

EPISODE 131

[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.

Our guest today on Coffee with a Journalist is Casey Clark. She's a freelance writer for Forbes, as well as People Magazine, Yahoo, and InStyle. During the episode, Casey talks about how she finds interesting pitches in her inbox, her process for finding sources, a subject line that caught her attention and why, and lots more. Let's hear from Casey now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:14] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is OnePitch's Coffee with a Journalist. Sometimes, we drink coffee. Often, we don't drink coffee, actually. But we like the Coffee with a Journalist thing. I'm Beck Bamberger, and I run an agency named BAM that works with all venture-backed technology companies, and I made OnePitch, along with Jered, who you heard earlier on the show, because journalists need better relationships with publicists. So that is the whole theme of OnePitch and why we built the technology for it, but also why we have the show. So we can talk with real journalists, freelancers, editors, reporters, and hear what they're looking for and what they like about pitches and not like about pitches on the other side of things.

With us today is a freelance writer. Casey Clark is joining us she writes for People, InStyle, sometimes Forbes, Yahoo, a lot of different things. We're going to talk about it all. Casey, thank you for being here.

[00:02:06] CC: Thank you for having me. I'm really excited to be talking with you today.

[00:02:09] BB: Yay. We're happy that you are here. So first off, being a freelancer, Casey, how did you arrive to being in such a position? You've had various internships and all this other stuff. But when did you like decide like, "Okay. Officially, I'm a freelancer. I'm going to write for all the people."?

[00:02:26] CC: So when I was in college, probably around my junior year, which was like three years ago, I realized that I wanted to start getting into the freelance space. It was like right when COVID happened, and I was stuck at home, and I was like, "Hey, I want to start writing for different magazines." It was my dream since I was younger to be a contributor to Cosmo and Forbes and all of those big publications. So I kind of did what I only knew how to do and cold emailed and tried to get my foot in the door. After months, maybe a year and a half, I finally got my first byline. It was at Allure. I was really excited about.

[00:03:05] BB: That's exciting. Indeed.

[00:03:06] CC: Yeah, it was great. Then from there, I've just kind of kept going with it, and I have applied for jobs that were more on staff, like nine to five. But I realized that wasn't really the path for me right now in my life. So I really like the untraditional freelance route of doing whatever. I want the stories I want, how I want to do them. It's just key into my lifestyle.

[00:03:29] BB: Okay. It's working for you. Then how is your inbox, Casey? Lots of pitches, no pitches? You're also pitching. So tell us how it looks in there.

[00:03:39] CC: My inbox is crazy. It wasn't always this fuzzy. But as of lately, there's tons of pitches. I'd probably get around 200 to 300 a day.

[00:03:50] BB: A day. Wow. Okay.

[00:03:53] CC: And I send out probably like 100, like whether its responses or my own pitches or correspondence with editors and publicists. It really depends on what I'm working on and if I need commentary or anything like that. But it's pretty wild, full of headlines and open me, click here, click there.

[00:04:14] BB: Got it. When people are pitching you, so I'm assuming publicists, what are your favorite type of pitches? Maybe what are the three components that you absolutely love or want in a pitch?

[00:04:28] CC: Sure. So I think the subject line is pretty important. I find caps lock stands out to my eyes when I'm looking at a glance because I have tons of emails, and I try to go through every one. Sometimes, I don't have time. But if it's bold and urgent, I'll click on it and see. Usually, if there's like a sample or expert commentary in that subject line, that can be very helpful, as I'm always looking. Like I do keyword searches through my inbox, okay, if I can find an expert so that kind of like streamlines the process for me.

[00:05:04] BB: Okay. So you like that in the headline or the subject line. Got it. By the way, you said caps, like all caps. You want an email and/or like the subject line in all caps.

[00:05:11] CC: The first like maybe two or three words is like caps locked.

[00:05:14] BB: Yeah. Yeah. Enough. Yeah. Okay, good. Good to clarify.

[00:05:19] CC: Then like the name of the brand kind of following that, I think a lot of publicists forget like I don't really know about the client they're reaching out to me about. Some forget to link back to it, which is kind of a hassle on my end because that requires me to go on Google and look for the brand and do like kind of that back end research myself, which is okay, sometimes. But I'd prefer to have it hyperlinked in there. Then lastly, I like short and punchy. I don't really need a whole bunch of like background about –

[00:05:50] BB: How's it going? What did you do for Easter or Sunday or whatever the date is? Yeah, boom. You just want to start it. Okay.

[00:05:58] CC: Yeah. Normal banter is fine. I don't mind like, "How have you been like since the last time I've seen you?" That's fine. But like I don't really need a history of the brand's founders in every single pitch.

[00:06:08] BB: There we go. Okay. Ideally, how long is a pitch for you, sentence-wise?

[00:06:13] CC: Two to three.

[00:06:14] BB: Two to three sentences. That's very short.

[00:06:16] CC: I won't normally pass like, yeah, two to three, maybe five.

[00:06:22] BB: Okay, five tops. Man, that's getting slimmer and slimmer there. But it's good. Do you want like a link or like, "Okay, if you're interested, here's a link with their media kit," for example. Is that helpful?

[00:06:34] CC: That is very helpful. I like to go through the media kit, and like there's a fact sheet and sometimes a one page. I can just go through and see what I need. If it could be a benefit for me for a story or something, I can keep on file for down the line. I think that's not something a lot of publicists know is that when we say, "Oh, we're keeping you in mind for future stories." They actually mean that. I have a chart where I write down like on a spreadsheet what brands have reached out to me and where I could see them for potential stories. So even though it's not a fit at this exact moment, it could be in three to four months, if I'm working on something that's a better match.

[00:07:12] BB: Wait a second. Wait a second. You have, truly, like a printout, spreadsheet, old school, analog.

[00:07:17] CC: Not like pieces of paper but like on a Google Sheet. I **[inaudible 00:07:20]** to the brands and the experts they have, like what type of brand it is. So when I'm writing, I can just pull from it.

[00:07:28] BB: Got it. Okay. So you even do your own Google search within your own email to look up resources. But then you have a backup system, which is the other spreadsheet.

[00:07:38] CC: Yes.

[00:07:39] BB: How many people are on that spreadsheet, by the way?

[00:07:42] CC: Probably like 70-ish brands and like 30 experts. I try to like have a variety to choose from because I'm kind of always doing experts. I'm starting to realize more as I get into this. A lot of editors want commentary from experts to bulk up the piece and give it more credit.

[00:08:01] BB: Yes, yes. Wow. Okay. So what's an ideal for you expert pitch?

[00:08:10] CC: I think, obviously, like the person who's in question, like whether it's a doctor or dermatologist or whoever the expert is, followed by like their credentials, where they work. I think it's really important for me as a commerce writer is if to be transparent if they're affiliated with a brand. I think that can sometimes get lost in translation because I'm writing stories, and having a dermatologist associated with a skincare brand is a conflict of interest.

I wouldn't necessarily be keen on including that in this particular round up but maybe for another general dermatology story, perhaps. So putting that upfront, that's kind of like my standard guideline is going through them and seeing and also who responds first because if he responds first, I'm more apt to include because I'm kind of trying to work pretty quick.

[00:08:59] BB: Okay, okay. This is so good. Okay.

[BREAK]

[00:09:05] 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]

[00:09:29] BB: Has there been a best subject line like ever that you've received lately that you love? Can you mention one, for example?

[00:09:37] **CC:** Yes, I can.

[00:09:38] **BB:** Pull one up, a live one.

[00:09:40] **CC:** Yes. There was one I got. It was caps lock AUGUST BEAUTY LAUNCH and then Tory Burch essence of dreams fragrance collection. That one –

[00:09:51] **BB:** Very clear.

[00:09:52] **CC:** Yeah. It's kind of – What it is, it's a launch. I mean, it's new. It's timely.

[00:09:56] **BB:** And a brand.

[00:09:57] **CC:** Yeah. So that like automatically gets my attention. If I'm looking for general newsy stories to whether I want to pitch my editors or if they're wanting me to include something timely in a roundup or a gift guide. Those are right to the point.

[00:10:14] **BB:** Okay, very helpful. Do you ever look at exclusives or embargoes?

[00:10:19] **CC:** I wouldn't say look at exclusives very much. Embargoes, yes. Normally, I go to it, just so I can see what's coming and if it could be a potential story. I think as a freelancer, it's a little hard to like say, "Oh, I could consider an exclusive or something under embargo," because that's normally going through like the magazine brand itself, versus me as a freelancer who pitches and gets assignments. I think it really varies based on the outlet.

[00:10:48] **BB:** Got you. What about for people who want to make relationships with you? I can see that being quite valuable because, oh, here's Casey, who writes for various outlets, that can really help with various clients. How do people reach out and make relationships with you, if at all?

[00:11:04] **CC:** I'm like a big advocate for like social media, especially Instagram.

[00:11:08] BB: Oh, Instagram. Okay.

[00:11:11] CC: A lot of journalists I know use Twitter. I have a Twitter. I'm not active on it as I should be. When I go through, it's like no journal requests and looking for sources that way. But on my Instagram, that's kind of more where I post about my personal life and what I'm doing and probably last minute call outs for sources that I need day of for quick turnarounds. I'll go there.

But also like getting familiar like with me, like liking my stories or like messaging me randomly, I find that very helpful. I'm not a writer who's like, "Don't DM me," or like, "Only email me." I don't know. I'm not that way. I'm open to –

[00:11:49] BB: You like it. Okay, okay. This is good to know. I like it. I rarely hear an Instagram person on here. So this is why we have the show to talk about all this stuff. All right, so find you on Instagram, like your stuff, start doing all that thing.

I have a little fill in the blank section here, Casey. So I'll tee you up with the phrase, and then we'll take it from here. Does that sound good?

[00:12:11] CC: Sure.

[00:12:12] BB: Okay. My favorite sources always –

[00:12:16] CC: Like a board certified doctor or dermatologist.

[00:12:20] BB: Something with Dr. and a DR in there.

[00:12:22] CC: Yes.

[00:12:23] BB: All right. You'll never get a response from me if –

[00:12:27] CC: You mess up my name or don't include it.

[00:12:29] BB: Really? It still happens? Don't include it. Oh, hi, blank.

[00:12:33] **CC:** No. Hi, insert name here.

[00:12:35] **BB:** That's the worst.

[00:12:36] **CC:** Hi, dude.

[00:12:37] **BB:** Hi, dude?

[00:12:38] **CC:** Yeah.

[00:12:39] **BB:** Oh, because they think – That happens to me because people think Beck is a male name. I just laugh at it. Okay. You can follow up with me if –

[00:12:47] **CC:** It's been between two and three days, and I haven't responded. I think after like that initial follow up, it's probably safe to say I'm either not interested or not working on anything, where your client could be a fit. I'll try to write back like, "Hey, sorry. It's not a fit right now, but I'll keep you in mind." But I can't do that for everyone. But I think if it's of interest, you'll hear from me. That's kind of like my –

[00:13:13] **BB:** Okay. I like it. The appropriate amount of time for story is –

[00:13:19] **CC:** Like for me to write it or –

[00:13:20] **BB:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:13:22] **CC:** I think it depends on the length of the story. I'd say I have like maybe three to four-day like stretches for my story. It's also same-day turnarounds that I do for like People and InStyle. More commerce like quick Amazon –

[00:13:35] **BB:** Yeah, quick, quick, quick.

[00:13:37] CC: But it depends on like the type of piece because if it's a feature or a gift guide, it's going to be a little more lengthy and time consuming.

[00:13:43] BB: Very true. Okay. My favorite stories to write are –

[00:13:48] CC: Commerce beauty stories. I love beauty. I love shopping, and then meshing it through together. Then I also love Disney, so like Disney travel stories.

[00:13:57] BB: Oh, okay. I was just talking this weekend with two people in their 30s, and they were talking about how they're going to go there for their birthday. One person was saying that their favorite ice cream on the planet is served at Disneyland, a very specific stall with the vanilla ice cream. Then the other one, the girlfriend, was like, "Oh, my God. But I got to go to California Adventure for this corndog." I'm like, "Where in the world do you think about the corndog that you got to go to and get?" I found this just delightful and odd also, but kudos to Disney. Wow. I love that. Okay. That was great, Casey. Thanks for illuminating all that.

What stories? What other things do you read, listen to, absorb? We'll take TV shows, Netflix, movies. What do you got?

[00:14:46] CC: I watch a lot of Netflix. To be honest, I don't really watch a lot of TV at all. I think most of my consumption comes from the Internet, particularly YouTube. I watch a lot of short clips. Like a lot of people my age, my attention span is kind of decreasing. So short, to the point is kind of what I like.

I also like to consume like other writers of mine who write. I like to look at theirs. They have sub stacks where they post what they're working on, and that kind of inspires me to see like what I want to do, what I should be doing. I have a sub stack where I post about what I'm working on and that type of thing, which I was inspired to from my other friends who started there for mine.

But I think kind of going to each of the outlets, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and kind of just gathering everything kind of makes for like a well-rounded like vessel of ideas to potentially pitch and write about.

[00:15:43] **BB:** Okay. So we got a couple. Do you have a favorite show on Netflix, by the way?

[00:15:47] **CC:** Probably Schitt's Creek.

[00:15:49] **BB:** Ah, classic. I feel like it's a classic. It's a good comfort one too. You could really watch that quite a bit. Yeah. That reminds me. I got to do a rewatch on that. Okay, great. Is there anything you're doing outside of doing all this freelancing that you just love, like personally, hobbies? Are you a crocheting savant of some sort?

[00:16:07] **CC:** I wouldn't say a hobby. I like drag shows and drag queens. That kind of like side hobby.

[00:16:14] **BB:** Gotcha. So Drag Race, top viewers, watcher.

[00:16:17] **CC:** Yeah. I used to work at Disney when I was in college. I'm moving to Orlando next month but –

[00:16:26] **BB:** Oh, my gosh. From New York to Orlando to go to Disney or like be in the vicinity?

[00:16:33] **CC:** Yeah.

[00:16:34] **BB:** Wow. That's dedication. Is there a word, by the way, for like Disney fans?

[00:16:39] **CC:** Well, there's –

[00:16:39] **BB:** Do you all have a word?

[00:16:40] **CC:** Like they're called "Disney adults."

[00:16:43] **BB:** Yes. I have heard that. Yes. You're a Disney adult. Okay. Wow. Oh, that's fun. Okay, Disney adulting. That's one of your hobbies. Got it. Love it.

[00:16:52] CC: I actually like glitter and makeup and kind of the whole –

[00:16:55] BB: Glitter and makeup and drag and Disney. That's it. I love it. I love it. Okay, Casey, last question here for us. What do you believe the future of journalism looks like?

[00:17:06] CC: I can really only speak to my like expertise and knowledge as a commerce writer. I think commerce is the way of the industry right now. There's not really an editor or a site I've worked with that isn't doing affiliate links or anything like that, and it's only going to keep going up from there. I think there is some caution to expand when everyone can be a journalist nowadays with – They have their phone and their social media. So anyone could write a story or put out a picture that can go viral or tell a story.

[00:17:45] BB: It's true.

[00:17:46] CC: Finding journalists and online sources who are credible and have background and experience I think is something to be on the lookout for, when in this age anyone could be a journalist or a writer.

[00:17:59] BB: Very true. I think you're embracing that too with the freelance. Very optimistic. I like it. Casey, Casey Clark, thank you for being on here today, on our little OnePitch show with coffee. We're not drinking coffee, but we're still here. It's all good, and I just appreciate you so much.

[00:18:17] CC: Great. Thank you for having me. It was a blast.

[00:18:20] BB: And congrats on the upcoming move. So you can Disney adult hardcore.

[00:18:24] CC: Yes, definitely.

[00:18:26] BB: I love it. Thanks again.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:18:30] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Casey Clark, a freelance writer for Forbes. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on Apple Podcasts, 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]