

EPISODE 162**[INTRODUCTION]**

[0:00:09] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious how OnePitch can help you find relevant journalists to pitch, including some of the guests on this podcast? Head to our website at onepitch.co to learn more. This week on the podcast, we sit down with Riddhi Kanetkar, a Junior Startups and VC Reporter at Insider. She is interested in covering emerging sectors, such as health tech, with a focus on women's health and mental health, as well as underrepresented founders and VCs in tech, company culture, labor rights, and the gig economy.

During the episode, Riddhi talks about riding behind the paywall, turnaround time for funding pieces, versus features, her thoughts on in-person meetups, and more. Let's hear from Riddhi now.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:04] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, and you're here, hopefully, to listen to journalists talk about what they like about pitches, what they don't like about pitches, and how you can make a better relationship with them. Hopefully, you're a publicist and a PR person who's looking to level up their game. That's what we do here.

Today with us, a reporting realm that is always fascinating and always moving, it's called startups and venture capital, which I know a lot about. Riddhi, this is very exciting. We have our junior startups and VC reporter from Insider here today, Riddhi Kanetkar is here, and we are so excited to have you.

[0:01:42] RK: Hi. Lovely to be on the podcast.

[0:01:45] BB: Yes. Where are you from, by the way, with that fabulous accent?

[0:01:49] RK: I am reporting live from London, so Insider's London Bureau.

[0:01:54] BB: Oh, it's fabulous. The London Bureau live. Oh, thank God for technology allowing us to do all this great stuff. Okay. It's been a wild time in venture, as you know. For those, before we get into that, how would you describe Insider for those who maybe are not as familiar?

[0:02:12] RK: Yeah, great question. Insider, or formerly known as Business Insider –

[0:02:15] BB: Yes, yes.

[0:02:17] RK: - it's basically a publication that covers everything from tech to lifestyle, and it's aimed at, I guess, a whole spectrum of people that are interested in business, finance, tech. I work on the business division, so a lot of our readership is founders, VCs, a lot of young people interested in tech, so people that really want to know the ins and outs of the tech industry, that's who we cater for.

[0:02:41] BB: Mm-hmm. Okay. I love Insider. I lot of people do. There's quite a number of journalists also there, so we've had a few on this show before. How is your inbox so far these days?

[0:02:54] RK: I'd say, my inbox is actually probably slightly better than my colleagues, because I didn't give up my email a lot.

[0:03:00] BB: Oh, smart. That's the best smart thing. Okay, go ahead. Keep going.

[0:03:05] RK: My pitch is actually, tends to be a bit more tailored, I think. Lately, tech has been so crazy that I'm getting a lot of one-size-fits-all pictures, and they've been quite **[inaudible 0:03:15]**, but just about SVB collapsing, crypto going crazy. Whenever the news cycle is crazy, so is my inbox. But working behind the paywall and writing subscriber-oriented stories. I don't actually cover a lot of news, so I have that time to cater to a lot of pictures that are slow and feature-space, which I really enjoy.

[0:03:36] BB: Is that your preferred, the ones that you like to do more in-depth, long reporting initiatives?

[0:03:44] RK: Yeah, definitely. I think one thing about our coverage is that we have our funding stories, which everyone knows the Insider Pitch Deck Funding Story. It's a classic.

[0:03:53] BB: Yes. It is a classic.

[0:03:56] RK: We can chat about that in a bit, but that requires a very specific pitch, which is obviously, very timely. But then, we also get a lot of pitches that are, about more broader abstract ideas, or concepts or themes. Those are always fun, because it introduces you to a new pocket of tech, or people you've never spoken to before from all sides of the world. I cover European tech mostly, but I've been speaking to a lot of US-based founders and VCs, and it gives you that time to really dive deeply into the tech and the story.

[0:04:26] BB: You prefer, what would ideally be the amount of time you have to do a story, for instance?

[0:04:34] RK: When it comes to new stories, it's great to get, if it's an embargoed pitch, it's great to get two to three days' notice in advance, just so we have enough time to reach out to the founders, get that interview, and write that story up. With the pitch deck, let's get the new stories, I'd say two to three days. If it's a feature, it tends to be quite evergreen, so we don't really have a time limit on that, and that's something that's more geared towards the long read style. Those stories tend to not really be as timely, so that's fine.

[0:05:06] BB: Okay. I know you have come prepared with some subject lines that you like.

[0:05:11] RK: Yes.

[0:05:12] BB: Maybe some that you don't like, which we can also cover. What do you have for us so far? I love when people are like, "I got some. I'm ready. Let's do it."

[0:05:20] RK: Yes, I've got some, and I've actually – you caught me at a great time, because recently I've had some amazing subject lines in my inbox.

[0:05:26] BB: Oh.

[0:05:27] RK: Yes.

[0:05:28] BB: Fabulous.

[0:05:29] RK: I'd say, to start off with, the best ones always have three key pieces of information listed in the subject line. If it's an exclusive, say it's an exclusive in the subject line. That will always catch attention. And the name of the company is always helpful, because sometimes I won't remember, and then just typing it in, it catches my attention, it makes everything easier. Lastly, the embargo date, if there is one. Again, that's super important. If I see that embargo is passed, I'm less likely to forward it to my editor. Yeah, those three pieces of information would make it more likely to get viewed.

[0:06:03] BB: Yes. I know you said you're not maybe inundated too bad, so yeah, because you've been very smart and selective in your email going places, but how do you manage your inbox?

[0:06:15] RK: It depends on the types of stories I do. For a lot of our list stories, I make folders. Recently, I did a list on mental health startups to watch. I'll make a folder and then all the emails pertaining to that will go in that folder. If I need them for future reference, I'll know exactly who to reach out to in that space. I have thematic folders in my inbox. I have mental health, pitch decks, wearable, women VC partners. I just have a roster of contacts at the ready.

[0:06:42] BB: That's nice. Okay. Great. You're using folders, you said?

[0:06:46] RK: Yes, folders in Google. Very archaic.

[0:06:51] BB: Wow. You need to go – Wow, in a drive? Your own Google Drive?

[0:06:55] RK: This is just email, not even my drive.

[0:06:58] BB: Oh, just in the email. You're just doing it with the labels and the folders. Okay, right, in the Gmail. Okay. Wow. Fascinating. Okay. That's very rare for us to hear that. This is good. Okay. Are there pet peeves you have so far from publicists?

[0:07:12] RK: Some of the biggest pet peeves are usually, when there's a lot of follow ups, but with very little attached. If I get a pitch that's about four sentences with not much information, I might ignore it by accident. But then the follow up has even less information, so it just takes up space in the inbox without offering much. I'd say, give a journalist enough information so that they're intrigued.

[0:07:35] BB: Okay.

[0:07:36] RK: Yup.

[0:07:37] BB: Then don't be sending the follow-up that's just not meaty. Yeah. Okay.

[0:07:40] RK: No.

[0:07:41] BB: Anything else? You sounded like you had more.

[0:07:43] RK: Yes. Just another thing is – I mean, this might differ from journalist to journalist, but because Insider and specifically, the startups and VC desk, we tend to have beats. Sometimes I get a lot of emails about things that I just either don't cover, or I've never covered. For example, off the bat, I don't really cover fintech, or crypto that intensively. I might do it as a one-off, but you can see from my profile that I don't, and my colleagues do. I think just reading up on a journalist profile before you pitch them, so it makes it easier. I will obviously forward it to my colleagues, but I'll be less likely to notice it if it's a beat that's way out of my remit.

[0:08:24] BB: Yeah. Oh, no. That's something distinct. Not everyone does that. You will forward if you see something for a different colleague, you'll ship it over to them?

[0:08:30] RK: Oh, definitely. Yeah. We always do that.

[0:08:33] BB: Okay. This is good to know. This goes back to the old, let's say, pet peeve of, "Oh, my gosh. Okay, I really want to get it in Insider. Let me email 27 reporters at Insider." It's like, don't do that, right?

[0:08:44] RK: No.

[MESSAGE]

[0:08:46] ANNOUNCER: Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch.

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Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:09:11] BB: How does the sharing process work there? Just so we all know.

[0:09:13] RK: I was speaking for the London tech desk, because that's how we operate. With our beats, we're not be exclusive. All of us cover stuff beyond what we've been assigned. I cover health tech, my colleague Tasman does climate tech and Callum, my colleague does FinTech. We can do stuff beyond that. Say, I get a FinTech pitch, or a climate pitch, I'll send it to Callum, or Tasman. Likewise, if they get a health pitch, they're likely to send it to me. We keep in mind if something's a better fit for the other, they'll send it to – we'll send it to each other.

[0:09:46] BB: Very good. Okay. Okay. This is good to know. Now, you mentioned earlier that you like exclusives noted right there in the subject line. How do you feel about embargos exclusives, etc.?

[0:09:59] RK: We love exclusives. I think all journalists love exclusives. That's definitely eye-catching in the subject line.

[0:10:05] BB: If it's a real one, of course.

[0:10:07] RK: Yes, definitely. For funding stories. We need a pitch deck, but we don't necessarily need an exclusive. This is a caveat.

[0:10:16] BB: Yes. Please describe this, because this is something Insider has specifically carved out, which I think is great.

[0:10:21] RK: Yes.

[0:10:21] BB: Go ahead.

[0:10:23] RK: Basically, for funding stories, if there's a funding round, we will most likely always cover it with a pitch deck, unless it's an extremely high-profile player. Yeah. We don't necessarily need the exclusive. It's great to have the pitch deck exclusively offered to us, but the story doesn't need to be exclusive. For feature stories, however, we want that exclusive angle, because we don't want three carbon copies of the same story in different publications. I'll actually read out a subject line, which –

[0:10:52] BB: Oh, yes please, please.

[0:10:54] RK: For a visual feature we did a few weeks ago. The subject line was, “Exclusive story.” Great start. “Leading Health Tech Proximity backed by SoftBank, Launches PX Lens, Set to Transform Surgery Safety, and Improve Surgical Training. Excellent images available.”

[0:11:09] BB: Excellent images available.

[0:11:12] RK: Yes.

[0:11:13] BB: Oh, God. What is that? Okay. Go ahead. Go ahead.

[0:11:15] RK: Extremely enticing. I love – that is a bit.

[0:11:17] BB: Yes. I was like, “Oh, yeah.” And? Okay. This was good.

[0:11:21] RK: This is amazing. I think this is one of the best subject lines I've seen, because it immediately prefaced that they would offer the stories and exclusive, so that really caught my attention.

[0:11:30] BB: Yup, you got that.

[0:11:31] RK: Then it highlights what the startup is. It's in health tech and it's SoftBank backed, which is a big deal on the VC world.

[0:11:36] BB: Big deal.

[0:11:38] RK: Then, it also gave me an indication of the type of story it could be. I did a visual feature when they highlighted that image is available. Excellent images, might I add. Always a plus. Yeah, for something like this, that's more feature-based, exclusives all the way to go.

[0:11:52] BB: Excellent. Excellent. I think it's a good call out to note how distinct Insider is with those types of funding stories. It's not just the regular, they raise this amount and what it is. That is so good. Okay. Then anything more with embargoes that we should touch on? Time, preferences, etc., or you don't really want to touch those?

[0:12:14] RK: With embargoes, I think I mentioned earlier, we'd like to get about two to three days' notice if possible, at least. I know some people give us more, which is amazing. Thank you to everyone who does that. Two to three days is enough time for us to get in contact with the founders, interview them for a funding story and also, just get all the necessary assets, like the pitch deck and the images. Embargoed stories, also, I mean, we can have embargoes for stuff like data reports as well, which again, two to three days would be great. It's enough time for us to relay any questions we may have. Also, pitching these types of stories, embargo stories

via email is always a good shout, because we have a record of the embargo and the conditions agreed to.

[0:12:56] BB: Yes. Exactly. You don't break the embargo, you don't do anything like that. Okay. Now, how does one make a relationship with you?

[0:13:05] RK: Great question. Because as a young journalist, I think this is something that I'm definitely learning about as I go along.

[0:13:11] BB: Yes. Thoughts, thoughts. Yeah.

[0:13:14] RK: My takeaway is that meeting in person has really helped, because – I mean, especially now that we've had a lot of restrictions lifted. I think a lot of young journalists have been taking advantage of the fact that we can meet up with PRs and comms people for lunches and coffees. I think it really helps to build an organic relationship outside of the remit of an email.

[0:13:36] BB: Mm-hmm. Very much so. You want to be asked for coffee, in a thing, in a lunch and maybe meet up.

[0:13:43] RK: Yes. It's always fun and it's always great, because then, I think you just know who the person is, what kind of vibe they have. I think the people I've met in person, I've then taken more of an initiative to check in on with. Another thing that's really important with relationship building is just checking in with people every so often, like every few months, "This is what I'm working on and this is the beat I'm covering," and letting PRs know from a journalist standpoint, what we're doing just to keep them in the loop.

[0:14:12] BB: Yeah. Keep you posted. Okay. We now have this little fun section that's a rapid-fire QA. I'm going to give you the question and you just give me the quick answer. Does that sound good?

[0:14:24] RK: Nice.

[0:14:25] **BB:** Okay. Let's do it. Let's do it. Video, or phone interview?

[0:14:28] **RK:** Phone.

[0:14:29] **BB:** Bullet points, or paragraphs?

[0:14:31] **RK:** Ooh. I like a good paragraph.

[0:14:33] **BB:** Good paragraph. Images attached, or Dropbox file?

[0:14:38] **RK:** Oh, images attached always for me.

[0:14:40] **BB:** Pitches in the morning, or the night or who cares?

[0:14:43] **RK:** Morning for me.

[0:14:44] **BB:** Morning for you. Morning for you, by the way, which is London time, so people got to know. Yes. Okay. Email or Twitter DM?

[0:14:51] **RK:** Definitely email.

[0:14:53] **BB:** One follow-up, or multiple?

[0:14:54] **RK:** I would cap at two follow-ups.

[0:14:57] **BB:** Two. Done. Direct, or creative subject lines? I know we talked about it a little bit. A little bit.

[0:15:03] **RK:** Direct for news. Creative for features.

[0:15:06] **BB:** Press release or media kit?

[0:15:08] **RK:** Press release always.

[0:15:09] **BB:** Always. Got you. Very confident in those answers.

[0:15:13] **RK:** Yes.

[0:15:14] **BB:** Riddhi, I like it. Is there anything we can promote, celebrate, tout for you? Because this is your time to shine here.

[0:15:22] **RK:** Yeah, of course.

[0:15:23] **BB:** Yeah. What you got?

[0:15:24] **RK:** Firstly, I think I mentioned, but I cover health tech along with startups and VC trends in general. If you have a cool story, cool data, or just cool people.

[0:15:35] **BB:** Cool people.

[0:15:36] **RK:** I can speak to, then hit me up.

[0:15:38] **BB:** Hit you up. Yes.

[0:15:41] **RK:** My inbox is open for you. That's an open invite. Yeah, hit my inbox if you have a personal story.

[0:15:49] **BB:** Do you know how rare it is for us to hear this on this show? Hit me up. I'm here. Send me something. Oh, it's very, very rare. Oh, boy. I hope you get ready.

[0:15:58] **RK:** She says, with one year's experience.

[0:16:01] **BB:** It's going to be a lot. It's going to be good though. Okay. Oh, Riddha, thank you so much for being on our little podcast here. We have so much fun. If you're going to London, everybody, invite her to coffee, or tea. Is tea, or tea, coffee, anything?

[0:16:15] RK: I'm a coffee girl.

[0:16:17] BB: Coffee.

[0:16:18] RK: I'm actually a matcha girl.

[0:16:20] BB: Oh, okay. Even better. Even better. Noted. Noted. Riddha, thank you so, so much for being on Coffee with a Journalist.

[0:16:28] RK: Thank you for your time. Also, sorry. I forgot to mention one thing that maybe you could add on later on. Yeah, the thing about being in London is really important, because we often get emails after 5 p.m. our time here, which a lot of us just do not check. London time, if you're in the US, schedule an email for London time.

[0:16:47] BB: Yes. Schedule the – everyone can schedule a damn email. Schedule the damn email. Yes. Good point.

[0:16:52] RK: Just some housekeeping. Yeah, that's it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:16:56] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Riddhi Kanetkar at Insider. For more exclusive insights about the journalists on this podcast, subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter at onepitch.co/podcast. We'll see you next week with even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]