

EPISODE 172

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:09] 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.

Today, we're joined by Glossy's Senior Reporter, Sara Spruch-Feiner. She spearheads Glossy Pop, a vertical about the intersection of beauty, fashion, and culture. She also writes the Glossy Pop newsletter which you can subscribe to at Glossy.co/pop. During the episode, Sara talks about her style of reporting and how it differs from the norm, how she prepares her newsletter for Friday's release, why authenticity in pitches is so important, and tons more. Let's hear from Sara now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:10] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, and we talk to journalists on this show about what they like, what they don't like, all their favorite publicist friends and maybe frenemies, all the good stuff there. We learn a lot on the show. Particularly, we got someone really fun for today because Glossy Pop is here. We've got Senior Reporter who is Sara Spruch-Feiner. She's here live with us, coming from where, Miss Sara? New York?

[00:01:40] SSF: Yes, yes. New York City.

[00:01:41] BB: Excellent, the best city in the world might I say. We're happy to have you here. How's it going?

[00:01:46] SSF: Good. Thanks for having me.

[00:01:48] BB: Yes, yes. Real quick, Sara, maybe people aren't as familiar, so we even like to ask all types of people. How would you describe Glossy Pop?

[00:01:57] SSF: Yes, of course. So for many people who know Glossy, Glossy is a trade publication that reports on the intersection of business and beauty or business and fashion. I joined the team over two years ago to sort of spearhead the launch of Pop, which is a vertical all about the intersections of culture and beauty and culture and fashion. Yes. So I have all sorts of little sayings that I've come up with to sort of explain it to people. But I sometimes call it business light.

It's still definitely more heavy reporting than your average consumer publication. Our story has serious interviews that are conducted over Zoom. We don't really do email interviews. It's a little serious reporting. We're still looking at marketing strategy. I report a lot on Gen Z and TikTok and how things are shifting for the next generation. It's not what I did, and it's not knocking it because I spent about eight years of my career doing this. But it's very different from traditional beauty reporting of like how to choose a vitamin C serum or retinol. Sometimes, I like to call it less stuffy than traditional business and less fluffy than –

[00:03:14] BB: Lip gloss brands.

[00:03:15] SSF: Yes.

[00:03:16] BB: Yes. Oh, I suggest everyone take a look because it is more in-depth and more – I don't want to say smarter, but it reads smarter, Sara, if I may. So I'm into it. I like it. Okay, how is your inbox, crazy, contained? What would you say?

[00:03:33] SSF: Oh, gosh. Yes. I really used to be an inbox zero girl, and it's gone. It's gone. I wish I could say I'd maintained it. But in this job where a really solid block of my time has to be spent focusing on deadline, and I am writing a story four days a week, and that story is going live the next day, that is the priority, not the emails. It's been hard. It's been an adjustment. I've definitely had people mad at me for –

[00:04:08] BB: Really?

[00:04:09] **SSF:** Yes, yes. You would be surprised. I mean like mad at me.

[00:04:12] **BB:** Publicists?

[00:04:13] **SSF:** Yes. And I'm –

[00:04:14] **BB:** What?

[00:04:16] **SSF:** Yes.

[00:04:17] **BB:** Oh, no.

[00:04:18] **SSF:** It was hard.

[00:04:19] **BB:** Unbecoming.

[00:04:21] **SSF:** I am definitely a people pleaser. I'm like I am doing my best. But it's not possible really to answer everything.

[00:04:30] **BB:** No. No, it's not.

[00:04:32] **SSF:** Yes. My coverage is really quite specific. So it is very surprising two years in like the amount of things where it is so obvious. I'm like, "What? That wouldn't never –"

[00:04:46] **BB:** No, no.

[00:04:47] **SSF:** I don't even have time to explain why that would not.

[00:04:52] **BB:** Yes. Okay. But can we go back real quick? How are people mad? Like they're mad at what? You ignored them, like you didn't answer. I just find that – well, people are trash. So there's that.

[00:05:06] SSF: You don't know. I did something recently where like I – and this was on me. Like I take responsibility, but I didn't get back to scheduling an interview because I just had so much else on –

[00:05:17] BB: You were married, yes.

[00:05:18] SSF: My plate. They were mad, and I was like, “You know, you could have just followed up again if it was that serious.” I don't know. That's like one option. Because like, I mean, that happened to me all the time where people don't respond, and I need to get something scheduled because I'm on – I write my newsletter on Thursdays, and it goes out on Friday the Glossy Pop newsletter. If people aren't – and I need to say let's do all those. That I could maybe squeeze in a final interview for the Pop newsletter on a Thursday morning.

If people aren't getting back to me, I will quite literally stalk them and be like, “If you are going to be a source in the newsletter, I need to interview you by Thursday morning. Can you do Tuesday morning? Can you do Tuesday afternoon?” If they don't get back to me, “Okay. If we're going to make this work, can you do Wednesday afternoon?” Like down to the minute. So I understand if someone has to ping me. I was surprised that they were like, “You didn't get back to me.” I'm like, “Okay. Well, you could have followed up. Sorry, I missed an email. I get 600 a day. I don't know what to say.”

[00:06:34] BB: Yes, yes. Just we need to practice grace. I think this is the perfect industry too on the publicity side is you must have grace or practice grace if you maybe don't naturally have it. So anyway, that's my comment on that. So 600 emails a day, Sara. Are those all pitches?

[00:06:54] SSF: I also – because I was freelance for a really long time, I do get emails to my Gmail, as well as my Glossy email. So I do keep an eye on two inboxes, which I guess now that I say it out loud, I'm like, “Oh, that's maybe not normal.” But I'm used to it. I'm like, “Oh.”

[00:07:15] BB: Nothing's normal in journalism I would say for everybody, so yes.

[00:07:18] SSF: Yes. I mean, I think the thing that like I really feel strongly about, and I say this as someone who anyone who knows me would say that I'm a very hard worker who very

passionate about my job and the vertical that I run. Especially being a one-woman team on the vertical that I run, like I take it very seriously. But I hold that with the knowledge that I report on the beauty and fashion industries and that they are not saving lives.

I'm the daughter of a psychologist, and my mom works at Planned Parenthood. My sister is a PhD in Psychology who before she started –

[00:08:00] BB: Oh, wow.

[00:08:01] SSF: Yes. Who before she started her PhD worked in suicide prevention research, and I just have a really, really acute understanding that at the end of the day, like – and I'm not a publicist. But it's PR, not the ER kind of thing.

[00:08:16] BB: Yes, yes.

[00:08:18] SSF: That's one thing I don't have patience from like guys. Like relax. It's the launch of a moisturizer or whatever. I think it's very important –

[00:08:29] BB: Yes, yes. Let's keep it in check. Yes. I work on crisis stuff for suicide prevention too, and I do stuff with the San Diego Police for death calls. We get called when people die. You think you're having a bad day, but you're not. You're not when you see what is relative to other people. So great point of perspective, Sara. Okay.

For all those dang emails you do get, and you don't hit the inbox zero, okay, we got that. Do you then value the subject line as a primer to what you open?

[00:09:05] SSF: Absolutely, absolutely. I think that if something is clear and it says exclusive or it tells me the brand that it's about or it tells me that it's a launch or that it's news, I would be lying if I didn't say that, of course, there's people that I have relationships with where, of course, I'm going to always open their emails and look at what they're telling me.

I also think at the same time, though, that like I'm also pretty agnostic. I'm looking at my inbox right now and –

[00:09:40] BB: Yes. How does it look?

[00:09:42] SSF: It's bad. But I see one that's a stat about an influence that I happen to be, and I'm not going to specify because I don't talk about my story ideas. But it happens to me. If I don't know the publicist, I don't know the source. I don't even know if it's 100% reputable. But the subject line mentions an influencer that I've been interested in writing about, so I already like –

[00:10:09] BB: Oh.

[00:10:10] SSF: Yes. So I already started, and that's just like a happy coincidence.

[00:10:16] BB: Yes. Sometimes, it is the timing and just magic. But what you're also mentioning here is it's specific and in the subject line. I've heard a lot of people say mention the person. Who is the person? Now, if you're not as familiar with the person, if it's a no-name person, okay. You say expert in cardiologists or cardiology.

But in your case, I would say that this publicist knew you, the audience that they intend to go. They know, "Oh, Sara's going to know this influencer. So let me drop a name in there." Just my thought.

[00:10:49] SSF: No, totally. I mention the person. I think for – again, like it is surprising how many pitches I get that seemed to pitch me. I do write traditional consumer stories. So even though it's surprising to me that I have to say this, like know who you're pitching. Know what they write about. Know that I write these sort of business light stories, that I write about influencer culture and social media and how brands are working within these new frameworks of new, whether it's TikTok or – we look at like when BeReal was really big last summer. Those are the things that I report on.

I definitely do look at things like exclusivity, like Glossy. We don't typically cover things if we're not going to cover it right at the time that it's launching. So, yes, like if it's an exclusive, like, yes, put that in the subject line. Tell me that kind of thing and make it so that I'm not digging in my inbox for it, for sure.

[00:11:57] BB: No one wants that. Yes.

[BREAK]

[00:12:01] ANNOUNCER: Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious to learn about the unique ways OnePitch helps brands engage with the right journalists? Head to onepitch.co and create your own custom media list in five minutes or less. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:12:24] BB: You mentioned in that other pitch, Sara, oh, you don't know the publicist. But the other ones you do know, you're going to open their emails. So if people do not have a relationship with you, what is one way or a few ways they can establish one?

[00:12:38] SSF: Oh, absolutely. I think like if it's not – and this is such a hard line to tell, and I appreciate that, and I don't want to sound like I'm saying like, “Do this but also like make it sound authentic.” I think if you can show that you've like actually read our stories and are familiar with the vertical, then that does go a long way. I think that sometimes, it's like I read. Sometimes, though, it can kind of backfire. If it's like, “I read the story on,” blah, blah, blah and you're just like it feels very like they literally just went to like your author page and picked the most recent story and like hyperlinked it.

Again, like I know that sounds kind of like double-edged sword. I think there does have to be some authenticity to it. I know that's hard. I really do appreciate that that's hard and that publicists are trying to keep up with a lot of different writers and their work. But, again, Pop and my vertical is so specific that for better or worse, I really can tell.

[00:13:39] BB: Yes, exactly.

[00:13:42] SSF: So I think it does kind of have to be authentic. But when it is, then, yes, I mean, that goes a long way of someone actually knowing what I cover and pitching accordingly.

[00:13:55] **BB**: Since you are in New York City, capital of the world, do you ever want to go to like a coffee, a walk, a happy hour, anything like that?

[00:14:02] **SSF**: Yes. So I definitely go to events. I go to a lot less than I used to 10 years ago.

[00:14:07] **BB**: Things have changed.

[00:14:08] **SSF**: Yes. I mean, I'm older. I'm –

[00:14:12] **BB**: What, 31? Oh, tragic.

[00:14:15] **SSF**: I'm 32.

[00:14:17] **BB**: See.

[00:14:19] **SSF**: In beauty, though, like a lot of the events are like –

[00:14:22] **BB**: I'm with you in that category, so yes.

[00:14:25] **SSF**: Yes. I think in beauty, it's like when I was 26, 27, I spent a lot of years going to five events a day, like really. Yes.

[00:14:35] **BB**: That kills. I'm sweating just thinking about that.

[00:14:39] **SSF**: Yes. So I have slowed it down a little. Anyone who knows me has heard me say this so many times over the past two years. I only go to events during the day on Wednesdays. I don't any other day.

[00:14:52] **BB**: Wednesdays in the day.

[00:14:55] **SSF**: Yes, because there's a lot of daytime events. But I actually do have to write. Then the beauty space is very, very –

[00:15:04] BB: I have a job.

[00:15:06] SSF: Yes. There is a severe misunderstanding of that. The beauty space is extremely event-heavy. I could still go to five events a day.

[00:15:19] BB: God, I don't know how you survived. I don't know. But looks like you have excellent boundaries now, Sara, which I applaud you for, and that's how you keep your sanity. So **[inaudible 00:15:29]** to you.

[00:15:30] SSF: When I was freelance, I was working often right through the weekend and really late at night. Many of my freelance friends are still doing that.

[00:15:39] BB: Gosh.

[00:15:40] SSF: So I think that – and I can't do that because, again, I am on deadline. So, yes, I will say to really actually answer your question, I don't have as much time as I wish I did, truly. Again, like I was just talking to a publicist that I've known for many years, and she was saying – before COVID, I used to work out of the wing. She was saying, “You did every desk side. I was at the wing with so many clients. You were so generous with your time.”

I was like I really prided myself on that, and I truly – I actually love meeting with founders. I love talking to people. But in my current job where I write four stories a week, that's not always possible. So I wouldn't necessarily say I can do like a ton of coffee dates or whatever every now and then, here and there. Like I said, I go to some events.

[00:16:35] BB: On Wednesdays. Yes.

[00:16:36] SSF: Yes. Or at night, on other nights, although, like I said, less than I used to. I think like a lot of things are done on email, and it's – if the story works for my vertical, it doesn't really matter if there's a relationship or not. If someone shows an understanding of my vertical, and their client is doing something that it's a fit, then great. That's enough, really.

[00:17:03] **BB:** That's a fit.

[00:17:04] **SSF:** Yes, a fit.

[00:17:05] **BB:** It's a fit.

[00:17:06] **SSF:** A fit is a fit, and a story is a story, so.

[00:17:08] **BB:** Yes. Sara, I have a quick little rapid-fire question session for you. Are you ready?

[00:17:15] **SSF:** Yes.

[00:17:15] **BB:** It's very quick. Here we go. Video, phone, or in-person interview?

[00:17:20] **SSF:** Video.

[00:17:21] **BB:** Why is that?

[00:17:22] **SSF:** Well, I think that I can't do in-person. I don't have time. I would be like literally running around the city all day. It's not realistic. But video I think I can connect with people and –

[00:17:35] **BB:** See their face.

[00:17:36] **SSF:** Yes. I mean, I tend to do three to four a day Zoom videos.

[00:17:41] **BB:** Look at that. Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch?

[00:17:44] **SSF:** Bullet points. Not enough people use bullet points.

[00:17:47] **BB:** I know. I love a damn bullet point list. What types of sources do you look for, and how do you want them pitched to you? Quick answer.

[00:17:56] SSF: I really find my own sources.

[00:17:59] BB: Well, there you go.

[00:18:00] SSF: Yes. It's not really people coming to me being like, "Here's a source for you," to be completely honest.

[00:18:08] BB: Images attached or Dropbox zip file?

[00:18:11] SSF: Attached.

[00:18:13] BB: Attached. Any why on that?

[00:18:16] SSF: I hate Dropbox, just personally.

[00:18:17] BB: Me too. Me too. I'm dealing with it right now. I'm like, "Wait, I got to log into this. Oh, I don't have enough –" Oh, no.

[00:18:23] SSF: **[inaudible 00:18:23]**. Then I'm like writing **[inaudible 00:18:27]** like the image is expired. It's a waste of both of our time. Oh, my God.

[00:18:31] BB: It is. It is.

[00:18:32] SSF: That is such a waste of time.

[00:18:33] BB: I'm on the same page with that. All right, last word, Sara. You have anything you want to promote, discuss, emphasize, talk about?

[00:18:43] SSF: Yes, yes.

[00:18:44] BB: What you got?

[00:18:45] **SSF:** Pop has so many exciting things going on. I mean, there's the Pop newsletter which you can sign up for at glossy.co/newsletters and then –

[00:18:53] **BB:** Yes, sign up.

[00:18:55] **SSF:** Once a month, starting only three months ago, the Glossy Beauty Podcast, there's a special Pop edition. So one –

[00:19:03] **BB:** Oh.

[00:19:04] **SSF:** Yes. So we've had Vanessa Hudgens, Molly Sims.

[00:19:07] **BB:** Hey, awesome names.

[00:19:10] **SSF:** Yes, yes. I'm recording the fourth episode today, actually.

[00:19:15] **BB:** Hey. Wow, look at you double podcasting today.

[00:19:19] **SSF:** Yes, double podcasting. Going from interviewee to interviewer, so yes.

[00:19:23] **BB:** There you go.

[00:19:24] **SSF:** Big exciting things happening at Glossy Pop.

[00:19:27] **BB:** Excellent. Everyone, sign up. Well, Sara, that concludes us for today. I know you had your 10-minute dinger thing popping up, so you got somewhere else to be. Thank you for being here. Pitch her some good stuff, everybody.

[00:19:41] **SSF:** I'm sorry about that sound.

[00:19:43] **BB:** And not middle-of-the-day events on Friday or Monday or Tuesday or Thursday.

[00:19:49] **SSF:** Yes, basically.

[00:19:52] BB: Thanks, Sara. Appreciate you.

[00:19:54] SSF: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:19:55] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode, featuring Sara Spruch-Feiner at Glossy. 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]