

**EPISODE 210**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:10] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. Are you looking for a more efficient way to find and pitch the right journalists? Head to our website at [OnePitch.co](https://OnePitch.co) to learn more.

Our guest on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Farrell Evans, freelance journalist from Inc. and Sports Illustrated. As a freelance journalist, Farrell covers a range of topics including business, golf, history, and race. During the episode, Farrell discusses exactly how to catch his attention in your outreach as well as what to call it in your pitch, what he looks for in a solid publicist, and more. Let's dive in.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:00:48.6] BB:** Welcome everyone, this is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger and we do this little show because we want publicists, i.e., myself, to know how to better work with journalists, editors, reporters, freelance writers, all the great people in media that make our job actually happen and hopefully, our relationships to be better and better.

So, that's what we're trying to solve on this little show, and it's going quite well because today, we have Farrell Evans who is here. He's a full-time freelance journalist, contributing to Inc., Sports Illustrated, a multitude of outlets, which we will get into. So first, Farrell, welcome and hello.

**[0:01:28.5] FE:** Great to be here, thank you.

**[0:01:29.8] BB:** Yes, thank you for being here. Okay. So, Farrell, when we've had freelancers on here, it's an extra notch of complexity I feel because you need to be pitching your stories sometimes and then you're also receiving pitches from publicists. So, why don't we start with all the outlets that you do contribute to, so people are understanding of that?

**[0:01:54.9] FE:** Okay. So, I contribute regularly to Inc. Magazine, ESPN Andscape, the History Channel, and Sports Illustrated.

**[0:02:09.7] BB:** Quite a lot. What about Golf Magazine as well? Are we still doing that?

**[0:02:13.8] FE:** Not Golf Magazine, not much **[inaudible 0:02:16.0]** yep.

**[0:02:16.6] BB:** Okay. Have in the past though, so that's good to know, and yes, perfect. Okay, and then how's your inbox, and how you manage pitches in there?

**[0:02:26.3] FE:** Well, you know, I get a lot of – you know, more recently, in the last year where I've been writing regularly for Inc. Magazine, I get a lot of pitches from publicists, you know, for companies that they're representing and so I might get, you know, I might get as many as a dozen pitches a week.

**[0:02:46.8] BB:** Okay, oh, a dozen. Only a dozen? This is fantastic but a dozen can be a lot. So, how do you manage pitches and what you receive from publicists?

**[0:02:57.3] FE:** Well, very often, for me, I can tell how closely they read my work and I can just tell if a lot of them are like, very like, you know, brand, product specific. So, if they've seen that I have done a – in the case of Inc., they can see that I've done a cosmetics company or – and they'll say, "Well, I've got a good founder here who has a cosmetics company." And so, if this is a sports product, then I'll get a lot of pitches but they come like, I'll say, 12 to 20 a week.

**[0:03:34.2] BB:** Which isn't too crazy when I've had publicists or excuse me, journalists on here and they get 200 a day at top frequency, so there's a lot. Now, you mentioned you were saying, you could tell how closely someone is actually reading your work. What are the clues to that? Because so many publicists, unfortunately, do spraying and praying, which we know is a big no-no, basically copy and paste of the pitch, which clearly shows I haven't looked at any of your stuff but there's other kinds of sneaky ways.

So, curious what you determine as, "Ah, this person has not looked at my stuff." Or at least not in a while, yeah.

**[0:04:11.8] FE:** So, for example, and you look at my Inc. stories, they are all – 99% of them are founders of color and you know, lots of different products and businesses and so forth but they are primary like products of color, and they spent any time with like, looking at my work and my work is all over the Internet. Anybody who reads me knows that like, I write a lot about the intersection of race and sports.

I write about the intersection of race in business, I write about African-American history. So, a good publicist who is trying to pitch me something, in that first paragraph, they're going to immediately let me know that, "You know what, Farrell? I see these are the kinds of stories that you write. This is a sweet area for you, you know, I have a good pitch." And immediately, I know that this isn't somebody just wasting my time.

This is somebody that kinds of know, so I've got an African American founder of a business and they're trying to get me to write for Inc. Magazine. They're going to tell me, "Okay, here's their product, here's how important the product is, have they rescaled." So, immediately, I think sometimes, the pitches I get are so long and I think that's just sort of like, to your point where there just cutting and pasting.

He is doing the kind of stories that he has written and I needed to make sure that when I engage Farrell, I'm super focused.

**[0:05:51.5] BB:** What do you mean by too long, by the way, with the pitch?

**[0:05:55.1] FE:** Well, get to the heart of the matter of why this is a good story for me to do. Why is it a good story for me to do? If you can't do that in like, an index card's worth of space, I'm probably not going to be able to pitch it to my editor because my editor doesn't want that much information. I've got to be able to distill that. So, I need the publicist to distill that for me, to help me.

**[0:06:25.7] BB:** Yes, distill it down, just get it down. Farrell, will you walk us through now, your pitch process when you're taking a story up to bat for your editors and so forth? Because this is what I was alluding to earlier, which is when you're dealing with freelancers or maybe deputy

editors who are kind of all-com basis, it's not like you necessarily getting a sign, "Hey, you got to give this four stories done by this week" or something like that.

Sometimes you have to pitch the stories. So, how does that look for you with Inc. for example? And other outlets if you want to expand.

**[0:07:00.2] FE:** Any story, like, I'm writing, I'm going to the Masters in a few weeks for Andscape, I have to pitch relevant stories to the Masters and to the mission of the media outlet I'm writing for. For example, Andscape is ESPN's site, which focuses on primarily like, black culture and sports.

**[0:07:22.4] BB:** Thank you for describing, yup.

**[0:07:24.4] FE:** I'm not going to pitch a story about a white golfer at the Masters to the Andscape. So, I'm tailoring my pitches for my editor to exactly the areas that I know that the organization is going to focus on. My pitches are hyper-tailored and focused, and also, to what I know will be the important themes and things that people will be talking about. So, I write a lot of history.

So, I'm thinking about, "How can I write a piece for the Masters that I haven't done before, that is going to work and is going to work for the Andscape audience but also be a Masters story that everybody's going to read?" With Andscape, I'm focused on particular kinds of founders and so when I'm pitching my editor, "Here's the founder, here's our business, how do they scale, how much money have they raised, what are their growth prospects."

"What is the good story around the founder? What are some of the things that we're going to learn from this founder that are readership will care about?" I'm thinking, very hyper-focused on how I'm presenting, I'm distilling everything down to where an editor can almost see, "Okay."

**[0:08:55.1] BB:** Here's the piece, here's how it's going to unveil.

**[0:08:58.0] FE:** Here's even a headline and a sub-hit.

**[0:09:00.2] BB:** Oh, and you're getting text messages, Farrell, see? I hear the dings, you're busy.

**[0:09:05.9] FE:** Absolutely. Always, as we speak right now, I'm trying to come up with a story, you know, that's just the business, you know?

**[0:09:16.1] BB:** So how – you're mentioning your pitching in a succinct way so that your editors can go, “Yes, I see the story, I can see how it unfurls.” Are you actually using like, bullet points of yourself or how are you doing that pitch or is it like on a call?

**[0:09:30.8] FE:** No-no, oh, no-no-no. No-no-no, this is all written. These are all emails where an editor can see exactly what I'm thinking. Sort of the anatomy, the architecture of the piece in a very clear, I've been doing this for almost 30 years. So –

**[0:09:50.4] BB:** Yeah, just a little bit.

**[0:09:52.6] FE:** Yeah, so very practiced at – and then, it's also getting to know the editor and understanding sort of like, editors are very different but I set the tone for what they can expect in terms of a pitch. I have a very kind of clear formula for how I pitch, how relevant is it, it can't just be anybody, you know?

**[0:10:13.6] BB:** Exactly.

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**[0:10:17.6] 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 CONTINUED]

**[0:10:41.1] BB:** Okay, so one thing we always cover here speaking of your relationships with your editors is how can publicists make a better relationship with you. Do you entertain any publicist in terms of building a relationship with you and how does that look like?

**[0:10:56.6] FE:** You know, absolutely. I think, you know, right now I love a good publicist. A good publicist is responsive, they organize the interviews. Any kind of background that I don't get from the subject after the interview they could fill on those blanks. I think right now with any writing about like founders, there are hundreds of venture capital funds out there who has publicists who represent their portfolio company.

**[0:11:31.7] BB:** Yes, I know this very well, Farrell, because that's what we do, yep.

**[0:11:36.5] FE:** And so if you're a publicist out there, you know, "Hey, here's a guy who is super focused, focuses on founders of color, entrepreneurs who are venture-backed or who are further along in their business, they've scaled, they're growing, they have news, and those are the kind of people that I want to have relationships with, who know exactly what I need and who know that their focus weighs in which I operate."

**[0:12:06.7] BB:** So, you're saying, okay, the response time is great and so forth but for you and you're in New York City, do you want to ever go to coffee with people? Do you ever want to get a cocktail or you're just like, "Hey, just be responsive" or an email?

**[0:12:18.4] FE:** I'm more about like engagement like you know, I'm not averse to meeting up, you know, with someone especially if you've got a bunch of companies whether it's for Inc. or somebody else or different kind of stores but if you're pitching particularly to me, I want you to understand very clearly the kinds of stories that I write and stay in touch with me. Like, just stay in touch, send me a personal note.

The thing I don't like when I get – just show you the cut and paste and they just put my name up there but they sent this out to 50 people.

**[0:12:54.5] BB:** Yeah, that's not appealing.

**[0:12:56.3] FE:** Or a hundred or whatever. I mean, I know that's a part of business but –

**[0:13:00.0] BB:** But you know it's not for you. You know that email was not an email for you, Farrell. It's an email to whoever answers this.

**[0:13:07.0] FE:** Exactly. Exactly, but you can be very personal with me. You're writing to me and just sort of stay in touch and like I say, being responsive. If the founder isn't ready to do a story just send me a note and just say, "You know, he or she can't, is not ready to." But what I don't like is just to be ignored.

**[0:13:26.4] BB:** Yeah, that's an ultimate nail in the coffin for I think how you will not work with the publicist again if you mention that or if you do that. I want to say too, so I do writing for Forbes just as a contributor for luxury hotels. Like this is just my fun hobby, I'm just over there doing it. Obviously, I am a publicist full-time on the tech side but one person yesterday and I know them, did the loveliest thing.

It was like, "Oh, hey, Beck. Hey, here's our client list, and by the way, here are the four new ones we have." And I was like, "Oh, this is so great." And she like, highlighted, like it said new, new, new, so I could see what is new versus what have you told me about or whatever. Oh, I just appreciated it, and was it you know, also blasted out to maybe a lot of people? And perhaps but she had like some specific notes on things.

I was like, "That's so great." So, to your point about like staying in touch, send me a little personal note, what are you doing, what's new, that's what I would want to hear is like, "Well, what's new in your roster of clients?" Not just, "Oh yeah, same thing, nothing new here." It's like, huh, why are you emailing me?

**[0:14:27.4] FE:** Exactly, and sort of just – and sort of staying in, you know, staying in touch. If anybody sends me a pitch and they know my work, they'll know the kinds of stories that I tell and they'll say, "Hey, I got this person" whatever, an athlete, a family story, or whatever, has a social kind of impact or race or whatever, I'm more likely to engage that person and then they're going to put me in a position and say, "Farrell, you, this is a perfect story for you to pitch to one of your editors."

**[0:15:02.6] BB:** And then you can take it from there.

**[0:15:04.7] FE:** Yeah, you take it from there, like this isn't like 1985. Everything is online now, anybody can look at any writer they're trying to – any publicists –

**[0:15:14.3] BB:** Exactly, it's not hard.

**[0:15:16.4] FE:** So, this last Inc. story I did on a **[inaudible 0:15:18.9]** it was an AI-related story. So, all of a sudden, I got –

**[0:15:23.4] BB:** Always everyone, oh no, because you were mentioning here this biotech founder wants to use AI to help get drug market faster but now if you read the piece, you see, “Okay, this is a female, black female identifying I believe, as you point out in the article. Like you're consistent with it, it's not like you just changed AI beats.

**[0:15:41.8] FE:** Right, so I get a whole bunch of AI, a whole bunch of like publicity people looking at me on LinkedIn on AI in the healthcare space and that's fun but like think about particularly what I'm focused on this person. You know, she has a great product, I also write about founders of color, who as you know somebody who comes into the tech space and see a very small amount of the BC.

I care about that and I write about that and I include a lot of founders. I have many colleagues who are freelancers who are not as focused as I am but I think the more focus – it's actually working with somebody like me is easier than working for a publicist and working with other people who are just all over the place.

**[0:16:32.1] BB:** Yeah. It's a good thing to focus on because then I know exactly what to pitch a particular writer. So you, and back to that story with the AI thing, anyone who spent a minute, maybe 30 seconds even looking at the curriculum of your Inc. articles would go, “Oh, there is a certain type of profile going on here with this particular Inc. writer, who clearly is not writing only about AI because look at all the other aspects and all the people he's highlighting about.”



You could deduce it easily. So, it's just, I would say, people need to do their homework than sending you all that AI crap. Well, that's why we're here on this show, Farrell, it's to demystify and educate those lovely publicists of us who maybe need these pointers because it's so important for building good relationships. I do have this rapid-fire question little part, Farrell, that I'm going to give to you if that sounds good and then we can wrap it up. Are you ready?

**[0:17:25.4] FE:** Yes, yes.

**[0:17:26.2] BB:** Okay. Video or phone interview?

**[0:17:29.2] FE:** Doesn't matter.

**[0:17:29.7] BB:** Doesn't matter? Bullet points or paragraphs in pitches?

**[0:17:34.3] FE:** Bullet points.

**[0:17:34.7] BB:** Images attached or Dropbox zip file?

**[0:17:38.6] FE:** Images attached.

**[0:17:39.8] BB:** Email or Twitter DM? Or X DM, or whatever DM?

**[0:17:43.0] FE:** Email.

**[0:17:43.6] BB:** Okay, one follow-up or multiple?

**[0:17:46.2] FE:** Multiple.

**[0:17:47.7] BB:** Multiple? How many?

**[0:17:48.8] FE:** At least two.

[0:17:49.6] **BB:** Okay, at least two. Just to get your attention, okay. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:17:55.8] **FE:** Direct.

[0:17:56.4] **BB:** Press release or media kit?

[0:17:58.5] **FE:** Press release.

[0:17:59.5] **BB:** Is there a time you read pitches?

[0:18:02.3] **FE:** Early in the morning.

[0:18:02.7] **BB:** Early in the morning. What's early, by the way, for you? You're a New Yorker so, nine?

[0:18:07.0] **FE:** Seven.

[0:18:07.3] **BB:** Seven?

[0:18:08.2] **FE:** Seven.

[0:18:08.5] **BB:** Seven, gosh, great, and then, any sources you're particularly looking for right now?

[0:18:14.2] **FE:** Sources, what do you mean sources?

[0:18:16.6] **BB:** Eh, just in your case, it might be quite different but like, any experts you got to want to talk to. So, sometimes people are like, "Oh, you know, I want biochemists who have Ph.D. in whatever" or "I need AI experts who have been lecturing about it for 10 years at least."

[0:18:33.7] **FE:** Any founders of color, entrepreneurs, venture-backed.

[0:18:38.3] **BB:** Venture-backed, founders of color. Boom.

[0:18:41.1] **FE:** Yeah, people who have scaled, who are growing their businesses.

[0:18:45.2] **BB:** Perfect. Farrell, is there anything you want to emphasize, highlight, tout, just, how can we celebrate you? You have a nonprofit, for example, we maybe want to plug that.

[0:18:56.8] **FE:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, Momentum Golf. You know, somebody who is committed – I mean, you could do that but I'm really somebody who is a committed storyteller, and every story I tell is just sort of like, there's an impact and I want to write about people who are making an impact and tell the stories that changed lives and that are meaningful and that are addressing past wrongs and I write with a social conscious.

[0:19:21.7] **BB:** I write with a social conscious.

[0:19:24.0] **FE:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sure.

[0:19:25.3] **BB:** Farrell, thank you. Thank you for being on here for today. Everyone, this is Farrell Evans, pitch him compelling things that are people changing the world, please.

[0:19:35.1] **FE:** Absolutely, absolutely.

[0:19:37.8] **BB:** Please, that are venture-backed, growing companies, people of color, we want to hear it. So, there you go.

[0:19:42.4] **FE:** And they can be in sports, they can be in business, medicine.

[0:19:47.8] **BB:** There you go, the whole array.

[0:19:49.9] **FE:** But compelling.

[0:19:50.7] **BB:** There you go, compelling. Thank you so much, Farrell, I appreciate it.

**[0:19:55.0] FE:** Bye-bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:19:27.1] BB:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode, featuring Farrell Evans, Freelance Journalist from Inc. and Sports Illustrated. For more exclusive insights about the journalists on this podcast, subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter at [onepitch.co/](https://onepitch.co/) podcast. We'll see you next week but until then, start great stories.

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