

EPISODE 56

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this weeks' episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. The guests in our show include some of the most notable journalists from the top US-based publications, who cover topics including technology, lifestyle and culture, health, science, consumer products and business news. We discuss their role, the types of stories they cover, what their inbox looks like and how they connect with sources.

Today, we're joined by David Carnoy, an Executive Editor for CNET. David joins CNET in April of 2000 and covers gadgets, tech and e-publishing. David started his career in 1989 as an editorial assistant and has held other positions, including editorial director and senior editor.

On the episode today, David tells us more about how many gadgets he receives for review, what and when he prefers to hear about products, his career as a novelist and more. Let's hear more from David now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:05] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. This is the first show. We're taping in 2021. This is super exciting. I actually have coffee today. We're so delighted. We have David Carnoy on, who's the Executive Editor of CNET. I know a lot of you guys know his stuff and his material. He writes extensively on a lot of our favorite products, among various other things. David, thank you for being here.

[00:01:29] DC: Thanks for having me.

[00:01:30] BB: I actually was looking at your AirPods accessories for 2021 article, just recently. Appreciate that piece.

[00:01:36] DC: I have to update it soon.

[00:01:37] BB: Oh, are they coming out with another one?

[00:01:39] DC: No, but they're always coming out with stuff.

[00:01:41] BB: I know.

[00:01:41] DC: Got to keep it fresh.

[00:01:43] BB: Constant. Constant. Well, speaking of fresh, is there anything going on that is decent in your inbox in terms of pitches? Do you get a bunch?

[00:01:52] DC: I get a lot and we're obviously facing CES, the virtual CES in about a week. I'm getting a ton of those pitches. I also get a lot of pitches from Chinese companies, which can be a little challenging too.

[00:02:06] BB: Ooh. How do those pitches look?

[00:02:07] DC: The funny part is they always for some reason, it's lost in translation, or something. They will say, "Can we make a collaboration?" I don't do collaborations. You send me this stuff and I decide whether to do something on it. It's a little weird. I just try to point that out to people, where I'm not doing –

[00:02:27] BB: Collaborations.

[00:02:27] DC: Collaboration. Yes.

[00:02:29] BB: Yes.

[00:02:29] DC: We try to keep things on one side of the wall.

[00:02:34] BB: Given the type of stuff that you cover, which is on products, specifically; of course, all tech products, do you get a bunch of stuff? How are you doing this in COVID, to touch and feel and do everything?

[00:02:45] DC: My wife is going to kill me if I get any more stuff in, so I try to limit it. It's more challenging to send things back. At the office, we do have a guy who helps out with that. That becomes more me. The companies are pretty good about it, including labels and stuff like that.

[00:03:03] BB: Return labels.

[00:03:05] DC: All in all, I'm just trying to be a little bit more selective in terms of what I get in. We were actually bought recently by Red Ventures. We have not been back in the office since March. We actually have to move out of the office, so I have to figure out how to get some stuff out and send some stuff back. That's the bigger logistical challenge right now.

[00:03:28] BB: You've just passed 20 years. Is that right, at CNET?

[00:03:30] DC: Yes. Unfortunately, in the middle of the pandemic. I didn't get a launch. I didn't get any –

[00:03:37] BB: Yeah, it was April 2020. 20 years. Wow, at CNET. We'll talk a little bit more about that. Back to the inbox, do you have a way, a system of how you sort through pitches?

[00:03:48] DC: No, not really. Honestly, I'm actually pretty good – relatively good about responding if it's something that's actually in my wheelhouse. Some editors let a lot of stuff go by and miss a lot of things. I had people who work for me who did that, which I was not happy about. I'm pretty quick at identifying stuff that could be interesting. I go from there. Then ask a few questions sometimes, to see maybe a price point, or sometimes the product isn't necessarily available in the US. That could be an issue. We're more geared towards facilitating commerce, so that the thing is actually available for sale.

I don't do as much rewriting press releases and saying a product has been announced. I'd rather have some hands-on with it and be able to say something about, that there are exceptions. Say for instance, just before I got on with you, Bose came out with a new open-ear earbuds.

[00:04:49] BB: Open-ear.

[00:04:50] DC: Yes. It sit on top of your ears, or sport earbuds. I quickly had to write that up. Certain higher profile companies, we're going to cover those releases, because they tend to do a lot of traffic and that certainly factors into our coverage. We also have a speed desk that does some quick announcements and stuff like that. That's something they want to cover a short product announcement stuff. That does still happen, but that's part of a little bit more – part of our news team.

[00:05:20] BB: Got you. By the way, for anyone who's listening, you scanned David's author page. I mean, it's just constant, the best. I mean, you even did fire pits. The best over-ear headphones, PC speakers, gaming headsets, Xbox gaming headset. What was your top product from last year, in terms of just did it surprise you and how it surprised you?

[00:05:39] DC: In terms of traffic, or in terms of actual just top product?

[00:05:43] BB: Oh, just you. You personally, where you're like, "Dang. I really like that thing. I would buy that."

[00:05:47] DC: I mean, I think the AirPods Max can be rather expensive. I'm talking to you on it right now.

[00:05:52] BB: It sounds good.

[00:05:54] DC: In terms of I cover a lot of headphones. To do a higher-end headphone. That was certainly an appealing product, although too expensive for some people and it sold out

quickly. I actually spend a lot of time trying to identify our readers, like most people like good values. I'm always trying to find stuff that's good for the money. Again, a lot of the Chinese companies that like to do collaborations, happen to be the ones putting out some of these true wireless earbuds that are competitors to the AirPods. There's some surprisingly good stuff for only \$50, \$60 these days. I do a fair number of accessories, so I've done a lot of iPhone accessories, iPhone cases.

[00:06:38] BB: Yes, you have.

[00:06:38] DC: Some of those are actually pretty cool. In terms of earth-shattering stuff, I did personally buy both a PS5 and an Xbox Series X.

[00:06:49] BB: Happy with it?

[00:06:51] DC: Yeah. Personally, we actually have a guy on our team who happens to be a shopping ninja and he offered to get me these things and actually managed to do it. I then owed him the money.

[00:07:02] BB: Wow, that's great.

[00:07:03] DC: I personally am not that good at the shopping.

[00:07:07] BB: You've got someone on your team whose only focus is that.

[00:07:10] DC: He volunteered. He gotten a few others for other people too. One tip is you can't double order at Costco, apparently. He managed to get an Xbox Series X at Costco, but then, they didn't allow him to get a second one.

[00:07:23] BB: How interesting. Online, I'm assuming. An online purchase, where you can't hit the two buttons. Good Costco tip right there, in case you're trying to snag some hot products. David, we do talk on the show about making a great story and how that comes to be. Does it

happen sometimes with you're just on a walk with your dog and something strikes you, or you're like, "Oh, I saw two things on Twitter and I got in a rabbit hole and then I got this investigative piece." Or, "Oh, I actually got a really good pitch and I decided to go into this." You're a little bit different, because you're doing product, product, product and quite an array of tech products. Is there though a way in which you think of, "Ah, I need to do a piece on this type of product"?

[00:08:05] DC: Yeah. I think, sometimes I do do some opinion pieces, might just have a column for a long time. I think in some ways, I am in many ways, a typical CNET reader. If I want something, or I'm interested in something, it tends to resonate with our readers. Questions about something, or I try to find an angle on a product, oftentimes we do five different articles on a hot product. They tend to be Apple, Samsung, Microsoft, the big companies, but everyone's writing about those products. We try to come up with an angle that people are interested in. Sometimes you have to put yourself out on a limb a little bit.

[00:08:49] BB: I'm thinking of you got to have a little bit of creativity in this, because you can't just say, "Yeah, here's a product. Here, I liked it. Here's a product. Here I liked it," because you come out, by the way, for people who know and are following any of your articles, I mean, you are prolific. You coming out with in a month, dozens of pieces. I'm looking at your December. You had a busy December, for example.

[00:09:07] DC: Honestly, a lot of the times, a lot of the articles are updates, sometimes with substantial updates. We tend to in this world of SEO, people looking for best products and that tends to be a fair amount of my focus. I'm more into evergreen content. I think, in terms of pitches, we're looking for stuff that isn't so much. We have our news team, that's what they do. On our end, we're looking for things that can live for a while, that can be updated, whether that's some form of guide, or especially around a product category.

Sometimes, people will pitch me on a product and I'm like, "Okay. That's interesting, but I need to put it in context of three or four other products." I'll actually ask, "Hey, can you tell me what some of the competitors are?" In some ways, in terms of one tip would be, sometimes, you

have to include your competitors to actually get a story done on your product. I know PR people don't like to do that sometimes, but in some ways, you could be part of a larger piece. I do things for instance, like best places to buy online glasses. There are a gazillion places.

[00:10:12] BB: Yeah, I saw that. Yeah.

[00:10:14] DC: There are gazillion places that sell online. Some people pitch me, some people I reach out to, in terms of I think of the major players. I'll say like, how are you different from your competitors? They'll have to try to tell me, because these things are seen on the surface pretty similar. To get any context in terms of your, whatever market you're in is helpful.

[00:10:36] BB: How do you determine doing something, like on the one you did on Christmas? High-tech ski gear. Do you always do ski gear, for example? Or were you like, "You know what? I want to talk about ski."

[00:10:45] DC: I'd be doing that. Yeah. I mean, some of the things are personal passions. I ski. I started going to some – They have these events that are similar to tech events, but for the outdoor market. They were having some of those in New York, and so I noticed – CNET is branching into all kinds of areas, not necessarily just technically doing mattresses, or all kinds of items.

[00:11:07] BB: Oh, a little bit more consumer reports-ish, would you say?

[00:11:11] DC: No. I mean, I think it's just more, I would say, we necessarily get into such exhausted testing. The idea is just to get into more areas, where people are looking for buying advice and providing that.

[00:11:25] BB: Let's go back to the ski story. The ski piece came from a personal interest.

[00:11:30] DC: Yeah, and it's interesting, because over the years, I've done that for probably five or six years and I generally –

[00:11:34] BB: That's all the way back.

[00:11:35] DC: Generally, updating the story and it's based on largely SEO. CNET does really well, SEO. We can go into almost any category and rank pretty high pretty quickly. You could even take something that isn't what you associate with CNET, like high-tech ski gear. All of a sudden –

[00:11:55] BB: Pops up.

[00:11:56] DC: I'll get some PR people like, "Hey, they notice that it's ranked pretty high," and suddenly, they're asking if their product could be featured.

[00:12:01] BB: You're on the list.

[00:12:02] DC: Yeah, yeah. They're surprised, because it'll drive more traffic to their client than another story from outside magazine, or something that you would think would be a leader in the category. That, I think surprised a lot of people. It generally takes a little bit – I'm fairly well-versed in ski gear, but I'm not a hardcore. That isn't my first and foremost thing I do. It takes a little while to gain the respect of –

[00:12:29] BB: The hardcore people?

[00:12:29] DC: Yeah. I've now skied from young age and raced a little bit and go out to Jacksonville every year. I've skied with some of the PR people and they think I'm okay now.

[00:12:41] BB: Only 20 years, David, took you this long to get the reputation for skiing.

[00:12:47] DC: Skiing is one of those sports that you can do for a long time and feel you haven't lost that much.

[00:12:53] BB: That's very true. I grew up skiing too. Now, I'm like, not so much. I don't like being cold.

[00:12:58] DC: It became a very expensive sport.

[00:13:00] BB: It's a very expensive sport. It is. Often, constantly freezing.

[MESSAGE]

[00:13:07] ANNOUNCER: Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch.

Are you curious to see the unique ways OnePitch helps PR professionals and marketers pitch journalists? Head to onepitch.co to learn about our new OnePitch score and see how easy it is to find the right journalist to pitch your news to. Sign up for your free account today.

Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:13:32] BB: Let's do a quick word association game. I'm going to give you a word and you just tell us the first thing that comes to mind. Does that sound good?

[00:13:39] DC: Sure.

[00:13:40] BB: Okay. First one, food.

[00:13:41] DC: Sushi.

[00:13:42] BB: Drink.

[00:13:44] **DC:** Gatorade.

[00:13:45] **BB:** Hobby.

[00:13:45] **DC:** Writing novels.

[00:13:47] **BB:** Yes, you have three. We'll talk about that soon. Skiing.

[00:13:50] **DC:** Powder.

[00:13:51] **BB:** AirPods Max.

[00:13:53] **BB:** Rich sound.

[00:13:55] **BB:** Ecom.

[00:13:56] **DC:** All I do.

[00:13:57] **BB:** Wearables.

[00:13:59] **DC:** Earbuds.

[00:14:00] **BB:** The Big Lebowski. I know you're a Cowan fan.

[00:14:03] **DC:** The dude abides.

[00:14:04] **BB:** Yes. Journalism.

[00:14:06] **DC:** Journalism.

[00:14:08] **BB:** Pitch.

[00:14:09] DC: Catcher.

[00:14:10] BB: Inbox.

[00:14:11] DC: Full.

[00:14:12] BB: That is a common response to that. Yes. Now that we've done 50 plus of this. No one's had a positive association with that last word. Thanks for playing that. Speaking of the novels you've written and we've talked about them at the top of the show here. By the way, I frankly ponder at how someone produces an entire book, let alone three. You had the debut novel that was even in the top 10 bestseller for Kindle and Nook as we talked about. What do you read as an author, but also a prolific journalist? Or what are you reading right now that you love?

[00:14:43] DC: Well, I was reading a lot of politics for a while with the election. It varies. I actually read more non-fiction than fiction, believe it or not. It's hard to find necessarily fiction books that I like. I've got four kids, so that eats into my time as well.

[00:14:59] BB: Oh, yeah. I would say. Leisure time is not high on your list.

[00:15:03] DC: Look at what I have in my phone here, because I tend to read on my phone, believe it or not.

[00:15:06] BB: Oh, really. Not the hard, regular pages.

[00:15:09] DC: No. I used to read a lot on the subway, because one-handed. I don't do that anymore. I was reading this guy, Sam Lipsite, who happened – I went to Columbia for an MFA program. He came up with a novel called *Hark* not too long ago. A bad time to release a novel in the beginning the pandemic. I'd liked one of his previous books, so that's what I was reading right now. Actually, I was starting to read Kurt Vonnegut again for the hell of it. *Cat's Cradle*.

[00:15:38] BB: Yeah, okay. Some classics.

[00:15:41] DC: Bad Blood, which was –

[00:15:43] BB: Oh, that's amazing. My favorite is a non-fiction that reads a ridiculous fiction. You cannot believe it.

[00:15:51] DC: Red Notice?

[00:15:52] BB: Yep.

[00:15:53] DC: I was reading a book by this guy, Kevin Wignall, *To Die in Vienna*, a death in Sweden. I think, he's a guy who got - who was probably self-published initially and got a contract, how well he did as a self-published author, so he's been doing well.

[00:16:07] BB: That's a rare thing. You don't usually hear that self-publish and then they get a nice big deal.

[00:16:12] DC: Well, that's what happened to me.

[00:16:13] BB: Oh, really. Tell us a little bit about that. You just self-publish and then you got some attention?

[00:16:18] DC: I had a big agent and thought I was on my way. Actually, had Simon & Schuster was interested in doing my first book initially. When I first came to New York, I worked in publishing. These days, it's not good enough usually for just one editor to want your - back in the day, it used to be one editor wanted your book. They could acquire it, he or she could acquire it. Now, you need to build consensus. You need a marketing department. This one senior editor wanted it and couldn't build consensus around it. It's largely based on how they think they can market it. Got rejected by -

[00:16:53] BB: They want to know how many books they get. Yeah.

[00:16:55] DC: I don't know. They just have to -

[00:16:56] BB: Oh, got rejected.

[00:16:56] DC: It's being clear. They got rejected by about 20 publishers. This is in the early days of Kindle and stuff like that. It was even before that Kindle came out. I had a friend who knew someone back in the day. There was no iBook store. Your book had to be an app in the Apple Store. A friend of mine knew this guy who put together a book with a guy from Romania, a programmer. He created an app out of my book, that I then gave away on the iPhone.

[00:17:30] BB: He made an app out of your book?

[00:17:32] DC: I gave it away as a free book and it went to number three.

[00:17:36] BB: Wow.

[00:17:36] DC: That's a book, in the book of the app store on the iPhone. It was ahead of the bible briefly. That was knife music. What happened though was, I told my agent that I was going to do this, that I was going to try to self-publish. That was part of the whole deal. What happened was initially, the app was rejected. I get this e-mail from the guy in Romania saying, "I can't believe your book was rejected by Apple for profanity."

[00:18:02] BB: What?

[00:18:03] DC: It was great, because they highlighted some swear words in the book and I could just screenshot it. I was disappointed at first. I was like, "Whoa. This is a PR opportunity."

[00:18:11] BB: Way to look at that.

[00:18:13] DC: Yes. I had some friends who worked for other competing sites, like engadget and stuff like that. I said, "Hey, Apple is censoring books." Sent them the screenshot and they -

[00:18:23] BB: Wow. Savvy. Look how savvy that is. Yes.

[00:18:27] DC: I've been pitched in the past.

[00:18:28] BB: You knew what to do.

[00:18:29] DC: Unfortunately, because I was much more motivated back then, it's a full-time job to do publicity as we know.

[00:18:36] BB: As an author.

[00:18:37] DC: As an author in general, to promote yourself. It's a skill to promote products, whatever it is, it does take a certain amount of skill. I respect PR people.

[00:18:47] BB: I was just going to say, it sounds like you got respect.

[00:18:49] DC: We were able to break through and pitch. Through that and doing crazy stuff to get publicity for the book, actually my agent ended up on TV.

[00:18:57] BB: Your agent did, not you? What is wrong with this situation?

[00:19:02] DC: I knew the tech reporter for New York One, which is the local station. I kept saying, the self-publishing thing is big. It's going to be big. You should do something on it. Then one day, he just called me up and said, "Okay, let's go for it." He did a whole segment on me, the book and then he said, "Hey, can I call up your agent?" Ironically, because my agent was on TV and some editors saw him, they requested the book from him and then the book was sold within a week.

[00:19:26] BB: What? I'm blown away about the app, then the rejection of the app, the profanity, you turned that into a PR opportunity, your agent was on TV and then that's how you sold the book. This is a PR dream. All of this. Wow, this is the best book story I've heard. Amazing.

[00:19:43] DC: If it had been made in a movie, it would have been better, but that hadn't.

[00:19:45] BB: A little bit. Yeah. Oh, man. Well, thank you for sharing that with us.

[00:19:51] DC: That was when actually, I did two others. I should have done a fourth, but I have not done it yet.

[00:19:54] BB: Well, you got a couple things going on, like four kids and a full-time job. Yeah, a lot of respect to you.

[00:20:01] DC: Thank you.

[00:20:01] BB: Gosh. Well, speaking of 20 years, now at CNET and that precedes and you had a couple other jobs before that, such as being an editor at Success Magazine, we always ask this, which is what do you think about the future of journalism?

[00:20:16] DC: I do think, I had worked a long time ago for the village boys, a guy, who investigative reporter named Wayne Barrett. He wrote a book about Trump and happened to die. He would have been a great source. I think, investigative journalism, there's a huge place for that. It's obviously a vital part of journalism world.

I think, what I do, I sometimes get to practice certain things that require investigations to try to get to the truth. Our news team tends to do more of that. I think, in our world, I also do some videos, so that was a big part of what we also do. It's about being prolific now and the best, whether it's Maggie Haberman at the New York Times churning out one article after another on

politics. Same is true for whatever field. You're in the tech, you have to constantly be in front of readers and constantly being out there.

That's why I refer to it a little bit more as journalism churning stuff out. Back in the day, when I used to work for magazines, you had to fit your words to a page. Now, there are fewer outlets that provide the training for younger people to become so-called seasoned journalists. I learned a lot from editors. Now, I think, people just learn on the job, so to speak, and crank it out. To a certain degree, unfortunately, I would say, you either got it or you don't. You can learn things along the way, but there's just - if you're at some of these - if you're not dealing. I have someone who edits me, who's actually helpful, but you have to have a good editor and sometimes it's questionable, whether how much stuff is getting edited.

Sometimes in our world, being being first is very important. Getting the scoops and all that source up. Whether it's your relationships. I think the writing, at least in what I do, is certainly varies in terms of quality. That's one of the things. We have some seasoned people on our news team who are very good and seasoned editors who can really massage things. We always joked about whether it was David Pogue, or Walt Mossberg at the New York Times, or Wall Street Journal. Those guys had the benefit of having great editors. It always would be interesting to see their raw copy, because -

[00:22:43] BB: Oh that tells the real truth of what was.

[00:22:46] DC: I think, journalism is extremely important, especially in a world where the truth is in question. I was talking to a guy the other day. He's like, "You don't really know what the truth is anymore." I was like, "You do."

[00:23:00] BB: Yeah, you know what it is.

[00:23:03] DC: Yeah. I think, that's fortunately, I think people, they filter their worlds through whatever media outlet.

[00:23:10] BB: That's a scary comment, by the way.

[00:23:14] DC: I do think that maybe that's the moral of the Trump story is, he was a perfectly reasonable guy and he was in fine with discourse and wasn't arguing. The fact that he said, you don't know what the truth is anymore, that's I think, the roughest aspect of these times is how mushy things, how mushy things have gotten and how people actually don't really try to get at the truth and I wish would spend a little more time trying to do them. On both sides, I think -

[00:23:47] BB: That's the scariest phrase I've heard. Well, and it goes into so many things. If it's like, okay, we can't agree on this man was killed, let's say, on this time at this place, at this thing, it's like, wow. Oh, if we can't agree, yeah, the planet's hotter. Okay, we can't agree on that. We got problems, I think. This goes into a whole other conversation.

[00:24:09] DC: Unfortunately, it may end up coming down to court spring, the arbitrators of the truth that -

[00:24:15] BB: Yes, interesting.

[00:24:17] DC: I don't know what else is and maybe that's not going to work either. I tell my kids, they're holding an iPhone in their hand, that is however many times more powerful than computers 20 years ago, let alone from when I was a kid. They're playing games. I said, you have this world that you - a you have access to all this knowledge and that's the irony of everything is that everyone has access to all this knowledge.

[00:24:46] BB: Yet, no one is necessarily smarter. Fascinating, isn't it?

[00:24:51] DC: The movie Idiocracy and all that stuff. I think it's unfortunate that you have such a powerful thing in your hand that you can research anything. I'll look at both sides. I follow both, some right-wing and left-wing people and stuff like that, just to see -

[00:25:07] BB: Went both sides. Yeah.

[00:25:08] DC: Yeah. I mean, and I think, certainly in the tech world, the challenges are with speed trying to be accurate. To give an example with the AirPods Max, I was one of the few people who got an early sample. I got it at around 12 noon on a Wednesday and I had to post a video at 9:00 a.m. the next morning, along with a story. I have to shoot my own video. In the pandemic, our video guys are not shooting. I'm not, so I'm competing with youtubers who have their own space. I'm more of a writer than a - but I'm trying to say something valuable about the AirPods Max.

Everyone wants to know, is it really worth \$550? How is it compared to Sony and Bose headphones? I said, they had the best noise cancelling. People were just irate with me. Meaning like, the Sony fans and - this is on YouTube. There are other people, you put yourself out on a limb to make a declaration like that. It took a lot of people several days. They're like, "How can you do that after just a few hours of being with the headphones?" I'm like, "This is what I do. I listen to a lot of headphones and I listen -"

[00:26:29] BB: You're an expert.

[00:26:30] DC: I have to make a call. This was my call. Not always completely accurate and I'll correct myself, but I think those are the challenges that speed with accuracy, and making sure you reach out and try to cover your bases.

[00:26:46] BB: The journalism as you were talking about.

[00:26:47] DC: You can always make corrections and you can always add and update your story, of this helpful in terms of your angle, but that to me is at the center of - the world is obviously moving so fast. You realize with newspapers like the New York Times, if you really know a subject, you realize that maybe they're not as accurate as you think and they're better with some subjects than others. I think, there's no definitive source of what are publications biased or not. These people are always attacking me on YouTube. "You're an Apple fanboy.

You're a whatever." I'm like, I think all these are huge corporations. I'm not a fan of any huge corporation.

If they make a good product, I'm going to say it's a good product. If they do some things that are not good, I'll say if they're not good. I have Windows machines. I have Macs. I have Samsung products, Apple products and Android. I try to remain above the frame, just try to give people the best advice that I can. We really try to put things in context for people to compare the products. In terms of the types of pitches, I think, where sometimes, where PR people can fall down a little bit is not being totally knowledgeable about the product.

[00:28:09] BB: What they're actually pitching.

[00:28:11] DC: Yeah, and sometimes, some of the funny stories are - it's always interesting to see a company come out with a new product. You can see whether they're trying to frame it from a marketing standpoint, or a PR standpoint. I often tell people, "Look, you can go with just two, maybe three things to really highlight." Where it gets complicated is when a product is trying to do too many things at once and I have to explain what the product does and frame it for them.

[00:28:44] BB: Yeah, not good.

[00:28:45] DC: If I'm doing the job of either the marketing person, a PR person, that becomes a problem. Sometimes, I'll do it. Sometimes it's worth the effort. What will happen is you'll see that internally, there's been an argument over why maybe they didn't include a feature, why they designed something a certain way. The product will be presented to me and I'll say, "Well, why didn't you do this, or why it wasn't like this?" You'll see, the person will be like, "I told you." No, you could see almost like -

[00:29:14] BB: Then, they take that back to their client like, "See."

[00:29:17] DC: No, no. They've already had the discussion and there's two factions. One faction, they get the feedback and they're like, okay.

[00:29:25] BB: Now you really are listening. Oh, man. We've had that before.

[00:29:29] DC: I think, the best advice that I try to give PR people is write a headline for it. Write the deck, the subhead, because that's what we're dealing with. As editors and writers you're thinking like, "What headline am I going to put on this story? How is it going to get attention? Why is it going to be worthwhile for me to - Why are readers going to jump on the story because I wrote a good headline for it?" Sometimes, that's the biggest problem is like, something either a little bit too boring, or sometimes we'll help a company out and I'll put a great headline on it, but it's something that they should almost come at you with at the beginning. If you have too many, you can't have too many things in a headline. It has to be one headline.

[00:30:14] BB: Precise. Exactly. That's great to hear, because this is on me speaking as a band person, but we put the actual fictional headlines index to clients to show them. I'm just glad to hear exactly your advice on that. That's helpful.

Well, let's do this, David. I know we have some limited time here, but we have our favorite part, which is the mad libs. Often, they are shockingly accurate. Sometimes they're just silly, but sometimes they're shockingly accurate and sometimes we laugh a lot, so we'll have to see. I'll tee up the word of the phrase and then as we go along here, I'm going to fill it in, if that sounds good, and I'll read it back to you.

[00:30:49] DC: Okay.

[00:30:49] BB: Okay. What's a catch phrase, first off? Any catch phrase.

[00:30:52] DC: Think different.

[00:30:54] BB: Think difference. What about a scare phrase that you would hear in your job, in journalism?

[00:31:01] DC: A scare phrase in journalism.

[00:31:02] BB: Yeah, something scary.

[00:31:04] DC: I think what I mentioned earlier, the can we collaborate on this?

[00:31:07] BB: Oh, can we collaborate? Yes. Okay, what about a positive thing, or an empowering buzzword you'd hear?

[00:31:15] DC: Resonate maybe.

[00:31:16] BB: Resonate.

[00:31:18] DC: Yeah, it's something that in terms of what a PR person would say in a pitch.

[00:31:22] BB: No, we'll get to that in a second, but just something that you get as a journalist that's a positive thing, if anything. Respect, for example.

[00:31:29] DC: Just kudos.

[00:31:31] BB: Okay, kudos. I'll put fan kudos. Okay. How about an adjective?

[00:31:38] DC: Speed.

[00:31:39] BB: Speed?

[00:31:40] DC: Or speedy.

[00:31:41] BB: Yes, speedy. Okay. Okay. A part of a pitch.

[00:31:45] DC: Which part of it, or -

[00:31:46] BB: Any part.

[00:31:47] DC: Price.

[00:31:48] BB: Price. Okay, another adjective.

[00:31:52] DC: Smart.

[00:31:53] BB: Smarts. Then another part of a pitch.

[00:31:57] DC: Bullet points.

[00:31:59] BB: Bullet points. Yes. Okay, an amount of time.

[00:32:04] DC: 24 hours.

[00:32:05] BB: 24 hours. An adjective.

[00:32:08] DC: Savvy.

[00:32:09] BB: Savvy. Oh, heard a little doorbell back there. Your next product right there, David. It's coming for you right now. Okay, singular noun. We're almost done.

[00:32:18] DC: Singular noun. Game.

[00:32:21] BB: A game. Great. What about a topic?

[00:32:24] DC: Audio.

[00:32:25] BB: Audio. Okay. All right, two more here. A verb ending in I-N-G.

[00:32:30] DC: Slacking.

[00:32:31] BB: Slacking. Then just a verb.

[00:32:35] DC: Drive.

[00:32:36] BB: Drive. Okay, here we go. Here's the whole phrase. To me, tech journalism is think different. It consists of can we collaborate asks and fan kudos on the daily. If a pitch has a speedy price, I will absolutely respond to it. However, if a pitch has a smart number of bullet points, you can expect no reply for me. If 24 hours goes by and you don't see an e-mail back from me, you can just assume I'm not savvy about it. The best stories always have a game and are usually about audio. The best way to reach me is by slacking it to me, but you can also drive it over to me. There you go, David.

[00:33:17] DC: All right.

[00:33:18] BB: Thank you so much. Thanks for playing that too. We love those. Those are sometimes fun and just accurate. Thank you for being on. Congrats to your book success and thank you for sharing that great story with us. I will not be sending you products to your house, so your wife doesn't get mad. That's my takeaway.

[00:33:33] DC: Thank you. I appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:33:35] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring David Carnoy from CNET. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. If

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