

**EPISODE 129**

[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 from the top US-based publications who covered 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 featuring journalists from the show.

Today's guest on Coffee with a Journalist is Eli Tan, an NFT reporter for CoinDesk. Eli covers NFT's, gaming, and the metaverse. During the episode, Eli talks about the many NFT pitches he receives, what he looks for and pitches, the types of sources he enjoys speaking with, and more. Let's hear from Eli now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:14] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. And what do here? I created OnePitch, because publicist needs help getting to journalists. And we're trying to make better relationships with our wonderful journalist friends. I also run an agency named BAM that works with all venture-backed technology companies. A wild time over there. That's quite the industry. But with us today also talking about tech in the wild industry that is all things NFT, Web 3.0, and so forth, is Eli Tan. He's the NFT reporter over at CoinDesk, which we will get into. Eli, welcome. Thank you for being here.

**[00:01:52] ET:** Thanks for having me, Beck. Excited to be here.

**[00:01:54] BB:** I'm excited too. And we had a fun time with our little video vignette things we just recorded. All good stuff so far. Real quick, Eli, for those maybe not as familiar, what is CoinDesk?

**[00:02:06] ET:** CoinDesk, we are a media organization that does news and content for the crypto native.

**[00:02:13] BB:** To the crypto native.

**[00:02:15] ET:** Very, very in the weeds, crypto news. Very high-level kind of expert level stuff for people that are in cryptocurrency.

**[00:02:22] BB:** That is deeply involved there. Yes. However, I will say, CoinDesk does have policy, TV stuff. There's a lot of podcasts. There're events. It's quite an elaborate organization at this point in time. Probably the largest actually in the crypto space, right?

**[00:02:40] ET:** Yeah, of crypto media. Yeah, we're I think the largest by headcount. We have the Consensus Conference every year, which is huge. 20,000 people at that. We've got news team, podcast TV, like you said. Yeah, we're going to do it all.

**[00:02:53] BB:** Yep, they're kind of the biggest in the in the land, as it were. Okay. Eli, for your inbox, how does it look?

**[00:03:01] ET:** My inbox, it's a little bit of a disaster. It's a little bit of a headache. NFTs being my beat and being kind of the beast they are, right? I just get a ton of pitches every day. I probably get 300 or 400 emails a day.

**[00:03:16] BB:** Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait. What? 300? 400 a day?

**[00:03:18] ET:** Yeah, probably 300 to 400 a day. Most of which are pitches every day to kind of look through and sort through though. It's certainly a tall task, I think, every day to look through. But there's a lot of gems in there every day as well. A lot of stuff. It's never like I can't find something.

**[00:03:33] BB:** Eli, how do you navigate then those 300, 400 pitches a day?

**[00:03:39] ET:** I mean, I'm going to be honest, I don't have time to go through each one and kind of read through the depth of the entire pitch, right, and look through the entire press release. Obviously, subject line, if it captures me, I'm going to look at it. If it's an embargo and exclusive, I typically am going to follow up with it just to kind of see what's going on. And then if it's sent from somebody that I have kind of rapport with, I'm going to of course look at it. I would say that's kind of the process for me.

And then I also have a telegram inbox, which it's a great way to reach people. On Twitter, I say that's kind of my main form of communication. Anyone that that goes – Look at my Twitter, look at my bio, add my Telegram. Like, I'm going to honor that effort as well.

**[00:04:25] BB:** What is in the Telegram versus in your inbox? Is there a difference in the distinction of pitches in there?

**[00:04:32] ET:** Yeah. With Telegram, **[inaudible 00:04:32]** doesn't know it's a messaging platform. It's kind of like texting someone. So, typically with email, you'll have like two or three back and forth. And there'll be kind of like big things. Like, if I'm sending someone email, like, I'm trying to get my questions in because I don't know when they're going to respond. But with Telegram, it's a little bit more casual. It's more like, "Hey, I got a pitch about this. Do you want to see it?" I'd go, "Yeah. Sure. I have questions about something." Like, we can just kind of be messaging in real time. That's why that's kind of my preferred mode.

**[00:05:00] BB:** Okay. Either platform preferred. Eli, then when do you file your pitches? Are you an inbox zero person? What do you do?

**[00:05:11] ET:** I used to be an inbox zero person. I'm not anymore.

**[00:05:15] BB:** Reluctantly.

**[00:05:16] ET:** Yeah. I'm not even close to Inbox zero. Maybe like inbox 200.

**[00:05:21] BB:** Okay. Okay. That's all right.

**[00:05:23] ET:** I'm a big fan of just starting pitches I think are interesting.

**[00:05:28] BB:** Oh, okay. And then do you at some point, like, do you review your stars or something?

**[00:05:31] ET:** Yeah. And I'll review my stars.

**[00:05:34] BB:** Review the stars. This is a first one.

**[00:05:36] ET:** Yeah. If something is like I commit to it, like, I'll star that as well. So that's really the only kind of like designation I have.

**[00:05:42] BB:** Okay, star system. We're going to – This is new terrain on the show. The star system. Okay, we've had flags. We've had the inbox zero people. We've had just let it ride, 497,000 unopened emails, and so forth. There is no method in which journalists seem to control the inbox. So, okay. What is the subject line, though, that gets your attention? Like, what are the components of an amazing subject line?

**[00:06:10] ET:** I mean, if you're somehow connected to like one of the major crypto narratives going on, like I think that's interesting. Like, if you can kind of – Because that's something that journalists look for is the narratives, right? Like, we're not just like – We don't want to just be summing press releases as promotions. Like, we want to be able to fit these announcements into kind of the larger story and like make it interesting for the readers, right?

If a publicist kind of already does that for me, that's great. Like, that makes it I think clear to me like why over that story. I get a lot of people that they work with prominent names or interesting names. I love to interview people. Like, I think adding quotes from interviews really makes my stories interesting. If you're someone that's like has a client that's interesting and can offer up an interview, like that's something that I'm always going to look into, even if I can't necessarily fit it into the story. I love just kind of talking to as many people as I can.

**[00:07:03] BB:** Hmm, gotcha. Now, what would you classify though as interesting?

**[00:07:07] ET:** I mean, not even – Like, most people would probably say, “Oh, you only want to talk to celebrities.” Really, like, anyone with just like an interesting background that's kind of like worked at some cool companies.

I did a profile the other day on this guy, Nikolai is name. And we met in Miami at a crypto conference. He's kind of an unassuming guy when you first meet him. But I learned that he had kind of this crazy background of – He played professional poker. He worked at like all these different companies, Google doing AI, doing machine learning. He worked in professional baseball doing statistics. All these really interesting things. And by no means that he's someone that is a celebrity. But just like hearing his story, like, I think there are so many people like that that are in crypto and NFTs. And it's cool to just hear how people kind of got to this point.

**[00:07:54] BB:** Okay. It doesn't mean that you have to have an A-lister celebrity to get a call booked with you or an in-person coffee as you were mentioning earlier on our videos.

**[00:08:07] ET:** Yeah. No, not at all. I mean, if you're a publicist, like, look at your founder. Like, figure out their story. And I'm someone like – If I ever see someone that's from Seattle – Because I'm from Seattle. Immediately, I will talk to that person because I just – It's that type of thing. It's like the little details.

**[00:08:21] BB:** Yes. Excellent. Oh, that's so good to hear. Okay. You mentioned a little bit when we were doing the video little portion of our series here. I believe you did exclusive, embargoes. Oh, no. When we were talking about the pitches and what you open. Okay. What do you think about exclusives? Do you want them? Do you hate them?

**[00:08:39] ET:** I love exclusives.

**[00:08:40] BB:** You love an exclusive. Okay.

**[00:08:41] ET:** They're the best thing you can offer to a journalist as a publicist.

**[00:08:45] BB:** Okay. You will accept those. Gotcha.

**[00:08:48] ET:** Yeah. I think that's the best thing you could do. One, it's like a relationship thing. Like, I'm offering you the exclusive news. I want to give it to you. I value your writing and outlet and audience more than like the others. I'm giving it to you.

**[00:09:02] BB:** It kind of a big gesture. I would agree with that.

**[00:09:04] ET:** It is, yeah. And like, on some level, like exclusives are kind of shopped around. Like, you'll get pitched. And then you'll say, "I'll do it." And then they'll say, "Oh, well, I already offered it someone else." And then it's like –

**[00:09:14] BB:** Does that happen though? Does that –

**[00:09:16] ET:** That happens a lot. I face that a good amount.

[BREAK]

**[00:09:21] 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 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]

**[00:09:44] BB:** I think that's poor form. Because, at least in our practice, or what I've seen is you offer a certain timeframe in which to offer the exclusive. Like, "Hey, Eli, in the next 12 hours, a deadline 6pm PT, would you like this or not? Otherwise, I will move on." Just to then say though, you respond to the publicists, and they go, "Oh, yeah, nevermind." Ooh! What do you do then? Are you like, "Yeah, no, I'm not responding to you ever again." Or what?

**[00:10:16] ET:** It might not be a response to you ever again, but definitely like sours that a bit. I think the truest form of exclusive is when you haven't even shown anyone else the news?

**[00:10:25] BB:** Yeah, exactly.

**[00:10:27] ET:** They're like, "You're the only one that seeing this. When you're going to publish it, other outlets are going to have to look at it." right? Versus, like, you get to publish five minutes before everyone else. It's like, "Okay." It's good, but it's not quite the level of a pure exclusive in my mind..

**[00:10:43] BB:** Yes. Got you. Related a little ish bit to the exclusive, embargos, do you ever want to see those?

**[00:10:49] ET:** Yeah, embargos are great.

**[00:10:50] BB:** Okay. You like embargos too. Okay.

**[00:10:52] ET:** All interesting news is going to be embargoed under some degree.

**[00:10:56] BB:** Okay. Embargo is good.

**[00:10:57] ET:** Yeah. For immediate release, I typically don't look at too many of those. Because if it's for immediate release, and it's notable, I think it'll have gotten to me through other channels.

**[00:11:07] BB:** Yeah. Gotcha. Okay. We already covered a relationship building with you, Eli. We talked a little bit about the subject lines that you like, exclusives, embargoes, all this good stuff. What are you reading? Plus, watching, listening to? We'll take any form of storytelling. Anything you got that you love right now?

**[00:11:25] ET:** I mean, general, I like – it's funny. I'm like a quick news guy. But I really liked the longform storytelling. I like the New Yorkers, New York mags. Kind of the higher brow magazine, glossy magazine stuff. Yeah, that's kind of what I'm into. And as well as sports journalism. I love sports journalism.

**[00:11:43] BB:** Oh, what do you watch on sports? ESPN? Sports Illustrated?

**[00:11:45] ET:** **[inaudible 00:11:47]**. I love the documentaries. I love following all the scoopers, the insiders. I think that's a cool job.

**[00:11:53] BB:** The scoopers. Okay. Okay. Interesting assortment of reading material. Eli, speaking of stories and all that you do, and I know you mentioned you get 300, 400 pitches a day. There's no lack of stories coming to you. How do you think about the stories you do do? Do you always take them from pitches? Or are you doing a daily stroll through the park and you're like, "Wait! Hallelujah! I'm going to do a story on X."

**[00:12:19] ET:** It's a bit of a mix. A lot stories are designed by editors, ones that I don't control that they get. And they say, "Okay, this is important." You've got to –

**[00:12:26] BB:** You're on it.

**[00:12:28] ET:** Some of them are going to be like longer feature pieces, which I kind of ideate over time. And I think, "Okay, what do I want?" Do I want to do a profile of a company or a feature on a person? Something like that. And then, yeah, a lot of the them just come from the inbox, I would say as well.

I like to think all of these little stories I put out are kind of part of like a larger narrative that I'm writing. Like, I want people – Because I'm coined as NFT reporter. Right now, I'm our only NFT reporter.

**[00:12:54] BB:** Oh, that's a big burden.

**[00:12:54] ET:** Yeah. I want people to be able to – Conceivably, if they only read my stuff, and they want to know what was happening in NFT's, I'd want them to know what's going on. I'd want to give them a good enough coverage. I know that as one person, I'm not going to be able to cover every story. But I just think they got to – I want to follow the pulse enough.

**[00:13:11] BB:** Yeah. Okay. And then you mentioned sports. You mentioned reading the New Yorker. I know you're in New York. I could see like sipping coffee somewhere in Soho. Enjoying



it with your coffee mug, as you showed us earlier. What do you like to do besides writing stories?

**[00:13:28] ET:** I mean, I love playing sports as well. I play in a Central Park baseball team.

**[00:13:34] BB:** Oh, fun. Oh, it's really hot though right now. Do you play now in the summer?

**[00:13:38] ET:** Yeah, yeah. During the summer. I love doing that. I mean, I live in New York now. So, I like doing New York stuff. I like going around and just hanging out with friends and eating nice food. I guess I'm a bit of a foodie.

**[00:13:53] BB:** You're a foodie. Okay, great. Are you a theatre, museum, etc., person too?

**[00:13:56] ET:** I love museums. Yeah. I love going to museums. With my job, I get to go to a lot of art galleries that are doing kind of –

**[00:14:03] BB:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm a member of the Whitney Museum in New York City, even though I only go there eight times a year or something. But hey, I got my art membership. It's pretty good.

**[00:14:14] ET:** I'm a Met member. But I think that's the only museum membership I have.

**[00:14:15] BB:** There you go.

**[00:14:18] BB:** Got it. Okay, good. Well, Eli, I know when we covered in your bio earlier at the kind of the top of the show, in the intro, you're a relatively new-ish journalists in this field. So, we like to always ask, what do you think is the future of journalism?

**[00:14:34] ET:** It's a tough question. I'm very young. I'm 24.

**[00:14:37] BB:** That's young. That's technically – You're an elder Gen Z'er. Correct?

**[00:14:42] ET:** I don't like to think of myself as Gen Z. But you're the one who designated me as that. But I –

**[00:14:47] BB:** I think the cut off is 20 – I think the current age of Gen Z's are 12 to 25. I just saw – Sat on this somewhere and I was like, “Oh, 12. Wow!”

**[00:14:55] ET:** The stat for the Gen Z is like a little bit all encompassing. Like 12-year-olds to 25-year-olds.

**[00:14:59] BB:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Okay. So, you are pretty young. But, okay, continue on with your answer.

**[00:15:06] ET:** Yeah. Future of journalism. I mean, it's tough to say. I would love for – Because the purest form of journalism are these local papers, right, that are doing news. And that those are kind of the outlets that are dying out, which is really unfortunate. I think like national media that is like well-funded and can write cool stories without a ton of like constraints like financially, I think that's – I hope that that continues to succeed as a business model. I know that's what kind of CoinDesk is built on. But who knows? Like, it's tough.

You see companies like BuzzFeed News. They're kind of like reshuffling other good things. I think, for sure, the big legacy media companies are going to last, the big names, The New York Times, The Washington Post –

**[00:15:51] BB:** Yes, yes, institutions.

**[00:15:53] ET:** Even like a Seattle Times. They'll be fine in the long run. They're too important. But, man, for the for the smaller outlets, I'm really not sure. I don't really know what's long term –

**[00:16:03] BB:** Let me ask you just as a follow up, what made you go into this as a career?

**[00:16:08] ET:** My journey to journalism, I was going into my junior year of college. I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I thought I kind of wanted to work in like tech. I was talking with one of my neighbors who was – They were working at Facebook. Meta. But at the time, Facebook

still. And they were telling me, “Yeah, content strategy.” They love like people to do their college newspaper. That’s their favorite. People to hire. I’m like, “Okay, cool. I’ll apply for an internship or like join the college newspaper.”

And then I joined the newspaper as the sports editor. And I just fell in love with it immediately. I love the storytelling. I love the writing. I love like the whole thing. I was like all in on journalism. And then from there, I just haven’t really stopped. Just kind of kept going.

**[00:16:52] BB:** Fell in love with it. Can't go back. I like it. I like it.

Well, Eli, thank you for being on for today. That’s it. That’s all the questions that we could bother you with today. I know you have so many pitches coming in, and there’s a lot for you to uncover. I encourage everybody listening, check out the videos that Eli and I did earlier. You’ll get some little tips on making relationships with Eli, for example. He is down for coffee in-person live in New York, for example. And Eli, just thanks for being on here. This is really fun.

**[00:17:23] ET:** Oh, thanks so much for having me. This was great. Hey, to anyone listening, if you want to connect, you can follow my Twitter, elitanjournos, another great way to get in touch with me. One of my Twitter followers or my mutuals, like, I always appreciate that.

**[00:17:37] BB:** There you go. There you go. Get that relationship going. Eli. Thank you so much. Eli Tan, NFT reporter at CoinDesk. Thanks so much, Eli.

**[00:17:45] ET:** Thank you.

[OUTRO]

**[00:17:47] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week’s episode of Coffee with a Journalist featuring Eli Tan from CoinDesk. 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 guests. 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 journalist you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]