

EPISODE 180

[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.

Today's guest on Coffee with a Journalist is Moises Mendez II from Time magazine. As a culture reporter, Moises covers the internet, movies, music, TV, books, and podcasts. During the episode, Moises talks about why he's looking for exclusive pitches about creators, the types of pitches you should avoid sending him, his advice for sources about prolonging a professional relationship, and more. Let's hear from Moises now.

[EPISODE]

[0:01:06] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. Today with us, oh, from Time magazine, the culture reporter which I cannot wait to get into what culture all encompasses because my God, can you imagine that beat? Moises Mendez II is here with us. Moises, thank you for being here.

[0:01:27] MM: Yes. Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited.

[0:01:29] BB: Okay. First, I do this with everyone just to make sure it's very crystal clear. What would you say encompasses the coverage of Time Magazine? That's a big ask. But just so people are clear, and then we'll get into what your beat specifically is on?

[0:01:47] MM: That's actually one of the hardest questions I've ever been asked in my life.

[0:01:51] BB: What we want to clear with the publicists, you know.

[0:01:53] MM: Well, I mean, we've been around for 100 years now. I only been for one. So to tell you that, I mean, in my time there, we obviously do a lot of different things. Anything from entertainment, which the team I'm on, to politics, to space, to health, and climate, to really anything under the sun. We have a CO2 division, which is about climate change, and the leaders on that front. And we have a bunch of lists and we have Time 100, Time 110, next generation of so many different things. So yeah, we do a lot of time, which makes my job very fun.

[0:02:30] BB: Oh, I am sure, because speaking of your specific job, you are covering everything from the story behind the Barbie soundtrack to Dojo Cat, what's going on with her fans? The primer on Disney Plus on something, post credit scene in the flat. I mean, all the things. So my God, how would you then encompass your coverage beat as culture reporter.

[0:02:55] MM: It's funny, because like my interest mainly is internet culture. But I do have a lot of interest in movies, and television, and music, especially like I do love doing a lot more media coverage now. But by trade, and what I've been doing for a long time is like Internet culture. So social media influencers, and all of the drama, and things that happen online. So I talked to a lot of creators. Yes, there's just a lot of different things that I do. So again, it keeps me very busy, which I'm very happy about.

[0:03:36] BB: I'm sure. So then, are pitches valuable to you?

[0:03:39] MM: It depends on what types and where they're coming from.

[0:03:45] BB: Okay. Do explain, tell us all.

[0:03:48] MM: The pitches that are most valuable to me are the ones where it's something to do with a creator, something that is an exclusive, something that they're not giving to 20 other people, and just someone that people care about? Because sometimes, I'm thinking about doing something with a creator, that I can't find a reason to really cover them in this moment, but then their PR person will send me something. Like oh, wait, that's actually a great way in.

With Mark Ronson, that was not a pitch for me, but to my editor, and it kind of – perfectly there, so I was like, "Okay, cool. I'm definitely down to interview Mark Ronson. You let me know."

[0:04:32] BB: Hit it up.

[0:04:34] MM: Yes.

[0:04:35] BB: Okay. So your inbox, how crazy is it in there?

[0:04:41] MM: Better than most people. I know a lot of friends who do like commerce, and all of that other stuff where they're getting 3000 emails.

[0:04:50] BB: Yes. Yes.

[0:04:52] MM: It gives me so much anxiety to think about that, because when I was writing the story I was doing today, I had like not look to my email for a second. I have like 20 unread emails, where I know like a friend of mine, she's getting like 500 emails in an hour. Oh, yeah. I'm the type of person who has zero unread messages in my inbox, which is insane to a lot of people. But I'm just very – I like to see everything, and then the things I don't need, I delete.

[0:05:21] BB: Okay. So you're a delete.

[0:05:22] MM: Oh, yes.

[0:05:23] BB: You just shovel it away.

[0:05:24] MM: If it doesn't pertain to me, delete, delete, delete.

[0:05:26] BB: Delete, delete, delete. Okay. Are you an inbox zero then person?

[0:05:30] MM: Oh, yes.

[0:05:31] BB: Oh, one of the few in the cab, myself included. Yes.

[0:05:35] MM: It just gives me a peace of mind. I can sleep better.

[0:05:38] BB: Me too. I just feel good. There's nothing like touching the bottom too, when you get to the zero. Then, I don't know if you guys all use Gmail, but when you get to that little thing, it gives you a little like, "Woohoo, you got to –" oh, it feels so good. It's like a little digital high five. Yes, because Gmail gets it. Okay. Then you are not in the camp, I would imagine of looking in your inbox, and searching from pitches like six months ago or are you? Maybe you do some filing system. Do explain.

[0:06:09] MM: I mean, I'm not that entirely organized, but I sometimes. We have our weekly meetings on my team, where we discuss different things. Then, we'll be like, "Oh my God. Wait. I got into a pitch about this person or a pitch about this specific thing that we're talking about." So then I'll go back and see if I deleted it or not, but I'll go back, and find that, and be like, "Oh, here's the person to talk to for something." Which is not usually hard to find. But yes, I mean, I'm definitely the type of person who knows what I need in my inbox and what I don't. Then I'll just delete.

[0:06:43] BB: Now, what do you attribute that to?

[0:06:45] MM: Maybe my astrological sign.

[0:06:47] BB: Oh, what are you?

[0:06:48] MM: I'm a Leo, but I think I have Virgo placements somewhere. So I'm very, very detail oriented, and like, I know exactly what I need in the moment, and I'm going to go and get that. And then the rest of it, it doesn't matter.

[0:07:01] BB: Yes. I want to like do a little survey amongst now the nearly 200 interviews we've done on this show of like, is this a generational thing too? Because I find that there's some people who are in the let it ride camp. And I feel I want to say like, it's Gen Xers who are just like, "You ain't know shit." Whereas, lot of Gen Z's, I don't know if you are, but it's just like, "Nope. No, boundaries. Bye. Bye."

[0:07:29] MM: Yep, exactly. I am Gen Z, and I'm very much that person. Like I know what I need.

[0:07:33] BB: I knew it.

[0:07:35] MM: Because I mean, I can tell you the types of pitches that I don't enjoy.

[0:07:39] BB: Okay, please. Let's, let's please.

[0:07:41] MM: There's two that come directly into my mind.

[0:07:44] BB: Oh, boy. Number one.

[0:07:45] MM: I get so much – so many pitches about like sleeping data, or data about, I don't know, just some random thing that I do not cover. I don't do health, I don't do climate, I don't do a lot of different types of things. And I don't need, I don't need that in my life. The other that I really don't enjoy is, invites to things that are happening that day, or like tomorrow. I'm like, "What? How am I supposed to go to this thing that you just invited me to tomorrow that I don't –" You know, it's just – if you want me to be somewhere or cover something, I need ample time to figure that out. And yes, I think a lot of publicists are doing their best, and I respect them. And we have a symbiotic relationship.

[0:08:40] BB: What a beautiful way of saying that.

[0:08:42] MM: I'm trying to be very nice, because I do love my publicists' friends, and they're really doing great stuff.

[0:08:47] BB: Yes, they're trying.

[0:08:49] MM: Where I would just like a little bit more leeway and lead time on something.

[0:08:55] BB: Yes. Okay. So don't send those two pitches that Moises is not going to like. Okay. Do you on the opposite have preferred pitches that you're like, "Oh, yes"?

[0:09:07] MM: Let me think. I think I would say like, maybe a pitch on a creator who doesn't usually do interviews, maybe some sort of exclusivity. I think it's funny when I get a random pitch about something that has nothing to do with what I write about. Which is very clearly entertainment and –

[0:09:27] BB: Culture. Yes.

[0:09:29] MM: Yes. You would think that I would be getting pitches related to that, but I'm not getting that. It was my inbox, so I need to just pull the drain out on that, and just get them all out. So yes, I think those are the types that I'm really excited about or like, something that nobody else has, or like, I like building relationships with the PR reps that I work with. Some of them are just like really fun to hang out with, but also like having that relationship, they'll think of me for something that they can give me an exclusive on, or be the first person to know about. I think also, my job kind of helps with that, like being at Time magazine. I think giving us some sort of exclusive is kind of nice. I think we kind – we do those well so it'd be nice. I want more of those.

[BREAK]

[0:10:22] 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 CONTINUES]

[0:10:45] BB: Okay. Now, you mentioned relationships, and it sounds like you do have publicity friends. How does one make a relationship with you?

[0:10:53] MM: I'm very friendly.

[0:10:55] BB: I can tell.

[0:10:57] MM: Yes. I think like I'm easy to talk to you, and I think I'm just thinking of one that I recently made when I was interviewing someone last week. We were just talking about who else they rep, and what other things we could do together, and just talking about the possibilities of how to prolong this professional relationship that we have. That would be the best way to continue this friendship or relationship, just to keep it working for the both of us. I think that's the main part of having that relationship is like, we need to have something that works for us both.

[0:11:36] BB: Of course, it's back and forth. But further, since you're in New York, do you want to be asked to coffee? Do you want to get an event invite for something four weeks in advance, for example? Do you want any type of relationship like that in person? Or is it, you know, as I talked to some people on here, they're like, "You know what, send me good pitches. That's how it goes."

[0:11:56] MM: I mean, I am particularly new to this media lens.

[0:12:02] BB: I know, isn't that fun?

[0:12:04] MM: It is fun. I would love any sort of invites or ask to coffee or whatever with –

[0:12:13] BB: Oh, listen to this, everybody. Send him invites.

[0:12:17] MM: Listen, if it's fun, I'll go. I've been asked to a lot of things where I'm like, thank you so much, but no, I don't want to go.

[0:12:27] BB: Why? Because it's lame? Because it's boring or what? Why?

[0:12:31] MM: It's just not something that I need to do in this moment, and it doesn't serve me. So I'm like, okay, and sometimes I'm just busy, but also like, I do like forging connections with different people from all across the entertainment sphere. So, you want to invite me to a concert, I'll go. Those are the things I like to do, and like, get to know people.

[0:12:57] BB: I like it. Once again, boundaries. Look at you, look at you. See, picking up on some things. Okay. Okay, Moises. Do you ever want – you also hinted on this. Exclusives, embargoes particularly for you, are these a value?

[0:13:14] MM: Yes. I just sort of think of the ones that I –

[0:13:14] BB: Tell me. Yes, spell it out.

[0:13:19] MM: I mean, I do some music coverage at time, and getting to know as far in advance as possible is best, so that I can plan to do something that is worth the time for this said thing that they're giving. Say if a new artist has an album coming out, you give me the advanced stream, you give me all of the notes on it as soon as possible, lyrics, credits, everything. I can work on –

[0:13:46] BB: The better.

[0:13:48] MM: That's very well rounded, instead of getting the pitch the week before it comes out. I can only just maybe put together some sort of an interview or something that's not as grandiose as it could. I'm one of the people who does use a coverage there. I think there's maybe two or three of us. The bigger the lead time, the better the story can be.

[0:14:18] BB: By the way, I don't get to ask this of everybody, but what's your most fun interview you've done or biggest get?

[0:14:25] MM: Oh God. I've done so many random interviews. I interviewed Brooke Shields.

[0:14:32] BB: Oh, how was that?

[0:14:35] MM: She's so nice, but she does so many interviews. So like she knows how to answer any questions.

[0:14:40] BB: She's got it. She's down with her media training.

[0:14:42] MM: Yes, but my favorite interview that I've ever done is with the band Paramore, because I'm obsessed with them. and they are like my favorite band ever. So doing that interview, I was just smiling the whole time while Hayley Williams was talking, and I was like, "Thank you for talking with me. This is so nice." So yeah, it's like, meet your faves. That's one of the many great things about being at Time Magazine is like, people will want to talk to you, especially for Time Magazine. So as long as that I'm really excited about talking with, and get to do some really cool things.

[0:15:20] BB: Fantastic. Oh, okay. Now, I have a little rapid-fire portion here. Are you ready?

[0:15:26] MM: I'm so ready.

[0:15:28] BB: Okay. Video or phone interview?

[0:15:31] MM: Video.

[0:15:32] BB: Bullet points or paragraphs?

[0:15:35] MM: Bullet points.

[0:15:37] BB: Short or long pitches?

[0:15:39] MM: Short.

[0:15:40] BB: How short?

[0:15:41] MM: Enough.

[0:15:43] BB: Perfect. Perfect. Images attached or Dropbox zip file?

[0:15:49] MM: Dropbox.

[0:15:50] BB: Email or Twitter DM or previously known as Twitter now X.

[0:15:55] **MM:** Definitely email. Do not send me any pitches on DMs, please.

[0:16:01] **BB:** Okay. One follow up or multiple?

[0:16:06] **MM:** One. That's all. I can't do more than one, please.

[0:16:09] **BB:** Boundaries.

[0:16:12] **MM:** If I'm being completely honest, if there's more than one follow up, I just will not respond.

[0:16:16] **BB:** There you go. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:16:21] **MM:** Direct. I don't need flowery stuff.

[0:16:23] **BB:** Yes. Press releases or media kit?

[0:16:26] **MM:** Press release.

[0:16:28] **BB:** What time, if any do you usually read pitches? Or is it all the time?

[0:16:34] **MM:** Anytime, because I read them as long as they interest me.

[0:16:38] **BB:** Is there a source you prefer? Like you want to hear from, I don't know, music analysts or – this is usually for like people who are like, "Yes, I want to hear from academia from this portal or whatever."

[0:16:51] **MM:** I mean, primary sources are always preferable, but I'm always interested in speaking to academics, as long as I'm the one that's looking for them.

[0:17:01] **BB:** Yes, exactly. A mean way of saying, please don't send me some random academic, because I'm not going to interview them, unless I am looking for them.

[0:17:13] BB: Is there anything finally that you want to promote, tout, et cetera? How can we shine a little light on you right now?

[0:17:23] MM: Well, my Instagram handle is, it's Moises, my first name, @MoisesFenty. Same for X Twitter, whatever the hell that one is. All my work is on time.com. You scroll down, and you'll probably see it somewhere. And yes, I have a couple things that I've done in the past that are available for – you can see on my Instagram or Twitter, because I like talking about myself, and all of my accomplishments. So, yeah. Some other things that I will be doing, but we'll just have to wait, and see, and I can talk about it.

[0:18:04] BB: Indeed. Indeed. Okay. Well, then stay tuned. That sounds like that, and invite him to good events, but not the day of, please **[inaudible 0:18:15]**. Please.

[0:18:16] MM: Unless there's an Uber code, then I'll go.

[0:18:18] BB: Oh, there you go. I'm so glad you mentioned that. That's what we do when we do our media matchmaking day. We're like, "Hey, here's a Lyft, Uber code. See you there." Easy.

[0:18:27] MM: Yes. If it's like super close to the day, then like short, but if I have like a little more time to think about it. Listen, I'll take an Uber code whenever it's given. But you know, if you don't have them, and there's like, I have to think about coming –

[0:18:42] BB: Yes, and then that's a no.

[0:18:42] MM: – at a different time. We'll see.

[0:18:44] BB: There you go. Moises, thank you so much for being here today. Culture reporter at Time Magazine, everybody. Check it out.

[0:18:52] MM: This was so much fun.

[END]

