

**EPISODE 170**

[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](https://onepitch.co) to learn more.

Our guest today on Coffee with a Journalist is Jillian Wilson, the wellness reporter at HuffPost. She's written for the Philadelphia Inquirer, previously with HuffPost, and even had a brief stint as an intern for a PR agency. During the episode, Jillian talks about searching her inbox for past pitches, why she enjoys virtual coffee meetings with sources, how you can format subject lines like a headline, and more. Let's hear from Jillian now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:01:00] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. Hopefully, you want to hear from a journalist because that's what we feature and do here on our little Coffee with a Journalists, and sometimes we have a fun time. I'm Beck Bamberger, I run BAM and also, I'm a co-founder of OnePitch. I talk a lot on here with fabulous journalists such as Jillian Wilson, who's the wellness reporter at HuffPost. Jillian, welcome, live from Philadelphia. How's it going?

**[0:01:27] JW:** Going well. How are you? Thanks for having me.

**[0:01:30] BB:** I'm good. I didn't get to say this, but I'm at a conference. I'm in Mexico City. The Wi-Fi wanted to be desirable more, but that's okay. We are here. You're in Philadelphia. This is the blessing of Internet and all the great things, so I'm good. And I had a lot of tacos last night, so I'm very happy with that. Yes.

**[0:01:48] JW:** Nice.

**[0:01:49] BB:** But let's get into it, Jillian on your expertise, and what you specific post. Wellness includes a lot. How would you define your beat?

**[0:02:00] JW:** Yes. Wellness does include a lot. I focus on both physical health and mental health, which is of course a large scope. But it's fun because I get to learn and research all different topics, everything from fitness, to sleep tips, to COVID explainers. So a whole bunch of things. Yes, it's just a lot of fun. I'm on the life desk too. So the wellness stories I do will be really helpful for people, really give them action steps. At times, I also get to do other life stories like things around beauty and food, because really, that's all wellness too. Wellness is everything.

**[0:02:38] BB:** That is. You just did a piece on nine things hairstylist should say you should never do to your hair. Oh, do you want to give us a preview? What's one of those things?

**[0:02:49] JW:** The one that really blew my mind was one of the stylists said, you should be applying conditioner starting at the roots of your hair not at the top of your head.

**[0:02:58] BB:** Hmm. Why is that? Because it gets oily at the top?

**[0:03:01] JW:** Yes, like the top already has that oil. It already has that production. The root is where it's dry, and where it needs that extra help.

**[0:03:09] BB:** Mm-hmm. I encourage everyone to take a look at some of your wide-ranging stuff because you have autism on here, you have a piece I'm like, "Oh, I need to read this." That's why you shrink as you get older. It's quite comprehensive, so that's good. Given the wide berth of what you do, are you getting pitches like crazy?

**[0:03:28] JW:** Oh, yes, yes, yes. Lots of pitches every day, lots of emails in my inbox.

**[0:03:35] BB:** How do you organize them?

**[0:03:37] JW:** I wish I had a really clean system. I think that's something I should do. It should be like a mid-year resolution. I do have some like rule setup, so certain keywords will come to the top of my inbox, things that our readers are really interested in. But honestly, it's just kind of messy, and maybe I will fix that this year.

**[0:03:57] BB:** Do you always keep every pitch and email?

**[0:04:00] JW:** Do I always keep it like do I delete them?

**[0:04:02] BB:** Yes. Are you a big mass delete or do you let them ride in terms of you might refer to them months from then or now?

**[0:04:08] JW:** Yes, I let them ride. Yes, because it's good for me to be able to search in my inbox. Well, if I get a new story assigned, there might be a pitch from three or four months ago that's relevant for this topic, so I really am not a deleter.

**[0:04:23] BB:** Few people are, I'm discovering. I do want to get in a little bit more than how do you search your inbox? Many journalists do this. They save pitches for months on end. When you're like, "Oh, okay, now I have something with hairstylist." Are you just searching hair stylists in your search field? Or how do you actually go about finding the relevant pitch that was from months ago?

**[0:04:45] JW:** Yes, I will search the keyword in that Gmail search box, and I'll filter through and see what comes up. If I see a name I recognize, I feel like my eye often goes there. So if it's someone who I email a lot from a particular brand, or college, or medical school, whatever it is, my eye tends to go there. But I also do really just search the keyword I need, and I look through the emails and see what pitches are relevant, and if anyone could be useful for the story.

**[0:05:13] BB:** Hmm, this is good to know. I almost have wanted to tell people in their pitches, "Include at the bottom, let's say, of your pitch, key words." Kind of like they do in academia, keywords, mental health, autism, academic research, so you can easily find it. But that's my own bias tip, but I don't know if it would actually work. But given how people search like you do so commonly, I think it would be valuable.

**[0:05:37] JW:** Yes, I think that's a really good idea.

**[0:05:38] BB:** But it seems like you're already finding your pitches anyway. So it's not like a need it would just maybe come up higher in the Google search? I don't know. I don't know, Jillian. This is the longer conversation for us to perhaps have. But tell me this for people who maybe you don't live in Philadelphia, of course, but they want to know you or meet you? How do they build a relationship with you?

**[0:06:01] JW:** Yes, so I love having relationships with the PR people I work with. I think it's so valuable for both of us, and I realized that everyone works hard in their job, and everyone deserves that attention. So I love having relationships with people I work with. I've had virtual coffees with people in cities, in LA, in New York when I am not able to meet them face to face. I have also had coffees with people in person in Philadelphia, for those who live in the area. But I really like virtual coffee, is just like sitting down with my coffee or tea, and talking about the beat I cover, and then they share information on their clients, and I find that really helpful. I'm also open to just email introductions as well, obviously, not everyone has time for virtual coffees. I'm open as well to just these introductory emails where they list out their clients and maybe areas where we can work together.

**[0:06:51] BB:** Oh, is that just the best way you'd suggest, "Hey, I like to have a virtual coffee with you. Here are my clients, A, B, C, D, and E"?

**[0:06:58] JW:** Yes. Honestly, yes, you could say that. Or you could even just say I have clients in the health and wellness space, I would love to talk to you more about them. Let's have a virtual coffee. So even if you don't list every single client in your email, that's okay. I'm open to that personally.

**[0:07:14] BB:** Okay. Oh, good to know. This is good, juicy stuff. Is there subject lines that stand out to you? Are there subject lines that stand out to you?

**[0:07:23] JW:** Yes. I very much like things that are to the point.

**[0:07:26] BB:** Tell us, tell us. Okay, to the point. No fluff?

**[0:07:29] JW:** Yes.

**[0:07:30] BB:** No, Dazzle?

**[0:07:31] JW:** No. Obviously, no. I appreciate the creativity, but not for this. I love subject lines that are simply expert source in inclusive fitness, expert sources for beauty story, source in nutrition. It's like, that's it. That actually probably is what helps those emails come to the top of my inbox when I do search.

**[0:07:53] BB:** Exactly, because then you're seeing that.

[BREAK]

**[0:07:58] 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 CONTINUES]

**[0:08:22] BB:** So you want to see and also, you were just giving great example expert in insert industry. But do you want to see also expert comma Dr. So and So PhD, whatever in inclusive fitness? Do you want the name drop also in the subject line ideally Or does that even matter?

**[0:08:40] JW:** That honestly doesn't matter to me.

**[0:08:41] BB:** Okay.

**[0:08:41] JW:** Yes. Unless they were like a huge celebrity.

**[0:08:44] BB:** Huge name, yes.

**[0:08:46] JW:** Yes, even then –

**[0:08:47] BB:** Otherwise, who cares.

**[0:08:48] JW:** Yes. Even then, it's not like I'm exclusively interviewing celebrities, or like, it's not always even a draw for me. For me, that's not necessary. Actually, I have another subject line, I'm looking at my inbox.

**[0:08:59] BB:** Oh, yes. Tell us.

**[0:09:00] JW:** Yes, a little more creative. So for those who want to be a little more fun with it, this one was Mental Health Month: Doing This Before Bed Helps Decrease Stress. I love this subject line, I honestly clicked right into the email because it reads like a HuffPost headline, which is great. Already envision how this would read on our site. It grabs my eye, and there is that knowledge gap. I'm curious to click in and read what this that they're referencing is. This is also something we do with our headlines and other publications do too, and we all do this for a reason. These are clicky, these are interesting. While this tactic works for headlines, it certainly also works for subject lines too.

**BB:** Yes, I think this is an underrated pitch element or tactic. The subject line, like the article would appear.

**[0:09:58] JW:** Yes, and tailor it per publication, like HuffPost headlines are different than New York Times headlines, and like kind of changing a bit. So it's relevant for whatever journalist is opening the email. Because yes, if I can envision this article already on HuffPost, I'm going to be more inclined to read it and more inclined to reach out for more information.

**[0:10:18] BB:** Mm-hmm. Oh, that's a hot tip. I like it. Do you ever take exclusives or embargoes, Jillian?

**[0:10:26] JW:** Yes. Honestly, not super often. But I think they can be really great. I will say, I do receive a lot of emails where the subject line has embargo or exclusive in it. Sometimes the information doesn't feel super newsy or super important. Which can mean, I sometimes glaze over the word, which I think yes, just shows it's really important to only use this when it's big news or something that's really relevant to what I write about, not just something little that isn't that exciting. Like it's not going to make me click if it's not exciting. For me, valuable embargoes have been around medical studies, or interesting fitness product launches that can be used for future news around a specific workout that's about to be buzzy because of this product launch. So for me, these exclusive need to be pretty big to warrant embargo or exclusive in the headline, personally.

**[0:11:25] BB:** There's a lot of misuse of both we have found in the many times on the show, so thank you for clarifying that. That sounds good. Oh, Jillian, I have a rapid-fire little question bank here for you. Would you like to play?

**[0:11:40] JW:** Oh, yes.

**[0:11:40] BB:** Here we go. Video phone or in-person interview?

**[0:11:45] JW:** Phone.

**[0:11:46] BB:** What's your preference? Phone. And why is that?

**[0:11:49] JW:** I have a really good recording software on the phone I use, so it's easiest for me to transcribe after that. Also, being a remote employee, honestly, I'm not always looking my best, so phone is nice because –

**[0:12:06] BB:** Yes, real. I love it. Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch? Why or why not?

**[0:12:12] JW:** Bullet points? I think I mentioned earlier that for me, shorter is better, and like to the point. I think bullet points are part of that. It's easy to scan, easy to see what the point is of the email. I just think they're really valuable and useful, and they save time for the PR person too. You're not writing whole paragraphs.

**[0:12:31] BB:** Yes. Why not? I like it. What type of sources do you look for and how do you want them pitched to you? Rapid fire.

**[0:12:39] JW:** I look for experts in the field and I want them pitched in a way that really tells me what their expertise is from the beginning. I don't want to have to go through a long email to see what their expertise is. I want to know it from the top.

**[0:12:54] BB:** Know it from the top. Images attached or do you prefer a Dropbox zip file?

**[0:13:01] JW:** I prefer a zip file.

**[0:13:03] BB:** Okay. Why is that? Yes, I think Dropbox, I often run into password issues, like I need a password. So that just adds a whole other step. When you're on deadline, you often don't have time for that whole step. Then attached, I mean attached isn't bad, but attach would be my second choice. Zip file to me is just like, you can open it up, it's on your desktop, you can save it easily. You can have them to reference for however long you need them.

**[0:13:29] BB:** Mm-hmm, very good. Okay. Jillian, is there anything you want to promote, brag about, elevate in your brand overall. We just want to give a shout out to our wonderful journalists who don't get to talk about themselves often.

**[0:13:44] JW:** Yes, it's interesting. I feel like my reporting is about other topics, not me. I don't normally do this kind of thing. But I guess, I would just promote HuffPost as a website in general, in addition to specifically HuffPost Life, which is the desk I'm on. All of our articles are super service journalism forward, so they're answering the questions that you're probably asking in your head. As you mentioned, why am I shrinking? What is this new virus? All these different things that you probably are wondering. We even did one like, "Why does time go by faster as you get older?" Just answering these questions that we all have, but who are you going to ask that? That's what I do, and that's what my colleagues do. It's really fun.

**[0:14:28] BB:** Mm-hmm. Jillian, thank you so much for being here. This was fun, and a delight, and not on video. So we check the box on that.

**[0:14:38] JW:** Thank you so much for having me. This was so much fun. I hope you have a great time in Mexico City. I am jealous. I'm not going to lie, Philadelphia's great, but it is certainly not Mexico City.

**[0:14:48] BB:** Yes, man. I think I ate six tacos last night. I'm not going to lie. It was fabulous. Thank you. Thanks, Jillian.

**[0:14:56] JW:** Thank you so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:14:58] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode, featuring Jillian Wilson at HuffPost. For more exclusive insights about the journalists on this podcast, subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter at [onepitch.co/podcast](https://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]