

**EPISODE 133**

[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 who write about topics including technology, lifestyle and culture, health, science, consumer products, business news, and beauty and wellness. We discuss the types of stories they cover, their thoughts on exclusives and embargoes, their favorite pitches, 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 on Coffee with a Journalist, we're joined by Jacob Roach, a Senior Staff Writer from Digital Trends. Jacob covers gaming and computing devices for the publication. During the episode, Jacob talks about his preference for working with familiar sources, shares an example of a real pitch subject line that caught his attention, how you can best reach him to work together, and more. Let's hear from Jacob now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:11] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, here with you live. Not really live but live with Jacob, who I'll introduce in just a second. I have an agency named BAM that works with all venture-backed technology companies, and we pitch a lot of media and work with a lot of media. So a few years ago, I created this thing called OnePitch, which is why you're listening to this podcast, to help you get better relationships and pitches to the right journalists. That's why we made OnePitch, and that's why we made this show to really know our great journalist friends whom we have to work with, and we want to know how better to work with them.

So with that, today, Jacob Roach is here. He's the Senior Staff Writer of Computing at Digital Trends. If you're wondering what is computing even at Digital Trends mean, we will get into it. But, Jacob, welcome, first off.

**[00:02:00] JR:** Hey, yeah. Thanks for having me.

**[00:02:01] BB:** You got it and way to bring your – I know no one can see, but we did a little video portion before. You got like your souped-up mic on. You got your stuff. You are prepared, sir. So Jacob, before we get into the pitches in your inbox and all that stuff, for those who are maybe not as well in the know of Digital Trends, and now I'm asking this about every outlet we have on here, what can you describe is Digital Trends?

**[00:02:27] JR:** Digital Trends, I'd say, is a consumer technology website. Our kind of guiding motto is tech for the way you live, and that takes a lot of forms. But the idea is that we're not scared of being technical and getting into details and laying it all out there. But our focus is informing readers about technology or products that may enhance their lives, provide them enjoyable experiences, and just make living a little bit more fun.

**[00:02:56] BB:** I like that.

**[00:02:58] JR:** Yeah. We try and balance the technical stuff with the products that people actually care about and actually want to buy.

**[00:03:05] BB:** And you write specifically in a pretty nerdy vertical, I will say. Computing, gaming, all these great things, and that's a bit of your background. We'll talk about pitches as it relates to that in just a second. So if you're listening right now, and gaming is your thing, and you really are down with that, this is your guy. This is totally your guy. You probably even know Jacob already. So Jacob, how does your inbox look?

**[00:03:30] JR:** It's bad. I have a lot of stuff. I try and clear out things as quickly as I can, things that are just clearly not important to me or nothing that I would even come close to covering. But I have a lot of stuff that are either stories in progress or things I need to follow up on that needs further communication. So there's a lot.

**[00:03:53] BB:** What's the majority of pitches, if you had to say, or what percentage? What percentage? What is the percentage of pitches?

**[00:04:01] JR:** Percentage of pitches in my inbox. I'd say probably 40 to 50 percent of my inbox is pitches after I go through everything.

**[00:04:12] BB:** In noting which pitches you open, how do you go about deciding that? Do you slay the subject lines? Or are you just like, "Okay, that's a shitty subject line. Bye-bye." Or do you open every pitch? Do you file?

**[00:04:23] JR:** I technically open everything because I'm just scrolling down through Outlook, but there are a lot of keywords that I can pick up on if something is worth pursuing or not. So lately, a lot of crypto, Web3, that type of thing, getting a lot of pitches around that. That's something that Digital Trends doesn't really cover. For the vast majority of people, that's not impacting their life right now. Once it does, then we'll cover it. So if I can see crypto, Web3, or I'll get like a lot of pitches for like baby monitors of all things.

**[00:05:00] BB:** Doesn't exactly fit in with destiny too.

**[00:05:03] JR:** No. It sure doesn't.

**[00:05:05] BB:** So you open every single pitch. What's a good pitch to you, and what are the elements of a good pitch? We must know.

**[00:05:12] JR:** In general, I'd like to see a pitch from somebody that I already have a relationship with. There's definitely room for unsolicited pitches. But if it comes from a company or a contact that I've talked to in the past, that's good. The main thing I want to see out of pitch, though, is potential to go further. I generally approach stories, especially when I'm pitched by companies, a PR team that's launching a new product or something. I'm coming into that story with an assumption that there's an angle for that company to – They want to tell a certain story, and that's great.

But I also want to make sure that I contextualize that story. So I'm really looking for potential to expand outside of what is just in that email and bring in other sources, bring in additional context. That's what gets me excited.

**[00:06:00] BB:** Is it helpful then if you've seen a pitch, "Hey, Jacob. Here's additional sources I have for the story. Insert A, B, C expert."? Do you wish to see those listed or included?

**[00:06:12] JR:** Yeah. It's certainly helpful. I've gotten additional sources that way or just been pointed in different directions of research. That's helpful, for sure. But I think it comes back to what the story is that's being pitched because I can talk to three people. But if they're all telling me the exact same thing, it's not much of a story.

**[00:06:31] BB:** Jacob, when you think of the subject line – So I know you already said you open every email. So in a way, maybe the subject line doesn't matter so much. But for you, we're very big here on talking about like the essence of the subject line, how important the subject line could be. What is the best subject line, either ever or lately, that you have received, and then tell us why?

**[00:06:53] JR:** Yeah, sure. So I actually have two examples. I got one this morning, actually, that was really great. Maybe this is a little bit self-absorbed, but someone's subject line was just a headline for an article I wrote about six or seven months ago, and it's recycling isn't enough. Here's how to solve the e-waste crisis. So it was someone reaching out about some circular economy e-waste, this type of story, this type of pitch.

But at the very least, the subject line says, "Hey, I know what you cover. I read your story. I'm from this company or I'm representing this company, and I think that we could work together based off of what you've written in the past." So just a really quick way to be upfront that, "Hey, I care about writing the story. I'm not just like blasting the same email out a million people."

**[00:07:44] BB:** Yes, because you can't recycle that subject line.

**[00:07:48] JR:** Exactly. Yeah.

**[00:07:49] BB:** Did the subject line say like re the headline of your story? Tell us a little bit more, if you can.

**[00:07:56] JR:** No. It's the copy pasted headline.

[00:07:59] **BB:** Wow. Okay.

[00:08:00] **JR:** So at the very least, it was a good strategy to get me to open and consider the body of the email because I'm like, "Hey, I think I –"

[00:08:08] **BB:** I wrote that.

[00:08:08] **JR:** Yeah. I remember that one.

[00:08:11] **BB:** I haven't heard that before. That's pretty savvy. Okay. What's your next one?

[00:08:16] **JR:** Yeah. So the next one is – It's a very dry subject line. It's researchers discover a new hardware vulnerability in the Apple M1 chip. It's very, very dry headline, but I prefer that almost. This particular story was about MIT discovering this certain vulnerability that affected a lot of different processors and a lot of different chipsets, but they related it to Apple. They related it to the M1, which is a really important area of coverage for Digital Trends.

So yeah, I think that the kind of two elements are that it just gave me the news. It didn't try and make a USB dock sound like it's revolutionizing the world. It's just the straight news. It's closely related to the topics that we cover and something that our readers really care about.

[00:09:04] **BB:** We always love great examples of the subject lines that work and get you excited. So that's good.

[BREAK]

[00:09:11] **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 RESUMED]

**[00:09:35] BB:** Jacob, looking at your stuff, and I've poked around, I've read a few things, but do you ever take exclusives or embargoes?

**[00:09:42] JR:** Yeah. We take embargoes all the time for news and reviews. It's important for Digital Trends. I think over the past couple of years or so, we've been less inclined to take every embargo. Generally, when we're receiving something under embargo, I'm assuming that everybody else that writes in the same vertical that we do, they all have that exact same embargo, and we're all going to be publishing the same story at that time. So if there's a way to take that embargo outside of a press release or outside of a product review, and provide additional commentary or maybe publish after embargo and do additional testing, that's more enticing.

Exclusives are a little bit different. Exclusives are great if the product itself is already interesting. So just because something is exclusive doesn't mean that I will take it. But if it's a cool new monitor that has a crazy piece of technology or does something a little bit different than a lot of other monitors do, that's an exclusive we want to see.

**[00:10:48] BB:** Do you want to see exclusive, the word, in the headline or in the subject line?

**[00:10:52] JR:** No, no.

**[00:10:54] BB:** Oh, you don't need that. Okay. Okay.

**[00:10:55] JR:** Yeah. I don't think so. I think the vast majority of time when I see exclusive at the front of a subject line, it's for a baby monitor.

**[00:11:08] BB:** That's not good. That's really not good. God, I don't even know like exclusive launch of baby monitor. That'll let you know when your baby burps. I don't know. Like what's the exclusive of this?

**[00:11:18] JR:** I don't know if I actually have gotten an exclusive on a baby monitor, but it's exclusive and stuff that we just don't cover.

**[00:11:25] BB:** Now, hopefully, because of this show and this recording, Jacob, you never will. Let's hope that that happens. Fingers crossed.

**[00:11:30] JR:** Fingers crossed. Yeah.

**[00:11:31] BB:** Fingers crossed. Okay. Jacob, you mentioned earlier that, oh, I like to see pitches from people I know, people I've worked with. How do people go about making a relationship with you?

**[00:11:42] JR:** Just send me an email that's separate from pitch. Send me an email or give me a call. I'm available most times during the day. So someone reaching out and just asking like, "Hey, this is what I represent, or these are the stories that I want to run. How can we work together?" I'm always willing to have those conversations.

**[00:12:02] BB:** And you said phone call, phone call, old school phone call. How do people call you?

**[00:12:07] JR:** Yeah. I'm on the phone all the time.

**[00:12:10] BB:** Okay. So you welcome that?

**[00:12:12] JR:** Yeah.

**[00:12:12] BB:** Okay. Yeah. How does one get your phone number?

**[00:12:16] JR:** Through my email signature.

**[00:12:19] BB:** There you go. So you got to get to write back first. Okay. Okay. Noted for everybody. No, there's never been a time on this entire show of all the recordings that someone's like, "Yeah, call me at six." What? No, no, no.

**[00:12:31] JR:** Yeah. I'm not going to do that.

**[00:12:33] BB:** Yeah. No, no, no. Okay, very smart. This show is getting bigger and bigger. Jacob, let's do a little fill in the blank here. So I have some phrases, and then you can fill it in. Are you ready?

**[00:12:44] JR:** Yeah.

**[00:12:44] BB:** Okay. My favorite sources always –

**[00:12:48] JR:** My favorite sources always talk to me candidly.

**[00:12:54] BB:** Okay. You'll never get a response from me if –

**[00:12:59] JR:** You pitch me on something that is not related to technology or consumer technology.

**[00:13:09] BB:** You can follow up with me if –

**[00:13:11] JR:** You follow up with me if the last condition was satisfied, and I haven't gotten back to you within a week.

**[00:13:20] BB:** Okay. Oh, a week. Okay. That's pretty good. The appropriate amount of lead time for a story is –

**[00:13:26] JR:** I'd say two weeks at minimum.

**[00:13:28] BB:** Okay. My favorite stories to write are –

**[00:13:32] JR:** My favorite stories to write are ones that have further potential, where I can continue to drill into that topic for as long as I want or the story demands.



[00:13:45] **BB:** Oh, okay. So you want something that can go on and on and get follow up and follow up. Ooh, interesting. I thought you were going to say, “Oh, everything about Fortnite. That’s my jam. That’s all I want to talk about,” which maybe falls into the category. Just saying. No, probably not. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

Okay. Now, I’m very excited about this part, Jacob, because I have my suspicions of what you may read, which could be really cool Sci-Fi. But I don’t know. You tell me. What are you reading, listening to, watching? We’ll take HBO, podcast, Audibles? You got anything?

[00:14:17] **JR:** Sure. So I listen to a lot of gaming podcasts.

[00:14:22] **BB:** What’s your favorite? Do you have one?

[00:14:24] **JR:** Oh, yeah. I listen to Kinda Funny Games a lot.

[00:14:27] **BB:** Kinda Funny Games. Okay. Not familiar myself but okay. Good, good.

[00:14:32] **JR:** Yeah. I listen to them a lot. As far as what I’m watching, I just finished The Boys for the first time. I had never watched it on Amazon.

[00:14:44] **BB:** I never watched it either. Did you like it?

[00:14:46] **JR:** Oh, yeah. It is fantastic, and I kind of expected, oh, it’s satirical superheroes and it’s –

[00:14:53] **BB:** I see. That’s what I thought. It was kind of flat. No?

[00:14:57] **JR:** Yeah. That’s what I thought as well. But, no, there’s so much commentary. There’s – It’s just so smart. I love it. Yeah.

[00:15:07] **BB:** Oh, good. Okay. I hadn’t – I thought it was too bro-ish. Yeah, light. So okay. Okay. We will add it. That’s very good. Okay, anything else?

**[00:15:15] JR:** Nothing at the moment. I play a lot of Destiny. New stuff in Destiny just came out, so I've been playing Destiny a lot lately.

**[00:15:22] BB:** What do you love about Destiny? I can't say I'm a big gamer, so I'm not too familiar. But what is it about. Destiny 2?

**[00:15:29] JR:** Yes. Destiny 2.

**[00:15:31] BB:** People love it, though. It's –

**[00:15:32] JR:** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I love being able to play with friends, and I love the community that comes out of it. There's a lot of people I play with that I otherwise probably would have never met, and I've gone on vacations with –

**[00:15:49] BB:** So really a community?

**[00:15:51] JR:** Yeah, yeah. Definitely within the people I play with. You have to work together. You're not working against each other. So it definitely forms bonds.

**[00:16:01] BB:** I love that that's a form of community. I think that's so cool, and you have to – Exactly what you're saying. It's multiplayer, so you got to be in there, all fighting against the one villain or whatever objective you're doing. Fascinating. I love it. Okay, now totally unrelated. Well, maybe it is somehow related to this, but I'll just ask it anyway. What do you think the future of journalism is?

**[00:16:23] JR:** The future of journalism. The future of journalism right now is Twitter in a lot of ways. I mean, it's not really the future. It's been a significant part of journalism for so long. But more and more, I'm seeing what would previously be an SEO play or a listicle type thing. Those are being converted into Twitter threads or maybe even TikToks. So that kind of short form content, I think, is a big part of the future of journalism to disperse information as quickly as possible.

Then I think there's something on the other end as well. I think there's more of a deep dive technical view of journalism, if you can. There's outlets or YouTube channel, plus written. They do a little bit of both. But like Digital Foundry cover graphics and video games and performance and video games. It's such a specific thing, but they have a lot of depth there, and they have a big community that they've grown out of that.

So I think journalism pushes out of the middle, and you have really short form stuff that gets people interested in a lot of different topics. Then you have that more specialized, more niche coverage that can really go in depth and still a massive, a wide audience.

**[00:17:41] BB:** See, that's, I think, the niche, the focus going deep into certain topics. I'd have to say, like Digital Trends does go deep in a lot of these things, like nerd hardcore level. That is what's certain audiences are going to want, and there's definitely demand for that. So I'm optimistic for that niching, that focus.

Do we need 900 CNN, CNBCs that are breaking – No, I don't think there's an appetite for that. A dozen, two dozen maybe, and all that good stuff. But I think there's something certainly to like deeply owning a vertical and deeply going into the content and having the expertise that really great journalists are all about.

**[00:18:22] JR:** Yeah, 100%. I think that the function of journalism several decades ago was to just disperse information, to make sure that everybody knew information. But now, that is not a problem and hasn't been a problem for quite a while. So, yeah, the more original commentary, context, all of that, I think, is really important.

**[00:18:43] BB:** Very true. Well, Jacob, thank you so much for being on here today. It has been a joy. It's been so great. You know what? Frankly, I'm not going to see you on Destiny 2. I'm just going to let you know right now, you're not going to see me up in there. But I do love gaming as a thing. I look over there and go like, "Oh, that's rad. I love that people play it and have a good time." I love that you open every email. So I think that's good for every publicist listening and to know, but make sure you don't send baby monitors because we know them.

**[00:19:12] JR:** No baby monitors. That's right.

**[00:19:14] BB:** Please, please, everybody. Thank you so much, Jacob. Jacob from Digital Trends, talk to you soon. Hopefully, you'll get his phone number eventually.

**[00:19:23] JR:** All right. Thank you.

**[00:19:24] BB:** Thanks, Jacob.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:19:26] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Jacob Roach from Digital Trends. Make sure to subscribe for new episodes updates on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. And if you have a moment, please leave us a review on Apple Podcasts to share your thoughts about the show and today's guest.

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[END]