

**EPISODE 144**

[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, science, and consumer products. 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.

This week on Coffee with a Journalist, we're talking to Erica Sloan. Erica is the Lifestyle Editor for Well+Good. She writes and edits articles about sleep, sex, astrology, travel, careers, financial wellness, and other elements of daily life that intersect with one's wellbeing. During the episode, Erica provides her top three recommendations for the perfect pitch, why funny subject lines don't grab her attention, her thoughts on embargoes and pitch lead time, and more. Let's hear from Erica now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:21] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. Today with us, live from Brooklyn, Erica Sloan. She's the Lifestyle Editor at Well+Good. If you're not familiar with Well+Good, we will talk about it extensively here. Erica, thank you for being with us today.

**[00:01:41] ES:** Thanks so much for having me.

**[00:01:43] BB:** Yes. Now, I like to start out for most people because we have more and more different outlets coming on here, even when they're the big ones, the Wall Street Journals or the New York Times of the world, still I like people to stay. Hey, here is what my outlet is about. So how would you describe Well+Good and then also the area that you oversee which is lifestyle?

**[00:02:04] ES:** Totally. Well+Good is a digital wellness publication and community. What we're doing is really helping inform and educate people on how they can live their most well lives and maximize their wellbeing in every sense of that word. So really, we're different because we cover everything that we do with that wellness lens. Within that, I am our Lifestyle Editor, and the lifestyle vertical is definitely a mushy mishmash of topics. It is wide. But essentially, I describe it as I cover everything that falls at the intersection of your daily life and lifestyle and your wellness or wellbeing.

What that really is is sleep, sex, relationships, even astrology. Wellness **[inaudible 00:02:59]**, career wellness, financial wellness are really the big buckets. I joke that this is a catch-all vertical for the topics that don't naturally follow into our other verticals, which are a little more specified like beauty and fitness, etc.

**[00:03:17] BB:** Oh, how fun because as wellness evolves, so then does all your coverage because tomorrow it could be mushroom facials. I don't know, all these things, all these things. Who even knows? Okay, Erica, your inbox, how is it in there?

**[00:03:33] ES:** It is a little wild. I would say that I fall somewhere in between the 50,000-plus unread craziness, which would totally send me spiraling, and an inbox zero, which is really what I aspired to but never have. So I would say I get around 250 to 300 emails a day, and the vast majority of those are from publicists.

**[00:04:02] BB:** Yeah.

**[00:04:03] ES:** Yeah. So currently, I have 209 in there, but this is because I did not clear this out last night or this morning. So that's my current number is 209.

**[00:04:17] BB:** Got it. It sounds like you don't hit the magical zero. But how do you then manage these? Do you file? Do you flag? What do you do?

**[00:04:27] ES:** 100%. I am a religious email filer. I have probably about 25, 30 folders that I file as many emails as I can I'd say. Keep my plain inbox around that 200 or 300 mark maximum. Then the other thousands of emails that are in my inbox have been opened and then filed into

one of these many folders. The reason I do that is because my coverage area is so broad that it would just be really difficult to keep track of the newness, the brands, the experts, the products across my areas of coverage, if I didn't have some sort of filing system. So it does help me keep things organized. I think this was a major boon of Gmail when I switched to my current job versus Outlook, which makes this incredibly hard to do. But I progressed.

**[00:05:27] BB:** It sounds like you do your own searching within your email.

**[00:05:30] ES:** Right. I am constantly searching within my email. Yes.

**[00:05:34] BB:** Everyone does that it seems. Well, well, not everyone. But many journalists do that, although I think you're at the next level, where you actually have flagging and some kind of organizational system in place.

**[00:05:45] ES:** I try. I try.

**[00:05:47] BB:** Aspirational sometimes, but still, but still. So what for you, Erica, is a good pitch?

**[00:05:54] ES:** Yeah. So I would break it down into having some clear, timely element, some news element or timely element for why this should be covered now, a clear wellness hook, so a reason why this needs to be Well+Good and should be me, and then a clear action item of some sort. So what is this one client that you are putting forward? Is it a product that's new? Is it a product you would like a review on? Is it a brand that you would like a profile on? Is it an expert whose insights you'd like included in a piece?

So a clear action item, this is something where, for me, I actually really prefer one client, one email, which I know is not necessarily what a lot of PR folks do. It's not necessarily the most efficient way. But for my filing system, it is so helpful to have an email centered around a singular client that I can then put in the right box.

**[00:06:58] BB:** That's a good insight. So I know, for example, there's quite a number of agencies that represent all types of stuff within the spectrum of wellness, or they're in hospitality. They have 17 hotels or whatever. So one at a time.

**[00:07:12] ES:** I love one a time. I understand sometimes that might not be so feasible. If it is, like you just said, I'm thinking travel, often hospitality. There's a ton. Occasionally, grouping them if they are related is fine. Or if there's a bunch of newness at once, I totally understand that that really does make sense on the PR side of things. So not religiously one client, one email, but it is helpful, especially if there's a lot to say about a particular client, like just use one email. Don't slide other things in there. It gets overkill pretty quickly.

**[00:07:47] BB:** Okay. Good insight with that. Do you have preferred subject lines?

**[00:07:54] ES:** Yeah. So I'm –

**[00:07:55] BB:** Do you have one handy by chance?

**[00:07:57] ES:** Yeah. I'm pretty boring on this.

**[00:07:59] BB:** Really?

**[00:08:00] ES:** I really – I don't necessarily need a subject line to be super funny or punny or witty. I think it's fun when they are but not necessarily going to get me to click more so than I would have. I think this is something that I would tell PR folks. Don't worry too much about making it a joke or making it a pun. I pulled a couple that really are so straightforward, but these are ones that I clicked on and used, so like experts available, a healthy approach to quiet quitting. I was like, “Oh, okay. Experts, healthy, wellness angle, quiet quitting. It's something that's in the news.”

Or file this, OB-GYN available for menopause stories. So menopause is a topic area that we've been covering a lot this year. It's something that was one of our trends for 2022. So this person knows that this is something we cover. They have addressed an expert source. They've told me to file it, which honestly, I'm going to file it. So I kind of giggled at that subject line. But basically, I think I am looking at so many things across so many subject areas that the mental energy to try to untangle a funny subject line is almost not really something I want to engage in versus a subject line that's super clear, straightforward, to the point.

**[00:09:24] BB:** Okay, straight forward. Do you have any subject lines currently that you're like, "Oh, I like that." Or it sounds like, Erica, since you're kind of ambivalent about how they are, do you open every email?

**[00:09:37] ES:** Yeah. Great question. I really do, which is why I'll go back to the subject line is not the end-all be-all, and maybe you'll get like a chuckle out of me from a subject line. But either way, I'm going to open it, and the reason why I mentioned clear straightforward is because then I already know what I'm getting when I open it, and I can quickly decide where this needs to be filed. It just reduces the amount of time between opening the email, knowing what it is, and filing it, which saves me time in my day versus the slight delay of having to untangle that headline, figure out what it is, laugh at it, find the relevant piece of information, and then file it.

I'm looking at my inbox right now, and I think it's helpful when I'm looking at a subject line that says study reveals. So study reveals the most popular house plant to have in your home. Not sure that that's something I would cover but –

**[00:10:33] BB:** That needed a study.

**[00:10:34] ES:** Yes. I love a study. I love a survey. I love an expert available, a news, things that are pretty straightforward like that.

**[00:10:44] BB:** Okay. Okay. This is good to know. Straightforward, you got to keep it to that. Do you ever want an exclusive?

**[00:10:52] ES:** Yeah. I think we occasionally do an exclusive. It's not the end-all be-all for our coverage, and it won't be necessarily problematic if we don't have it. I think this one really depends on the brand, the item being something that feels really squarely Well+Good feels really something that our voice is the most important voice to be talking about this item.

I'm thinking of an exclusive that I wrote on the opening of the ranch in Hudson Valley for next year, and that was announced. When I saw that, I was like, "Well, yes, wellness travel falls

within my wheelhouse. The ranch is a huge name in wellness travel, and this is an opening that feels like, 'Okay. Well+Good could grab that exclusive.'" But at the same time, we're not only taking newness if we can have an exclusive on it.

**[00:11:45] BB:** Got it. Okay. Rather similarly, embargoes, do you ever want that? Some people are like hard-nosed, but you tell me.

**[00:11:55] ES:** Yeah. I think if there's an embargo, we do our best to respect it, so totally open to that.

**[00:12:01] BB:** Okay. Open to an embargo. Now, how much time do you want, though, for an embargo or an exclusive?

**[00:12:06] ES:** Yeah.

**[00:12:07] BB:** Ideally.

**[00:12:08] ES:** Another thing that varies. I would say my average would be around, I'd say, comfortably a week ahead of time so that we can adjust our editorial calendar. I can speak to any relevant experts. Usually, a week allows enough time for that, maybe two weeks if it's a busy time, and that amount of time is available for that. But bleed time definitely varies. Sometimes, I'm writing something as quickly as that day or the next day. Sometimes, I am going back to it several weeks or even months later.

**[00:12:46] BB:** Okay, months later. Good to now for everybody.

[BREAK]

**[00:12:51] 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]

**[00:13:15] BB:** What, Erica, has you thinking about the stories you do? In other words, how do you get the inspirations for your stories? You have, for example, something on glamping. You have something here on are you being passive-aggressive? Are you – Do you have the people's snooze button things? The range is wide. So is there a way to work to get your stories or doing them up? Or are you using pitches to guide it? What's kind of the thoughts?

**[00:13:42] ES:** Yeah. It really is being observant. I know that that sounds like the classic. A good journalist is a good observer. But indeed, it really is. I am paying so much attention because the topic areas that I cover are squarely lifestyle things. They usually are coming up among my friends, in conversations on social media, and conversations in real life. I'm seeing it in the news. A lot of what we do at Well+Good is at day two or day three take, which just means we're aware of and following the news. But we're not necessarily breaking the news. We are looking at what is our wellness spin on a news topic that's happening right now.

An example of this is I worked on a piece about like the psychological impact of being displaced from your home during a hurricane. That did not come out when Hurricane Ian was actively in the news. It was about the next week. So not necessarily day to literally but essentially a secondary take on something in the news is often one way, but also just being aware of conversations that are ongoing on social media and sometimes in my inbox, though, I'm not usually picking up a pitch directly and running with it. But I am using those pitches if I've gotten so many pitches that revolve around a particular sleep trend, a particular travel trend that might influence the direction of a piece.

**[00:15:12] BB:** Sounds like you're maybe guided by pitches is what is bubbling up and what's occurring. But you're definitely not sitting here going like, “Oh, yeah. 50% of pitches are used for stories.”

**[00:15:23] ES:** No. I would say the biggest way I'm using pitches is, yeah, what you mentioned about being on top of trends and newness, but then also going back to those pitches for experts and products. When I am working on a story that we have ideated in house, then I'm going to be

looking for, okay, what's a product that supports this? What's a new launch? What's an expert that could be in this piece?

**[00:15:48] BB:** So speaking of the pitches and how they guide stories, we have someone here giving an audience ask. We have Mitch from ScanMyPhotos, and he is asking, “Do you accept pitches by posting topical stories on Twitter? And if so, what are your to-do and never to-do recommendations?” So I think Mitch is asking here like, “Are you following the zeitgeist on Twitter, and does that emerge into stories? And if so, if you've got a product maybe trending, do I talk to you about it, Erica? Do I send you a pitch?”

**[00:16:20] ES:** Yeah. I have to laugh a little bit, just because I'm so terrible at Twitter, specifically.

**[00:16:25] BB:** Me too, right. I don't exist there. Yeah.

**[00:16:29] ES:** I don't really exist there, to be perfectly honest. I try to check it occasionally. But social media in general, yes, I think TikTok, Instagram totally inspires stories, and we will occasionally reach out directly to a source from TikTok, a therapist who spoke to something on TikTok, a psychologist who made a comment on Instagram, an OB-GYN on Instagram. We will occasionally reach directly out to these folks. So there certainly is a role of social media in guiding stories.

**[00:17:07] BB:** I would imagine big time for your beat.

**[00:17:10] ES:** Totally.

**[00:17:11] BB:** Man, yes. Oh, gosh. I was just like, “Oh, God. What if you spend like hours on TikTok every day, just trying to like get the pulse of what's happening?” Anyway, we could talk about that further. Erica, if you're not on TikTok or any other social media platform, what are you reading, watching, consuming? We'll take anything, movies, VA set. What is it even called, VHS? I saw that this weekend at our house, and I was like, “Oh, my God. Wow. I don't even know how you consume that.” Anyway, yes, what do you got?

[00:17:43] **ES:** Yeah. I think that so much of my reading ends up being articles that also inspire my stories. I would say I know I love Vox, and I'm often on the goods. I think Rebecca Jennings was a guest on this podcast. I love her work. I'll call her out specifically because I think her coverage of Internet culture is so fun for me to read. So I'm actually often on Vox, in terms of consuming articles on the Internet. But in terms of books, I am part of a book club that we tend to read books created or written by magazine editors or writers, people from the journalism world. So one that I'm about to read is *A Hundred Other Girls*, which is –

[00:18:32] **BB:** Wait, wait. What was it? What was it? I'm going to Audible.

[00:18:35] **ES:** *A Hundred Other Girls*.

[00:18:37] **BB:** *A Hundred Other Girls*.

[00:18:39] **ES:** Yes. It's about actually the path of an early journalist, essentially, and it's by one Iman Hariri-Kia. So I'm excited about that, but I also read fiction occasionally. I read Andrea Bartz's *We Were Never Here*, which is a thriller [inaudible 00:18:58] novel. Highly recommend.

[00:19:01] **BB:** Great.

[00:19:02] **ES:** Yeah. Then TV-wise, I'm one of two sides, essentially. I'm either watching total garbage reality TV.

[00:19:14] **BB:** Okay. But seriously, what's your favorite? Tell us what it is.

[00:19:17] **ES:** Okay. So I am really into Love Is Blind right now and I will –

[00:19:24] **BB:** Isn't that on like season two, three? What season is that?

[00:19:28] **ES:** Three I want to say.

[00:19:29] **BB:** God.

**[00:19:31] ES:** I know.

**[00:19:31] BB:** The chaos continues, I guess.

**[00:19:33] ES:** It does. It does. In fact, it really inspires stories, occasionally. Love Is Blind, The Bachelor, Bachelorette, this entire space of TV. Then I'm also I'm kind of the opposite side, occasionally. If I'm ready to buckle down, I'm watching something like Ozark. I loved Mare of Easttown. I'm waiting for season four of Succession. These really petty types of shows that require you to focus, complete opposite.

**[00:20:01] BB:** Yes, yes. You want to watch like every detail and see it. I just saw Tar, the movie that has Cate Blanchett in it. Oh, my God. It's one of those films. It's a classic like Film Festival film, and I go to Sundance every year, where you need to watch every detail. There's so much in it, in every scene and thought – It's one of the things. You blink, you're going to miss it. It's like nope, if you saw that from the –

**[00:20:27] ES:** Yeah. I did not, mostly because I was scared But –

**[00:20:32] BB:** I highly recommend it. It's like popcorn scared, just kind of like, “Oh, okay. The alien does something to stuff people up for something.” Yeah, it's a fun time. It's a real fun time.

**[00:20:42] ES:** Awesome. Well, I've heard about Tar, so that is definitely on my list too.

**[00:20:46] BB:** Yes. But full absolute attention for that one required. Not Love Is Blind, blah, blah. But that's why there's quite the range, which is so good. Erica, what are you doing? You mentioned your friends, and you get ideas from them. What are you doing outside of work? Like any other hobbies you've got, besides your Love Is Blind watching?

**[00:21:09] ES:** Yes. I grew up in the arts world. I went to an arts high school for ballet, actually. So a lot of my current extracurriculars are within that space, so going to shows, going to see a dance performance, going to an art museum. I love kind of engaging with the arts.

**[00:21:29] BB:** I love it. Okay. Does that mean museum strolling? Does it mean like film festivals? Tell us a little bit more.

**[00:21:37] ES:** Yes. 100% museums, I feel like that's definitely one of my favorite activities for a Sunday afternoon. Then in terms of – I love a live performance, so I'm actually less of a – I've been less of a film festival person, though, I feel like I certainly would love a film festival if I ever decided to go. But I love a live performance, so like a play or a dance performance. That's one of my favorite things to do.

**[00:22:05] BB:** There's nothing like live. You're in Brooklyn, so the Brooklyn Museum. I went to last time, Brooklyn Museum of Art. Oh, my gosh. Stunning, huge.

**[00:22:14] ES:** So great and it's like a 20-minute walk from me. Yes.

**[00:22:15] BB:** Who would've known? Yes. Look at that. Well, Erica, on another topic perhaps, I don't know if it ties to art or what your interpretation will be, but what do you think the future of journalism is?

**[00:22:30] ES:** Yes. So I think there are two avenues that I see journalism going, and one of them is this explosion of commerce content. At Well+Good, we grew a commerce team only last year, shortly after I was hired. We brought on several commerce editors and writers, and this has been a huge growing area for us. So I think that commerce and shopping is evolving to be a very viable sector of "real journalism," whereas it was once partly dismissed as a side thing. I think that's really growing. I think within that same vein, SEO and the focus on creating content that really is what people are searching for and what people want to click right now, I think, is exploding.

But at the same time, on the flip side with the fall of magazines, which has been personally so troubling to me. I got my start in magazines. I love print journalism. With these basically continued collapse of magazines, I think that we are also really seeing digital sites, digitally native brands pop up with these awesome digital issues, digital cover stories, that kind of long form journalism that does blend months of deep reporting with personal voice and narrative.

That kind of thing that was perhaps once reserved for the magazine reader and that same level of depth and breadth being applied to digital journalism, which is exciting for me.

**[00:24:10] BB:** Evolving, ever evolving. Well, Erica, thank you for being here today, live from Your Brooklyn place, 20-minute walk from the fabulous Brooklyn Art Museum. Highly recommend.

**[00:24:24] ES:** Thank you so much.

**[00:24:26] BB:** You open every pitch. What a good thing to hear. But make it timely.

**[00:24:29] ES:** I really do. I promise.

**[00:24:31] BB:** But make it timely. Excellent. Well, thank you so much, Erica. It's been a joy having you here. Have a good rest of November because it just turned to November in this recording. Hooray, fall in New York. I love it.

**[00:24:44] ES:** Yes. Thank you so much.

**[00:24:46] BB:** You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:24:48] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Erica Sloan from Well+Good. 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 even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]