

**EPISODE 173**

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

Our guest today on Coffee with a Journalist is Kevin Dugan. He's a finance reporter for Intelligencer, a New York Magazine site covering news and analysis about politics, business and finance, technology, sports, and media. During the episode, Kevin talks about his change in priorities, going from a beat reporter to what he covers now, his lack of interest in crypto, how he resurfaces old pitches when the time is right, and more. Let's hear from Kevin now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:00] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Beck Bamberger, and this is Coffee with a Journalist, where we talk to really great journalists from all over the place, all different outlets. Hopefully, you're a publicist wanting to know about what journalists like because that's what we do here. Today with us, ooh, finance reporter from New York Magazine. Kevin Dugan is here with us. Welcome, Kevin.

**[00:01:22] KD:** Thank you. Thank you so much for having me.

**[00:01:24] BB:** Yes. Are you drinking coffee right now since it's morning time-ish?

**[00:01:28] KD:** Well, I'm the East Coast right now. So I'd had my fill of coffee for the day. But spiritually, I'm drinking some coffee.

**[00:01:33] BB:** Spiritually. I like it. Okay, that sounds good. Kevin, for those who maybe aren't as familiar, and I have people do this more and more often, even for the biggest outlets that are

out there, how would you describe New York Magazine and then specifically what you are covering?

**[00:01:48] KD:** Sure. I think New York Magazine is, for people who don't know, it's been around for decades. It was founded by Tom Wolfe. We are very invested in telling really great stories around people and personalities not only just in New York but around the world and how they affect everything from the way that we see celebrities to the rich and powerful and what they're up to and why we should care about them.

What I do is I focus on people with power and money in the world of finance, in the world of economics, even in crypto, and the ways that they are affecting our daily lives. These are people who do everything from build the buildings in New York City to create and then collapse the giant cryptocurrencies that probably we maybe are investing in. So it's a wide world, and it's kind of fun. Yes, those are the kind of stories that I'm interested.

**[00:02:56] BB:** Yes. Oh, my. I was going to say, like do you find it enthralling or exhausting?

**[00:03:02] KD:** Oh, it can be both.

**[00:03:03] BB:** Yes, probably the same day.

**[00:03:05] KD:** Yes, yes. There are amazing characters out there, people like Sam Bankman-Fried.

**[00:03:10] BB:** Oh, what a time.

**[00:03:13] KD:** Right. There are as well as people who are kind of stalwarts like Jamie Dimon who are just endlessly fascinating people. What they do and what they say has a tremendous amount of influence on the rest of the world, and that is what makes them so interesting. So it can be a little head-spinning when you're covering someone like Elon Musk, and he is in the news.

**[00:03:38] BB:** God, yes.

**[00:03:41] KD:** That can be like, “What is he doing now?” Then you're just kinda, just kind of rolls across your eyes. You're like, “Okay.” Or like, “All right, let me kind of figure that out into the entire mosaic of who Elon Musk is or what he is.” So it can be a little bit of both. But I mean, in general, it's great. It's a great place to be. It's a great way to see the world.

**[00:04:04] BB:** Oh, I like that, a great way to see the world. This is fantastic. Speaking of seeing the world, I'm sure you get that from your inbox. So is your inbox pretty crazy, or what would you say?

**[00:04:15] KD:** My inbox has 12,800 –

**[00:04:19] BB:** No, Kevin.

**[00:04:22] KD:** I refuse to do inbox zero.

**[00:04:24] BB:** There's a very strong camp on both sides of this. So you're –

**[00:04:28] KD:** Too much work.

**[00:04:29] BB:** Okay. You can't do it.

**[00:04:30] KD:** It's too much work. I don't care about the number. The number doesn't bother me. I can live with a little red dot. It doesn't – whatever.

**[00:04:38] BB:** So you don't have any like angst around it? You're like, “Oh, it's 13, 000 a day. Whatever.”

**[00:04:43] KD:** Zero.

**[00:04:45] BB:** Wow.

**[00:04:45] KD:** Yes. It has no weight on anything that I do. Even my personal inbox has – let's see. Oh, that's much smaller; 1,544. But there are thousands upon thousands of emails in my promotions and updates tab that I just never look at and don't care about.

**[00:05:06] BB:** Wow, okay. So then what is your system, if any, to discerning what is important versus not important in your inbox?

**[00:05:15] KD:** Well, it usually does not start with what's in my inbox.

**[00:05:20] BB:** Okay.

**[00:05:21] KD:** The way that I – so I used to be a beat reporter, right?

**[00:05:25] BB:** Yes.

**[00:05:25] KD:** I used to be a beat reporter for most of my career. I started off working for industry newsletters. I worked at Bloomberg News, New York Post, The information. Those were areas where I would focus on like one thing or one topic, and I would report on incremental news as it went along. So my inbox was much more important to me then.

Right now, it is not really the case. I have more than a decade covering, essentially, this industry, right? I mean, finance. So I have people who I talk to. I have sources that I follow. My editors and I, we talk every morning about what to cover. Then we go from there. There will be occasions when something is important and someone does reach out to me. Typically, it is not so much with a story idea as with someone maybe notices what I'm covering and can offer up a good source for me.

**[00:06:32] BB:** Yes. Well, I was going to say, for your area of coverage, which is looking at the personalities and the high-flying personas of some characters, let's say, is anyone pitching you anything that you'd be interested in? Because I would think it's quite the opposite. You need some scoops. You need some inside information. No one should be pitching you.

**[00:06:57] KD:** Right.

**[00:07:00] BB:** Am I right? Am I right? Maybe that's the takeaway from this particular podcast. Don't pitch him. It's bad news if you do.

**[00:07:07] KD:** I mean, that's not entirely true. I mean, for instance, like I mean one area that I cover is economics, right? So I cover –

**[00:07:13] BB:** That's true.

**[00:07:14] KD:** A lot of what the Federal Reserve is doing. I cover problems with inflation, exactly. That have been, for instance, when certain economists or government figures are coming out with books. Or if they're joining law firms or something like that. It would be kind of an introduction email. That way, I can meet with somebody who already has a certain pedigree and expertise that is certainly interesting.

A lot of those people who are academics professors at a high level who have something interesting to say about the world right now, that would be something that would be really great. I certainly have people who I talk to already, but it's a big world, and I'm very open to meeting new people, especially if they have a new way of seeing things or something unorthodox in their study. Or if they're just recently – I don't know. I'm just throwing this out there.

But let's say someone from the treasury or from some other government agency left to join a law firm or a think tank or something like that. Those kinds of people who have very close experience with very important agency that is often in the news and makes a lot of policy. All that stuff would be great.

**[00:08:30] BB:** So do you have a request that you would like to make, Kevin, to publicists right now?

**[00:08:35] KD:** I think there's almost zero chance that I'm going to open anything that is about crypto if it is in my inbox, and I don't ask for it. The exception would be if it would be, again, a good source, someone who can talk to me about what is like maybe the legal implications of something that is going on, something like that.

But so much of it is just not credible, and I look at it, and it feels like someone is trying to get me to write something that is a little scammy. I don't appreciate that. I mean, in general, a lot of this stuff, it doesn't really bother me too much. Maybe I'm just kind of – I mean, I told you the numbers on my inbox. It just kind of like –

**[00:09:25] BB:** You're very chill. I have to say. You're just like, "Yes."

**[00:09:29] KD:** I do wish that people would take me off of lists that have nothing to do with my coverage; movies, all kinds of television shows, things that I don't cover. It's just another thing for me to look at and to ignore. That is – it does take up my time. It doesn't really bother me all that much. I'm often just focused on my own writing and my own reporting during the day. But people just shouldn't waste their time.

**[00:09:58] BB:** People should not waste their time. This is good to know.

[BREAK]

**[00:10:05] 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](https://onepitch.co) and create your own custom media list in five minutes or less. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

**[00:10:27] BB:** Are there any elements of the pitch that you particularly like when you actually see one of merit? Or should we not even get into that?

**[00:10:36] KD:** Well, there have been two times where a pitch was successful but maybe not in the moment. There was one time where someone was offering to connect me with an executive who could speak about FTX and **[inaudible 00:10:51]**. I got this email. It was actually to my personal email, which is something, again, I do not like. Please do not reach out to me on my personal email.

**[00:11:01] BB:** That's a *faux pas*.

**[00:11:02] KD:** For a while. Yes. If you see Gmail or anything like that, I will immediately delete it. Anyway, this person emailed me, and she wanted to connect me with someone who could talk about FTX and Sam Bankman-Fried. I don't think that I actually responded until maybe a few weeks later because it was just kind of sitting in my inbox until I needed it. Then I kind of knew that it was something that I could tap on to, and I did. She was able to connect me with a good interview, and it ended up in a story.

That has happened before as well with authors, if someone has a book coming out. I might not immediately respond, but there are oftentimes where I will look at it. It will just register in my brain space. Then if something comes up in the future, then I can say like, "Okay, I kind of remember this," and then go back and find that. It might be a while, but it does happen.

**[00:12:03] BB:** Okay. It can come back around. Very good. Are there any exclusives? Or I would think not embargoes. But do you ever want an exclusive?

**[00:12:13] KD:** Sure. Exclusives are always great. I love exclusives.

**[00:12:17] BB:** You love exclusives, okay. But tell us what type of exclusive.

**[00:12:20] KD:** Right. So the incremental kind of exclusive is probably not what I would be writing up, unless it's someone very, very important in my industry or if it's incremental but going to be extremely newsworthy in a particular way, for instance. Like I guess it's technically an incremental that like a CEO would be stepping down of a major problem or something like that. But other kinds of exclusives that would be great would be – so I love lawyers.

**[00:12:53] BB:** You love lawyers.

**[00:12:54] KD:** I love lawyers. I love attorneys who can talk about clients with interesting cases.

**[00:13:00] BB:** Okay, okay.

**[00:13:01] KD:** If there are attorneys out there who are planning on filing a lawsuit and would be willing to – or if something is already filed and it just hasn't really been picked up but could connect me with plaintiffs, things like that. Then that would be **[inaudible 00:13:16]**. Sure.

**[00:13:18] BB:** Wants to hear from the lawyers. I think that's a first on this show. That's so good. Okay, Kevin. I have a quick rapid-fire question series for you.

**[00:13:27] KD:** Sure.

**[00:13:27] BB:** Are you ready? Here we go. Video, phone, or in-person interview?

**[00:13:32] KD:** In person.

**[00:13:33] BB:** Ooh, why?

**[00:13:34] KD:** Oh, I think it's just pandemic fatigue. I did so much Zoom, and I just don't like it. I would much rather get to know someone, and I also – there are so many interruptions that happen, Amazon delivery packages.

**[00:13:52] BB:** Yes, seriously.

**[00:13:53] KD:** It is distracting, and it's hard to get people to open up and talk. So I would like – in general, I don't really even want to do that at all.

**[00:14:04] BB:** Okay. So in person if you can make it happen. Oh, by the way, like do you have a preference, like you want to go to a coffee shop? You want to go to office space. What kind of in-person? Back alley? What?

**[00:14:17] KD:** I have a zero preference. Honestly, I'm very comfortable anywhere, and I'm happy to go wherever someone is comfortable.

**[00:14:23] BB:** Okay. Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch?



[00:14:27] **KD:** A little bit mix of both. If you can explain to me why I should care and then bullet point the facts that are backing it up, then that would be great.

[00:14:38] **BB:** Okay. Images attached or Dropbox zip file?

[00:14:42] **KD:** Neither, really. I –

[00:14:43] **BB:** Neither.

[00:14:43] **KD:** Yes. I mean, especially if it's a cold pitch, I'm never going to open that.

[00:14:48] **BB:** Yes, okay. So it does not apply. Then besides lawyers, are there any other sources that you look for or get extra excited about when you see them in your inbox?

[00:14:58] **KD:** Oh, I mean, anyone who couldn't really – let me think about that.

[00:15:02] **BB:** Yes. Because the floodgates will be opening after this, just to be clear, Kevin.

[00:15:07] **KD:** I want to hear from bankers. I want to hear from financiers. I want to hear from [inaudible 00:15:10] guys and all that. I very much want to hear from people who are trying to change things in their industry or their company. For instance, if they are involved or thinking about being involved in, let's say, a class action lawsuit about sexism, that would be someone who I would very much want to talk to.

You know what? As much as I care very much about those issue-oriented stories, I also care a lot about fun stories. I want to talk to people who are doing something cool and exciting. But by that, I do not mean that if someone has a brand new product that they're trying to sell. Can I help them sell it? I don't want to do that. I am talking about is someone who – again, it's a little bit like pornography, right? You know it when you see it.

I'm sure people will be emailing me with all kinds of stuff, but it's often I know, and I understand, and I appreciate the difficulty from the side on the PR person's perspective that every client

thinks they have like the cool amazing thing. But it's – yes. That's fine. That's cool. That's the job. But I'll take a look. I'll hear them out often. But I make no promises on –

**[00:16:28] BB:** Yes, yes. Okay. Kevin, is there anything you wish to promote, brag about, et cetera? We're here for it.

**[00:16:37] KD:** I'm very proud of my work. I hope people read my stories and read New York Mag and just keep an eye out for what I'm doing.

**[00:16:44] BB:** Okay. Keep an eye out. If you got a lawyer or a banker, Kevin wants to hear from you. Kevin, thank you for being on this today. This was a lot of fun. I've never heard banker or lawyer before. So you know what? I learn something every time.

**[00:16:59] KD:** Great. Well, thank you so much for having me on, Beck.

**[00:17:00] BB:** I love it. Check out Kevin's link, everybody, and his wonderful little drawing because I love that you all do, of course, the fun drawings for the New York Mag, which is classic and a fan favorite. Thanks again, Kevin. Appreciate you.

**[00:17:14] KD:** Have a good one. Bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:17:16] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Kevin Dugan at New York Magazine. 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 guests and insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]

