

INDIE|TOP 40

AGENCY NEWS

WEIRDOS, MISFITS + UNDERDOGS

Below, you'll find all of the fields needed for your entry/entries.

For People + Team Entries:

Name(s)

Enter the name(s) of the person/people being nominated.

Jake Hay

Agency Affiliation

PopShorts

Role(s)/Position(s)

Enter the role(s) or position(s) of the person/team..

Partner, PopShorts - Faculty Lecturer, University of Texas

Which best describes this person/team? ☒ Weirdo ☐ Misfit ☐ Underdog ☐

Other: _____

The Indie Spirit

What makes this person/team distinctly "indie" in their approach or mindset? What traits set them apart?.

Jake champions an independence-first philosophy in every brand relationship. Instead of squeezing creators into preset media plans, he positions PopShorts as a strategic growth partner that starts with a brand's business problem and reverse-engineers a culturally resonant solution. Often under budgets that global holding companies would consider "test spends." His north star is simple: if the work wouldn't make audiences talk, it doesn't leave the building.

The Status Quo Disruptors

What conventional wisdom or industry standards have they questioned, rejected, or reimaged?

While conventional agencies still optimize for lowest CPM, Jake rewrote the playbook around alignment and outcomes by mapping creator content, audience sentiment, and brand purpose down to frame-level signals. Internally, he linked team incentives to post-campaign lift, not billable hours, and replaced bulky creative approval chains with 72-hour “green-light sprints” that let PopShorts beat heavyweight rivals to cultural moments.

The Impact Makers

How have they used their independence to make a difference in the agency, for clients, or in the industry?

Over the past eight years, Jake’s growth blueprint produced a 30 % revenue CAGR, landing PopShorts on the Inc. 5000 multiple times and the Financial Times Top 500 Fastest-Growing Companies list. By architecting account-planning frameworks that uncover upsell and cross-sell whitespace, he pushed customer retention to 85 % YoY, turning one-off briefs into multi-year partnerships. Those results fueled marquee recognitions, such as Forbes 30 Under 30 and Boutique Agency of the Year in Los Angeles, cementing PopShorts’ reputation as a small shop that punches far above its weight.

Industry Impact – Seeing a gap in local representation, Jake founded Austin’s first-ever E4 Youth Award, honoring emerging creatives of color and expanding the talent pipeline for the entire regional industry.

The Hidden Gems (Optional)

What’s something about this person/team that isn’t on their LinkedIn profile but defines their indie character?

Behind the scenes, Jake personally reaches out to promising, under-the-radar creators offering guidance on audience growth, brand positioning, and revenue strategy long before formal partnerships are discussed. It’s grass-roots mentorship that keeps PopShorts ahead of cultural shifts and pays forward the indie ethos.

The Turning Point (Optional)

Was there a specific moment or decision that crystallized their commitment to independent thinking?

The day Vine shut down, most agencies abandoned six-second storytelling; Jake saw proof that authentic, creator-led narratives would outlast any platform. That realization crystallized his independent mindset and set PopShorts on a course to build flexible, creator-centric strategies that could jump from Vine to TikTok to whatever comes next.

The Ripple Effect (Optional)

How has this person/team influenced others in the indie community, either within your agency or beyond?

Jake has mentored 60+ students through an internship program he built, now expanded into his UT coursework, sending well-trained, diversity-minded talent into agencies nationwide. As President of the American Advertising Federation's Austin chapter, his community initiatives earned him AAF National "President of the Year," and his playbooks for indie growth are shared across local AAF clubs and emerging agencies alike.