

EPISODE 137

[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 ranging from technology, to lifestyle and culture, health and science. 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 and look for the video page to learn more about our new video series, featuring journalists from the show.

Our guest joining us today on Coffee with a Journalist is Toby Bochan from CoinDesk. Toby is the Managing Editor of Learn, an educational content at CoinDesk. During the episode, Toby talks about how pitches help her learn what's happening in the crypto space, the plethora of NFT pitches landing in her inbox, her advice for pitching multiple journalists, exclusives, and more. Let's hear from Toby now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:11] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I hope you have some coffee. I'm Beck Bamberger. I got my coffee right here, thank goodness. It's going to be one of those days, so I'm glad I got my coffee. Hopefully, you're here because you're listening to a great journalist tell us everything about their preferences.

With us today, we have the Managing Editor of CoinDesk. All you crypto people out there, you're going to love this. Toby Bochan, she's here with us today, going to give us the download pretty much on all her preferences and pitches and inbox mayhem. Toby, welcome.

[00:01:45] TB: Thank you for having me, Beck. It's great to be here. I am looking forward to our conversation.

[00:01:49] BB: Yes. You also told me, Toby, even though you're a pretty big deal, this is your first podcast.

[00:01:55] TB: It is my first podcast, yeah.

[00:01:58] BB: You're doing great so far. I love it. Well, first off, for everybody's fundamental understanding, what would you describe CoinDesk is as an outlet?

[00:02:09] TB: Sure thing. So CoinDesk is a cryptocurrency digital asset media covering. So basically, think of this as the Wall Street Journal, but we're only talking about crypto and digital assets. That can include like NFTs, blockchain, Web3, the metaverse.

[00:02:27] BB: Policy.

[00:02:28] TB: Pretty broad. Yeah. Policy, regulation. We've got a lot of different angles, but at all it's going to relate back to cryptocurrency in some way.

[00:02:37] BB: The realm of crypto is now massive, so hence this now outlet just for crypto, and it's wide and vast. Great, great outlet if you want to learn anything soup to nuts on the crypto industry and so forth. How, Toby, does your inbox look these days?

[00:02:54] TB: Well, I've got it down to like today, I haven't had a lot of time to go through it. But I am like a person who likes to clean out my inbox. So I have 15 unread emails right now. But I also am a person who has the sort through, so I have the promotions. I **[inaudible 00:03:10]** Gmail. So I have the primary promotions. So I don't even count the promotions one in that.

[00:03:16] BB: Yes. Wait, wait. Wait, wait. Did you say 15 or 15 –

[00:03:20] TB: Yeah, 15. No, only 15 that are in the primary that I haven't read.

[00:03:24] BB: Oh, wow. I think you get the trophy for smallest inbox on this entire show.

[00:03:33] TB: But when you look at like that number next to the word inbox, which is just like all the unread stuff, it's 3,000 something because those ones do not get sorted out.

[00:03:43] BB: Okay, gotcha. Then for those 15 that are sitting in your inbox right now/the other inbox, are they a lot of pitches? Is it your reporters? Because you're editor, so that adds another layer of complexity. How would you describe it?

[00:03:58] TB: So we use Slack a lot for communication in the team. So that really cuts down on the inbox corner, and I love it. I'm a huge fan of Slack as a communication, and I use that also with the freelancers I use regularly. So I invite them into Slack conversations there, so yeah.

[00:04:14] BB: With the freelancer. Oh, smart, smart, smart.

[00:04:17] TB: I only do that with regular freelancers, but they are people I brought into that community. But you sort of have to like keep that gate a little bit closed for everybody. So it's a lot of still like communications. Once I've started a conversation with somebody externally, that's a lot of the things I have to reply to freelancers, who I don't have handed in drafts or asking questions about drafts handed in, communications around like stories that I may have said, "Oh, yeah. We're going to send somebody or we're going to cover," so people are following up on that. That's what's in.

Then meeting requests and stuff like that just end up in that box too. Yeah. But it's a lot of – Anytime I'm working on a larger project with a larger group at CoinDesk, usually there's stuff that ends up threading through there that – Because if they're not on the editorial team, like if I'm working with this product or the graphic designer, like that will often have to sort of end up in my inbox. Yeah.

But the promotions is where a lot of the pitches end up. But I do go through it. I just don't always mark it. So I do scan through every day and try to at least see what's come through, what people are pitching, and what sort of – That's also where newsletters a lot go. I do love to read newsletters, and I do love that Google is smart enough to know when I read a newsletter every day, and that goes, and then it sends it into my like primary **[inaudible 00:05:38]**.

[00:05:38] BB: Oh, I didn't know it did that. That's good to know. Okay. I like your utilization, one, of Slack, big time, including your freelancers and then the primary pattern recognizing that Gmail can do. Oh, that's good. So do you open all pitches, Toby?

[00:05:53] TB: No, I definitely don't. But I try to look at them, especially because – I'll tell you what. I only started working in cryptocurrency about a year ago now. So I still find pitches as a way to learn what's going on, and I do want to take the time to – If something catches my interest, I want to read what it's about what they're doing, and it helps me to gauge sort of what is happening because it's an incredibly noisy space. Some of it is – That's the only way I'll hear about it because that's sort of the blunt instrument that a lot of new projects are using or people are trying to get noticed.

Sometimes, I do find something interesting that just sort of piques my interest in those pitches. Then there are people who I work with. I look for names I know or people that I sort of know that they work with a company or a project that I have covered before. So I want to see what's new.

[00:06:46] BB: That's interesting. I haven't heard someone on here before at least say, “Oh, maybe that's not true. I'd have to fact check myself.” But like say, “Hey, I look at pitches to learn.”

[00:06:56] TB: Yeah. That is my overview. My two main topics at CoinDesk, I oversee all the education and Learn content. So I'm constantly learning and seeing what's out there. But I'm also overseeing a lot of our new Web3 content. Sort of as I spoke to before, metaverse, NFT, play-to-earn games or that kind of stuff. That's more new to me, and there's a ton of pitches, like the NFT. There's a new NFT thing I see every day.

So I'm still sort of using pitches to see like what are the common things that people are saying and what makes something really unique in the space. That is helpful for me to sort of just look at. I also get pitches that I just ignored because I've – Some pitches sort of follow you around wherever you go. I used to work in traditional finance. So I see a lot of –

[00:07:44] BB: Yeah. TD Ameritrade, for example. Yeah.

[00:07:45] TB: Yeah, exactly. Right. I was at TD Ameritrade for a couple of years. So I still sort of –

[00:07:49] BB: [inaudible 00:07:49].

[00:07:50] TB: Yeah, [inaudible 00:07:51]. So there's a bunch of things that have sort of followed me by however people follow me. I don't even know, like good for you.

[00:07:56] BB: But wait a second. Wait a second. They're emailing your CoinDesk email.

[00:08:00] TB: Yeah. I don't know, and I have spoken also at sort of traditional financings as crypto with a crypto bend. So like I was at a conference last May, which I guess is just this May. Everything moves so fast. But around aimed at advisors and wealth managers and CFP and stuff. So I got on a lot of lists through that, I think also, is probably the real story, although it seems some of them are familiar to me.

That's why I think that it's probably false that they followed me from TD Ameritrade. They probably picked me up from there. But those are not generally very relevant to how we're covering because I don't need to cover sort of general market moves or related specifically to crypto. I think not.

[BREAK]

[00:08:47] 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]

[00:09:11] BB: Do you Toby, hot topic, like exclusives or embargoes?

[00:09:16] TB: I do. I definitely put embargo or exclusive in front of it. It's more likely that I'll read it. I will tell you, one of the things that's interesting about how our inboxes work these days is I've had, even in my short time here, employees who have come and gone. Because I'm the managing editor of these departments, their emails filter into me. So sometimes, I'll see. If you're giving someone an exclusive, I'll sometimes see an exclusive come to me and somebody who used to work for me, and that is not great.

So if you're giving someone an exclusive and I guess we're still all at CoinDesk and they're trying to reach them, but it does sort of raise a red flag, like how exclusive is this offer.

[00:09:53] BB: Okay. Yeah. This is always like such a talking point. I don't know why because it should just be you just get the story. You just have it. So there's that.

[00:10:05] TB: When it really is exclusive, I am – I definitely do want to see like is it something that we want to cover, and what is the length of the exclusive? Like how long will we have it, and who else will be offered if we don't take it? Because, obviously I want to break stories and have that kind of credibility. Like that really is we want to be known as the people who have scooped an, so certainly important to us.

[00:10:29] BB: Yes. Okay. Good to know. Do you have any subject lines that you like absolutely love?

[00:10:35] TB: I like when people know that I do primarily focus on the Learn or Web3 stuff. So like they're sort of like if they are calling out like this is a new thing that's relevant to me, I mean, the words like exclusive, embargo are good, but like keep it simple. If there's somebody famous involved, I'm interested in that. People do click on – For instance, there's a project called Doodles. It's an NFT thing, and Raul announced this, the like new creative director. I'm like, "That's interesting." When big games get involved in crypto, that's still pretty newsworthy.

[00:11:07] BB: Yeah, it is. Yeah.

[00:11:09] TB: Celebrity stuff is certainly of interest, so yeah. Definitely call those out in the subject line.

[00:11:14] **BB:** Put the celebrity. Drop it in the line. But you then better be telling a real story or like really have it because I've heard people using subject lines that are not telling the truth. Then it's like a bait and switch, which really is a bad look. So we don't want any of that.

[00:11:28] **TB:** Exactly. So don't just throw celebrities' names in there because like Paris Hilton has done stuff with crypto and NFTs. [inaudible 00:11:35] actually involve your thing.

[00:11:39] **BB:** Yeah. Toby, before we get into our little fill-in-the-blank section, are you reading, watching, or listening to anything that you just love? I get all my book recommendations here.

[00:11:50] **TB:** I'm in a book club I've been in for 20 years. I'm a pretty big reader. I have my background way before journalism was as a creative writer. So I –

[00:11:57] **BB:** Wait, 20 year – Is it the same book club you've been in?

[00:12:03] **TB:** Yeah.

[00:12:03] **BB:** What?

[00:12:04] **TB:** I know. We've been – Yeah. It's actually over 21 years now because we started on September 11.

[00:12:09] **BB:** Is it the same people?

[00:12:11] **TB:** Some of us. There's four or five of us that have been the same four women.

[00:12:14] **BB:** What?

[00:12:15] **TB:** Yeah.

[00:12:16] **BB:** I love it. Do you meet in person? How do I be part of this?

[00:12:19] TB: We do meet in person. During the pandemic, we actually were open to Zoom people. So we had people who are not in New York, but we're all in New York and we meet up. We tried to meet up in person. During the pandemic, we definitely did a Zoom shift.

[00:12:31] BB: How often do y'all meet up?

[00:12:33] TB: We try to meet once a month, but the summer usually gets a little messy because everyone goes away and has busy weekends. But, yeah, we generally meet once a month.

[00:12:41] BB: I love this. But wait. What's a favorite book for the last maybe six months that you all like loved?

[00:12:48] TB: *Cloud Cuckoo Land*, which is by Anthony Doerr, who wrote *All the Light We Cannot See*.

[00:12:52] BB: Yes, yes, yes. I was there.

[00:12:54] TB: A classic and as a summer read, kind of like great like fast read. We read Marcy Dermansky's new book, which is called *Hurricane Girl*. Or actually, I don't think we read the book. Some of us did, but it wasn't an official pick. That was like some people like a summer reading thing. We're not going to meet, but everyone can read that book, and that was a just so much fun to read book.

[00:13:13] BB: Just a fun, beach reading, type of thing.

[00:13:16] TB: Yeah. But also just like not total fluff. Like it was interesting, also very readable. I read it in like a weekend.

[00:13:23] BB: Wow. Wow. Wow. This is a quote that says like, "It's one of the most wildly original writers that I've ever seen." Wow, this is from the author of *Nothing to See Here*. Oh, wow, wow, wow. Okay. See, that's why I love to ask this question. Wonderful.

Okay, Toby. We're a little pressed for time. So we'll see if we get to the fill in the blank. But let's see how this question goes. What do you think the future of journalism is, especially for you being in it as long as you have been?

[00:13:51] TB: I mean, I think the future of journalism is very much still evolving. But I do think that like a lot has changed, and most of the younger generations are getting their news like they've never read print newspapers. Those are not going to come in.

[00:14:08] BB: Yeah. I still read print, Wall Street Journal every day. I'm just throwing that out there.

[00:14:12] TB: Congratulations. That's amazing. I –

[00:14:14] BB: And New York Times, if any more. I'm like old school raised that way. So that's me.

[00:14:18] TB: Yeah. But like subscription things. But I think that the definition of where people get news is expanded like when I think of it. Everybody does still read like those sort of big tent pole like Wall Street Journal, New York Times. But like when you look at like some of my reading habits even, I was like looking at like sub stacks and subscription-based services. I think it's going to be a huge growth. Like that has been proven like if you have good content that's really relevant.

The Athletic's a great example of something that hired like really talented people who really spoke to the audience and really knew who they were speaking to, and made a successful business at a time when people were like, "Are people really going to pay for just sports?" The answer is yes. Sports fans really wanted to have that community and that knowledge. So really focusing on anything –

What CoinDesk is doing, like we're just talking about cryptocurrency. We're only going to focus on this. We're not going to spread out and do that sort of like Frankenstein site that's just like, "Oh, I couldn't clicks on this. So let's just do 7,000 stories on this." Not really core principle of our journalism and our mission. So I think the company's focus that way are going to see

success. While the companies that sort of just go after search traffic, that sort of just like spray and pray way, is not.

[00:15:34] BB: Yeah. Kind of spray and pray. It doesn't work for pitchers. It doesn't work for journalism. I think that's what we kind of get into, like deep, funneled, focused industry expertise, analysis, long – I think there's still a big opportunity for long form. I love a 3,000-word piece. Great. Took you seven months to write it, but I love it. Yeah.

[00:15:54] TB: 100%. Like also just looking at the right storytelling methods. So like podcasts and videos, wherever it is, like figuring out what's the right way.

[00:16:02] BB: What's the –

[00:16:03] TB: Yeah. And who you're speaking to. So like becoming more adaptable in that way. I think podcasts have done a really good job generally, actually, with that. I listen to a lot of podcasts while I run.

[00:16:12] BB: Yes. Yes. Oh, well, you run. Me too. Oh, I love it. Well, Toby, I know we are pressed for time. So I think we should end here on the relatively positive note of journalism continuing in deeply formatted focused expertise, of which you are definitely getting more and more in this crypto landscape. Thank you for being here. Way to knock out your first podcast.

[00:16:37] TB: Thank you so much, Beck. You made it amazingly easy. I really appreciate it.

[00:16:40] BB: Oh, you're so welcome. Toby Bochan, she's from CoinDesk, Managing Editor. Pitch in her inbox. She might actually read it because she only has like 15 emails that she hasn't read today. I did throw that in. We'll see what happens. We'll see what happens. Or maybe she'll eventually add you to Slack if you're pitching a story and you're a writer. Hey, how about that? You never know. Thank you, Toby.

[00:17:04] TB: Thank you so much, Beck.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:17:07] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Toby Bochan from CoinDesk. 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 even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]