

CWAJ 105

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. The guests on our show includes some of the most notable journalists on the top US-based publications who covered topics including technology, lifestyle and culture, health, science, consumer products, business news, and beauty and wellness. We discussed their role, the types of stories they cover, what their inbox looks like, and how they connect with sources. Head to onepitch.co and look for the video page to learn more about our new video series.

On the podcast today, we're joined by Carleton English, a reporter for Barron's. Carleton covers financial markets and asset managers. Prior to Barron's, she was a reporter for The Information, the New York Post and The Street. During the episode, Carleton give us a peek inside her tightly organized inbox, shares the history and perspective of Barron's, talks about the ins and outs of being a beat reporter, and more. Let's hear from Carleton now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:18] BB: Welcome everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. We don't always have coffee on here, but we always have a journalist. So that is one thing you can count on. I'm Beck Bamberger. I have an agency named BAM. We work with all venture-backed technology companies doing crazy things, better things for the entire world. Hopefully that's the aim. And then I also created OnePitch, which is who's producing this podcast. And OnePitch is, of course, for publicists to get to journalists better and more efficiently through their pitches.

We do this podcast so that all of us here, publicists, can learn and understand how better to work with the wonderful journalists we work with on a daily basis and get a hold of what they like, what they don't like, what really bugs them with pitches. Do they want to meet in-person for coffee? Do they never want to meet in-person for coffee? Again, whatever it is, we learn it all here. And I'm happy to be welcoming today someone from Barron's. We haven't had a Barron's

reporter before, Carleton English. He's a reporter at Barron's. Based in New York, New York. Probably my favorite city on the planet. That's a whole another discussion.

Carleton, welcome. And thank you for being here.

[00:02:25] CE: Thank you so much for having me. And also, Thanks for the kind words about New York. My favorite too.

[00:02:30] BB: Oh, man. You know, I just read last Sunday. I don't know if you're a New York Times writer, like hardcore, but I am every Sunday. And there was a whole article about the social misgivings of if you leave New York, or if you have left New York, and how your friend group that's still in New York looks down on that. Do you know what I'm talking about? Do you see that article?

[00:02:54] CE: I haven't seen that one. But there's some people – I mean, as much as I love New York, I do worry when people kind of make the city their personality. I mean, New York is a wonderful diverse city. It may be my forever home. It may not be. It will always be a wonderful city. So when people leave, they have things they have to do. They have families they have to take care of. They have career opportunities that they want to take advantage of. That's all fine. So I don't like when I hear that kind of stuff of like, "Oh, so and so moved. They gave up on the city." The city is wonderful. You can always come back to it. You can make your own version of New York when you live here. So I'm a more inclusive New Yorker, I guess, is what I'm saying.

[00:03:34] BB: I like it. I like it. Well, we could talk all about New York here. But that's not our point for our purposes on this little show. So, Carleton, what's your inbox like?

[00:03:44] CE: Well, today, it's great, because yesterday, I cleared it out. Yeah.

[00:03:49] BB: Oh! What does it mean?

[00:03:51] CE: What does it mean?

[00:03:51] CE: For me, inbox zero doesn't happen. But we use Gmail. So I get nervous when I have more than 50 in the inbox, because that's when you have to page through, and that's when things get lost.

[00:04:03] BB: Yes. Yes. Agreed.

[00:04:04] CE: So yeah, my inbox is a great mess, because we end up on so many of these automatic distribution lists. So all of us are getting hundreds of emails a day. And in my case, 20% of them are maybe relevant to me, and even a smaller portion of those are actually actionable. So I always try. I don't always succeed, but I try to keep the inbox so that it's just like one Gmail page.

[00:04:29] BB: One Gmail page. I've never heard that before on the show. Just keep it to one Gmail page. Cool. Now with the pitches you receive, are you a mass deleter? Are you a filer? Do you have a whole system going on? What do you do?

[00:04:42] CE: Yeah. So I am a mass delete and unsubscriber if I can tell that it's coming from kind of, I guess, like a pitch form or it's things that aren't very relevant to me, like somehow I got on a list.

[00:04:54] BB: Oh, crap.

[00:04:54] CE: Yes. Right? But if it's something that ties to things that I cover, or things that I might cover, or things that I know a colleague is working on, I'll deal with those accordingly. I'm a terrible responder. I mean, I'm terrible at responding to every single pitch. But they do stay kind of archived or I kind of keep a note for myself, "Oh, yeah, that was an interesting idea. I can't do anything with that yet. But that's something I want to read into more or think about later."

[00:05:22] BB: Do you then use your inbox as your own personal Google search? Do you go in there and type in that bank name, for example, that you're like, "What was that pitch?" Or, "I'm going to do a story on X. Let me go back."

[00:05:35] CE: Yeah, totally. So I do that. And then for ideas I really like, I keep a work in progress list, A WIP list, where I might just kind of copy and paste some of a pitch, or an introduction, or whatever. And just like, “Oh, yeah, do you want to follow up with that person later?”

[00:05:51] BB: Mm-hmm. Okay, good to know. What's one of the best subject lines you've ever received, and why?

[00:06:01] CE: Yeah. So I don't have one that I can say like that comes to mind. I will admit, though, that sometimes like the subject lines for the things that I'm obviously never going to write about, but that are just like really clever, like how like every day is like National Hot Dog Day, or National Breakfast Sandwich Day or something like that?

[00:06:19] BB: I know. Cupcake icing day. Yeah.

[00:06:21] CE: I mean, the pitches tied to those days. They are not at all for my readership. Not things I'm going to write about. But there are some creative people who write those. I wish I could think of one off the top of my head. But I mean, there's so much fun with like the puns and the things that people write about there.

[00:06:36] BB: What's a subject line where you're like, “Damn! I got to open that.”

[00:06:39] CE: That have to open it and like actually refer to it. Yeah.

[00:06:42] BB: Yes. That you're like, “And I'm writing it. And I responded right away. It was so good.” Or does that never happen?

[00:06:51] CE: I mean, it certainly happened. There're people I respond to anyway. But those are honestly probably more boring and traditional ways. But they're just immediately relevant to me. So say that there's like an ongoing story, something like the Meme-Stock Mania that we saw in early January, where maybe I wrote one story, but obviously, there's going to be continued follow up on that. So someone who just really kind of addresses a point that I made in

a story and then says, "You might want to look at," is like, "Oh, okay, I need to look at what this person is saying."

[00:07:24] BB: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Okay, I like that. And for people who maybe don't know, Barron's overall, maybe you're not in the financial wealth management space or anything. Could you give us an overview, Carleton, on just what is Barron's all-encompassing for just everybody? Honestly, I should have started off with that instead of going right into your inbox. But I was excited and also happy about New York. So let's go back to that real quick.

[00:07:47] CE: Sure. So Barron's just celebrated its 100th year. I know, it's wild.

[00:07:50] BB: Gosh! Freaking amazing.

[00:07:52] CE: So it's an amazing financial publication. Sister publication to The Wall Street Journal. And we kind of cater towards the individual investor. Our coverage includes a lot of stock picking. Our coverage also includes just kind of more in depth analysis that can help people make their own investment decisions. Kind of explaining like a behind the scenes of what's going on with things in the market, whether it's what the Fed is doing with interest rates, what the Coronavirus pandemic means for the economy and investors, and how to react to that? So that's our readership base. And then we're also doing a ton of things in video. I actually do have a YouTube channel where I talk about stock picking and where I recently did meme stock trading. So we're a multimedia. I mean, we're everywhere.

[00:08:39] BB: Yes. So then, given that wide array in investor education, in the market. Now, some of that, of course, is driven by the pure news cycle. So something comes out about stock X, and you're going to have to talk about stock X. But are there any stories that you get to contemplate and kind of come up with? And if so, what's the creative process for that? And also, does any of it ever come from a pitch?

[00:09:06] CE: Yes. So probably one that I had a lot of fun writing. So with investing, it's always like, "Okay, well, if everyone's thinking this, what about that?" of like what aren't people saying? So if you go back to 2022, onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Federal Reserve lowered interest rates. Just a scary time for banks, right? Because they don't make as much money

when rates are low. And then also, I think everyone had this kind of memory of, “Wait. The last time the economy was in crisis, that was the banking crisis of 2008. So banks must be terrible.”

And definitely they were scary times. And all stock sold off, and especially banks. But as we started – I don't want to jinx myself of saying come out of it, because we're still doing this stuff remotely. But as we started to get more of a handle on the virus and the impact on the economy, it's like maybe things are going to rebound faster than everyone thought. And this was, I guess, around July of 2020, where I started to realize, “Okay, all these banks are setting aside these billions of reserves. But strangely, the market is recovering and people are spending money to the extent that they can.

For banks, like all these reserves that they're setting aside expecting people to default on their loans, that might not happen. And those reserves will get to be released. So that was a really fun one that I got to work on. And it was kind of getting ahead of what I think a lot of the analyst community was saying where it was one where I was calling either bank investors or bank analysts, talking to a few executives at the big banks, and just kind of getting that sense of like, “Alright, what are you seeing here? Is this possible?” And for some of these sources, it was like, “Oh, yeah, that actually does make sense. So that started to become the consensus view. And that was a fun one to work on.

[00:10:57] BB: Oh, sounds like you like kind of like getting in to something. Digging around.

[00:11:02] CE: Absolutely.

[00:11:03] BB: Seeing what's really going on. That's fun.

[00:11:04] CE: When you have time to do it, it's the best feeling as a reporter.

[00:11:07] BB: Oh, yes, yes. I'm glad you mentioned that. I was thinking of journalists yesterday. I was in a class for my Ph.D. program. We got to do this whole 50-page thing, and use all these theories and all these things going on. And I'm like, compared to a journalist, this is a piece of cake. Because these are all theories and think we just need to repackage it and apply

it. Whereas a lot of times for you, you are starting with nothing beyond perhaps a phenomenon happening in the world.

[00:11:39] CE: Right. Yeah. And we tend to have to become experts on topics pretty quickly. I mean, that's what I do –

[00:11:45] BB: Yeah. Oh, and on deadline.

[00:11:46] CE: And on deadline. So that's why I do think beat recording is really important. There's a challenge to it, where you limit yourself too much. But if you kind of have like a broader theme of things that you look at – I mean, I write mostly about things, but that means I'm keeping my eye on all financials. So that makes that process a little bit easier that when those things are happening live, you're like, "Okay, I do have a baseline for understanding how this works. I do need to get more information, of course." But you're not – I don't want to make a sports analogy, because I'll probably get it wrong, but like you're not starting from scratch.

[00:12:18] BB: It's okay. Yeah, yep. Yep. Got it. Okay.

[BREAK]

[00:12:24] ANNOUNCER: Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious to see the unique ways one pitch helps PR professionals and marketers pitch journalists? Head to onepitch.co learn about our new OnePitch 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]

[00:12:48] BB: Totally different. What are you reading, listening to, loving, streaming? Freaking, we'll take anything. So what you got? Is there anything you get to enjoy story-wise?

[00:12:59] CE: Are you talking journalism or like reading for fun?

[00:13:02] BB: Oh, yeah, reading for fun. We'll take anything. You got anything on Netflix? We just like what do you as a storyteller like to absorb.

[00:13:09] CE: Yes. So I'm trying to become better about getting back into reading for pleasure. As a reporter, you don't always realize like you read so much. When you're reading things, you're not – I remember I used to curl up with the Sunday Times and I loved it. When I became a reporter, it was like in a way it felt like work because I'm reading stories and I'm like, "Oh, I wonder how they got that story." Or, "Oh, that's interesting that they included that quote," or whatever. I'm trying to move away from my usual daily media diet of like Barron's, The Journal, The Economist, the Financial Times, The New York Times, that kind of stuff. I've been getting into like the classics that I probably should have read in high school and college. So I just read *Anna Karenina*, which –

[00:13:54] BB: Oh, yeah. How was it?

[00:13:55] CE: Oh, it's so good. It took me forever. I mean, because I'm one of those readers where I can only do things like in a big chunk, and it's an eight part, so I would read one part. Then I'd need to have like a few hours to like read the second and the third. So, yeah, I got into *Anna Karenina*. Now, I have the goal of doing *War and Peace*. We'll see if that actually happens.

[00:14:16] BB: Oh, my gosh.

[00:14:18] CE: But, yeah, I'm just trying to like go to kind of the more reading for pleasure because so much of like classic literature, I mean, it's based on history, and so many of the things that played out decades, centuries ago, I mean, affect the world now. So it's a different way of like exercising your brain.

[00:14:37] BB: I like that and way to chip away at some of those big ones.

[00:14:40] CE: We'll see. I did the one. We'll see if I do the other one.

[00:14:43] BB: Okay. Wow. Okay. Going back to – Now, this is back to pitches, but I want to make sure we cover this because this seems to be increasingly a hot topic, exclusives versus embargoes. You mentioned on one of our video little snippets, which I encourage everyone to watch for some really little gems of wisdom there that you have an embargo. You say, “Hey, it's going to 8:00 AM tomorrow,” and you're like, “It's 4:00 PM right now. That's not very helpful.” So do you receive exclusives? Do you receive embargoes?

[00:15:14] CE: I definitely get pitched them a lot and I think all of us do because you can kind of tell by some of the emails that you get. But it's like, “This doesn't feel very personalized.” So to work on something like that, I'm open to that sort of thing if it's someone I've had a reporting relationship with before because there's trust there. It's a source is saying like, “Look, this deal's going to be announced tomorrow,” and you've talked to that source before, and you understand what they cover. But going in cold with a new source on an exclusive or embargo on a tight timeline, I just – It makes me a little bit nervous, right, because there's not that trust relationship. Or it could be a new topic, and that can always be difficult to work with. So, yeah, it really depends. But it's generally something I'm more open with, if there's been a longer reporting source relationship there.

[00:16:09] BB: Got it. Okay. Then is there ever a time where you're like, “Someone sent me an exclusive or someone sent me in this embargo,” and you're like, “Absolutely, no. I do not –” Like is there just a no, no to do for either one of those for you?

[00:16:23] CE: Yeah. For me, I mean, if it's your first time contacting me, and you're offering me an embargo, again, it comes down to that sort of trust. Then also, the tight timelines always make me nervous. I mean, we work in news. Things happen very quickly, so I'm aware of that. But it's funny because before I was a reporter, I worked as a credit analyst, and one of the kind of ways for sussing out fraud was someone who's really anxious to get a deal done quickly. That's just something that I kind of took with me in journalism, where it's like there might be more to the story than what's being pitched. That trust needs to be there that I can fully vet it and talk to a variety of sources and tell the complete story. If it's not there, I get too nervous to do it.

[00:17:08] BB: Tell me a little bit more. This is an interesting tidbit. Someone who's trying to cram the deal is a sign of, okay, there could be fraud going on here.

[00:17:17] CE: Yeah. So this was my earlier career. I only became a journalist about 10 years into my working career. Before that, I worked as a credit analyst and sales rep for an equipment finance firm. Then I worked in wealth management. So going to the fraud piece, just think about like human psychology. So getting a deal done in the case someone is looking for money to fund a project for their business or something. When someone's kind of being very aggressive, a business or person saying, "Hey, can you get that through? Can you get that through? Okay, I'm going to need that money by then," and you haven't even had time to like really look and think about. You're like, "Whoa, whoa. What's going on here?" I mean, is it fraud necessarily? Maybe not but there's something going on when someone is very anxious to get something done quickly, and you need to understand what that is. Sometimes, it can be something innocent. But a lot of times, there's something else going on that you just need to be aware of.

[00:18:13] BB: I love that insider tip. Well, that maybe teases to this more open-ended question to wrap us up for today, Carleton. The future of journalism, what do you think it holds?

[00:18:25] CE: Yeah. It's definitely an exciting – I feel like everyone says that, so I don't want to say that. But an exciting time to be a journalist, blah, blah, blah. I do think that people have to be open to wearing many different hats. We've seen this kind of happen over the last decade, where if you were a print reporter, you do have to start to become comfortable doing a little bit of video or podcasting or presenting stories in a different way. Not everyone needs to be a social media star, and I don't think that that's always good for journalism. But some level of fluency with social media and different storytelling formats I think is good. Again, you don't need to master all of them. You don't need to be someone who's always getting in on like those Twitter fights and things like that because I honestly don't think that's good for objective journalism. But just an awareness of all of these different tools that are out there I think is just going to be really important for journalists. It's not going to be enough to say, "Oh, I just mostly want to be on camera, so I'm not going to focus as much on writing." Yeah, you do have to specialize to some extent, but you also have to like have a specialty but also have a bit of jack of all trades too.

[00:19:32] BB: Man. I really think that is true. You need to be able to produce, cut, write, be on camera, be on this podcast, do all the things. You just have to. There's too many multimedia is now to work with in storytelling.

[00:19:46] CE: Exactly.

[00:19:47] BB: It's very true.

[00:19:48] CE: It's exciting to be able to do it all. It does take continued learning, and I think that's fun, and that's what makes for long careers too.

[00:19:57] BB: I think so too. Then the last question I want to cover on this because you're coming from not so much the traditional background, you made that leap from sales and finance into journalism. Now, of course, reporting on finance. So not maybe a huge, huge stretch, but still quite a career shift. How did you do that?

[00:20:18] CE: Yeah. So it took some time and it wasn't a very linear path. My first almost 10 years of working was more in the financial field. I always wanted to be a writer. I was just always kind of nervous too because you always hear, "Oh, reporters, they make no money," and that kind of thing. I obviously had – We all have financial obligations. So I was like, "Okay, I'm not doing that yet." Then I guess around 2012, when you think about that kind of era of blogging that was going on around then a little bit before, I was able to start to get freelance work. But there was this issue where I was working in finance and financial firms then, especially 10 years ago. We're super strict about social media use and things like that because we're like, "Wait, if you're giving financial advice on a blog, that's not what we advise and that sort of thing." So I had to leave the financial industry. I worked at a medical device startup actually for a little bit. But that freed me up to write about finance. So I did a lot of freelance work for like women's blogs. I did some ghost writing, things like that.

It was kind of four years of having a non-related to any anything I was working on, jobs that covered my financial basis and then doing freelance and other projects that eventually led to me getting my first reporting job. Then when you get your first reporting job, then it's like, "Okay, you're –" I mean, it was weird. I was 31, 32 years old, and I was feeling like a 22-year-old. I

mean, the pay was like a 22-year-old. My experience level was that of a 22-year-old. That was a very weird feeling to have of like I just moved to New York, and I'm like, "Oh, my god." Since I started my career in finance, like I didn't even live like this when I was 22. So it took a while.

[00:22:04] BB: God, what leap and adjustment?

[00:22:06] CE: Yeah. So hopefully, knocking on wood, I'm doing well.

[00:22:08] BB: But you know what I love about this?

[00:22:09] CE: Sure.

[00:22:10] BB: Yes, and you had that growing up. That's the like what I want to be when I grew up thing. You did a little pivot over here and you got to it.

[00:22:20] CE: Yeah. I mean, careers. I think that's the case for everyone to know. Like whatever you want to do, there are ways. They're not easy ways. Going through financial journalism, trust me, there was a pay cut.

[00:22:31] BB: Yeah. Yeah. I would say from finance, yeah, especially New York finance. Oh, my god.

[00:22:35] CE: Yeah. But there are ways to make those things work, and it might not be – I mean, in my case, it didn't turn out to be 100% what I wanted to do. But we can all be ballerinas and firemen and baseball players, but there are ways to have like some element of that career in your life or as a hobby where you can make a meaningful contribution.

[00:22:58] BB: I love that story. I think it's hopeful for a lot of people who – I think, I mean, maybe it's not as high-ranking as a ballerina, a baseball player. But there are people who are like, "I want to be a journalist." That's wildly the fantasy for some, but it's clear. It can be done and it happens. Clearly, we've talked to all these journalists on here, so I know it can be done. Cool.

Carleton, thank you so much for being on today. This has been a real pleasure. Thank you so much. Do not send a bad pitch to this lovely lady here, where it's not about finance and what she's covering. That I think is the salient point from today's chat. Also, if you dream of being a journalist, it can happen. You can do the career pivot. Maybe you'll get emails about that, Carleton. That'll be your next pitches is like, "Oh, how do I get into journalism? Can you help me?"

[00:23:48] CE: With that, I'm happy to help.

[00:23:48] BB: We'll see. That would be interesting. See, okay, great. You can email her for that. I love it. Thank you so much, Carleton. This was a real treat. Carleton English from Barron's, thanks so much.

[00:23:59] CE: Thank you so much. This was fun.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:24:02] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist featuring Carleton English from Barron's. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. And 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. 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]