

EPISODE 213

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:09] 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 to learn more.

Our guest on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Beth Gillette. Beth is a beauty editor at Cosmopolitan where she covers skincare, makeup, hair, nails, and more across digital and print. During today's episode, Beth discusses her go-to e-mail organization tactics, hello folders, and specific rules. Her favorite story she's ever written and how it came to be, as well as why sit-downs with PR pros help her learn more about who they represent, and how they tick, and vice versa. Let's dive in.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:55] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, and we are on this show to help publicist learn how to make better relationships with all of our media friends, and colleagues, and so forth, because we all need to work better together. That is the name of the game, in publicity, and this wonderful world of PR.

With me today, coming straight from New York, where I am also based on this fabulous 70-degree spring day, oh my, is Beth Gillette. She's the beauty editor of cosmopolitan, and we're going to be talking about all things beauty and pitches galore. I'm sure. Hi, Beth. Thanks for being here.

[0:01:35] BG: Yay. Hi. Thank you so much for having me.

[0:01:38] BB: Oh, we are excited, because also, what a fun freaking beat. I can only imagine. So, first, Beth, I like to ask this for every outlet that's on here, just to be clear, and to also hear just straight from reporters, or editors, or freelancers, whomever the media person is. How would you describe Cosmopolitan, especially these days? Because things have quite evolved.

[0:02:00] BG: Yes. Cosmo is essentially just like your very, very cool best friend who is extremely smart and witty, but like is with the times and knows everything. I love Cosmo so much. I was a reader. Then, I fell very deeply in the demographic of the reader before I joined the team. Being on the inside, I see so much about how we just want to like provide a service, and be there for people, and do it in a way that feels really authentic.

[0:02:38] BB: I can hear a little honk in the background. Definitely, you're in New York. Okay. You're talking about authentic, and I love for example, you have this piece with your face. Can chin filler really get rid of a double chin. I tried it. I mean, like that's the most open and authentic, I would say. Here's another one, at home laser is like a magic eraser to my acne scars, like you are putting yourself out there, Beth, I have to say.

[0:03:01] BG: I always joke that like I have donated my face and body to science. By science, I mean, beauty. I have some old photos of me on the Internet, from when I've tried like various treatments, and products, and things. I got Botox. I have a photo of me like showing myself scrunching my eyebrows to show what it would look like.

[0:03:24] BB: This, I think is so unique in the realm of journalism. Most reporters are not putting their literal faces on the Internet to showcase before, and afters, and so forth. How do you feel about that? I mean, obviously, you're doing it.

[0:03:38] BG: Yes, it is. It's so different from what – I bet like all of my journalism teachers from our professors from college are probably wincing anytime they read me being like, "Hey, BB. You absolutely need this serum that was sent to me for free." But for me, I think that the beauty industry has always kind of needed this. I think that that's why influencers and TikTok blew up so much, and YouTube. You wanted a face behind a product. That's how people decide that they want to buy something, or that they want to try something, or to kind of see if something's worth it for them, or to learn.

[0:04:17] BB: That has really evolved and changed, especially in the last couple of years with folks just going like, "No, I'm putting my face out there. Here it is."

[0:04:24] BG: Definitely. I think it just has built such a relationship with our reader. A couple of weeks ago, I got so excited. I did a story about AviClear, which is an acne laser. It's like one of its kind, very, very cool when I tested it. I got an Instagram DM from someone, and she was like, "This is so weird. I'm so sorry, but I'm really considering AviClear, and you wrote this story months ago. I want to know, have your results held up? Blah, blah, blah." I kind of got to tell her like the real tee, which was that, made my skin amazing for six months, and then I started breaking out again. We got to kind of have a back and forth, then she was like, "Thank you so much for responding to me and answering this question." I think years ago, that wouldn't have been the case, talking to an editor at a magazine.

[0:05:09] BB: Yes. Who's actually like, "Yes, let me tell you how my face looks." "You want to send a photo?" "Yeah." "Wow. Wow. Wow." Yes. I think that is such a neat evolution in this space, especially beauty for all those who have been watching the beauty space. Okay. Beth, how is your inbox?

[0:05:27] BG: Oh, it's bad. I ultimately turned off the badge on my computer that tells me how many emails. Because I was like, "I don't want to see. I don't want to know how many emails I have." That is probably one of my biggest flaws, is that I am pretty bad about my email. I'm a big scanner. I scan my email when I'm looking for something, I search within my email. If I'm writing a story, and I need a new retinol serum, or I am looking for dermatologist to interview, or if I'm like, "Oh, do I have any other events?" or "Is there anything happening on May 2nd?" I'm going to just search that in my inbox. That's kind of the easiest way for me to compartmentalize everything in there. But yeah, my inbox is a mess.

[0:06:15] BB: Okay. So, as it is a mess, is there any system that you're maybe even piloting right now? I know some people do the folders, they just do the let it scroll, they do like labels, they do – is there any AI thing you're doing or working with? I don't know.

[0:06:30] BG: Oh my God.

[0:06:30] BB: I feel there should be a solution to this at this point.

[0:06:33] BG: If there's an AI solution, like I need it ASAP. I'm a big folders person. I have the rules set up. I am not techie, so I'm sure that I'm butchering how to explain this. But I have like rules set up. Anything that has urgent in the subject line, or anywhere in the email, it goes into a direct folder. Anything that has event, invite, RSVP –

[0:06:58] BB: This is pretty savvy. Yes. Yes. Yes.

[0:07:01] BG: – goes into a folder. That's something that I'm checking like a couple of times a day. Anything that is like fashion week is another one. I just put that all into one folder automatically. That's kind of the easiest way for me. I even have a folder for holiday, gift guide.

[0:07:19] BB: This is really advanced, Beth? I'd say so.

[0:07:22] BG: Yes. It has helped me a lot to kind of always know where things are. My basic inbox, I'm not going through that as often as I would like to, but I'm able to filter through the important things.

[0:07:36] BB: Yes. Okay. I'd say this is working-ish for you then.

[0:07:41] BG: It is, definitely.

[0:07:42] BB: Yes. Okay. Sources. Are you looking for any particular sources? For example, maybe dermatologists, maybe estheticians? Anybody like that?

[0:07:54] BG: Oh, I'm always looking for new dermatologist to interview, because we're talking to dermatologists across so many different stories now. It's not a story on, what is dry skin. It's also like, we're talking to a dermatologist about how to wear foundation, and what foundation work for certain skin types. We're talking to dermatologists about hair and hair loss, nails even. Every single story that I'm writing about for the most part could use a dermatologist.

[0:08:24] BB: Yes. Okay. So derms are in.

[0:08:26] BG: Yeah. I'm constantly interviewing derms. Estheticians, I love interviewing. Unfortunately, Google hates aesthetician. I'm hoping that – but like within like SEO –

[0:08:39] BB: Oh, really? You're in New York City, I can hear the sirens in the back. But all good. This is how we know we're live. Okay. Really? So, you can't really – oh.

[0:08:47] BG: I always will try to, and usually, I will pair it with interviewing a derm. But for whatever reason, Google really prioritizes within SEO, MD versus estheticians. I love interviewing estheticians when it comes to skincare ingredients, like layering skincare, treatments, anything like that, because they're the experts in that. Some derms are really great with certain lasers, and whatnot if they are cosmetic derm. But use of chemical peels, and things that are happening more in terms of like a med spa, estheticians are the key to that knowledge. I love interviewing estheticians, but I don't get to do it as much as I would like to. Then, another one is trichologists.

[0:09:33] BB: Oh, okay. What is that type of per – what is that?

[0:09:36] BG: It is the one who is an expert in hair.

[0:09:39] BB: Oh, yes. When they do like the scalp?

[0:09:42] BG: Yes. Yes. Especially with scalp, we have been focusing so, so, so much on hair loss, and hair growth, hair thinning. I think after the pandemic, everyone is dealing with that.

[0:09:52] BB: Yes, stressed out.

[0:09:54] BG: Yes. So, I'm interviewing a lot of trichologists lately, because they're really great experts in hair. Again, they have such a great knowledge of hair ingredients and products.

[0:10:05] BB: And how your scalp looks. Have you ever done – you've done a little microscope thing?

[0:10:10] BG: Oh my God. Yes.

[0:10:10] BB: Oh my God.

[0:10:10] BG: I've done it multiple times, and it is a different thing every time.

[0:10:12] BB: Me too. Quite the illuminating experience. Yes. Okay. Now, Beth, you being an editor, do you run things down, let's say, to your staff, reporters, et cetera? In other words, you get a pitch and go, "You know what? Okay, I'm going to toss that to so and so"? Does that happen? You write a lot, but I wonder how much you're tossing, and also dealing with maybe freelancers who are trying to write for Cosmo.

[0:10:35] BG: Yes. So, we work with a handful of freelancers. Right now, with freelancers, we're mostly sending SEO kind of down the line with them. We have such high quotas in terms of SEO. I've heard from all of my editor friends that it is the same at every publication. Now, where the money is, **[inaudible 0:10:52]**. We work with a handful of freelancers in terms of SEO. Then, when there are fun, cool, splashy ideas that we have, and we can't do them, that's when we would also work with freelancers. It doesn't happen super, super often, but occasionally. A few months ago, we worked with a freelancer on a really cool project about secondhand beauty. It was an idea that my – basically, it's like the concept of like buying beauty products on Poshmark, Mercari, et cetera.

[0:11:26] BB: But not use, just discarded?

[0:11:28] BG: Yes. I mean –

[0:11:30] BB: Or discontinued, maybe.

[0:11:31] BG: There are ways to like sanitize eyeshadow palette, and foundations that you've used a couple of pumps out of, but it's not your shade anymore. Very cool concept. Our deputy editor like heard about it and was really intrigued by it. But it was something that we knew would need a lot of reporting that we just didn't have the man for. So then, she assigned it out to a freelancer, and it turned out so cool, and was a really good reported – we wouldn't have

otherwise had time to do. We get a handful, a couple of times, we get to do these like fun pieces with freelancers. I love doing that, because I love working with other writers.

[0:12:08] BB: Yes. Okay. Then, how do you determine, "Oh, I'm going to write that piece. That one's for me"?

[0:12:15] BG: A lot of times, it's something that I feel like is personal. I went to journalism school, and I love a reported piece, as much as anyone else who sat in journalism lectures. But something that I love about working at Cosmo, and that I love about the way media, and the beauty industry has kind of changed is that I'm able to kind of pull myself in it a lot. I'm able to write really fun –

[0:12:38] BB: Your face literally in it.

[0:12:40] BG: – that put me into it. So, for me, I love writing stories where like I am involved in it. So, I did a story in print last year, it's one of my favorite stories I've ever written. It was born from the idea of, how I am single, and on dating apps. I have been on dating apps for a very long time. I was getting no matches, and I was like, "What is happening? I am amazing, and have the coolest job, and why isn't everyone falling in love with me?" I was like, "I'm going to try this little experiment." I changed all of my photos to photos where I was like barely wearing any makeup. I got so many more matches.

So, I did this whole story on it, and it went in print, it went on digital. It was so cool. It was actually a story that I had pitched when I got my job. It just like took a while to come together, but – and I interviewed. It was fun, because obviously, it was very personal, it was about me. But I also interviewed a dating coach, a matchmaker, I talked with our sex and relationships editor. It kind of came together in a really cool way. But also, had this cool beauty tie in. When it's something that like feels really personal to me, that's the content.

[0:13:50] BB: Then you're like, "That's mine. That's what I get to do." Okay.

[BREAK]

[0:13:56] 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]

[0:14:20] BB: Beth, you were in New York City, which is basically the epicenter of the world. Do you ever want to meet publicists out and about? Do you want to be out and about, period?

[0:14:29] BG: Yes. I love a little breakfast, a cocktail at dinner, I love it.

[0:14:35] BB: Oh, she's ready. All of the above.

[0:14:38] BG: Any time I meet with a publicist, I'm able to learn so much more about brands that they cover, or brands that they rep, and kind of their inner workings. I also like to explain mine too, because I think every publication is so different, and how we do stories everywhere is so different. Me, being able to be like, "Here's what Cosmo covers. Here's what I liked. to write about. Here's what's possible for me. You're still publicists who are very – who think that I'm going to turn out a dedicated review in a print story about a random, an off-product launch." I'm like, "Well, we only have four issues. That's simply not happening."

It's like nice to kind of be like, "Here's the rundown of Cosmo, what I can do, what actually is possible to happen with a product if you are interested in me covering something." I could talk about what products I even like, what I'm testing, what I'm working on for us. Everything is editor's pick, so it's so tied to products we actually like and use. I'm always reaching out to our other editors who have different skin types, hair types, et cetera, and like not in stories, because no one wants to read about Beth's only favorite products. Sometimes it's nice, where a brand will send me a ton of products for curly hair. I'm like, "Did you look at me? I don't have a curly hair. I'm unfortunately not going to be able to touch that, or use that, or anything." I love meeting with people. I think it's really fun. I'm very busy, so I don't get to do it as much as I like to. If I could, I would practice every morning, but I do really enjoy it.

[0:16:15] BB: That is something quite distinct, I'd say for you, Beth. Whereas, a lot of reporters on here, journalists say, "No one looked at my articles, they don't know what I'm writing about." You have the unique position of going, "Did you look at my face? This is my skin type. This is my hair type. This is what I'm dealing with." It's something like, your face is everywhere to be seen on multiples of your article. So, so easy to know who you're pitching in that sense of actually, physically how does someone look.

[0:16:42] BG: Right. Exactly. I think too, I've had people say like, they'll reach out to me on Instagram or something. Which like, I hate when people reach out to me on Instagram, because if you think I'm bad at emails, I'm horrible at Instagram DMs. My friends hate me because they're like, "Did you see that meme I sent you?" I'm like, "No." I'm very bad at responding. I'll get a message from someone, and they'll ask me about something. I'm like, "Did you look at me? Obviously, that isn't right for me." It could be, again, a curly hair product or something. Or something that's anti-aging, and I'm like, "I'm 27." It makes it a little easier, I would think. But then, I also hear from journalists all the time who say that like, they get invited to a 30-minute blow out appointment, and they're like, "Do you know how long it takes to blow out my 4c hair? That's not going to work?"

[0:17:35] BB: You have 30 minutes. Yes. Though, you have limited time, Beth, you do enjoy the invite. For someone who maybe hasn't worked with you before, is that the best way for them to reach out to you? Or, just to say, "Hey, I'm so and so" and "Hey, I'd love to bring you to a coffee"? How does one make that relationship work if I don't know you yet?

[0:17:57] BG: Yes. I feel like the easiest way is to drop into my inbox, and like a coffee, even like a Zoom. I've done a little zoom coffee-sesh with people before, and it's nice, it's quick. It just like gives me a second to have some FaceTime with someone, and work with whatever brands that they're working with, or – there are so many times where I've met with someone and I've learned about a brand that I've never tried before. Then, it becomes like my new favorite thing. But if you had just sent me a million pitches about this brand, I maybe wouldn't have seen it, or wouldn't have had such a reaction to wanting to try it.

[0:18:34] BB: Okay. Okay. So. meeting helps. You want to meet.

[0:18:38] BG: I think that I'm kind of unique in that sense, because everyone else is like –

[0:18:42] BB: There's some people liking to meet, meet, but I think it's more, and more discerning out there as it should be, as it should be. If you have, for example, I'd imagine for you, "Okay. Why would I meet this with this publicist who has one client, let's say, in beauty?" Whereas, "Oh, I can meet with Sephora as head of coms or something." There's different weights I'd imagine, just as importance. Okay. Is there ever an interest embargoes for you or exclusives? Probably not, but I want to ask.

[0:19:10] BG: Sometimes. Okay. One thing that we've really been working toward is doing cool exclusives, where there's kind of a cool tie in. I just reviewed the Djerf Avenue, Matilda Djerf's brand. We all got to test it in advance, like a handful of us editors, and we all shared a little review. That was really cool, because the day that the products launched, we were able to say like, "Here's what we love about them, here's why you should try them." It was a really great cohesive way to talk about a new brand and a new product in a way that felt serviceable to a reader.

We also love doing that when we can tie in like a coupon code or anything like that. Or, if it's a brand that we like know that our reader really, really loves. We just worked with K18, and did a whole review of their new dry shampoo. It's like a very expensive dry shampoo, but the best dry shampoo I've ever used. It's very cool. It's like a liquid, it's very different. Again, that was really fun, because that's a brand that our reader really loves, and we knew would be interested in that kind of product. Exclusives when it comes to celebrity sometimes can be fun, for a new play.

However, it's just hard for us, because – unless it gets kind of picked up in a news module, is don't perform well anymore. Like unless it has a really good sound bite, and these days, getting a really good sound bite out of a celebrity is hard. You can't ask them or you can't talk about. And unfortunately, the only thing the Internet cares about when it comes to celebrities is like who they're dating, or plastic surgery, or all of these big top-level things. They don't care about more of the basics.

[0:20:51] BB: Like what are they using on their face, what sunblock.

[0:20:52] BG: Right. It's still really fun, and it's a really cool way. I worked with Xeomin a couple of months ago, and I interviewed Demi Lovato, and she is someone that I have idolized since I was a teenager. That was such a good interview for me, and it was a really cool way to kind of bring kind of myself into it. It felt like a really – we talked a lot about body image, and beauty standards. It made this topic that otherwise would have been kind of just, "Oh, why do you like Xeomin? What's your skincare routine? How do you feel about aging?" And kind of bring it into something that felt a little more robust.

[0:21:31] BB: Okay. So, she does like them. This is good for us to know. Beth, I have a rapid-fire question series here. Are you ready?

[0:21:38] BG: I am ready.

[0:21:39] BB: Let's do it. Video or phone interview?

[0:21:42] BG: Video.

[0:21:44] BB: Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch?

[0:21:47] BG: Bullet points.

[0:21:47] BB: Well, then, it might answer this, but short or long pitches, and how short?

[0:21:51] BG: Short is easier, but I need all the information. If you can give me like a short pitch in a paragraph. and then add a bunch of bullet points.

[0:22:01] BB: There you go. Dream. Okay. Email attached or a Dropbox zip file?

[0:22:06] BG: Oh, I like, a Dropbox is easier.

[0:22:11] BB: Because it has the click, and boom, all the things. I find that if you have 12 images, and it's on one attached, and you're like, "Oh, I can't."

[0:22:17] BG: Yes. I download so many things on my laptop, everything just gets kind of lost in my downloads. If I have to download something, it's easier.

[0:22:26] BB: Email or a DM of any sort. We already covered Instagram, so no, no for there.

[0:22:31] BG: Definitely email because, I can search in my email. I cannot search in DMS. It's like impossible.

[0:22:37] BB: This is true. One follow up or multiple?

[0:22:40] BG: This is probably what no one ever says. But I am so pro-follow up, because my inbox is such a mess. I see that someone has messaged me like eight times, I'm like, "Oh my gosh. I'm so sorry." But it gets to the top of my inbox, and it's way easier for me to see it.

[0:22:54] BB: Oh, it's a unique answer, definitely. Definitely. Okay. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:23:01] BG: Direct.

[0:23:03] BB: Direct. Press release or media kit?

[0:23:07] BG: I would say a media kit is easier. It's easier to like scan through information than like a traditional press release.

[0:23:13] BB: Any particular time you like to read pitches?

[0:23:15] BG: Usually, in the mornings, that's when I go through my email. Or, the afternoon when I've finished all my writing for the day.

[0:23:21] BB: Okay. What I'm hearing is, twice a day, twice a day. Not like every five minutes type of thing. Okay.

[0:23:27] BG: Yes. That's probably why my inbox is so bad, because I'm not reading –

[0:23:30] BB: Maybe. Then, we already covered sources. I want to ask you, is there anything that we could do to promote, celebrate, highlight you and the work you're doing?

[0:23:42] BG: Ooh. One thing that we have coming up is our Cosmo Beauty Awards. We do four beauty award every year, which is an undertaking, but they're so fun. It's one of my favorite things that we do at Cosmo. They're like so in depth, and our Holy Girl Beauty Awards comes out in May, which –

[0:24:02] BB: Around the corner

[0:24:02] BG: – with our deputy director. Then, we also will have our Readers Choice Awards coming live soon, and that will involve a ginormous survey, where readers get to take the survey, and choose all their favorite products. It's 800 different products, so it is a survey that we pulled together. It's like everything readers love based on like our internal data. And yes, that survey is really fun. I'm excited for people to take it. I'm excited to see what people's favorites are.

[0:24:34] BB: Beth, that is great. By the way, how do people get that survey? If we have any beauty publicists are like, 'Hell yeah. I need to tell you all my favorite things.'

[0:24:41] BG: Yes. That will go live soon, and it'll go onto our Instagrams. You'll see it on the Cosmo Instagram. I will be sharing it on my Instagram. Yes. It'll be on the Cosmo site too.

[0:24:51] BB: Beth Gillette, thank you for being here today, beauty editor of Cosmopolitan. She likes a breakfast everybody. She likes a breakfast. Maybe can't go, but you want the invite.

[0:25:04] BG: I will try to make it work. It might be like two months from now, but I will try to make it work!

[0:25:08] BB: Hey, let's do it. Especially with the fabulous weather like this today. Oh my God.

[0:25:12] BG: I know. Just sipping a drink on a patio right now.

[0:25:16] **BB:** Sounds divine. Thanks, Beth. Appreciate you.

[0:25:20] **BG:** Thank you so much.

[0:25:21] **BB:** See you.

[0:25:21] **BG:** Okay. Bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:25:23] **ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode with Beth Gillette, beauty editor at Cosmopolitan. 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. But until then, start great stories.

[END]