

**EPISODE 182**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:08] 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 a pitch, including some of the guests on this podcast? Head to our website at [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) to learn more.

This week on Coffee with a Journalist, we sit down with Anna Hrushka from Banking Dive. As a senior reporter, Anna covers banking in the FinTech sector. She was also part of the team at Industry Dive to help launch the Banking Dive Vertical. During the episode, Anna talks about her interest in banks and FinTech partnerships, looking for second-day stories that further outline major stories, doing introductory calls with sources, or meeting up for coffee, and more. Let's hear from Anna now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:01:08] BB:** Welcome everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. Hopefully, you're a publicist wanting to know all the great juicy insights from Journalists. That's why we're here. Today with us is Senior Reporter from Banking Dive, Anna Hrushka, and coming from DC. My little field trip, as I just mentioned, Anna, for my program that I was last in. I love DC.

**[0:01:30] AH:** It's a great spot.

**[0:01:32] BB:** It is a great spot, but also Banking Dive happens to be headquartered there, so that makes sense, as well.

**[0:01:36] AH:** Yes.

**[0:01:38] BB:** Excellent. For those who are not familiar, and I do like to ask this of everyone, just to make sure everyone's on the same understanding of what the outlet generally covers

before talking about what you use, specifically cover. How would you encompass the coverage of Banking Dive?

**[0:01:54] AH:** Yeah. We're an online publication. I actually helped launch this publication about four years ago. We're part of Industry Dive, which has about 30 different industry publications. We cover the banking and FinTech sector. So, that – I mean, that can be everything from focusing on bank technology, regulation, mergers, financial policy, banking trends. We've got a daily newsletter that goes out covering banking news. Then we have a weekly newsletter that covers more, dives more into the FinTech space. That goes out on just Wednesday afternoons.

**[0:02:31] BB:** I'm scanning a couple of your articles here again. You're covering, it looks like everything from federal regulation down to payments Wells Fargo is making to WhatsApp probes, and so forth. What's the coverage you're looking to do?

**[0:02:45] AH:** Yeah. We're a small team. That means we could be covering anything. We don't really, we don't necessarily have, we're not siloed into different beats in most cases. I could be covering all what you said, what you just outlined was just a really good example of just how widespread my coverage could be. But that said, I mean, we've got particular interests that we try to cover.

I'm really interested in how banks and FinTech's are partnering together. I've covered just the really interesting cannabis banking space and just legislation that is stalemate right now in terms of encouraging more banks to serve that space. Then I really like covering just how big tech and even just retail giants like Walmart are making moves to offer banking services and payment services to their customers.

**[0:03:40] BB:** Yes.

**[0:03:41] AH:** It's an interesting trend. I particularly, really like covering that.

**[0:03:46] BB:** Yes. By the way, why do you think that's happening?

**[0:03:49] AH:** It's just another way, I think, for them to just increase that stickiness with their customers. If you can get into folks' wallets in that sense and have them start to open accounts and deposits at your corporation, it's just another way to serve their customer segment.

**[0:04:07] BB:** Excellent. True, true, indeed. Yeah, because if you're having people spend money with you, and then they're also banking money with you, and you could see, that makes me a little nervous of like well, then all the insight that they might be able to have from your – in any way, the possible problems. But anyway, Anna, how's your inbox?

**[0:04:28] AH:** It is full.

**[0:04:30] BB:** Okay. What do you do to manage it if anything?

**[0:04:34] AH:** Yeah. I get so many pitches a day, but in combination, I get just a ton of Google alerts and notices coming out from various regulators. It's a lot. It's a lot to filter through and sort through. I try to like I'll sign in in the morning. I'll go through it, and I'll just flag any email that is like, "Okay, got to come back to that. Oh, that's something I need to look into later." If it's not something I need to immediately open, because in the mornings, I tend to just be really busy writing. I don't want to get too distracted.

**[0:05:09] BB:** Morning rider.

**[0:05:10] AH:** Okay. Don't want to get too distracted with my inbox in the mornings, but I just – I have a system where I just, I'll flag a ton of emails and then later in the morning when I've got some more time, when I filed my first story, I'll go back and go through those emails that stood out to me.

**[0:05:29] BB:** Okay. You're a flagger.

**[0:05:30] AH:** Yes.

**[0:05:30] BB:** It sounds like. Ah, there is a breed of that in this journalistic population here. Okay. So, do you just delete the pitches where you just deem it not a fit from the subject line alone?

**[0:05:44] AH:** Yes. Yeah. I feel like just being in the space as long as I have now. I have a pretty good –

**[0:05:51] BB:** Yeah. Better one.

**[0:05:52] AH:** Pretty good at filtering out something that I just know is not going to be a good fit right away. I just don't have time to read everything. Yeah, I will click that delete button pretty fast.

**[0:06:04] BB:** Yeah. Okay. Then what's a good pitch to you, if it gets the flag? Why is it getting the flag?

**[0:06:12] AH:** A good pitch. The banking industry, there's just a lot of fast-moving pieces. I mean, there's a lot of news that we cover, like breaking news or just really timely stories that we need to get out and cover. I'm always looking for those second day stories too that further the news. If there was a big piece of regulation, not a regulator released or a merger that was announced or just, as I said, a really interesting non-bank deciding they went along on some banking service, I may cover that just right away, put it in our newsletter as fast as we can, but I'm always looking for a pitch that furthers that. Timely is, is really the key word here.

Give me a source that, a relevant source, obviously, but someone who can speak to why Elon Musk wants to add banking and payments to X, as it's called now. What does this new piece of regulation mean for CEOs, bank CEOs? I want to see a headline that really just is aware of the news and is pitching me someone who can really add some really interesting analysis or insight to that.

**[0:07:23] BB:** Okay. By the way, since you live in DC and you do cover a lot of regulation, do you meet with people in Congress? Do you have coffee? Do you walk down to the Capitol Hill?

**[0:07:33] AH:** Yeah. I'm a remote worker, but we've got our office in DC, and I try to go in once a week. Then I usually try to time that with an interesting event that might be going on, press conference or maybe there's a big FinTech conference being hosted. I try to get out and be in the city during occasions like that. If you have a client that is attending a particular conference I might be at, or is already just based in DC. That's like a good time for me to just step away from the conference or from the office in DC and grab a coffee. I'm open, definitely open to meetings like that.

**[0:08:13] BB:** Okay. Speaking of, as you said, open to meetings like that. Relationship building. How does one go about building a relationship with you?

**[0:08:23] AH:** Yeah. Meeting for coffee, in person meetings, I think are great. Obviously, I don't have time to meet with everyone that might pitch a coffee meeting. That's just would be really hard for my schedule. I've got stories to write. I've got calls to make, but if I feel like your source is someone that is going to be a great person to keep in touch with and invaluable to our publication, have some great insight down the road. I'll make that effort to grab coffee.

Yeah, I mean, I appreciate just introductory calls too, if your client is not in DC or won't be in DC anytime soon. Maybe there's no news to share, but maybe you want to get them on my radar and maybe the company is doing something that I've been following or maybe you've got a new leadership, a new CEO. I mean, that's always a great opportunity to just do an introductory call. It might not turn into a story. It might even be off the record, but found that – in most cases those calls can be beneficial. I can get a little bit of context on the company or the person and revert back to that if I have a story that is relevant to that person.

**[0:09:39] BB:** Okay. She likes to go to coffee. Very good. Very good.

[MESSAGE]

**[0:09:45] 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]

**[0:10:08] BB:** Okay. Back to the inbox and you sorting through the pitches. On the opposite side of that, is there something where you're like, "Oh, God. That's just a bad pitch. No, go."

**[0:10:18] AH:** A bad pitch. Yeah.

**[0:10:19] BB:** Let's say a non-interested pitch.

**[0:10:22] AH:** Yeah.

**[0:10:22] BB:** You're just like, "That's a no." Clearly someone spells your name wrong. "Okay. That's a no." Clearly someone's trying to tell you "Shampoo launch party," like that's a no, but is there something where you're like, "It just doesn't do it."

**[0:10:36] AH:** Yeah. I think sometimes we get pitches that just are not relevant to our audience. Maybe some people think that we're consumer focused and we're really not. I might write about retail banking and what a bank might, a new product they're launching, but that's really from the angle of what are other executives or CEOs at banks going to want to know about this. If you pitch me something that's very consumer oriented about, I don't know, X percentage of millennials now do this or I don't know. It's just, I got to see the banking angle. I got to see that banking. I got to look at it in a lens from a fellow banking or FinTech executive. What's their takeaway? Why do they want to know about this?

**[0:11:23] BB:** Back to like the good pitch. I heard this yesterday on the show. I was like, "Oh, this might be relevant to you. I want to see if this works." Do you want to see, for example, experts who can be on record or they have the big title, something like that? Like if you had, oh,

Wells Fargo's CEO on record. He wants to talk to you about Senate bill X, that would be an open for you.

**[0:11:45] AH:** Oh, yeah. I mean –

**[0:11:46] BB:** Yeah.

**[0:11:46] AH:** If your client is Wells Fargo and Charlie Scharf wants to talk to me. I will drop everything and hop on the phone and talk to you, Charlie Sharf.

**[0:11:56] BB:** Oh, wait. This is what I love. I think so many publicists are just like, “Oh, the media never wants to talk to anybody.” It's like, oh, no, no, no. It's just the person it is. Do you have the caliber of the person? Hey –

**[0:12:07] AH:** Exactly. In some cases, maybe the pitch itself is not necessarily something I'm that interested in, but if you tell me I can talk to your CEO about it and why your company is going in this direction, especially if it's a big bank or a well-known FinTech. Then yes. I'm going to hop on that call, because that in and of itself is, I think, interesting to our readers. They want to know what the big executives are doing and why they're doing it.

**[0:12:37] BB:** Okay. This is good to know. Is there anything else tips, tricks you use just to manage the flow of the pitches that come your way or that we should just know?

**[0:12:48] AH:** Yeah. There's the flagging that I do.

**[0:12:51] BB:** Yes. Yes.

**[0:12:52] AH:** But other than that, I'll try to just like open another window, maybe, perhaps in my computer. Then like go back to it, but obviously that can get chaotic. If you've got like a ton of Outlook windows open. No, I'm still trying to figure it out, to be honest. I'm open to tips from other journalists on how they manage their inboxes, I'm still –

**[0:13:12] BB:** That's almost maybe a fun thing we could do. OnePitch could do of like, okay, everyone who's been on the show has talked about this thing. Do you want to all come and hang out and like share your tips? I think it'd be fascinating. I could tell you doing all the interviews. It would be fascinating.

**[0:13:26] AH:** Yeah.

**[0:13:26] BB:** Maybe that's something we could look into. Anyway. Oh, Anna, I have a quick hit list of questions here to rapid fire throw your way. I would love to hear your thoughts.

**[0:13:37] AH:** Sure.

**[0:13:37] BB:** Are you ready? Okay. Video or phone interview?

**[0:13:41] AH:** Phone interview. Yeah. I don't want to be camera ready all the time. I just also don't think, necessarily –

**[0:13:48] BB:** Hey, I feel you.

**[0:13:50] AH:** Need to see your face to hear what information you're giving me. So, yeah. Phone is the way to go.

**[0:13:55] BB:** Bullet points or paragraphs.

**[0:13:58] AH:** Bullet points.

**[0:13:59] BB:** Short or long pitches. I know this is a dumb one, but still, you'd be surprised.

**[0:14:03] AH:** Short. I mean, and short is like, maybe –

**[0:14:05] BB:** And how short?

**[0:14:06] AH:** Like two to three paragraphs, maybe. Yeah.

[0:14:11] **BB:** That's, I think long. Okay.

[0:14:12] **AH:** I'm thinking short paragraphs, though.

[0:14:14] **BB:** Yeah. Yeah. Three sentences. That's it. Okay. Images attached or Dropbox zip file.

[0:14:20] **AH:** No preference.

[0:14:22] **BB:** Email or formerly known Twitter. We'll call it XDM.

[0:14:26] **AH:** Email is probably the very best way to reach me. I used to be way more active on Twitter or excuse me, X, but not so much anymore. I'm trying to be more active on LinkedIn.

[0:14:38] **BB:** Yes –

[0:14:39] **AH:** Trying to like – yeah, trying to get more pitches there. If you want to pitch me on LinkedIn, give it a shot. We'll see how it goes.

[0:14:45] **BB:** We got you. We got you. Okay. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:14:50] **AH:** Direct. I just think it's a lot easier for me to figure out what the pitch is. Creative can sometimes be a little, I don't know, a little misleading, perhaps. I don't know. It's just not – and it's not really our focus here at a Banking Dive.

[0:15:06] **BB:** Yeah. That's not the vibe.

[0:15:07] **AH:** Yeah. Exactly.

[0:15:10] **BB:** Press release or media kit.

**[0:15:12] AH:** Media kit is fine. I mean, a press release is great. I guess, to start out with, but if you've got a media kit with photos and other stuff, I'm always happy to look at it.

**[0:15:21] BB:** What time do you normally read pitches? We covered this a little bit.

**[0:15:26] AH:** Yeah. I mean, I could be on my – the way things are these days. I could be on my phone at any time of the day, looking through my inbox, trying to be better about that, separating like off time and work time. I'd say the best time when I'm really focused looking at my inbox is like late afternoon. That's like when the busyness of my day is over. We've got our newsletter has gone out. Most likely I'm done with meetings and interviews that I had. I'm just checking on what am I doing for the rest of the day or the rest of the week. I would say, maybe between like three and five might be the best window to get my attention.

**[0:16:04] BB:** That's an unusual time. Glad we asked. Okay. Then what types of sources do you look for? If you had to say the title, the one thing.

**[0:16:13] AH:** Yeah. I mean, I hinted at this before.

**[0:16:17] BB:** Yes, you did. Yes.

**[0:16:18] AH:** Yeah. Looking at like that C-suite executive. I mean, I want to talk to the people that are the decision makers at companies. They tend to make the headlines, if you will. They're the ones that are, our readers are interested in, as well. That being said, I mean, I do still want to talk to the folks, managers, folks that are creating products in the day-to-day of things at a bank or a FinTech. I mean, that's also obviously, always valuable. Yeah, it really – it could be wide ranging depending on the angle of the story, I guess.

**[0:16:53] BB:** Okay. Is there anything else, Anna, that you'd like to promote, emphasize, celebrate? We just want to highlight you.

**[0:17:04] AH:** Well, if you check out Banking Dive. If you've got clients.

**[0:17:07] BB:** Yes.

**[0:17:08] AH:** That are in the banking and FinTech sector, check us out. Look at what we're writing about and maybe you've got someone that's a good fit for us. I'm always on the hunt for stories about banks or FinTechs that are servicing a specific demographic. Maybe it might be an underserved demographic or a segment of the population that's just got some really unique banking needs.

A couple of years ago, I wrote a story about how some community banks in Lancaster, Pennsylvania are serving in the Amish community. It was a fun story. I got to learn. Yeah, it was a little out of my comfort zone, covering something that I'm – an area I'm not normally in, but these banks had some really interesting solutions to serving a group that's not as connected technology wise or using mobile banking in the same way that most of us are. It was a really fun story. I'm always looking for just that unique angle. Yeah, what's your firm doing that's different? What's the demographic they're reaching that maybe isn't getting the service from traditional banks?

**[0:18:15] BB:** Okay. Anna Hrushka, thank you for being on our little show today. This was fun.

**[0:18:23] AH:** Thanks so much for having me.

**[0:18:25] BB:** Yes, of course. If we got anything good banking wise, especially a CEO of a big bank, we know where to go to.

**[0:18:33] AH:** Yeah. Pick me up.

**[0:18:33] BB:** That's you. Yeah, exactly. Thank you so much, Anna. Pleasure having you. We'll talk to you soon.

**[0:18:40] AH:** Yeah. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:18:42] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode, featuring Anna Hrushka from Banking Dive. 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]