

**EPISODE 204**

[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 today on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Conz Preti from Business Insider. As the Senior Editor for freelancers, Conz covers parenting, health, college life, and sex and relationships. During the episode, Conz talks about the juicy personal stories she writes about, a reliable source who works with clients to prepare stories before they land in her inbox, why she always agrees to embargos that are relevant to her beat, and more. Let's dive in.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:59] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. The reason we do this show is so that us publicists can know a little bit about our journalist friends and reporters and editors and all the people who make up the wild world of media, as it is a wild world. We all need to get along together, most importantly.

With us today, coming from Portland, Maine, not to be confused with the other one, is the Senior Editor for freelancers of Business Insider, Conz Preti. She is here with us now. Welcome, Conz. What's up?

**[00:01:34] CP:** Hi. Thank you for having me.

**[00:01:36] BB:** Yes, excited to chat with you. You're covering a lot of stuff at Business Insider, which used to be called Insider. Now, we're back to Business Insider. Real quick, for those who may not be as familiar, what would you say now encompasses everything for Business Insider?

**[00:01:52] CP:** I mean, we do a lot of things at Business Insider. Obviously, we cover business. We cover tech, markets. But we have a pretty robust lifestyle section also. I do mostly health,

parenting, college, sex and relationships, a little bit of travel. We also cover shopping, lifestyle, and everything in between. We do a lot.

**[00:02:15] BB:** It is a wide coverage area, absolutely. Okay. Specifically for you, you have a large coverage area. Is there anything that you're loving right now in particular that you really want to hear pitches from?

**[00:02:29] CP:** Yes. Interestingly, our audience is really into relationship content. I always say I cannot get enough sex and relationship pitches because people are very into either what they should be doing, what they should not be doing, red flags in a relationship, or just reading personal essays from people who like – recently, we had an essay from someone who was like, “I went on a trip with my boyfriend and realized there that he wasn't into me.” So kind of like juicy breakup stories as well.

**[00:02:58] BB:** Juicy breakup stories. Oh, I have to say I don't know what it is about those, but maybe it's like the pain or the identity of realizing like, “Oh, God. I've been there, too.” So maybe it's that that it resonates with people. I don't know. It's kind of fun.

**[00:03:11] CP:** Yes. All the sex and relationship pitches, I love them. I don't get enough.

**[00:03:15] BB:** Really? You want more.

**[00:03:17] CP:** You want more.

**[00:03:17] BB:** Okay. Let's talk about pitches then. First, how's your inbox?

**[00:03:22] CP:** Oh, it's a dumpster fire always. I try to reply to absolutely everyone.

**[00:03:28] BB:** Wow.

**[00:03:29] CP:** I mean, I'm going to admit this. I have pre-written answers, so I can be better at getting back to everyone. But I reply to everyone, whether it's accepting a story, wanting to know more about the story, or rejecting because I've been a freelancer also before. I know that getting

ghosted can feel weird. You never know if they're passing on it. They never read the email. I try to respond to absolutely everyone. I might not do it in a timely manner, but I will reply.

**[00:04:00] BB:** Well, that is heroic of you to try to get back to all these. Do you have a filing system, something that you do it all to go back to pitches months later, weeks later?

**[00:04:12] CP:** If I feel like a pitch is interesting but I don't have the time right now to get into it, let's say, because whatever, something in the news and we're focusing on something else, I will leave it in my inbox. I will mark it as unread. I used to be an inbox-zero person. Just seeing unread messages gives me anxiety, so I will get to them faster that way.

**[00:04:37] BB:** Okay. How is that inbox zero-ish going at all?

**[00:04:42] CP:** Right now, I only have 16 unread, so I guess –

**[00:04:45] BB:** That's good. That's pretty good.

**[00:04:46] CP:** Pretty good.

**[00:04:47] BB:** That's pretty good. Okay. Thank you for sharing that. Now, you just mentioned, “Hey, I cannot get enough of the sex and relationship type of pitches.” What's a pitch that stands out to you, though, on that topic or any topic really?

**[00:05:00] CP:** Good question. The first thing that is going to sort of get my attention is the subject line. I love when it starts with pitch, so I know what's coming.

**[00:05:12] BB:** Really?

**[00:05:13] CP:** So I know it's directed at me, and it's not just a mass blast email.

**[00:05:19] BB:** Oh, like just spelled out in all caps in the subject line?

**[00:05:22] CP:** Yes. If you want all caps, go for it. Yes, absolutely. Then give me a little bit of what we're going to get in the email. I have an example here that is a good **[inaudible 00:05:34]** pitch.

**[00:05:33] BB:** Yes. Thank you.

**[00:05:36] CP:** “My 13-year-old son is the only one of his friends without a smartphone.” I knew that we're talking about a teenager. I know phones are a big thing for teenagers, and he is the only one in his group of friends. I immediately want to know more.

**[00:05:51] BB:** Wow. Yes. By the way, that whole line fit on the subject line.

**[00:05:56] CP:** That whole line fit on the subject line, yes.

**[00:05:57] BB:** Oh, dang. Okay. Specific pitch called out in caps right there. What is the narrative of this thing? Okay. Then when you open up that pitch, what do you want to see in a pitch?

**[00:06:10] CP:** I want to see a little bit more about the story. Give me a little bit more context, why it matters now, right? In this example, the person said – this is a pitch that I actually accepted. She says, “I want to write about why we've chosen to delay giving him a smartphone, including my own experience of feeling addicted to mine.” There's like more layers to the story. Then it ends with who this person is and some of their sample writings.

Also, just to be clear, if this is the first time that you're writing, I don't care about your previous clips not necessary. If you have them, share them, great. But if you've never written before, that doesn't disqualify you from pitching me.

**[00:06:58] BB:** Okay. Good to know. Now, that pitch that you were talking about is someone who's seeking to write it like a by-line. This is a freelancer, so this isn't a pitch from necessarily a PR person. What's the breakdown of freelancer pitches because you're an editor versus just PR folks?

**[00:07:18] CP:** Good question. I think it's probably like 70% writers, 30% PR. I've worked a lot with PR in the past. I'm always like ask – when I get, let's say, a product pitch or a company pitch, I'm like, “Okay, but what is the story behind the founders, or why did the founders decided to create this?” I always feel like there's a really interesting story. People have really interesting stories beyond sort of like their business pitch. That is what I'm most interested in. We can talk a little bit about the company, but I want to know what human connection we can pull out of the story that my audience is going to be into.

I get a lot of pitches of like, “There's a new podcast coming out,” or, “Here's this new newsletter by this famous author.” I'm like, “Well, I can't really cover that. But this person probably has a really interesting story. Why don't we talk about that and then sort of put a line or two about their new launch or their new whatever into that story?”

**[00:08:26] BB:** Okay. Then process-wise, how do you batch out, let's say, a PR pitch that you're like, “Ooh, okay. I like this. Okay, I want to give it to one of my reporters, though.”? What does that look like? I think this is the murky world of like, “Ooh, editors.” It's like, “How are they doing the traffic control over here?”

**[00:08:44] CP:** Right. Because so many of my stories are essays usually or reported essays, we try to have the person write it, right? For example, we're working now with a couple podcasters in the parenting world, and they were like, “We actually don't have the bandwidth to write it.” We're like, “Okay, great. I have a reporter who is excellent doing as told tos. That means that she will interview them and then write it in first person, as if it was them writing the story.” We will, obviously, put in the story this is an as told to. It was told to this reporter, et cetera, et cetera.

That is the workaround that we found for sort of the stories that I do which are essays. We also, obviously, have a ton of reporters in-house. I have a correspondent who works mostly on parenting and health stories. We would use her for more sort of in-depth reported pieces, not necessarily, like I said, a human connection story.

**[00:09:44] BB:** Okay. Is there something that bugs you about publicists?

**[00:09:47] CP:** I get a lot of subject lines that says timely pitch, and there's nothing **[inaudible 00:09:52]** about it. **[inaudible 00:09:53]** to get the story out. That kind of irks me. Yeah

**[00:10:02] BB:** Oh, God. Okay. What is it? It's just because you're like, "That is not timely. That happened seven months ago."

**[00:10:07] CP:** Right. It's like timely pitch, and then I might not recognize the name and be like, "Ooh, this might be something really interesting." Then I open and it's like, "A new crib has launched." I'm like, "Oh. Well, no. That's –"

**[00:10:19] BB:** Yes. That's not. Okay. So untimely pitches which are packaged as timely. Okay. Anything else?

**[00:10:26] CP:** No. Let's go into what I love.

**[00:10:27] BB:** Yes. Let's – yes. Something positive.

**[00:10:30] CP:** Another thing I love, there's one PR person that I work with a lot. She will pitch me and say, "I have already gone ahead and asked my client to write sort of a couple paragraphs for you to get a sense of where she's going." She sent me that. Nine times out of 10, I will accept her pitches because she works with the client before coming to me to make sure that it is a Business Insider story, that it has our tone, it has sort of the flow that we're looking for. Then we just – yes. It's just easy from there.

**[00:11:06] BB:** She shows you not the whole thing but the snippet, the like, "Hey, I've already punted this down the field. You know me. It's looking good." Yes.

**[00:11:15] CP:** Yes. It's usually – she works a lot with experts. For example, this one that I'm talking about that comes to mind now is a water safety expert. So the whole pieces about how parents need to prepare themselves for water safety. This person has a personal story related to why she became a water safety expert. That's what I mean, where we can lean into someone's story and showcase what they do.

**[00:11:47] BB:** Okay.

[BREAK]

**[00:11:51] 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]

**[00:12:14] BB:** You mentioned experts. We also talked about, oh, yes, okay, the sex and relationship story narratives. But do you have a little roster of experts you're always looking for on speed dial?

**[00:12:26] CP:** We're always looking for pediatricians, just because we do a lot of parenting content, pediatricians and child psychologists. We do a lot of – for example, let's say some celebrity. Here's an example. Mila Kunis said that she didn't bathe her kids every week. It was like a big –

**[00:12:42] BB:** Yes, yes. I remember that. It was weird.

**[00:12:45] CP:** What we did was like, "Okay, she said this." We went to a couple pediatricians and said, "What do you think?" The story was like, "Mila Kunis doesn't bathe her kids on a regular basis." Three pediatricians agree that it's not necessary. I can't remember exactly what story was.

**[00:12:59] BB:** Oh. Three out of how many?

**[00:13:01] CP:** I mean, I made that headline up. I can't remember if it was three, whatever. Basically, the story was pediatricians were agreeing with her that kids didn't need to be bathed as often.

**[00:13:08] BB:** Got you. Got you. Got you.

**[00:13:10] CP:** We do a lot of those stories where we see something trending, either because it's celeb or influencer said or did or whatever. Then we go to a pediatrician. We go to experts and we're like –

**[00:13:21] BB:** What's up?

**[00:13:21] CP:** Hey, what do you think about this? We want to expand the story, right? We don't want to just cover what everyone else is covering of like so and so said and did this. We want to be able to give our audience more actionable info of like, “Okay, I remember that she did this, but I shouldn't be doing it or I should be doing it.”

**[00:13:41] BB:** Okay. Anyone else that you're like, “Oh, God. I need to have those people on here.”?

**[00:13:45] CP:** No, I think –

**[00:13:45] BB:** I need them on my list. No?

**[00:13:46] CP:** I think those two are the ones that we're always scrambling to get. Also, I mean, we do a lot of women's health, also just gynecologists and, yes, the endocrinologist, stuff like that because cover a lot of infertility, IVF. We're starting to do more perimenopause because our audience is aging. There's not enough information about perimenopause out in the world, so yes.

**[00:14:11] BB:** There is not. I feel a lot of startups are starting to poke around on that and trying to figure that out, so there's that. Okay. What's a day in the life of you like? Walk us through a little bit. This is more of a popular question people want to start asking so that's why I want to poke you on this.

**[00:14:27] CP:** I try to frontload my weeks with all my meetings.



**[00:14:31] BB:** Smart.

**[00:14:32] CP:** An easier rest of the week. I failed this week. I have so many meetings this week. It's insane. But I usually – Monday and Tuesday to have all my team meetings and start doing rearrangement of stories, depending on what worked on the weekend, right? So the weekends. One Monday, the first thing I do is I look at the stories that work for the weekend. Do we need to prioritize any stories that we have in similar themes because they're working? Should we punt stories that are very similar to later because they flopped? Kind of like do a strategic look at that.

My team publishes anywhere from four to eight stories a day, so I will definitely be doing some editing and replying to emails. I try to block time to do a lot of editing in the morning where I'm most focused and then replying to emails in the afternoon because if I don't look at my inbox for a day, it just explodes. I get about 100 pitches a day, and that's not counting blast emails of new products or events happening or stuff like that.

**[00:15:39] BB:** Okay. What about relationship-building with you? You're not in New York City where it's like, “Oh, I can get a coffee anytime.” Do you want to build relationships with publicists or freelancers? How would you say?

**[00:15:51] CP:** Absolutely.

**[00:15:52] BB:** Oh, good. Tell us more.

**[00:15:53] CP:** Like I said, I love working with people that have worked in the past because it makes just the whole thing easier. Not that I don't want to work with new people. I'm always looking to meet new people, but just being able to have those relationships and being able to be like, “No, this one's not for me. But next time, let me know.” It is harder. I used to be in New York. I was in New York for 10 years, and then I had a toddler, and then I got pregnant with twins. I was like **[inaudible 00:16:15]**. We had three dogs. It was a lot of –

**[00:16:20] BB:** Okay, yes. That's – yes, yes, yes.

**[00:16:22] CP:** I miss that aspect of New York but always down for like a virtual coffee. I know it's not the same. It's not as fun.

**[00:16:27] BB:** Yes, not the same. But that's okay.

**[00:16:30] CP:** Yes. I also have connected with a lot of PR people through social media. Obviously, working in the parenting world for as long as I have, we've all had kids around the same age or even now some of the people who – when I was at my previous role in another company, which was mostly focused for moms, I was getting a lot of product pitches. Now, those people who are pitching me are having their own kids. Now, they're like, “Hey, do you have any advice on what to do?”

**[00:16:58] BB:** Oh, how fun. Come back around. Look at that.

**[00:17:02] CP:** Yes. I also connect a lot on, especially on Instagram. I'm most active on Instagram, and I love it. But, yes, virtual coffee, sending some time to chat. Always welcome. Some weeks are just so chaotic that I'll just be like no.

**[00:17:14] BB:** No. It's just not a no.

**[00:17:15] CP:** Yes.

**[00:17:16] BB:** By the way, so for those, what is the pitch for that? “Hey, do you want to get on a virtual coffee with me? Is that fine with you, Conz?” Yes?

**[00:17:22] CP:** Yes. It can be like, “I have –”

**[00:17:25] BB:** I have X, Y, and Z client perhaps.

**[00:17:26] CP:** Exactly, yes. I want to talk about potential stories for this and this and also know what you're working on or what you want to work more on or stuff like that.

**[00:17:36] BB:** Okay. She's open to the virtual coffee. Excellent.

**[00:17:40] CP:** Now I'm going to be inundated. Now, I'm going to like –

**[00:17:41] BB:** Oh, you might, so you got to be careful on the show. Is there ever a chance for, this is a thing people just want to know, too, exclusives, embargos? Is that ever interesting? I know for Business Insider, yes, for some areas. But for you –

**[00:17:57] CP:** It depends. Let's say it's a product. I'm probably going to kick it to our reviews team. But if – now, I'm trying to – we've had a couple of embargos but I can't – I think it was more on book launches that they just gave us a passage that we could run on.

**[00:18:17] BB:** Oh, I see. Here's a – yes, yes. Got it.

**[00:18:19] CP:** I've done a lot of those, but I always say yes. I agree to embargos, just because I want to make sure that it's not a fit. When it comes to like, “Bluey has a new season,” well, our audience is not going to really care about, even though they love –

**[00:18:34] BB:** They're probably watching it. Yes, yes.

**[00:18:38] CP:** That's not the kind of story the Business Insider would do.

**[00:18:40] BB:** Yes, noted. Okay. Conz, I have a list of some rapid-fire questions. Are you ready?

**[00:18:46] CP:** I am ready.

**[00:18:47] BB:** Let's see here. Video or phone interview?

**[00:18:51] CP:** Phone.

**[00:18:52] BB:** Bullet points or paragraphs?

**[00:18:55] CP:** A mix of both.

[00:18:57] **BB:** Okay. A mix of both. Okay. Short or long pitches?

[00:19:00] **CP:** Short. I prefer short than long. Yes.

[00:19:02] **BB:** Got you. How short?

[00:19:04] **CP:** Let's say like two short paragraphs.

[00:19:07] **BB:** Images attached or Dropbox zip file?

[00:19:10] **CP:** Attached.

[00:19:11] **BB:** Email or XDM or any DM of any sort?

[00:19:15] **CP:** For pitches, email only. I will forget about pitches –

[00:19:20] **BB:** Anything else. Yes. One follow-up or multiple?

[00:19:23] **CP:** Multiple because, my inbox situation.

[00:19:27] **BB:** Yes, yes, Okay. Direct or creative subject lines?

[00:19:31] **CP:** Creative.

[00:19:32] **BB:** Creative. Okay.

[00:19:35] **CP:** Yes.

[00:19:36] **BB:** Could you elaborate on that because that's a rare answer? You want to hear that little snippet of a story we just heard with the son, the 13-year-old who doesn't have a phone?

**[00:19:44] CP:** Yes. I also had examples of bad.

**[00:19:48] BB:** Oh. Please share, please share. Don't mention names, of course. We never do that. But, yes, what do you got?

**[00:19:54] CP:** I have one that says, "New pitches, Disney and more." I'm like, "What?" I know nothing about what I'm getting into. There was another one that only said timely pitch, nothing else, which we kind of talked about.

**[00:20:08] BB:** That was the whole subject line, by the way? Tell us the pitch.

**[00:20:09] CP:** That was it.

**[00:20:10] BB:** No, no. That's hard. No.

**[00:20:13] CP:** Then another one that said, "Solo travel client submission." Again, I know nothing. I don't know who your client is. I don't know why Business Insider would care. I think a better way for that one would be pitch, and I'm going to make this one up, woman has traveled to all countries by herself and shares her tips on how to solo travel. I would click on that. That is more creative, right? That's what I mean by creative. I don't need a joke. I don't need a pun. But I need more of like you at least look at what Business Insider would like, and you try to emulate that.

**[00:20:50] BB:** Okay. Thank you for those samples. We like it. Thanks for the exploration on creative versus timely pitch. Press release or media kit?

**[00:21:02] CP:** Press release.

**[00:21:04] BB:** Okay. Any particular time for pitches that you read?

**[00:21:07] CP:** You can pitch me at any time of the day, but don't pitch me on a weekend because when I come back in on Monday –

**[00:21:16] BB:** Oh, it's gone.

**[00:21:17] CP:** It's exploding and it's going to take me forever. I like midweek pitches more so than – don't pitch me late on a Friday because I'm not going to –

**[00:21:28] BB:** Yes. Who – No. Yes. That's not going to work. That's not going to work. Okay. We did cover this with the sources, but is there anything more on the sources or experts or something at all you want to hear?

**[00:21:39] CP:** I mean, look. I –

**[00:21:40] BB:** That's not pediatricians, but yes.

**[00:21:41] CP:** I love an expert that can expand the story. We recently had someone who was a funeral home director for 11 years write a piece about what people get wrong about what happens after we die, so technically an expert. We've never had someone like her writing for us, and our audience loved it. I'm open to all experts if they want to sort of expand on a story or come with a different approach.

We do use more pediatricians, child psychologists, relationship therapists, and stuff like that, just by the nature of the stuff that we publish. But I'm here for other experts. If you do a quick Google search, you can see, “Oh, has Business Insider ever worked with TK expert?” If we haven't, then that's a great pitch to pitch me your client because we can experiment and see what happens.

**[00:22:40] BB:** Conz, do you have any last things you want to promote, highlight, celebrate, et cetera?

**[00:22:46] CP:** I mean, like I said, I'm always here for pitches and ideas. If I reject a pitch or a client or something, don't take it personally. Just like I said, I get over 100 pitches a day, and sometimes people are like, “But why?” I'm like, “Well, if I had time to explain to everyone why, then I wouldn't be doing my job.” So don't take it personally.

**[00:23:05] BB:** Move on. Move on.

**[00:23:07] CP:** Move on. I get it. You're trying to get your –

**[00:23:11] BB:** Feedback. Yes.

**[00:23:13] CP:** In front of as many eyeballs as possible and also giving them feedback. But I just want to make it clear that it's not personal ever. It's more so, also, sometimes we're very into some stories, and then our focus moves into something else. I wish I could share our strategy behind, but I can't. Sometimes, I pass on stories that people think are a perfect fit. I'm like, "Sorry, I can't because it's just not right now."

**[00:23:37] BB:** Speaking of not right now, it's just it's the wrong week. It's that wrong month. Luck is part of this game.

**[00:23:43] CP:** Totally, totally.

**[00:23:44] BB:** You're wasting your time. Yes. Conz, thanks for being here today.

**[00:23:48] CP:** Thank you for having me.

**[00:23:48] BB:** All the way from the little corner up in Maine, in Portland. Not to be confused with the other Portland, everybody. So no real coffee but virtual coffee she's open. She's open.

**[00:24:00] CP:** That's right.

**[00:24:01] BB:** By the way, I hope you don't email me in like a month and get back, "Oh, my God. I had 92 virtual coffees." Everybody, calm down, calm down. Yes, it can be done. It can be done. Make sure you include pitch in the actual pitch subject line. Good tip. Good tip. Thanks, Conz. Have a great rest of the day.

**[00:24:21] CP:** Thank you. You, too.

**[00:24:23] BB:** See you. Bye.

**[00:24:24] CP:** Bye-bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:24:25] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode, featuring Conz Preti from Business Insider. 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]