

**EPISODE 104**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:10] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist brought to you by OnePitch. The guests on 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, business news, and beauty and wellness. We discuss their role, the types of stories they cover, what their inbox looks like, and how they connect with sources. Head to [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) and look for the video page to learn more about our new video series.

Today on Coffee with a Journalist, we're joined by Elisabeth Buchwald, a personal finance reporter for MarketWatch. Elisabeth started at MarketWatch as a reporting intern in 2018 and previously was a news desk and production intern for CNBC. During the episode, Elisabeth shares specific tips about subject lines, her honest thoughts on exclusives versus embargoes, random places she gets inspiration for her stories, and more. Let's hear from Elisabeth now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:20] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist, where we chat with a real deal journalist every single time. We've been doing this – I think we're up to like 120 something episodes, maybe more. I'll have to chat with Jered on that. I'm Beth Bamberger. I have an agency called BAM that works with all venture-backed technology companies. Then I also started with Jered OnePitch, which is helping publicists get better pitches to journalists, which is why this show was also created to help us learn what reporters, what journalists really want to hear from publicists and hopefully make the relationships better. So that's why we're here.

Today with us is Elisabeth Buchwald. She is the market reporter, actually, excuse me, the personal finance reporter for MarketWatch. We'll start off indeed with what MarketWatch is. But, first, Elisabeth, thanks for being here. Live from New York.

**[00:02:11] EB:** Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

**[00:02:14] BB:** Yes. For those who do not know Elisabeth, before we jump into your inbox, what is MarketWatch? So everyone knows what's up.

**[00:02:22] EB:** So a lot of the times, when I tell people I work at MarketWatch, they're like, "Oh, got any stock tips?" I'm like, "Okay. Well, yes, we cover the stock market. It's the basic part of our coverage. We have good tickers, a lot of trendy topics there." But it is not just the markets and it's not actually that much part of my coverage as a personal finance reporter. But MarketWatch is politics. It's personal finance. It's companies and indeed, obviously, markets.

**[00:02:52] BB:** Good. Okay, now that we got the win-win on that, your inbox, what is it looking like these days with pitches?

**[00:03:00] EB:** Oh, my god. It's all across the board. I'm a zero inboxer. I love being that way, which means I'll delete things as they come in, simply based on subject line. Then there's the emails that I kind of saved. I put them in reserve for when I'll need them on a rainy day or not really rainy day. But there's news, and you're kind of in a crunch, and you're like, "Okay, who do I reach out to?" So I'll kind of search around in my inbox and just pull up. Supreme Court hearing on vaccine mandate, yeah.

**[00:03:33] BB:** Yeah. You kind of have a hybrid approach, which, first of all, you are in the extreme of the inbox zero because there's few in the podcast that actually ascend to that level. So there's that one. But secondly, you also do a filing of some sort. Now, some people have said they've got flags and color coding systems and folders and all this whole thing. Do you do that? Or is it more just like a running file of stuff, and you just use your search within your inbox is how to find people?

**[00:04:03] EB:** Yeah. It's way more. But I think in my earliest days, I was like, "Oh, my god. I'm going to be so organized with folders." Actually, I still have folders from some of my first stories. I thought it would be cute to do like, "Oh, the gig economy story that I'm working on. Let's put all those emails there." It just got too cumbersome. So it all kind of stays in the inbox, which sounds like a bad plan, but it works really well for me because I can search around easily.

**[00:04:32] BB:** A lot of people do that, to tell you the truth. You just use it as your own personal Google for your story and you put in the keywords, which I think is little told on this show, which is like consider – I mean, I guess you would you would have the right terms in your pitch. But I've even thought like, “Hey, publicist. Why don't you put a little like keywords, dot, dot economy, COVID implications, or whatever, just so that there's like the pops up in the search.” But anyway, I don't know if anyone's adopted that. There's that. Okay. So, Elisabeth, you talked on our video part about the importance of the subject line. Would you like to elaborate on how direly important that is to you?

**[00:05:11] EB:** I would be glad to. The way I think of a subject line, and this is kind of extreme, but every time I watch the Superbowl, and I'm not a huge football fan, so I'm watching for commercial and for the halftime show. But it always amazes me each year. When the stats come out, I'm like, “This is how much a 15-second ad costs.” So you really got to make the most of that time.

**[00:05:32] BB:** That's right.

**[00:05:32] EB:** If you're wasting those 15 seconds with garbage, that's a lot of money out the door. So it started **[inaudible 00:05:38]** my inbox not that extreme at all, but I think, and it's probably the case for a lot of journalists, that your subject line or the subject line you receive is valuable real estate. You don't want to waste that with words that are taking up space that aren't helping you understand precisely what the person is pitching about. So I gave a couple examples in the video, which I'm happy to give again. I never understand why pitches need to say pitch, and it's usually in capital letters, brackets. I don't know who decided that that was the style. For some reason, it's that. Study, reveal, news, exclusive, survey, all that is junk. So if you've cut that out, you're probably going to get to your pitch a lot faster. All caps is not necessary. That also takes up more space. Capital letters, in general, isn't that necessary maybe for your first word.

But the other one tip I have, which I believe mentioned on the video was that it should – If there is a company that you're pitching on behalf of and you only know them because you're working with them as a client and you're pitching because they're the client, all of that, but you wouldn't know them otherwise, that means that the company should not be in the subject line. If you

wouldn't know them, otherwise, I don't know them otherwise. I strongly believe that you should just cut out as much garbage and tell me. There's a survey that says this or we have experts available on X stuff, pretending that your company's like something I should know about, to put one point.

**[00:07:16] BB:** Yes. That's a good tip. So now, what is the best subject line you ever have received? Or maybe one recently where you like, "Damn, that was good."?

**[00:07:28] EB:** Well, okay, so there's a couple. Sorry, I'm excited because it's so hard to think of things off the top of your head. But the things that kind of make me laugh and are memorable to me is where people – So I have in my Twitter bio proud midnight snacker, which I really am. It's kind of a problem, and I've recently owned up to it, which I'm happy about. People used to be like, "I heard you eating at night," and I was like, "What? You didn't hear me." I'm like, "You know what? Proud midnight snacker." So I found some people pitching me. It's very smart and crafty but kind of like put in the subject line like, "Hello from a fellow midnight snacker." 100% chance that I will click that email, even if it's not a pitch that ends up being useful to me. But I'll usually respond like appreciate the personalized effort. I think –

**[00:08:16] BB:** Yeah, that is super personalized. Okay. So like the midnight snack drop in there. Okay, that is valuable real estate in the subject line but effective real estate. So I'll go with that. Okay, I like that. That's good. What about exclusives versus embargoes, a hot topic amongst the journalists' crowd?

**[00:08:38] EB:** Yes. I find that embargoes are helpful. But I think they're used. They're overused in journalism. In terms of pitching journalists, I think people or PR people think that that kind of makes it more compelling if there is an embargo. That word, I remember learning it as a kid. It was like trade stuff and the British and the US and all of that, the colonies. It's weird hearing it so much now, but obviously I'm used to it. I think it's not that important, but it's just something that we've gotten used to. Sometimes, it's quite helpful to be like okay if I'm in between stories today, and I have some random piece that's on embargo. At least I could get a jumpstart on that. It'll make the editors happy if I get a story done that they can set to pre-publish. It's kind of nice. I do think it's overused. It's never actually an exclusive in my experience.

I mean, there are some times when I had before – Actually, I once worked with a company that did like an exclusive survey to help support my story that I was working on, and that I really appreciated, and that I knew was exclusive. But the other stuff that I get, it doesn't. First of all, I've never spoken to them before in most cases. So we don't have that relationship for them to like exclusively deliver me pitches. Even still, I know you're sending it to other organizations. Again, it's not necessary to say that you're giving me an exclusive when it's not.

**[00:10:12] BB:** Yeah. So just to be clear on that, because this is like somehow debated, which kind of blows my mind, exclusive should just be you're giving it to one person, one person. That's it. Not one person with this tip and then one person with that angle and then one person with this thing. But it sounds like, Elisabeth, for you, you're not down with embargoes and not really down with exclusives.

**[00:10:35] EB:** Yeah. I mean, embargoes I have more flexibility with just it comes in handy. But I think it's just overused. I don't like people using it just to – What is the purpose of the embargo in the first place? But, yeah, again, I'd rather kind of just have the information without it trying to appear more elite or whatever.

[BREAK]

**[00:10:57] 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](https://onepitch.co) to learn about our new one pitch score, and see how easy it is to find the right journalists to pitch your news to. Sign up for your free account today. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

**[00:11:21] BB:** I'm glad we demystified that. So, Elisabeth, for the stories you do, and maybe it comes in the midnight time when you are snacking, how do you come up with the stories you like to pursue and do? You have one on inflation right now, for example, which of course that's a topic on everyone's mind. You have a lot of about millions of people are quitting their jobs. There's all these other topics and stuff. So inflation seems to be a topic of sort right now that

you're covering. But are there times and inspiration that hit you for a more like in-depth story you want to do, or how did the stories come about to you?

**[00:11:57] EB:** Well, first, midnight is not my like hour that I'm really able to think about anything besides snack. I'll literally wake myself up in the middle of the night and grab a snack. But it's so unhealthy. I'm trying to get out of the habit. But, yeah, **[inaudible 00:12:10]** midnight snacker. But anyway, I get story ideas from other stories sometimes. There's sometimes an interesting stat in, for instance, a Wall Street Journal story, and I'm like, "Oh, I wonder why they didn't expand upon that more. But, hey, maybe I could." I also get story ideas from just listening. I used to kind of put my headphones in all the time when I was on the subway or leaving my room, and I try to actually use those opportunities to hear what people are talking about on the subway or waiting in line for COVID test or at Trader Joe's where I was yesterday. But a lot of story ideas too come from just personal experiences. For instance, again, when I was at Trader Joe's yesterday, the shelves were entirely bare. I even tweeted about it, and it was crazy. It was flashbacks to March 2020. Thinking about it now –

**[00:13:01] BB:** Wait, where? Wait, where? In Trader Joe's, it was bare – I mean, bare-ish.

**[00:13:07] EB:** I mean, there was stuff but there was no lettuce, no orange juice. There is no fruit. They had some stuff, so it wasn't as bad, but it was creepy.

**[00:13:17] BB:** Is there a snow storm coming?

**[00:13:21] EB:** No. I mean, everything's just screwed up with omicron and people getting COVID all along the supply chain. So I bring this up because that's something that actually would probably be a good story. I didn't have a chance to tackle that today because I'm involved in a bunch of other things that need to get done. But it's experiences like that. I did a story on what's called **[inaudible 00:13:43]** recently, where instead of raising the prices on goods, a lot of consumers will shrink the contents but keep the price **[inaudible 00:13:52]**. It's not always out of like a bad, malicious thing, but they do it. I had a couple experiences where I was like, "Is it just me or did this get smaller?" I was like, "Ah, that's a story."

**[00:14:06] BB:** That is a story indeed. Okay. Of all the stories you do, right, and you pump out a lot, by the way, Elisabeth, you're like rolling. How many stories do you do in a week, by the way, average?

**[00:14:19] EB:** It totally varies. Yeah. I'd say at the most I would do six. But usually, I'll try to do a story tonight. I didn't quite get on because there's some overflow but minimum for max six or seven. On a really, really busy news week, like eight. That hasn't been the case for a while, and they're not always like huge, long form stories. Sometimes, it could just be something really quick and brief. We call them like little keywords stories. So it's not always like paragraphs and paragraphs. It's just here's what's happening. Here's why you should care.

**[00:14:57] BB:** Yup, got it. Okay. Given all those stories that you do and write, which is a lot, are there books, podcasts, TV shows, anything that we can learn that you love? Because we love stories.

**[00:15:14] EB:** All of the above. I try to – I know a lot of people listen to podcasts for news and stuff like that, and I definitely do that. I like the Wall Street Journal podcast. It gives you a good overview of what's going on in the world in kind of a jargon freeway, which I appreciate. They also –

**[00:15:31] BB:** Which one though? Which one?

**[00:15:32] EB:** It's called – What is it called? Shoot. I just told. That's why I'm like – Oh, What's News. I think that's what it's called. I never actually tap it on my phone. Thank you, Alexa, for helping me out.

**[00:15:43] BB:** There you go. There you go.

**[00:15:44] EB:** I am also attempting to read the book by Andrew Ross Sorkin called *Too Big to Fail*. It's quickly become too big to read. But the '08 crisis always fascinated me. So I'm leaning a little bit more about that.

[00:15:59] **BB**: Okay, yup. A real life thriller about the most tumultuous period in America's financial history by acclaimed New York Times writer, reporter, Andrew Ross, yes, Sorkin. Yes. Okay, yeah, that is a hefty one. Okay, anything else? Do you have any shows you watch? Do you ever just watch something for fun?

[00:16:19] **EB**: Oh, all the time. I think this is a popular show amongst journalists but Succession [inaudible 00:16:23]. It's really sad that it's ended just now. Not ended for good but it was sad to say goodbye.

[00:16:28] **BB**: Ended for now. Man, I agree. I agree. It's so bad. It's good.

[00:16:34] **EB**: It's so good. Fast acting. I love it. What else? Oh, I started binging The Morning Show.

[00:16:41] **BB**: How is it? Yes.

[00:16:43] **EB**: It's a great show.

[00:16:44] **BB**: Really?

[00:16:44] **EB**: I like it.

[00:16:45] **BB**: Where is it on though? Oh, it's on Apple. Apple –

[00:16:48] **EB**: Yeah, it is. What else is there — I have like a little like — Most of my shows are on HBO, I would say. I think it's important to like have a lot of shows to distract you from what's going on in the world at the time. So I have like more fun stuff too and I always love watching The Office, but it's not on Netflix anymore. But that used to be kind of my go-to distraction show.

[00:17:11] **BB**: Damn. Who owns that now? Did Amazon get it?

[00:17:14] **EB**: Peacock.



**[00:17:15] BB:** Oh, Peacock. Geez. It's fascinating to think of like and maybe that I'm sure someone has done an in-depth story about this on just like the intellectual property wars of owning the like classic sitcom treasure trophy. It's kind of like the new art for networks.

**[00:17:34] EB:** Yeah. It's like a lot. I mean, that was Netflix's top watch show even. They hadn't aired an episode in a while.

**[00:17:43] BB:** You know what else I saw too? I saw a post on this I think on Instagram, talking about how comparing the picture of the Golden Girls thing versus Sex in the City's new like poster. The shocking thing, you should look this up right now, is that the women are the same age. But in the Golden Girls 1, you would be like, "Oh, here's my grandmother wearing her frumpy stuff, looking all ancient." Versus the iteration of Sex in the City, which is not called even Sex in the City. It's called and just like that. But anyway, I'm like, "Oh, how interesting." So the point is I wonder who owns the Golden Girls and I wonder if there's going to be a boost in Golden Girl thing, especially since Betty White died.

Anyway, we're going down a rabbit hole, Elisabeth. That is not the point. The next question I have for you is what do you think the future of journalism looks like?

**[00:18:36] EB:** Everyday on Twitter, at least since the year started, I feel like I'm seeing more and more personal news. I'm like, "I will not have personal news job pages." But there was actually some big news.

**[00:18:48] BB:** It's true. It's true. We are recording this in very early January. So just for people to know, it seems like it's the time to mention these things. Yes. Anyway.

**[00:18:57] EB:** Yeah, exactly. So one of the personal news was the editor in chief of Bloomberg leaving along with one of the top media columnist of the Times to kind of start their own media startup. There's not too many details on what that is yet. But I think the way that or what that sort of symbolizes to me is that more reporters are going to become business people. So meaning they're following to kind of say, "Okay, I don't need an organization behind me right now. I've worked up this whole portfolio of people that love me. I'm going to take what I do best and I'm going to make it my own thing, have my own journalism standards, all of that." I don't

know how successful it's all going to be. I think it's sort of similar to the big wave of journalists that also left organizations. But instead of forming a new one, they just took to Substack. I think that trend might have peaked a little bit. I think it's really hard. I personally can't imagine doing that. But I do think it's going to be more people trying to fill voids using their following and jumpstarting something new.

**[00:20:09] BB:** Yeah, and I love that. I would have some entrepreneurship going on in there. But curious, though, to see, what is the appetite for 37 Substacks that are going to land in your inbox a day? That I think is the other question is like is there a saturation point to all of this?

**[00:20:28] EB:** No. I mean, they're definitely – As people are like constantly making jokes, they think their inboxes like over cluttered, and it's because of all the subjects that they apply to and I think they're subscribed to. I think sometimes you lose track of who wrote what, and the meaning gets lost. It's not trying to insult the journalists that do that because there's some really good stuff out there. But it's a bit oversaturated, I would say, and the niche things actually do quite better. So if you're focusing on something very, very specific, that's kind of one way to stand out – the newsletters are very hard to keep track of.

**[00:21:06] BB:** There's so many. There's so many. Elisabeth, I'm so glad you joined us today and giving us not only your pitch tips but a sticky that outlines your pitch tips on the video. Everyone needs to check out Elisabeth pitch tip video because it is passionate. For sure, for sure. So, Elisabeth, thank you so much for being on today. Elisabeth Buchwald, she's from MarketWatch. They don't just talk about the market. Get on there and check it out and write your subject line thoughtfully. Thank you.

**[00:21:35] EB:** Yes, yeah. Thoughtfully, agreed. Thank you for having me. Take care.

**[00:21:40] BB:** Thanks, Elisabeth.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:21:43] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Elisabeth Buchwald from MarketWatch. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. If you have a moment, please leave us a review to share your thoughts about the show and today's guest. To learn more about the latest tools on OnePitch and to subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter, head to our website at [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co). We'll see you all next week with a brand new guest and even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]