

EPISODE 116

[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 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 and look for the video page to learn more about our new video series, featuring journalists from the show.

Today on the podcast, we're joined by Anita Ramaswamy, a reporter at TechCrunch. Anita covers crypto and fintech startups, trends, and news. Before joining TechCrunch, Anita was a finance fellow at Insider. During the episode, Anita shares real life examples of pitch subject lines in her inbox, why she's hesitant about pursuing exclusives, her new podcast from TechCrunch, and more. Let's hear from Anita now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:16] BB: Welcome, everyone. I'm Beck Bamberger with OnePitch. I made OnePitch because us publicists need a better way to talk to all of our journalist friends. I also run BAM, which is an agency that works with all venture-backed technology companies that also uses OnePitch, lo and behold.

Today with us, another person from TechCrunch. We love TechCrunch. We'll talk about the outlet and what that all means. But with us today is a Anita Ramaswamy. She's a reporter from TechCrunch, covering fintech and crypto, as you all just heard. Anita, thanks for being here.

[00:01:48] AR: Yeah. Thanks so much for having me. It's great to be here.

[00:01:50] BB: Yes. Thank you. Okay, now I'm asking this more and more just for people who might not be familiar. First, before we go into your content, TechCrunch in general, what is TechCrunch all into?

[00:02:02] AR: Yes. So TechCrunch is a tech news outlet, and we focus a lot on speaking to people who are building things, so founders, sometimes investors. We focus a lot on, I would say, early stage founders is our core audience. But, in general, anyone who's curious about tech, wants to build, and has that fascination.

[00:02:19] BB: Yes. It is the top outlet, I'd say, in the startup space for everybody who's pitching tech or looking at startup, so great.

[00:02:26] AR: Thank you.

[00:02:27] BB: Now, for you, Anita, your inbox, let's talk about what you want. But what's in your inbox first? Lots of pitches, how do you organize?

[00:02:35] AR: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. I don't know that I'm the most organized person, but I do get a lot of pitches. I think especially because I'm covering fintech and crypto, and there's just so much going on in both of those industries right now. I would say like, I don't know, I get maybe 100 emails every single week day. I would say a high amount of those are actually pitches. It's not just like newsletters and stuff.

So in order to stay organized, what I do is really simple. Every time I get something that I do want to cover, I just star it, and it moves to like – I have that thing where your starred messages come at the top of your inbox, and everything else is at the bottom. Then once I'm done covering it, I move it into a folder that says I've already covered it.

[00:03:13] BB: Okay. So you do a star system.

[00:03:15] AR: Yeah.

[00:03:16] BB: And it works.

[00:03:17] AR: It works as well as it can. I think it definitely is hard to keep track of everything, and I used to be like a total inbox zero, like I have to read every single thing. It has to be filed in a folder. But when I started at TechCrunch, I realized that that was not going to be possible.

[00:03:30] BB: Yes. I think we all have the aspirations of like, “Oh, there's no email in there.” I've talked with many people on the show who were like, “No, I have 57,000 unread emails, and I just let it ride.” Like you just kind of get to that point, and it's okay.

[00:03:41] AR: Yeah. I have 1,500 right now.

[00:03:44] BB: There you go. You're in the club. You're in the thousand plus club. So, okay, Anita, we talked a little bit about this on the videos. But tell us more about the subject line. So for you to open that email and go, “Oh, here's what I want to do,” and give that little star, what does the subject line need to look like?

[00:04:00] AR: I would say it should just be as direct and clear as possible. I really do appreciate is it's an exclusive like that's put in the subject line. If there's like a hard deadline and you're not flexible with timing of your announcement, if you put in parentheses like what the announcement data is at the end, that's really helpful. Sometimes, it's just as simple as saying something like exclusive fintech launch or fintech funding announcement. Or if you're announcing like a fun launch, like exclusive like X million dollar crypto fund. Those are just some examples that I've definitely clicked on in the past.

I think sometimes, especially with fintech companies, they can be really complicated. So if there's a way to concisely sort of summarize what the startup does in the subject line, that's also really helpful. But if it's difficult, then just saying like fintech funding round is actually good enough because I know that, okay, I can sort of screen out the ones who are not within my beats or the timeline isn't going to work out for me. Or maybe it's like something that's interesting, but it's not an exclusive, so it's not the number one priority for me that week. That's sort of how I filter things out.

[00:05:03] BB: Okay. You also mentioned when we were chatting earlier the type of coverage you're looking for, the type of pitches you're also not looking for. So for everybody here, what's the non-star category? Obviously, it doesn't fall into crypto or fintech. But can you give us an example actually of like something live ideally that you got this week where you're like, “This is just clearly a no.”?

[00:05:25] AR: Yeah. Yeah, for sure. I actually get a lot of them. So let's see.

[00:05:29] BB: Yeah. Pick one, Anita, of the 400 or so that you have so far this week.

[00:05:33] AR: Interview available on the global supply chain and how China's locked down will put pressure on inflation. I don't report on economics, so that's definitely something that's outside of my wheelhouse.

[00:05:43] BB: Was that all in the subject line?

[00:05:45] AR: There was more. Yeah, yeah.

[00:05:46] BB: Oh, my gosh. Oh, yeah. No, no.

[00:05:47] AR: Yeah. It was a long subject line.

[00:05:49] BB: Okay. No, that's a good example. Okay. Do you have another one? This is so helpful.

[00:05:54] AR: Yes. This was really funny. Three environmentally friendly artists to keep on your radar for Earth month.

[00:06:02] BB: Why? I'm so – That's bad. Okay.

[00:06:05] AR: These are both from today. So I really, really –

[00:06:07] BB: This is –

[00:06:09] AR: Yeah. I try to open all my emails, but it's a lot of this stuff. I must be on some list somewhere that like I get these.

[00:06:16] BB: Oh, my god. Anita, every single person I've had on here is on some multiple – There are many lists. You're on many lists in the Internet, and you're on the list. Yes.

[00:06:24] AR: Here's a fun one. New summer staple alert, now show, nonslip odor repellent socks.

[00:06:30] BB: Is that a pitch? Or is it an ad?

[00:06:32] AR: I think this one's actually – This one's an ad. Okay. The other two were actually pitches though.

[00:06:40] BB: But it's confusing. That's very confusing. Oh, man.

[BREAK]

[00:06:45] 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 journalists to pitch your news to. Sign up for your free account today. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:07:10] BB: Okay. Real quick, TechCrunch does do a handful of exclusives. Where are you on the exclusive versus embargo and which is which to you?

[00:07:18] AR: Yeah. So I will definitely cover an embargo, if it's interesting to me, and it's in my beads. But I do try to give priority to exclusives. Like if there's an exclusive that I find interesting, then I will do more to sort of meet their timeline, do more to make sure that I like get to talk to the company, get to talk to the investors. That sort of becomes my priority for the week, but I'm not tied to only doing exclusives.

I will say that it's nice to be offered an exclusive because it's not so much about the competitive aspect of it for me, but it's more about it just shows that that company really cares, and they know that TechCrunch specifically would be a good fit for their story.

[00:07:53] BB: Okay. That's good to know. This has come up more often. Has there ever been a slip up of an embargo or an exclusive? Is there any like tale you want to tell us? Maybe not a slip up on your end but on like the PR side.

[00:08:07] AR: Yeah. Once or twice. It's not super common, but there have definitely been situations where I've been pitched a funding round announcement by a startup, and I've wanted to cover it. Then I go to Google the startup, and it turns out that someone else has already leaked the funding round, or it's been reported on elsewhere. That is just a huge no for me.

[00:08:25] BB: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Now, do you actually mean like there's a whole other article done on it? Or like you did some snooping on Crunchbase, and you're like, "Oh, wait. It's already up there."

[00:08:34] AR: It's usually been an article but a brief one. Like maybe they didn't do an interview with the company, so it's been like pitched as an exclusive interview to me. But maybe like phrase it away where I didn't know the news was out. Yeah.

[00:08:45] BB: Yeah. Lame, lame, lame, lame. Did you respond to that startup, by the way, and say like, "Hey," or what?

[00:08:51] AR: Yeah. I ended up getting back to them, and I was just like, "I can't cover this anymore," because I think I had a great cover, and then I was doing some more digging.

[00:08:59] BB: Yeah. That's a bummer.

[00:09:00] AR: Yeah. So that fell through.

[00:09:03] BB: Yeah. That's a no, no. Okay. This is good. Anita, I know you're in grad school right now, which is great. What are you covering right now? Where in terms in your degree here? Are you doing an MA in journalism?

[00:09:13] AR: Yes, in business journalism at NYU.

[00:09:14] BB: Yes. Business journalism. Okay. How's it going? We don't have a lot of also students on here.

[00:09:22] AR: Yeah. It's a lot to manage. I mean, I love being at TechCrunch, and I'm really happy that I started when I did. But it's definitely a lot to juggle, and I didn't necessarily expect that I would be a student at the same time as I was working. But anyway, it's fun too because I get to like cross apply things I'm learning and one to the other.

[00:09:38] BB: Yeah. I'm a student too right now. I'm in a PhD program, and it's a lot. It's a lot. Yeah. I feel you on that. But the upside of it is a lot of times you can use your current work environment. You can work things with the studies and all the concepts and the theories and stuff, so there's a direct line that goes through that. That's helpful.

[00:09:57] AR: Yeah. Always thinking about the same topics.

[00:10:00] BB: Yes, exactly. I found that to be helpful. Okay. Anita, you also have a podcast that you're doing. Tell us more.

[00:10:08] AR: Yeah.

[00:10:09] BB: Can we pitch the podcast? What do we do? Tell us.

[00:10:12] AR: Yes, you can. So the podcast is called Chain Reaction, and I'm launching it. The first episode is coming out tomorrow, Thursday, April 21st. I'm really excited. It's going to be me and my coworker, Lucas Matney. So he also is on the crypto team. He's an editor at TechCrunch, and we are going to be co-hosting this, talking about a little bit of crypto news at the beginning of the podcast and then having a guest speaker, who we interview together and just sort of have a chat with about some trends in the space for the second half of the show.

You definitely can pitch us. We're looking for like crypto experts, people doing interesting things in the crypto space, so not necessarily the most traditional experts always. It could be anyone doing anything interesting and maybe really like involved in the community on Twitter or Discord or that sort of thing? Yeah. We're looking to hear from a pretty wide range of people.

[00:11:01] BB: By the way, because I know this will be asked, and I'm with all these VCs all the time, do you want like people investing in crypto or you want people building other things?

[00:11:09] AR: Both, but I would say –

[00:11:10] BB: Both. Okay.

[00:11:10] AR: We're definitely open to having investors on the show because I think anyone who can give them more like high level view. I don't think that we necessarily want our show to focus on like one product or one specific company. So if it's a founder who has some background, and they can talk more broadly about the space, that would be awesome. But investors have that really great perspective where they can talk about the market as a whole.

[00:11:30] BB: Very good. Okay, everybody. One more time, just so everyone knows, we're recording this in April, in late April. So when is the actual first show dropping?

[00:11:42] AR: Tomorrow. Yeah.

[00:11:43] BB: Tomorrow.

[00:11:43] AR: April 21st.

[00:11:43] BB: Okay. So April 21st, for real. Okay. Everybody, then you'll be able to find it. Awesome. Okay, Anita, what are you reading, writing, consuming? What are all the things?

[00:11:54] AR: Yes. So in terms of reading, I mean, I definitely like spend a bunch of time keeping up with the news, like all the crypto trade publications. I read those pretty much daily. But outside of that, I'm reading *The Cryptopians* right now by Laura Shin, like her new book about the history of Ethereum and the history of crypto. It's really good. I normally don't read books that are like directly related to my work. I honestly like reading a lot of fiction and keeping those two things kind of separate because I enjoy reading. But *Cryptopians* has been a good pick so far.

[00:12:25] BB: Okay. *Cryptonians*. Then what about more fun TV, something not in your industry? You got anything?

[00:12:31] AR: Yeah, yeah. Honestly, super trashy shows. I'm watching *The Ultimatum* right now. I've watched –

[00:12:37] BB: Oh, my god.

[00:12:37] AR: Binge-watching all stupid dating shows.

[00:12:39] BB: You're the second person on this podcast. I had yesterday someone from B Capital, Capital B, and she said the same thing. Oh, shoot. Now, I got to go on there. It's just so good though those romance ding-a-ling things.

[00:12:50] AR: Yeah, they're great. I also love like shows about like young women in New York City. Maybe that's because my life right now. But I like *Sex and the City* remake.

[00:12:58] BB: Me too. Anita, I did. Okay. People were pissed about it, but how can you be pissed? People have problems.

[00:13:04] AR: Yeah, it was fun. I'm like “Roast me for liking it” but I thought it was good.

[00:13:08] BB: I thought so too, and I thought it was mature and real. I liked it. I can't wait.

[00:13:14] AR: Yeah. I'm with you. This is a hot take. I'm sure it's a hot take, but I'm glad you agree with me.

[00:13:19] BB: I'm not mad at it, no. Also, to your point, anything, anything, frankly, because I try to be a half New Yorker. I'm not, but I have the essence. Anything that is totally and exclusively shot in New York City, I'm all about it. I honestly don't care about the content so much. If it's about – You know what I mean? If it was just a setting, I'm already halfway in. I'm halfway in. Oh, god. Anita, Okay. I'm going to have that.

[00:13:43] AR: Yeah. It's like, “I'm eating there. I've been there.” Like –

[00:13:45] BB: I know that street. Yes, yes. Okay, Anita, especially as you wrap your wonderful graduate degree, what do you think the future of journalism looks like?

[00:13:57] AR: Yeah. That's a good question. I would say, I mean, look, like keeping it interesting is actually so important. People just don't have long attention spans anymore, and I think the thing is like our competition as media outlets, it's not necessarily just other media outlets. I think today it really is like TikTok or Twitter or Discord. That is, frankly, where people are getting their news. You can cast a value judgment on that one way or the other, but I choose not to do that.

I think I have things that I could learn from people who are on social media. Maybe they're not always experts, and I'm not saying that you should take your advice from them, per se. But I think there's something to be said and to be learned about their format. I watch a lot of TikTokers who are like trend analysts or business analysts. Or they'll talk about like the fashion industry or something like that. I learned so much from TikTok, to be honest. So I think the future of news is going to move in a direction where you have to provide like the rigorous like fact checking and reporting, but you also have to make it entertaining. Otherwise, people aren't going to care.

[00:15:00] BB: Yeah. There could be something with personality. What is the view, and what is the lens that you're coming from? Frankly, we're all biased in some way, shape, or form. So perhaps it will go into, okay, coming from my perspective with this background, here's my view on this piece of fact or this view. So I think there's a lot of room for that, as TikTok has obviously shown us.

[00:15:22] AR: No, and I agree with that. I think like we should try as reporters to be as unbiased as possible. But at the same time, I like TechCrunch because we do provide some of those opportunities to do analysis pieces. I love writing those. I love writing about my analysis on an industry and what I think is going to happen, and that's always backed by a ton of research. No one at the end of the day can predict the future or tell you what's actually going on. But the one thing that I can tell you is that if I publish something like that, I have done my homework, and you can definitely agree or disagree. But it's not informed so much by an opinion. It's informed by like my conversations with a ton of people in the industry.

[00:15:57] BB: Anita, thank you for being on with us today. We're going to wrap it right there. Optimistic about the future, optimistic about crypto, optimistic about this wonderful podcast you're doing with some TechCrunch friends. That is always good and exciting and definitely check out. I think for everybody here, if you are like, "Oh, god. Crypto," TechCrunch is a great place to start. My goodness.

[00:16:19] AR: I hope so. I'll try to keep it fun.

[00:16:21] BB: You will, Anita. I love it. Thank you, everyone, for listening and listening in on TechCrunch and Anita. Anita Ramaswamy, reporter at TechCrunch, send her a good subject line. Please, please.

[00:16:35] AR: Thanks for having me.

[00:16:36] BB: Thanks. Thanks, Anita.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:16:38] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist featuring Anita Ramaswamy from TechCrunch. 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]