

EPISODE 123

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. The guest on our show includes 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 including today's guest.

Our guest on the podcast this week is Chris Teale, the technology reporter for Morning Consult. As a technology reporter, Chris uses proprietary polling data, external data sets and interviews with experts from across the sector to write feature length and short articles about technology trends and news. He also produces a weekly morning newsletter.

During the episode, Chris shares more about what Morning Consult is, his process for finding unique stories to write, how you should structure pitches to send his way and more. Let's hear from Chris now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:24] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, co-founder of OnePitch, which helps wonderful publicists like ourselves get better relationships with media. And that's why we do this show so that we can figure out what journalists are looking for, what reporters really want, their editors and so forth. We even have editors who come on here as well to talk about their inboxes. It's about making better relationships with our media pals. Because as you probably know, it's a relationship business at the end of the day with PR.

Very excited today. We have Chris Teale, who is the technology reporter over at Morning Consult. We're going to hear about his inbox and all the fun things he deals with and his fancy

words and terms, which I highly encourage you to watch our little video vignettes as well. But first, Chris, welcome. And thank you for being here.

[00:02:11] CT: Thank you for having me. It's great to be here.

[00:02:13] BB: Yes. And you're in DC right now.

[00:02:15] CT: Yeah, Washington, D.C.

[00:02:17] BB: Washington, D.C. Another good media spot to be. I like it. Chris, before we get into your inbox, could you give us just overarching what Morning Consult is?

[00:02:28] CT: Sure. Morning Consult is a decision intelligence company. We kind of help business leaders make the best decisions that they can. We use proprietary survey data that help shape that. My role within that, I cover technology. I have a morning newsletter that goes out at about eight o'clock eastern every morning. Most important technology news of the day. Also, we'll write a lot of articles using survey data. Again, all just to help people figure out what's next.

[00:03:00] BB: Very important intel, I'm sure, that people definitely need. I highly recommend everyone signs up for your newsletter, by the way, which I just did myself. There's that.

Okay. Chris, you might be considered you are the technology reporter. But I'm curious to hear how your inbox looks in terms of pitches. Do you get a lot of pitches?

[00:03:19] CT: I do get a lot of pitches. My inbox is that I'm one of those inbox zero types.

[00:03:25] BB: Oh, you're on the other side there. Yes. We have many of those journalists from this show that are the same.

[00:03:31] CT: Yeah. And so, I do get a lot of pictures, a lot of things from sources. I'd like to trying to set up interviews, a few statements that I got about a piece of legislation that I'm

tracking, various things. But my inbox almost functions as a secondary to-do list because I try and keep it so sparse. If an email is sitting there, I need to action it in some way.

[00:03:54] BB: Okay. Ooh! Ooh! As your to-do list. Dangerous, perhaps. But okay. You do not open every single email then. Do you?

[00:04:02] CT: I do.

[00:04:03] BB: Oh, you do.

[00:04:04] CT: I read it and process.

[00:04:06] BB: Oh! You're in rarefied air, because there's quite a handful of journalists who've been on here that they are of the inbox zero mentality. But they do a mass delete. Like every top of the hour they go through and boom, boom. 27 deleted. Like, just full sweep. And there's maybe two other people on this entire show that I've ever talked to that actually says, "No, I'm not only the inbox zero. But I also open every email." This is impressive.

[00:04:32] CT: I would hate to miss something. I just came back off vacation today.

[00:04:35] BB: Fascinating. Oh, and?

[00:04:37] CT: First thing I did was scroll through and make sure I got everything. And it took about an hour to get through everything. That wasn't too bad.

[00:04:43] BB: An hour? That's it?

[00:04:45] CT: Yeah.

[00:04:45] BB: Okay, Chris, there could be a class for you to teach to your fellow journalists on like efficiency times X for my fellow journalists. How many emails did you have coming back from your vacation, though?

[00:04:58] CT: It was just a short vacation. It was about 200 and something from a long weekend.

[00:05:03] BB: Okay, that's not crazy. I was going to say like 2000 or something. Okay, yeah that's not as daunting. But still, impressive. Very good. When you are thinking, Chris, of the stories you want to do and what your newsletter is going to be about, how do you sort out and select the stories you do?

[00:05:21] CT: Wow! That's a really interesting question. The old question of where does news come from?

[00:05:26] BB: Where does it come from?

[00:05:27] CT: One of the great things I like about covering technology is that there are so many ways you can go. I'll give you a couple of examples I covered towards the end of last year was about social media and whether regulation would finally get off the ground in 2022, whether we're actually going to make it a reality. That comes from following hearings and listening to lawmakers talking about **[inaudible 00:05:52]**. There's that side of things.

An article I wrote that would maybe be less serious, I wrote about catfishing. Pretend to be someone else on social media. Why did I write about that? Because I like watching the show on MTV. And we've never done a survey on it. And I thought, "Well, this will be perfect. No one else has written about this. Let's do it." It really comes from anything really.

[00:06:14] BB: Okay. You don't have like a process necessarily. Like, "Oh, yeah, I go to do my morning walk around whatever lake. And then I think about what I want to inspire my readers with today." I mean, I'm painting a very unrealistic picture. No one has a routine like that that I've ever spoken to on the show. But I was just curious. Okay. That sounds good. All over the place.

Do many, or all, or none of pitches convert to stories?

[00:06:41] CT: I'd say a few here and there.

[00:06:43] BB: A few. Okay.

[00:06:46] CT: What we try and do at Morning Consult is we try and write stories that we can do surveys on, if that makes sense.

[00:06:55] BB: Let's do it. Let's do that.

[00:06:57] CT: Taking you back to the catfishing sport. I ran survey on have you been catfished, for example? Do you know what it is? Who's responsible for stopping it? And that kind of thing. That's kind of how I approach things from that perspective. Can we run a survey on it? Can we delve into this proprietary data that no one else has access to out there in the journalism world? And can that then drive the news forward?

[00:07:20] BB: Mm-hmm. Okay. I kind of like that. In summary, it's rare for the pitch to convert. But here and there, if it maybe has jettison for survey intel, something like that, fancy.

[BREAK]

[00:07:34] 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 CONTINUED]

[00:07:58] BB: That leads me to elements of the pitch. Are there maybe three things that you want to see in every pitch?

[00:08:05] CT: I want to see – Well, first of all, I want it to be short. I don't want it to be full of tech jargon that get weighed down by all of these buzzwords and acronyms and all of this. I don't want any of that. Leave all that at the one side. Let's keep this as simple as possible.

And what's the news? Tell me what you're trying to get across. I don't need paragraphs and paragraphs of scene setting. If you can give me a little bit at the end of why this matters to my readers, I'm all the better for it, because it helps us all get on the same page as early in the pitching process as possible.

[00:08:41] BB: Mm-hmm. Cut the crap. Just get to the point of what it is. I have to say, too, that is increasingly requested from journalists, is we don't need the, "Oh, how was your weekend, Chris? Hope you had a wonderful time in DC. Did you have a nice sail boating adventure? Okay. Now I want to talk –" Like, just what is it? Because we don't have time.

And I think we're in agreement of we understand the invisible dance of publicists and journalists. We all know what the dance here is. I have a pitch of my client. You have stories to write. Please, let us perhaps connect on this. Okay. I like that.

Do you have any subject lines you absolutely love? Now, we talked a little bit on this video, which I'm not going to give away for the little video vignette that we have. Everyone can watch that. But what do you love in a subject line? Even though you open every single email.

[00:09:32] CT: Again, short. Again, no technical jargon necessarily. That's an immediate no-no for me.

[00:09:39] BB: Okay. No jargon.

[00:09:40] CT: Yeah. Just tell me what it is. And then tell me what you're telling me. We don't have to mess around here, Beck.

[00:09:47] BB: Yeah, I like it. Keep it simple. Okay. That's good. Do you ever want to see, though, like the name of the expert? Is it a survey that's special or exclusive embargo? We'll talk about that in a second. Anything further like that?

[00:10:01] CT: This is one of the things I like being pitched, is someone offering an expert, say, an academic, who can talk to the news of the day that I'll be running a survey on. If I get a pitch that says, "University X professor to comment on why news story." Great. I'm all for it. Because,

again, that makes it as easy as possible for me to figure out if this is worth reading or even if this is worth filing into my little folder that I have marked sources that I kind of keep in as well. Go back to it if I'm revisiting a news story. Yeah, the info is good. But don't go crazy.

[00:10:39] BB: Don't go crazy. Okay. I like that. Chris, what are you reading, watching, consuming, listening to? We just like to know, like, what are the stories journalists like to just to be consumed by?

[00:10:53] CT: Right now, as of yesterday, I finished a really good book by Sheera Frenkel and Cecilia Kang called *An Ugly Truth*. And it's all about the last few years of Facebook told by two people who have incredible sources within the company about a pretty tumultuous few years for that social media firm. I finished that one yesterday.

I find those kind of richly-reported stories about tech companies, because, right, I'm in tech. I find those so interesting. I remember it was super pumped by Mike Isaac of The New York Times.

[00:11:27] BB: Yes. I'm telling you, The New York Times is pumping out so many – And Wall Street Journal, of reporters gone authors with books that are just runaway hits, because they get these deep, interesting tech stories that you're like – I mean, I think about the research level. It's incredible.

[00:11:47] CT: It's told like a narrative as well. That's what I really like. You feel like you're right there in the meetings with these people. It reminds me so much of kind of completely switching gears, *The Boys in the Boat*.

[00:11:57] BB: Yes. Did you like that? See, I didn't read that one, because I was like, "Oh, I don't know if I'm going to –" What do you think? You loved it?

[00:12:05] CT: I'd highly recommend it. I grew up in a big growing country. I've always had a bit of an affinity for it. Again, narrative. And it's historical, right? It actually all happened. But again, it looked like a story that's been told.

[00:12:17] BB: Oh, that's the magic. That's the magic. WeCrashed I read, or listened to. And again, just like you know it's real, but how it unfolds and the way, of course, this wonderful author tees it up. You're going, "Wow! It writes like just the most amazing –" You can't make it up. It's such an incredible story.

[00:12:37] CT: There are so many good stories to be told and so many ways to tell it.

[00:12:41] BB: I know.

[00:12:42] CT: Do you have any shows? Anything you watch? Or any other podcasts you love?

[00:12:46] CT: I just finished The Drop Out on Hulu.

[00:12:48] BB: Oh! Was that good, too?

[00:12:50] CT: Incredible. Amanda Seyfried –

[00:12:51] BB: It's on my list. She just aced that, I heard. Yes. Okay, I'm going to add it to my little wish list. It keeps popping up and I'm like, "Uh!"

[00:12:59] CT: Yeah. For the purposes of this podcast as well, the things I took away, the power of journalism. **[inaudible 00:13:05]** at the Wall Street Journal who helped expose it.

[00:13:08] BB: He broke it. Yes.

[00:13:09] CT: From my perspective, the power of regulators, there was a really interesting scene where an investigator from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services came in to like investigate the lab, right? With the view to maybe shutting it down. And you wouldn't necessarily notice this guy if he walked in a room. But then he had this ability to actually make real consequences happen. I found that one piece fascinating when you consider Elizabeth Holmes and Sunny all the personalities and the way they projected themselves. They got undone by someone who you could sit next to on the bus and not notice him.

[00:13:46] BB: It really is something. God! O! These tech stories, I'm telling you. What a fascinating world we're in. My God. Well, Chris, not so much on the tech side, but maybe it ties into it, what do you think the future of journalism looks like?

[00:14:03] CT: I think a lot about the future of journalism. I was a local news guy to start with. I was at a local newspaper called The Oxfordshire Guardian who's now sadly defunct in my home city. I worry a lot that we're losing those local watchdog newspapers and websites that keep track of city councils, and of school boards and of state legislatures as well. Not enough coverage of where the rubber hits the road.

We found something that I'm going to get on my soapbox about. You talked about things I was listening to. John Stewart's podcast that accompanies the Apple TV Show. We did a show about the media and then did a follow-up podcast about it. And I was really struck by something, the media now is good, at least nationally, is good at covering politics and the conflict that goes on and the kind of soap opera of Washington. But it's not as good at explaining how governing works. How does the government do things? Which is less sexy. It's less conflict-driven. But it is so important for people to understand.

This whole idea of journalism as a public service. I hate to be the British guy who talks about the ideals of the BBC. But we've got to have something that has that mission of helping us understand how this all works. I hope we can get to that in the future.

[00:15:27] BB: Yes. I like how you throw in the British piece of it, too, because you're the Brit hanging out in America here.

[00:15:33] CT: I have to.

[00:15:38] BB: Whatever spots. I have to. I have to be over here. Oh, man. And then even furthermore, you're in DC. You're just like all-in, Chris. All-in. You're like, "Let me get in there, America. I'm going to be up close in your sh—" Okay, I won't say.

Anyway, Chris, Chris Teale, thank you for being here today. You're the technology reporter for Morning Consult. Love it. Thanks for telling us all about it and understanding how crisp and

short you wish your pitches to be, and the stories and your recommendations on reads to read, because I'm always looking for good tech stuff. Thank you.

[00:16:14] CT: Thank you, Beck. It's been great to be with you.

[OUTRO]

[00:16:17] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee With a Journalist, featuring Chris Teale from Monring Consult. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts and anywhere else you listen to podcasts.

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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]