you'll have that much more ability to move forward and take action and make it happen.

[0:12:42.5]

FT: You're very entrepreneurial Brian, how do you introduce yourself to people who have never met you when they ask, what do you do?

[0:12:49.4]

BB: Well, that's a good question because I'm really not sure, always how to answer it.

[0:12:54.3]

FT: Me either, it's hard.

[0:12:58.1]

BB: I went to the eye doctor the other day and they ask your occupation and like, I don't even know which one to say. Sometimes I say, even though it makes me cringe a little bit, I say, TV Personality and Television Development, I can't even get it out see? See how bad I am at this?

[0:13:19.1]

FT: Development Producer or Development.

[0:13:22.0]

BB: I don't like the word Executive. It sounds so Woo woo. Programming and Development TV Producer.

[0:13:31.5]

FT: TV Developer.

[0:13:32.8]

BB: I have not been able to say out loud what I do but the quickest way to say this is, TV Personality and Television Show Creator.

[0:13:40.6]

FT: I like it though. Really, going back to this entrepreneur hat that you wear, it's true because you have Pop Goes The Week, something that you totally thought up and now has become.

[0:13:51.6]

BB: I'm also a blogger and a writer.

[0:13:55.0]

FT: I'm just bragging about you because it's true, you're doing so much. I mean, some people would just be happy being like the guy who is an EP at HDTV or you know, the Co-EP at The View. You have a million things going on, is that very much your personality? It sounds –

[0:14:11.9]

BB: Yeah, it is. Because on weekends, I renovate and flip homes.

[0:14:17.0]

FT: No way.

[0:14:18.8]

BB: Yeah. It is difficult for me to sit still. Although I will say, I love sitting, I love to sit. I'm tired.

[0:14:28.6]

FT: Sitting right now.

[0:14:29.0]

BB: I'm really tired. I will say, there are some advantages truthfully to staying, remaining focused on one particular path or two. I think for me personally, there have probably been some things that I might be further along and some things if I had remained more focused on just one or two things.

I found that my personal satisfaction came from doing a lot of different things. It is a challenge for sure but it has ended up being also really pretty lucrative you know? I mean, on the topic of money, the story and poking holes in my checks and one time in Boston, we were driving down the street and my dad said as he remarked of all this homes that were really expensive homes in downtown Boston and he's like, "I can't believe the price of these homes."

"Brian, look, you'll never own a house" and I remember, it was just a soul crushing moment. He didn't mean anything – it wasn't that he didn't believe in me, it was just that he had felt badly for me and he thought that I'd never own a house. Well, I do own a house and now I flip them.

In a way, it drove me but I remember thinking, wow, you know, maybe I won't. I worked really hard and I'm fortunate to have turned that around but I get that I know that feeling of thinking, "my god, will I ever own a house? Will I ever be able to do that?"

[0:15:54.3]

FT: Where is the money in television? Can you just tell me? I need to write this down.

[0:15:58.6]

BB: Okay, well.

[0:16:00.0]

FT: How do you make the big money in TV, is it, you sell a TV show, you become an EP of a show like, what is the – where is the money?

[0:16:05.9]

BB: It depend on the genre. I will say, there are some executive producers of syndicated talk shows like Kathie Lee and Hoda is not a syndicated talk show but like, the Wendy William's show, a syndicated talk show, Steve Harvey is a syndicated show, Harry Connor Junior is a syndicated show. Executive producers of those shows get sizeable salaries for sure.

So working towards that is a big one. I'm quite comfortable in my salary here, I do very well, I don't make Executive Producer of a syndicated show money but I'm very financially stable here and grateful for the money I make here.

I'm technically the title at HDTV would be a Programming Executive, a Vice President of Programming and Development. On TV, this is probably a misconception that people have. There are a lot of people on TV that are not making a lot of money and spending a lot of time doing it.

In other words, they're not making money somewhere else in exchange for a very low salary on a TV show that they are using as leverage to get commercial endorsements or spokesperson endorsement fees.

It is a gamble. People that think they're getting a TV show and it's in season one and think they're going to be millionaires or even making six figures would be surprised.

[0:17:28.1]

FT: Ratings are tough, doesn't that bother you though? Because we don't just watch TV the way we used to watch TV 15 years ago yet I feel like the rating system hasn't caught up to that.

[0:17:37.9]

BB: It's true. Yeah, I think the technology certainly exists. For a long time I think people, we don't want to – we talk a lot about privacy but the truth is, I think you know, the people who are giving us our television shows, I mean, the providers, like you know, the cable companies or the satellite providers, they all know what we're watching, when we're tuning out, if we're skipping the commercials.

They know all of that stuff. Yet we do have a rating system that's a little bit different and it's difficult with all these new platforms, digital platforms are competing with linear platforms, whether it's a broadcast network versus a Netflix.

People watch those differently at different times and truthfully Nelson is trying to catch up and make sense of it all but it's happening at such a fast pace. That's why I think you're seeing so much about followings and how things tend to go viral and advertisers being interested in a show because it's a buzzy show and maybe it doesn't even make, some networks, the digital networks don't even say how many people are watching their shows.

Because they don't have their regular advertisers, they have subscribers. It's a really complicated time in the industry but it's an exciting time. If you want to be on TV, there are more places than ever to try and get on.

[0:18:52.5]

FT: Right, that's the good news. You know, in fact, when I had my Yahoo show, I would get more – I felt like I had a bigger audience than any other thing that I've done and I've done CNBC and NBC and it was just – I would get recognized and I'm like really, this little show that we do? That airs sometimes on the homepage but it was – you're right. There's so many platforms and you can start your own, you can go on YouTube and do your own thing.

[0:19:18.1]

BB: Yeah, I used to do a morning show on Pix 11 and I would get more people recognizing me from that than the national shows. One, it's a New York show but it's also, I was just kind of amazed you know?

[0:19:30.3]

FT: Yeah, well New York One News where I used to work, they used to say, I don't know how true it is now, that their ratings in New York City were higher than The Today's Show in New York City.

[0:19:42.0]

BB: That's probably true, yeah. Also partly, yeah. There's I think Fox Five has had those days as well where one, some of them are on a little earlier and they get that viewership really early but yeah, there are definitely, LA has the same situation with NBC's affiliate and ABC's affiliate, Good Day LA in many cases has beaten their local numbers as well.

[0:20:03.0]

FT: Well I could talk shop with you for a long time but I want to also get to why really we have you on the show and why listeners come to the show is to learn about money through the experiences of our guests.

[0:20:13.7]

BB: Great.

[0:20:14.9]

FT: Let's start and ask you, what is your money mantra? Do you have a financial philosophy?

[0:20:21.9]

BB: Well, I don't know if I really have a philosophy about it. Well, I will say this, if I don't have the money, I don't buy it. I do have mortgages out on two homes but I don't have credit cards, I paid off my credit cards. I fell into the trap that so many of us do in our early 20's where it's

really easy, at least it was at the time to get a credit card and I racked up what was an incredible debt.

It wasn't crippling but it was verging on a real problem. I used my car as collateral basically to finance that kind of repayment program and then I got into a car accident and the car was totaled and the money that I got for the total car ended up going to that debt whether I liked it or not. It paid off the debt. I don't suggest this plan but once I realized that you know, credit cards were not –

I didn't have the skills at the time to manage them wisely and I didn't have money so I was relying on them too much. I'm in my 40's now, I don't have a credit card, I don't necessarily know that this is – I don't necessarily recommend this but I'm fortunate to have enough savings that I don't need to charge things.

Now, I could benefit from a lot of the points programs that – and the reward programs that credit cards offer. I do have a debit card and there is a credit on my bank account that I can use as a credit card but I have not applied to multiple credit cards, I don't use in store credit cards at chain stores or – when you go to a clothing store and they're like, would you like to save 10%? I bought one shirt, I don't need to save \$3. They always ask you, I understand.

[0:22:00.9]

FT: They're so aggressive.

[0:22:01.6]

BB: Yeah, I know. The other thing I would say that for me, a transformative moment for me was when I really wanted to get this little cottage out in Pennsylvania. So when I say I have an additional house. It's out in Pennsylvania where real estate is really cheap comparatively to New York, everything is relative, right? So I wanted to be able to afford this mortgage payment on a home in Pennsylvania that was on the water. Beautiful.

But I wanted to make sure I really had the means so I thought to myself, I thought of my bank account which you could look at online as kind of like CSI and I wanted to do an autopsy on my bank account. So I went charge by charge to see what I was really spending my money on and how much of that was really necessary. Of course some of the things I thought, “Yeah I want to eat out. I want to have a social life.”

But I found that ooh, I subscribed to this every month and I don’t remember. A lot of apps and a lot of magazines, websites, digital platforms are charging you by the month whether you use it or not and they will hook you in when you sign up. We’re going to charge you by the month, cancel it anytime and then you forget to cancel. So I think it’s a healthy thing to do every year. If you’re not monitoring, you should really monitor it monthly.

But at the very least every year see exactly what you are really spending your money on. I use my taxes as an opportunity and my monthly statement as an opportunity and get the stuff out of there that you are not using. Really get it out of there.

[0:23:33.6]

FT: I like the word autopsy. We’ve used other words on this show like “do an audit” or one gas at a time.

[0:23:40.7]

BB: I like CSI. It’s a crime scene.

[0:23:42.0]

FT: Yeah, I like it. Well of course coming from the TV guy.

[0:23:44.9]

BB: You’re going to find something on your statement that you won’t even know what it is.

[0:23:47.9]

FT: It happened to me yesterday. I was like, "Angie's List, \$9.99" I don't even know what my user name and password is to the same. I tried every single email that I have and nothing is working. So that's going. It's 10 bucks whatever but then it's 10 bucks.

[0:24:06.2]

BB: And if you are doing it monthly then if you have four things that you are doing a month like there was a time when I was subscribing to Hulu and I really wasn't watching Hulu. Now I am really watching Hulu but at the time I think it was seven bucks a month. I have an app that I realize now recently, it's like a photo effect app and its billing me \$10 a month. That's a \$120 a year and then you add in the digital platform that you may not be watching.

Suddenly you've got \$500, you know that adds up to an insurance payment or a car payment or that kind of thing so.

[0:24:40.3]

FT: Yeah and saved over 10 years with interest, that's a nice down payment on your next cottage.

[0:24:47.9]

BB: Right, exactly. You have to think big picture when sometimes it's so hard. It is hard for sure.

[0:24:52.5]

FT: It is hard. Did you feel like you learned anything about money growing up? What was the money temperature in your house growing up in terms of how comfortable you felt talking about it, was it taboo?

[0:25:05.5]

BB: It was not talked about much. I knew that we weren't rich but I didn't feel poor. I knew that I couldn't have everything I wanted. At the time holidays like birthdays and Christmas, that was the time when you were hoping for something that you knew that they weren't going to buy you any other time of year and I don't know that necessarily it was because they didn't have the money, we were probably middle class.

I think really smack in the middle and it wasn't that they didn't have the money but they didn't spend money flippantly or foolishly and so I didn't need all of the things I wanted because sometimes you just don't need all the things you want. That's why they call them wants and they call them needs, you know they're different. I don't know that it was taboo but I was taught to balance my checkbook.

But there was not a big discussion beyond that and so I think that that was something where if I were to be parenting which I am not, I am parenting dogs it's different but I would be a lot more upfront and forthcoming about the importance of talking about money. It shouldn't be taboo. I don't know it was taboo in my house but I understand that some people just don't feel comfortable talking about it for whatever reason.

[0:26:16.6]

FT: I think more than half of our country is like that. We're a very cut off country when it comes to talking about money. Although I think we are getting better with it. I think the recession really opened up the dialogue, got people talking.

[0:26:31.4]

BB: I wonder if it has something to do with people often view their self-worth with their income level. If we are now suddenly in a position to compare what I make to another person with what they make, you know we are in a culture that likes to rank people.

[0:26:49.0]

FT: Yes, self-worth is net worth and we like to use benchmarks. Yeah, I completely agree. I actually think that we would rather walk around naked than clothed with our salaries stapled to our foreheads.

[0:27:04.3]

BB: Yeah, oh that's a really interesting.

[0:27:07.2]

FT: You like that visual?

[0:27:08.4]

BB: That's a great party question.

[0:27:08.4]

FT: Yeah which would you rather have, your salary revealed or your boobs?

[0:27:13.7]

BB: Right, now I really – yeah, I mean I don't know and I don't have a really good answer to that. I don't want to do either, yeah. It's difficult.

[0:27:20.5]

FT: No, I know it's tough. I am okay telling someone maybe in private that I trust and they are asking for a good reason but yeah, it's hard but I think we need some level of transparency especially for women. We get paid less than men so it's important that we are outspoken about how much we earn.

[0:27:41.2]

BB: For sure and even if we are not talking about income it's like talking about how – there is a disparity between products that are marketed towards women and the men and the way they price them and it's amazing that that's happening but it is happening.

[0:27:55.0]

FT: I know, so we've got women making less and then having to pay more for things and we live longer.

[0:27:58.7]

BB: Yeah why does it cost more for women's deodorant? It's beyond me, you know?

[0:28:03.9]

FT: Well it's prettier. It's pink and you know?

[0:28:06.4]

BB: Exactly, we made it pink for you.

[0:28:08.1]

FT: Yeah, well you know what? When you ask the companies flat out why do you charge more for the pink deodorant than the blue deodorant they'll say because we actually spend more money promoting the pink deodorant too, now I would say that cutting holes in your checks is maybe a low point in your financial life.

[0:28:26.2]

BB: You think?

[0:28:27.0]

FT: Well a little bit, what was the high? Name a high point, a So Money moment.

[0:28:33.2]

BB: Okay, so the low point was when I was living in my car. I lived in my car for a little while just a summer.

[0:28:39.4]

FT: Tell me about that, take me there.

[0:28:40.9]

BB: Well, I made a conscious decision in Boston. I had a choice, go back to Pennsylvania and live in a small town that I was in where I didn't feel like the opportunities were there and graded, I was not destitute. I was not homeless per say. I don't want to belittle people who are really struggling with this but I thought, "You know what? I'm going to just stick it out in my car for a little while, sleep in my car for a month or so."

And I knew it would kind of knock some sense into me, like make me work that much harder, and I know that sounds crazy. A lot of people don't have that choice and so I don't want to discredit that but for me I was like, "Okay I need to realize that if I want to stay in this city I need to step it up" and I got through it. I did step it up and then my high point, I would say breaking the six figure barrier and like you said, we talk about milestones.

It is again like we talked about being uncomfortable talking about money and this is a weird thing and I don't ever think I have ever said it out loud. I think people probably assume. But that was a high point. I think it was really though truthfully, to be able to get that second house that I could go to on weekends. To me I never take that for granted. Every time I am there I think "there was a time in my life where I thought it was hopeless."

And hopeless is a really terrible emotion because it drives people to think that they have nothing left to lose, they do foolish things. There is always hope. There really is always hope. I do deep down in my core believe that and sometimes it's harder to keep alive to keep that fire burning but I do believe it but that's something that I think of every time I go in that house and mind you, it's not a McMansion.

It's not a mansion or even a McMansion. It's a modest home but I know that many people don't have one home so I feel very grateful. I work really hard, I really do. I work really hard for the money that I make and so I don't feel like it was handed to me and that makes it that much more special.

[0:30:49.7]

FT: I don't think anyone doubts you don't work hard. I mean your LinkedIn profile alone is very impressive and I think that it sounds like you've now entered and stepped into this mindset, this abundance mindset. I think that when you're starting out and you are living in your car, clearly you don't have an abundance mindset maybe then. You're thinking "money is limited and I'm never going to get there, hope is just not an option."

But do you think that you have the potential to make even more? Do you aspire to that? What do you aspire to financially right now?

[0:31:29.8]

BB: I have been in a position to make more and said no to that and even for the sake of my own happiness. I've left jobs where I made more and then I've been offered the possibility of making more that didn't pan out. So I feel like the possibilities are good for making significantly more money but I won't let it drive my decisions in such a way that it compromises my happiness or my self-worth because I have been in that position.

Where I really felt like by taking that money I feel like that money would not come without a cost and the cost would be at my physical wellbeing, my emotional wellbeing and my spiritual wellbeing and so I'm very fortunate to be in that position that I can make that choice. But I am

optimistic that more money would be out there but if I didn't make more than I am making today for many years, I think I would still be okay. I would definitely still be okay but of course, we all want to make a little more.

[0:32:32.4]

FT: Of course. I think part of how you do it is you continue to stay relevant and valuable to your industry and to your craft.

[0:32:41.2]

BB: And I use a lot of face cream.

[0:32:43.1]

FT: Right because you're on TV too. You need a good skin care regiment, let's be honest.

[0:32:49.1]

BB: I am just kidding.

[0:32:50.6]

FT: You need a Botox budget, no.

[0:32:52.2]

BB: Thank you, it's getting harder and harder to stay relevant or up to date. I can't watch every reality show. I can't do it and I won't.

[0:32:58.2]

FT: What's your favorite?

[0:32:59.7]

BB: Oh see.

[0:33:00.3]

FT: Do you watch like Real Housewives?

[0:33:03.1]

BB: I don't watch The Real Housewives, isn't that terrible?

[0:33:05.6]

FT: No I think it's great.

[0:33:07.5]

BB: I'd say probably actually – I actually have been watching a lot of the news. It's a good time to watch the news. I'm just starting to explore The Handmaid's Tale. I still like Great British Baking Show because it's easy. It's just easy and I look at that food, I don't know if you have ever seen the Great British Baking Show?

[0:33:28.5]

FT: No, I have never heard of it, what channel is it on?

[0:33:30.7]

BB: Yes, we always get it a year later. It's a baking contest reality. It's like an elimination show. I still like the classics like Project Runway. Here's the thing, I am a no drama person so I like scripted drama like Scandal or How to Get away with Murder. I love Family Guy, I'm a little bit

irreverent or American Dad. I love a Seth Macfarlane comedy, I do. I say that sheepishly because I think people think he's crude but I think he's hilarious and so raw. He makes me cringe, don't get me wrong, he still makes me cringe.

[0:34:04.9]

FT: If it's so wrong, I don't want it to be right or whatever the expression is, if this is wrong I don't want it to be right.

[0:34:10.3]

BB: Exactly. It's so funny, I go to bed to The Golden Girls.

[0:34:13.9]

FT: Oh I love The Golden Girls. I love Three is a Company.

[0:34:15.8]

BB: I know, here's why. I fall asleep with the TV on and the timer is on so it will turn off and I won't force myself to stay awake because I have seen it. I know what happens. I can't watch the show at night that I'm going to be like, "Oh I would better stay up and watch this" because I really just want to zone out but I don't watch that much TV anymore.

[0:34:32.6]

FT: I watched so much TV growing up. Did you watch a lot of TV? I got rid of cable don't tell anyone.

[0:34:39.1]

BB: Oh I don't blame you because that's a great way to cut costs. There are these mini-bundles like Roku has a great mini-bundle where you can watch HDTV. Hulu has it, I mean I'm really getting closer to cutting the cord myself but I shouldn't say that too loudly.

[0:34:55.0]

FT: Yeah, I mean honestly Brian, I am probably not spending less on streaming and content but it's just that I am getting now what I actually want to watch. With cable, I feel like I watched three, I watch news and some cable but mostly it's sports and we're not a sports fan household so we got rid of it and if there's a game that we want to catch, we get together with friends and watch it at their house.

[0:35:19.9]

BB: Right, yeah. So I don't feel like I miss out. I watch a lot of movies later. I did watch Wonder Woman in theaters because you have to watch that in theaters but I like to watch a lot of movies on demand. I love on demand, I love that freedom and flexibility.

[0:35:35.7]

FT: Alright, let's do some So Money fill in the blanks.

[0:35:40.0]

BB: Okay.

[0:35:40.6]

FT: And then you are going to tell me how I can get my own money show. Money is so hard to make into a TV show, I will just say that right?

[0:35:48.2]

BB: Yeah, it is. It is hard for sure.

[0:35:50.7]

FT: I've been pitched so many things that have never come to fruition like, "We want to do The Doctors but a money show" with money experts. Is that a good idea? Of course I think so because I am a total money geek and then yeah, it's just hard. It's a hard sell but okay, "if I won the lottery tomorrow the first thing I would do is?"

[0:36:12.9]

BB: Oh well it does depend on the size of the payout but I –

[0:36:19.1]

FT: Yeah, the power ball like.

[0:36:22.1]

BB: I would take a break. Truthfully, I would only take like four weeks off. I would want to get back to my job but I would just say and I think my company would be amazing with it like I don't want to quit. I just need four weeks off to get my head on straight and lay down on a beach somewhere and not worry because we can't help but worry a little bit about and so that's what I would do and then from there, I would probably buy –

I would really buy real estate because it is one of the few investments that's physical in nature, that's tangible that I feel like if you make it better you will get a return on that if you are careful with a lot of the factors that could place it or rental property that you can payoff and then have that rental income come in.

[0:37:01.7]

FT: I'm with you. I am obsessed with real estate. I read the real estate section at The Times, the first thing I do on a weekends is open up that section. "When I spend money to make my life easier or better or both, I spend on?"

[0:37:16.5]

BB: Oh, lately I have been buying a lot of smart items for my home like I have a digital thermometer, I have a NEST system where I can check in with my dogs, I can adjust my thermometers before I get to the house. I can program them. I love good food, I am obsessed with good food and so I love to cook and so I like to spend money on nice dinners out but I also love cooking food at home. So I do spend a little bit more on food but it's not processed food so I feel like I can justify it that way.

[0:37:55.1]

FT: A New Yorker who loves to cook, you are a rarity, who actually cooks like people love cooking but the idea of it but they actually don't.

[0:38:02.8]

BB: Oh I really do. All weekend I love to cook if I am not painting or sanding something.

[0:38:09.0]

FT: You're a renaissance man.

[0:38:10.9]

BB: I guess, I'm like one of those splattered paintings you know?

[0:38:16.3]

FT: Love it. You do so much. I'm gushing now but I mean it.

[0:38:22.5]

BB: You're too kind.

[0:38:23.9]

FT: No, it's true. Alright, "When I was growing up the one thing I wish I had learned about money?"

[0:38:30.5]

BB: Oh – the one thing I wish I had learned about money, I wish I had learned about how credit cards work beforehand. Like really learned what the consequences can be and had some real reality to taste, some real case studies of what can happen.

[0:38:48.0]

FT: You know no one told me that either. I opened up a couple of new credit cards in college and I just remember thinking, "Really? All I have to pay is \$12 even though my balance is \$400? Great! Sign me up" but that's not good and then last but not the least, "I am Brian Balthazar, I'm So Money because?"

[0:39:07.5]

BB: Oh, hmm it's not supposed to be boastful, let's see I am So Money because I work hard and – oh wow, this is hard! This is a hard one.

[0:39:20.5]

FT: Yeah, you know people I don't want to brag and so my response is just think of it maybe as something you're really proud of that it doesn't even have to be about money, you know? It could just be like –

[0:39:33.5]

BB: Yeah, I'm So Money because I'm working hard and I am being nice.

[0:39:41.0]

FT: You are so nice.

[0:39:42.0]

BB: I'm trying. I think the truth is if, one other career path note to anyone who's trying to build a career is one, I hope it's a given to be nice to people but I will tell you also it does come back to you. It really does and also, you'll run into those people again. You might think you are not going to see those people again. If you stay in the same town including New York which may have what, 8 million, 9 million people?

You are still going to run into those same people if you stay in the same field and it's going to pay off in a great many ways and also it encourages people to be nice right back.

[0:40:18.8]

FT: Well you get what you give, right?

[0:40:22.8]

BB: Exactly.

[0:40:23.6]

FT: Brian Balthazar thank you so much. I've been smiling this entire 30 minutes.

[0:40:27.7]

BB: Oh thank you. Thank you very much.

[0:40:29.1]

FT: You're a delight, thank you.

[END]