

**EPISODE 199**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist brought to you by the team at OnePitch. Are you looking for a more efficient way to find and pitch the right journalists? Head to our website at [onepitch.co](http://onepitch.co) to learn more.

Our Guest on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Anna Tingley from Variety. Anna writes about topics related to e-commerce, including entertainment, politics, and online culture. During the episode, Anna shares what it's like trying to weave e-commerce into the type of coverage variety is known for, how often she's writing throughout the day, the right and wrong ways to reach out to her, and more. Let's dive in.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:58] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist, and I'm Beck Bamberger. Guess what, fellow publicists. This is episode, apparently, 199. God, we have been here a while. This is great. Wow, this is almost 200 reporters, editors, freelancers we've talked to over the years. In doing this, we have learned so much on pitching, and that is what this show is for. We are here to make better relationships with our journalist friends because we need to be friends with journalists and editors and reporters.

Speaking of, a fellow Bruin is with us today. I went to UCLA as well. Anna Tingley is here. She's an editor at Variety Magazine, and we're going to talk all things commerce and her Stanley Cup, et cetera. Anna, welcome, live from New York.

**[00:01:47] AS:** Hello. I'm so happy to be here. It's my first podcast **[inaudible 00:01:50]**.

**[00:01:49] BB:** Yes. I know.

**[00:01:51] AS:** So I'm half excited, half very nervous.

**[00:01:54] BB:** Yes. Okay. Well, have no fear. It's so funny to me when reporters on here are like, "Oh, my gosh. Was that okay? How'd I do," and everything. It's just because the shoe's on the other foot here because I get to ask some of the questions. But, of course, you are welcome to ask questions as well if you want. Anyway, Anna, just for those who may not be as familiar, I do like to start out with this. How would you describe what Variety covers?

**[00:02:17] AS:** Yes. It's really interesting because e-commerce didn't exist at Variety before I came on like two and a half years ago. So that was kind of a challenge when I first came on in making e-commerce and shoppable content makes sense for a brand, especially a **[inaudible 00:02:33]** trade magazine.

When I first started, I was really throwing a bunch of things at the wall. It had to be something that was entertainment-related, right? We didn't want to jar the audience with things that didn't make sense for our brand. General, even from the beginning, I just always cover anything that's entertainment-related. So that can be celebrity collaborations or product launching, products that celebrities are loving, using, and wearing, items –

**[00:02:56] BB:** Yes. You just did a piece on Julianne Moore's fan T-shirts, for example.

**[00:03:01] AS:** Oh, yes. I just wrote that. Yes.

**[00:03:02] BB:** Yes, yes, yes, yes. How fun. Oh, I love it, too.

**[00:03:04] AS:** It's really – I've been like loving doing the like fan-made merch on Etsy. I feel like there's just really hyper-specific niche things that our audience really appreciates. I also really love highlighting just like – well, also highlighting small businesses. I mean, I'm constantly, obviously, **[inaudible 00:03:21]** to Amazon and those big retailers, which is inevitable. But it's always nice to be able to link out to Etsy.

**[00:03:26] BB:** Always good. Okay. So your inbox, Anna, how is it in there?

**[00:03:34] AS:** I actually am pretty good with my inbox. I feel like I'm like one of those organization freaks that like that's my procrastination almost. Not necessarily responding to

them but just like going through my email and just deleting all the ones that are irrelevant, putting them into folders. That just calms me down, honestly. When I actually have to get to like responding and doing the work, that's the hard part. But like we all know that a lot of it is useless. I cannot, for the life of me, of course, respond to every single email. So kind of organizing is honestly kind of fun.

**[00:04:06] BB:** What do you do once you file these pitches, though? Is it you return to it maybe even in three months, six months, whatever? Or is it you have a process to return back to that is what is organized?

**[00:04:17] AS:** Yes. I mean, I'm sure as you've talked to other editors before. I mean, I would say like 80% of emails are just things that are completely irrelevant, which is definitely the most –

**[00:04:28] BB:** Oh, 80%. That's mad.

**[00:04:30] AS:** I mean, like a lot – I mean, just things that I would never ever cover, just because they have nothing to do with entertainment. I mean, and I totally get it. I know that it's more of an automated process, and they don't have so much power to be able to like know what every single journalist writes about. But, I mean, of course, I appreciate when publicists are reaching out about things that just totally make sense. I mean, I am like really fast deleting if it's like very obviously not something that I would cover.

But even if it's not something I'm necessarily writing about that day, if it's anything that I've written about in the past or I could even just see myself writing about, I have a bunch of different folders. So I stow it away. I always come back. Especially for like gifting season, if it's like, okay, I'm not necessarily going to do a standalone article on this, but this looks like a great product. This could be something that I –

**[00:05:18] BB:** Roundup maybe.

**[00:05:19] AS:** I'll always return when I'm kind of putting together more general things like that.

**[00:05:24] BB:** Okay. Now, in an editor role, how much of at least the 20% of the pitches that are good are you sending to others, like maybe other people on your team, freelancers, et cetera? How does it – demystify this whole thing for us.

**[00:05:41] AS:** Yes. I've kind of gone in and out of accepting pitches and having like a freelance budget. I am kind of like a one **[inaudible 00:05:47]** like for e-comm.

**[00:05:49] BB:** Okay, okay.

**[00:05:50] AS:** So I'm more of an editor in the fact that like I kind of just self-edit, or I also have – I mean, basically, I'm an editor in the sense that I have autonomy over what we cover and what the e-commerce looks like. We do have one floating writer that floats between the Hollywood reporter Variety and Billboard because we're all under **[inaudible 00:06:11]**. It helps with some e-comm stuff. So I edit and assign stories to him and some other writers if they ever have something that kind of aligns with e-comm. Thankfully, at least at this point, I do not also have to sift through pitch emails, although that would be fun.

**[00:06:28] BB:** Oh, thank God. Thank God. Okay. That's good. So you're kind of operating as like a one-woman band over there and with your own discretion, which has to be great, but also inundating, of course. You mentioned earlier, “Oh, if I can tell it's a fit.” How are you immediately telling if it's a fit?

**[00:06:44] AS:** I mean, if it's newsy and entertainment, that's going to be an email that I want to read, right? If it's the day after the Emmys, I'm probably not going to really pay super close attention to anything that's not having to do with the Emmys or the Golden Globes or the Critics Choice Awards. Not what our readers are caring about and writing about. It's not what people are Googling.

For example, today, if I'm looking through something and it's not really like Emmys or awards-related, I'm going to like stow that away for later. But I do have fun when it's like, again, I like to save things that don't necessarily make sense for a standalone for Variety. I get to have a little bit more freedom when I'm just doing like gift guides and roundups. Not every single thing that I

write about is entertainment, so honestly – and that's probably why it's very confusing for publicist, too, when they see what I write about because it can run the gamut.

Entertainment-related is better. But, really, I think it's mostly about staying a part of the conversation. So I'm like always scrolling on Twitter, and it's just important, I think, obviously, in any media or journalism-related job to just be immediately aware of what people online are talking about. So, obviously, right now, it's the Stanley Cup and Jake **[inaudible 00:07:54]**. Just like what's going viral, right?

**[00:07:58] BB:** What's your process for staying on that?

**[00:08:00] AS:** I am just constantly on Twitter. I mean, it's helped also. Again, that's like probably the hardest part of being a smaller team. Thankfully, Variety, even though I'm the only one really doing e-comm, we have a huge team. I'm constantly on Slack. We're all very, very online. I think that's just kind of like a prerequisite of being in journalism. So if I don't catch something, people are always sending things to me. Thankfully, I don't have to force myself. I love being online. I love scrolling on Twitter, so it comes naturally.

A lot of what I write about might not make sense if you aren't also online. Like last week, I had a story about the Jacob Elordi Bathtub Water Saltburn candle.

**[00:08:37] BB:** Oh, my God. Yes. Geez.

**[00:08:39] AS:** That was like super, super viral. It's like one of the silliest things I've ever written. You just never know it's going to just go crazy. We ended up getting Barry Keoghan to talk about it on the red carpet, and like everyone's seen it, so.

**[00:08:50] BB:** Oh, God.

**[00:08:51] AS:** That's just an example of something –

**[00:08:52] BB:** Just a bit wild. Yes.

**[00:08:53] AS:** But that's an example of something that just like makes so much sense for Variety. We're talking about Saltburn all the time, and it's funny that there's somehow a shoppable element to it.

**[00:09:02] BB:** Yes. Isn't that interesting to have that moment, the viral moment? But then is it tied to something that is benefiting commerce to some person, to someplace? Okay. How do you structure, if there is any structure, Anna, your day?

**[00:09:20] AS:** How do I structure my day? I mean, it's kind of nice because I'm on the East Coast. So I feel like I had a little bit of a buffer before because most of the team – we have a small cohort in New York, but most of the team is in LA. So I feel like I'm not getting super bugged until like around 12pm when people on the West Coast start getting onto their laptops. So I kind of –

**[00:09:40] BB:** God, that is, by the way, one of the best hacks. I swear to God. If you have a team that's West Coast and you get to be on East Coast, just toodling away, hours ahead getting so much stuff done, and then they come on. Oh, it is one of the most rewarding things. I am mostly in California. Then when I go to New York, I'm like, “Watch out. I am blazing, people.”

**[00:10:00] AS:** Unstoppable. Are you in New York?

**[00:10:01] BB:** Blazing. It's so fun. I'm in New York like six times-plus a year, and I'll be there like the whole week or like 10 days because I love it, and I got lots of business and all this good stuff to do. It is just a delight. I love it.

**[00:10:14] AS:** It's **[inaudible 00:10:14]**.

**[00:10:14] BB:** I'm a super morning person, too. So I'm already up at 4:30 doing all my stuff and running, which, no one is up that early in New York, by the way.

**[00:10:22] AS:** Yes. They're still like **[inaudible 00:10:22]**.

**[00:10:22] BB:** It is just great. Exactly. People are still up coming from the night before, so yes. Okay. You take advantage of your East Coast position.

**[00:10:34] AS:** Yes. Usually, in the morning, I'm catching up on emails from the night before because, of course, then I'm getting emails like after I'm off from the night before. So I kind of spend my first few minutes. Well, I do spend morning going on Twitter, checking all of the news. I just want to make sure I'm on top of any newsy things that are happening so that I can be the first and also take advantage of being on the East Coast to the first **[inaudible 00:10:56]** things. Make sure I'm not missing anything big, read any big cover stories that are coming out. I also spend that time social-ing out stories. I thankfully have access to like our Twitter and Facebook, so I'm able to kind of just like give some extra love to my e-comm articles.

Then I'll try to like get at least one or two stories up by 12pm. Then, yes, start my day with like quick standalone posts to make sure I'm kind of just like getting on top of anything that's newsy and kind of shape that discourse on Twitter. Then the afternoon, spend time on things that are a little bit longer form, like longer form roundup. Sometimes, I'll try to schedule my interviews or if I'm talking to somebody later on in the day. But, honestly, not hugely structured. Every day is a little bit different.

**[00:11:41] BB:** As they need to be. Absolutely.

[BREAK]

**[00:11:45] 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]

**[00:12:09] BB:** Now, you're in New York, best place ever. Can people build a relationship with you meeting you up in New York? Or do you prefer like, "Nope, I just want to talk to you on email and thank you very much."?

**[00:12:19] AS:** That's a great question. I feel like it's just a huge balance. I love actually going to press events. I mean, I'm a pretty extroverted social person. I know some people would like hate that. I definitely have to be in the mood, but I don't know. I think it's a perk of the job that brands will put together dinners or events. I always enjoy going to those. I mean, especially at this point, I at least know enough people in the industry that I'll sometimes see familiar faces. It's a little bit less intimidating than maybe it was when I first started.

Those are fun. It's really fun to not only meet people that you have been emailing for a really long time. But, also, like I think my favorite part is also just meeting other journalists, and connecting with people that have similar jobs, and hearing how they do things, and hearing how their publications do things. At that point, like let's say I'm going to an event, and then I totally get along with a publicist or a brand, or I genuinely am really interested in something that they're working on, then, yes, I'm totally down to go get a coffee or a dinner. But if somebody totally cold emails me and is like, "Oh, I just moved to New York. I work for this publicity company, and we should get coffee," I'm not super with that.

**[00:13:26] BB:** It sounds like you want to kind of meet them in the wild, that something, and then feel the vibe. Then we can take it from there.

**[00:13:32] AS:** Yes, exactly. Because, otherwise, it just feels like forced. I mean, I also get emails. I know you were saying like emails that just kind of annoy you. I think that there's also just a –

**[00:13:43] BB:** Such as – tell me. Tell us. Tell us.

**[00:13:46] AS:** I mean, okay, I feel for publicist, it's like such an art to be able to form genuine relationships. But, also, of course, it is professional. But I definitely get turned off, and I can say most of my friends in the industry also get turned off if it just doesn't seem genuine like from right away, the first email they're acting like they're your best friends. Or they're like, "Hey, girlfriend." It just seems really forced.

Also, a lot of times, like after you've worked together once, a publicist will like follow you on Instagram, which like sure, maybe. But then they'll like in their next email be like, "Oh, my God. I saw you were traveling around here. I hope it was great." It just feels a bit creepy to know people are like stalking you and then using it to craft an email. I don't know.

**[00:14:25] BB:** I did have someone, though, one time. I just have to share this because it's, I think, relevant to this. I said, "Oh, hey, Jane. Would you be interested in something?" I just used the word "hey". This person was like, "You should never use hey. That is unprofessional. That is \_"

**[00:14:43] AS:** Oh, my God.

**[00:14:43] BB:** This was recent. This was recent. I was like, "Wow, this is not my lady." Okay, it's totally fine. But I was like, oh, I've never had someone respond back to like, "Hey is not appropriate and how dare you."

**[00:14:53] AS:** Oh, my God. I do not go that far. I'm actually pretty casual. I'm not very professional. I love just being casual over email.

**[00:15:00] BB:** Yes. That's what shocked me. I looked up this person, and maybe there's an age differential maybe perhaps. I don't know. But I was like, "Damn, okay." But, yes, "Hey, girlfriend. You want to go meet me for drinks tomorrow? I just moved here." No?

**[00:15:14] AS:** No. Yes.

**[00:15:15] BB:** Yes. No, no. Okay. What's your favorite type of pitch?

**[00:15:22] AS:** Something very specific. I mean, just in general, I like to write things. I mean, obviously, I like to write things that will perform well and do well on social media specifically. That's how you get clicks in today's day and age. We like specifics, right? Let's say it's the day after the Emmys, and they're like, "Sarah Snook wore \$350,000 of Cartier jewels tonight." That's a pitch where I'm going to click on it. We want numbers. We want something crazy and insane that we want to learn more about, like just even saying that she wore Cartier. Of course, she did.

Everyone was wearing jewels, like something that sticks out that can just give an angle immediately, right?

Everyone wants less work, right? So if the publicist is already giving you that angle or that story that's going to be [inaudible 00:16:09], it's just going to be that much easier to convert it into a story.

[00:16:14] **BB:** Jumping around, just to hop on that and I'm thinking about like the best pitches here, you already have up, Anna, your gift guides for Valentine's Day. It is a solid month about. It's January 16th right now, so we are one month total out. Dang, when do you like to get gift guide pitches?

[00:16:34] **AS:** For Valentine's Day, for example, I mean, as soon as like January 1st. I mean, not that I'm necessarily going to be checking my email on January 1st.

[00:16:44] **BB:** Yes.

[00:16:44] **AS:** But it's never too early because, again, like even if I'm not ready to like sift through those, that'll be just like a day where I sift through and like do my holiday gift guides. So it's never like annoying to me that people are pitching that because I love having as many products to kind of go through when I'm putting those together, so like two months in advance. I mean, Valentine's Day is a little bit different because like you don't really want to be receiving Valentine's Day stuff when you're already in the slog with like Christmas and stuff. But one or two months because, really, I mean, especially when you're buying things online, you need at least a month to shop through those things. So I like to get them out as soon as possible.

[00:17:17] **BB:** Do you also like to receive the actual products?

[00:17:20] **AS:** I mean, I'm never opposed.

[00:17:22] **BB:** Okay, okay.

[00:17:23] **AS:** But it depends. I mean, we're not like huge testing.

**[00:17:27] BB:** Yes. You're not a test facility type place. Yes.

**[00:17:30] AS:** So it's never like a huge necessity. There are some things that I think are helpful. I have a big candle roundup and perfume roundup and specific things that are really saturated spaces. I mean, there are like a million scents and candle brands that I do like being able to experience them, smell them. As many products as I include, I really don't like writing about something that sucks, obviously. I want to genuinely know liking the product.

I don't necessarily ever need to get something sent to me. But if they offer it to me and it's something that just would be helpful to experience. It also just like helps to write about it if you experience it, especially if you really, really like the product and you're using it. It's just like, "Oh, my God. That'll inspire me to –" One of my favorite things that I wrote about was the Solawave, which is a skincare ultra-red or infrared light skincare wand. I actually don't even think the brand sent it to me, but it was in our Power of Woman gift bag, and I got it.

That's just an example of a very expensive skincare device that I would never ever pay money for. I always think those things are hoaxes. But I actually ended up trying it, and I could not believe how much of a difference it made for my skin. I would never –

**[00:18:38] BB:** Really?

**[00:18:39] AS:** Whole story about something like that if it really didn't work with me. So that was an example of something being really helpful to actually have experienced and –

**[00:18:47] BB:** Just to be clear, you got it in a Variety gift bag.

**[00:18:51] AS:** Yes. I got it in a Variety gift bag and just so random. We have gift bags.

**[00:18:55] BB:** I see it here on the article. Yes. This little pink – it kind of looks like a razor with little dots on it.

**[00:19:00] AS:** It's so strange, and no one ever believes. I mean, I'm like the biggest proponent of this thing. I like – it's awesome with my like personality traits at this point. But it's huge because it's basically what every Hollywood star uses to prep their face before red carpet. So that's like a huge entertaining –

**[00:19:14] BB:** This thing? This little stick? Wow.

**[00:19:18] AS:** Yes. You basically like rub it on your face for like 20 minutes after you put like moisturizer on. It just **[inaudible 00:19:23]** your skin – or absorb all of your skin care product.

**[00:19:27] BB:** There's been a lot of these, yes, over the years and stuff. But, yes, they've gotten lots of coverage. Okay.

**[00:19:33] AS:** Yes.

**[00:19:34] BB:** Good to know. I'm on the link. Okay. Anna, I have a quick rapid-fire question series here if you're ready.

**[00:19:42] AS:** Okay, let's go.

**[00:19:43] BB:** Okay. Video or phone interview?

**[00:19:46] AS:** Video.

**[00:19:48] BB:** Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch?

**[00:19:51] AS:** Bullet points.

**[00:19:53] BB:** Short or long pitches?

**[00:19:55] AS:** Short.

**[00:19:56] BB:** How short?

[00:19:58] **AS:** I kind of like when like literally a couple sentences to like show if I'm interested. Then I can like say if I want more information or not.

[00:20:05] **BB:** Images attached or Dropbox zip file?

[00:20:08] **AS:** I'd say Dropbox, I think.

[00:20:10] **BB:** Okay. Email or DM?

[00:20:13] **AS:** Email, for sure.

[00:20:16] **BB:** One follow-up – yes, that's everyone's, I have to say. Siren in the background. I'm in the city. That's what's happening. Direct or creative subject lines?

[00:20:26] **AS:** Direct.

[00:20:27] **BB:** Press release or media kit?

[00:20:29] **AS:** Press release.

[00:20:31] **BB:** Time you prefer to read pitches? You talked a little bit about it.

[00:20:34] **AS:** Yes, morning.

[00:20:35] **BB:** Morning, ET time, as we talked about the other day.

[00:20:37] **AS:** Yes, yes. So if you're on the West Coast, sorry.

[00:20:40] **BB:** Yes. Sorry, we'll schedule that stuff. We all can schedule emails. Any preferences on sources right now?

[00:20:47] **AS:** Preference on sources.

**[00:20:50] BB:** Like is it stylists you want to hear from or just PR people who have celebrity clients or et cetera, et cetera?

**[00:20:58] AS:** Yes. I mean, I'm always interested in talking to hair stylists, makeup artists, people that are kind of behind the scenes that are very kind of hands-on with these products in the industry. But I'm also – it's always nice talking to like experts in the field. I'm trying to think of like an example. But for like an example, I'm working on a story right now kind of related to basic like social media stars going into comedy. So rather than just talking to the social media stars themselves, I'm interested in talking to kind of the people you wouldn't think about that are like in these venues, like whether they're just kind of like the ticket **[inaudible 00:21:36]**.

**[00:20:58] BB:** Like a **[inaudible 00:21:36]**. Yes.

**[00:21:38] AS:** Yes. People like that are in the space that like are kind of firsthand seeing these shows and change and vibe, but they're not necessarily the first person you would think to talk to. I think I always love when –

**[00:21:47] BB:** Interesting angle. Yes.

**[00:21:49] AS:** Yes. When articles just like include unexpected sources. I mean, it's just is always refreshing.

**[00:21:54] BB:** Unexpected sources. Okay. Anna, is there any that we can promote, celebrate, highlight for you in your fabulousness?

**[00:22:04] AS:** Nothing super specific, but I will say this year is going to be big for Variety e-comm.

**[00:22:11] BB:** Okay, okay. I like it.

**[00:22:13] AS:** We're trying to scale a little bit. I think for this year, I'm trying to get more into video content and longer-form content. So just look out. Go to [variety.com](https://www.variety.com). Hopefully, you'll see some more exciting e-comm content.

**[00:22:26] BB:** Excellent, Anna. Well, thanks for being on today, your first one, episode 199 for us.

**[00:22:31] AS:** I know. So exciting. Thank you so much for having me. This was wonderful.

**[00:22:36] BB:** Thanks, Miss Anna. Everyone, please remember, don't be asking Anna for random coffee if she's never met you. Go to the events where she will be seeing you and sussing you out. That's the best. Thank you, Anna.

**[00:22:47] AS:** Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:22:49] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode, featuring Anna Tingley from Variety. 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. But until then, start great stories.

[END]