

EPISODE 183

[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.

Our guest on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Catherine Perloff from Adweek. As a reporter, Catherine covers ad tech, social media platforms and their influence. During the episode, Catherine elaborates on the nuances regarding exclusives, how you can approach her with trend stories that she hasn't covered yet, why she values talking with sources regularly and more. Let's hear from Catherine now.

[EPISODE]

[0:01:01] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. Hopefully you're here because you want to hear from a reporter about what they like about pitches, and not like about publicist, and actually do like publicist in this wide world of media that they all exist in. I'm very happy to have with us today, ooh, the platform's reporter from Adweek. Catherine Perloff is here and she's ready to spill the beans. Catherine, welcome.

[0:01:29] CP: Hi. It's nice to be here.

[0:01:32] BB: Yes. Okay. You're coming live from New York, right? Tell us the – how is it going? Are you excited for fall? Let's talk about that. It's August right now.

[0:01:40] CP: Yes, it's a beautiful day here right now. It's like a perfect day right now. It's just a little bit crispy, which is nice.

[0:01:48] BB: Ooh, I'm coming there next month, I cannot wait. So anytime I get the New Yorkers reporters here, I'm like, "Tell me more. This is so good."

[0:01:55] CP: This is the best time of year in New York, I think.

[0:01:57] BB: It is. It is. Ugh, I will be there soon. Okay. Catherine, first, I usually like to start off with having people give an overview of their outlet, just in case people are not as familiar. So what would you say encompasses Adweek, and then we can get to your focus?

[0:02:13] CP: Yes. Adweek is a publication for the marketing community. It is sort of a one-stop source of news for specifically more advertising, but marketing writ large. We cover sort of like the agency world, and sort of moves among agencies in different agencies, sort of workplace practices or culture stuff. We also cover brand marketing, so CMOS, and different sort of strategies like rebrands, that kind of thing. Then, I'm sure, like am I getting all the sections?

[0:02:46] BB: Yes, I know. There's so many.

[0:02:48] CP: I know. We cover like TV. Then my team, I'm on the media team. So we cover sort of media, and tech from the lens of the marketer, and sometimes publishers as well, and sort of how are these tools best used for them? So yes, I mean, I think overall, it is a publication for advertisers meant to serve the advertising community, and covering a lot of different facets within that.

[0:03:13] BB: Mm, okay. If you take a look, I mean, you were covering things, programmatic, on meta, on salon, on podcasting. I was looking at mattress firms branded podcast, for example. I mean –

[0:03:28] CP: Yes. That was a little bit not my normal wheelhouse.

[0:03:30] BB: Yes. I was going to say, "Oh, gosh." How CEO agencies are adapting to a world without traditional search, all these things, Home Depot. It's quite the treasure trove that you're covering. So I highly encourage everyone to take a look.

[0:03:44] CP: I cover like a wide gamut. I basically cover all of digital advertising, write large with a focus on platforms. So like Facebook, Instagram, Google, YouTube, TikTok, and how advertisers are using those. What they're spending their media budgets on is sort of the big question I'm always trying to answer. Then, also, programmatic advertising. So advertising on the open web, and what's going on with ad tech, and what's going on with privacy and tracking, and how advertisers find audiences on the open web is another big focus of mine.

[0:04:18] BB: Mm-hmm. Then, given the wide array you cover, I can only imagine your pitches are also as wild and comprehensive. How's your inbox?

[0:04:30] CP: Yes. I mean, I do get a lot of emails, and I think it's hard. It is tough, because I feel like – you know, a lot of emails I get are most of them I think are not like totally irrelevant. Of course, that happens, but it's just – yes, I do cover a lot of things. Like I sometimes cover the *Creator Economy*. I sometimes will cover a podcast. Sometimes I get these things that are not as – just not my norm, like you know, maybe like it's something I would cover every couple of months, but not my like normal day to day, so that's tough.

Then, also, there's a lot of stuff that's just happening, but not necessarily newsworthy or interesting, of course. But yes, I do cover a wide gamut. I think someone might be Googling around on their topic and see that I write on it. But I might not necessarily be the best person, though. I mean, sometimes, I'm always interested. But yes.

[0:05:17] BB: You're always interested, okay. What do you do then with all the pitches you receive? Do you have a process on how you can manage the craziness?

[0:05:24] CP: Yes, I feel like, honestly, I kind of like once a week, I'll actually really read through my inbox, because I feel like most like – if I get an email that immediately catches my eye, or

like is from someone I've been emailing, whatever, I read it all. Of course, I get a lot of obviously pitches and other emails where it's like, "I don't know what this is." I'll just kind of like not look at it. But then, once a week, I will go through my inbox, and just try to read, or scan everything I've gotten that week just to make sure I didn't miss anything. I will like look at pitches that I've gotten and stuff. If I think it's interesting, that's something I miss, I'll respond.

If a lot of times, people reach out because they want me to talk to someone. If I think the person they're talking to is interesting, I'll make – like I have a list of potential sources, and I might put that name in my list. Then just when I'm looking later for someone to talk to on that topic, I might respond, and it could be like way later. So that can be helpful. Or if there's like a topic they brought up that maybe I'm like, "Oh, maybe it'll be interesting later, I might make a note of it." Or I'll respond, or I'll just decide this is an interesting and like won't respond. Usually, yes, that's kind of how I manage it.

[0:06:37] BB: Okay. But now, the thing that just caught my ear was once a week, you look at your inbox? No? You like scan and you like sit?

[0:06:46] CP: Well, I mean, I look at it like every hour, really. But like once a week, I do like a more thorough read through of, did I miss any email? Because I'm looking every hour and seeing what emails I get, a lot of pitches. I'll be like, "Oh, this isn't that important for right now" kind of thing. But if I catch it, I mean, there's certain emails I'll get, and they could be from a PR person, and I'll be like, "Oh, this is interesting," and I'll read it immediately. Yes, I do kind of – the weekly sweep is more so just the ones that I kind of dismiss on first glance, should I give them a second, kind of thing.

[0:07:17] BB: Got it. Oh, you're the first person I've heard that does a weekly sweep type of thing.

[0:07:21] CP: Yes. I mean, it's hard to know what's the most effective strategy.

[0:07:26] BB: I know, seriously. No one has the end all be all for sure. By all means, totally get it. Okay. Is there a subject line type that gets your attention?

[0:07:37] CP: I feel like – I mean, definitely, if it's like exclusive, because I mean, just because it's exclusive doesn't mean we'll cover it, of course, because it's like, is this something that's interesting to us. But if I'm going to cover something based on something that a company is putting out, like it does usually have to be exclusive to us. So that's definitely something that will catch my eye. If it is specifically about like a topic that I've written about recently, I guess it's sometimes though, like not – I mean, I look at it more often, though a lot of times, it can just be like, "You wrote about this, do you want to talk to this other person?" And it's like, "Well, I already wrote about it, so why not?"

But yes, I feel like if it's on a topic that I've been covering in the past couple of weeks, that makes me more likely to read it, if that's in the subject line, if it says exclusive, or if it's from a company that I cover a lot, or if it's like a big company that like I haven't covered a lot, but is like a pretty big company. Maybe it's like a brand that wants me to speak with their CMO. It's hard to know when to take a meeting that it's just kind of a meeting without a specific purpose. But if it's a pretty big brand that I find interesting, I'm more likely to be like, "Okay." I'll meet with the person, that kind of thing.

[0:08:48] BB: Okay. So you'll meet with a person if it's a big grant.

[0:08:51] CP: Or one of the roster companies I cover, maybe it's an ad tech. I am very interested in – you know, I covered Google and Facebook, and certain ad tech firms like the Trade Desk or whatever. If it was an email from them, I'll definitely read it, because it doesn't mean I'll like do anything about it, but I'll read it because they're kind of in my roster of companies that I keep tabs on.

[0:09:12] BB: Mm-hmm. Okay. This is good. Are there any that get you the, "Ugh. No." Do you ever delete based off just the subject line?

[0:09:20] CP: Honestly, I'm not a big deleter which –

[0:09:22] BB: Really.

[0:09:23] CP: I just kind of – it's a little bit of a mess. I mean, I'm not like a zero-inbox person. I'll just be like, read it. Okay. This is irrelevant. It stays in my inbox, but I don't delete. I don't know. But I mean, things that I just ignore. I mean, obviously, it has nothing to do with what I write about. Sometimes people want me to cover a creator who has a business, and it's like, I do cover the creator economy. I cover how advertisers approach the creator economy and systemic issues between creators and platforms, but like, I don't care about most random creators. Or like if it's like a random startup that's in the ad tech or market big space, generally, that's just not my bailiwick to cover so. Then also, annoying, yes. I've just written an article, and then they're like, "Have you seen this?" It's like, "Yes. I just wrote it."

[0:10:12] BB: Yes, I just wrote it. Yes. Jesus. Yes, that's a consistent pet peeve, and I don't know why people do that. You just wrote this piece. You're not doing another piece. Yes, it has to add tremendously more for you to warrant another piece or continuation of the story.

[BREAK]

[0:10:31] 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]

[0:10:54] BB: Yes, yes, yes. Okay. How about the elements of a pitch where you're like, "Hmm, that is a good pitch. It was teed up to me perfectly." What's that perfect pitch look like?

[0:11:04] CP: Yes. I mean, I think it can be sort of one – I guess it depends on what you mean by pitch. If it's like – because some emails from publicists are just like talking to someone versus like, this is actually an article. But I think that something like I wrote about IN2IT it launching an ad network, or becoming sort of a commerce media network. I mean, that story, I sort of had been in touch with the people involved beforehand. That was kind of how I found out about it. But something like that, where like a brand is doing something really interesting. That's obviously –

I also read about the MTA offering programmatic advertising. That's a company that's doing something really interesting, and it's a new product, or it's just legitimately like a new interesting product. I feel like, a lot of times, I get pitches that are, two ad tech firms integrating with each other, which is probably not going to rise to the level where we write about it. And I get why they reach out to me because it's like not irrelevant, but it's just not interesting. But I think, yes, like the perfect pitch is a company that is just doing something like very new, and interesting, and isn't like their normal business line. They're like expanding in some way.

Also, I mean, every now and then, a publicist will come to me with a kind like an actual trend that hasn't been covered before. I wrote this whole big story about how brands have trouble knowing who creators' audiences are. That makes it hard to value the creator, and to attribution for a creator focus campaign, that kind of thing. That, I mean, partly started, because like a publicist reached out to me with one of their clients talking about how they approach this problem. It ended up being like a ton more reporting. But if you come with a legitimately new, trend that hasn't been reported before, which is kind of rare, honestly. But if a publicist flags it, to me, it's just like, if anyone flagged it to me, it is interesting.

Something that is like on my beat, that is a unique trend that hasn't covered before, just like every freelancer was pitching this, it would be interesting kind of thing. Or it's like a company doing something legitimately interesting. Then, I think the third thing is, I mean, my bread-and-butter sources are media buyers. I think they're like my best kind of sources. Those are the people who work in agency, or work for brands, who they're actually making the decisions about which media to buy. If you just reach out and say like, "Hey, this buyer wants

to talk to you." That will get my attention already. I might not talk to the buyer, but I'll definitely note them in my list for the future. But then if like they are experiencing any sort of problem, like any sort of challenge, that I might talk to them. I mean, maybe I won't write about it, but it might get me to talk to them just any sort of problem they're having with media buying, that's interesting to me. So, I mean, not all publicists represent media buyers.

[0:13:55] BB: Exactly. That's still a niche thing. But okay. But you are, of course, in New York City, which is arguably the capital of such. So, question about relationship building. How do you like to build relationships with publicists, if at all?

[0:14:10] CP: Yes. I mean, I feel like there are some great – there are good publicists to kind of understand what I'm writing, and do you have a number of clients that would be relevant. I feel like – I don't know if I always have to meet with them one on one, though sometimes that can be helpful if they really do have a good roster. I feel like – yes, once I know a publicist has a lot of people who might be good for me to speak with, then it's like, okay, maybe it's worth building a stronger relationship. Just I think off the bat, I wouldn't necessarily meet with one because I don't know if their clients are going to be useful. Then it's just like, is this going to be worth my time? So yes.

I think some publicists like work for a lot of ad tech firms and they might think that I'd want to talk to everyone, all their clients. Ad tech firms are usually – they're a good source, but they're not necessarily the best source, because sometimes they're trying to like – sometimes they're really useful in their expertise. Sometimes they're just kind of trying to sell their company, so that's kind of the risk. So yes. I think if a publicist has shown – like I've ended up just like running into them a lot, because the people I'm contacting they work with or they've ended up coming up with lots of good people. Then it's like, "Okay, let's maybe sidebar with this publicist." But I think off the bat, maybe not. Or if they work for a company that is someone – a company I want to be in touch with, then it would be more valuable to meet with them, one on one.

[0:15:35] BB: Okay. Fascinating. Do you ever want exclusives?

[0:15:38] CP: Yes.

[0:15:39] BB: Okay. Tell us a little bit more. What's the how? What's the how?

[0:15:42] CP: Yes. I mean, again, as I said earlier, I think if a company is doing something interesting, we want to be the one to exclusively tell it. Now, it has to be a big enough company, like just because often for us to write about it. But we don't want to be, if the story is being shared with a million other outlets, or even a couple other outlets, it makes us not likely to cover it. So it's sort of like a medium-sized company doing an interesting thing, definitely should be exclusive. And definitely, if it's not exclusive, we're not going to cover it.

Now I know the risk is you offer an exclusive and maybe you've offered it and then like what if I take a little bit longer to respond, and then it's – so I try to get back to people in a reasonable timeframe, if I'm not going to take it. Because at the end of the day, like exclusive is sort of almost the minimum to cover something. And if it's just covering their idea – now, I mean, someone could reach out about something, and I could think it's interesting, and then that could come into like a larger story. The fact that this company is doing it in like a larger trend story. But if I'm going to just like do a story that is about a company, minimum kind of has to be exclusive, usually/

I think the tricky part comes with like, if a company is doing research, because not – sometimes that research is interesting, and maybe we want to cover it. Certainly, we'd want to cover it exclusively, because usually, the research is a launching off point to talk about the larger issue that the research is studying. And so that, yes. So that research has to be sort of good enough that it feels like it could be sort of the **[inaudible 0:17:13]** story. Because sometimes, it feels like research is a little bit just self-serving to the company.

[0:17:18] BB: Yes, exactly.

[0:17:20] CP: That we want to be careful of not promoting, if it doesn't really feel legit.

[0:17:25] BB: Yes, exactly. Okay, Catherine. I have a little rapid fire question section. Are you ready?

[0:17:32] CP: Yes.

[0:17:33] BB: Here we go. Video or phone interview?

[0:17:36] CC: Honestly, I like – as far as I like phone better, especially if it's about something that is a little bit more sensitive, or private, or secret because I feel like people feel a little more on the spot with a video interview. Though like – sometimes this video interview can be nice to build a relationship too. But I feel like, sometimes I little bit prefer the phone, but either is fine.

[0:17:57] BB: Okay. Bullet points or paragraphs in the pitch?

[0:18:01] CP: I feel like just two paragraphs saying what you're talking about, honestly. If it has to be spelled out in bullet point, it's almost like too long.

[0:18:10] BB: Okay. Too long and bullet points. Interesting. Well, the next. Short or long pitches? I would say short.

[0:18:16] CP: Yes, exactly. Just like tell me what's going on. Don't say so little that it's okay, like I don't believe that you're talking about something real. You don't want to be like, "Oh, I have this great piece of news, email me back to learn more. It's like, "Okay, I probably just won't." But yes, like enough where I get what's going on. But don't give me all this information where I'm searching through the email to figure out what the point is.

[0:18:41] BB: Yes. Okay. Images attached or Dropbox zip file.

[0:18:46] CP: I mean, images aren't that important for the kind of reporting I do, because I'm not recovering campaigns or, maybe if there's a tech featured. I guess, yes, maybe making it

like attach because it's – an image is usually not that relevant. But if it is relevant, like, I'm not going to do that much work to find it.

[0:19:03] BB: Mm-hmm. Okay. You're not going to do the work. Email or ex DM. Used to be Twitter DM.

[0:19:11] CP: No, definitely an email.

[0:19:13] BB: Okay, email. Emails where it's at.

[0:19:14] CP: Yes. I mean, I DM my sources to talk with them. I think it can be a good informal way to talk to people. But like, if you're going to send like a formal pitch, if it's over Twitter, I probably am going to think it's not legit.

[0:19:26] BB: Yes. Okay. One follow up or multiple?

[0:19:29] CP: I mean – oh, no.

[0:19:34] BB: I think that is one.

[0:19:35] CP: Because if you're following up, it's probably not a great sign. Honestly, sometimes people have followed up twice, and like I have seen it more so. So it's tough for me to say. Definitely not more than two though, because that's just gets to be a bit annoying. But yes.

[0:19:51] BB: Yes, yes. very good. Okay. Press release or media kit?

[0:19:55] CP: Probably press release. Again, just like getting to the point easier.

[0:20:00] BB: Okay. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:20:02] CP: Direct.

[0:20:03] BB: Okay. Any particular time for a pitch?

[0:20:08] CP: I guess it depends. I mean, I feel like the day that I'm mostly going through my inbox is Thursday, because I feel like I'm less likely to publish a story for Friday, because like people read less stories on Friday.

[0:20:21] BB: Yes, exactly.

[0:20:21] CP: **[Inaudible 0:20:21]** publish a story for Friday, but Thursday can kind of be my more like chill day. Like, I guess, Monday morning doesn't hurt, I think because, like I am looking more on Monday morning. And then, yes, Tuesday, Wednesday, like I'm really in my reporting, and like doing my stuff, so I'm more likely to miss stuff. So maybe beginning and end of the week, I guess.

[0:20:40] BB: Okay. Any last words, comments, things to promote, Catherine of yours that we could just shout out and use?

[0:20:49] CP: I mean, follow me on LinkedIn and Twitter.

[0:20:52] BB: Obviously, yes, yes, yes.

[0:20:54] CP: I've been posting more of my stories on LinkedIn recently, because Twitter or X has been a little more random. So I'm always looking to chat with people. It is how I like – I don't know anything unless I talk to people at the end of the day, and publicists can be a great conduit for getting to know people. I mean, not every person they think I should talk to I think I should talk to of course, but there's definitely a role for sure.

[0:21:22] BB: Okay. Good to know. Well, Catherine, we know where to find you. You're in New York City. It's great. Come and visit. It's the fall. It's crispy. I love it.

[0:21:33] CP: Yes. It was great to chat with you.

[0:21:35] BB: Thank you, Catherine.

[0:21:36] CP: It's also like fun to be able to talk about my process, because I'm just on my laptop. And I'm like, "This is how –

[0:21:44] BB: The weekly sweep. The weekly sweep. Don't be in the sweep. Be in the first reply. I think that's the key message here.

[0:21:52] CP: Yes. Yes, for sure.

[0:21:53] BB: Well, thank you, Catherine. Thank you for being here. Really appreciate it.

[0:21:57] CP: Thank you. It's great chatting with you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:21:59] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode featuring Catherine Perloff from Adweek. 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]