

**EPISODE 223**

[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](https://onepitch.co) to learn more.

Our guest on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Cloey Callahan, Senior Reporter at WorkLife. Cloey covers how modern workplaces and workforces are changing across culture, tech, talent, leadership, spaces, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. During today's episode, Cloey discusses how to get front-of-the-line status in her email inbox, the power of data in storytelling, how to optimize pitches for SEO, and so much more.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:51] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, and what we try to do on Coffee with a Journalist is maybe have some coffee with a journalist but really understand how it is to work with reporters, editors, journalists that are out and about in the world. Thank goodness because us publicists need to know how to better make our pitches and to better our relationships with journalists because we all have a job to do. That's why we're here.

With us today, speaking of work and what we have to do, is Cloey Callahan. She is the Senior Reporter at Digiday Media's WorkLife section, so specifically all the things about work. Cloey, thanks for being here.

**[00:01:33] CC:** Yes. Thanks so much for having me, Beck. I'm super excited to spill some tea with you.

**[00:01:38] BB:** I can't wait. That's what we do. Okay, first, first, first, for those who may not be as familiar, how would you describe the coverage of WorkLife? There's quite a bit on here.

**[00:01:50] CC:** Yes. With WorkLife, I cover all things future of work. That ranges from things like spaces and office design to HR and people management and really everything in between. Of course, right now a lot of tech and AI.

**[00:02:04] BB:** Yes.

**[00:02:05] CC:** The whole gamut, we're here for all of it.

**[00:02:07] BB:** We're here for all of it. There's other section – you have awards. There's DEI. There's all these things, so yes. And there's a handful of newsletters, so I want to give a shout-out for that for everybody. I'm going to sign up right now, in fact, for it. Okay, Cloey. How is your inbox?

**[00:02:23] CC:** Yes. My inbox is crazy. I will say I was off for a couple days last week for extended weekend. When I came back, I had, I think, probably 500-plus emails through just a couple of days of being off. It is definitely hectic in there, and I'm always trying to sort through it.

**[00:02:46] BB:** What is your mechanism currently to do such?

**[00:02:50] CC:** Yes. How I usually sort through my inbox is just using that star method on Gmail where I'm reading through everything. But if there's something that really stands out to me, I'm just going to start it and go back to that folder later on when it's time to pitch my editor and figure out what stories I'm writing that week. That's really my go-to.

Then sometimes, if I'm working on special projects, I'll assign folders and sort things that way, but for the most part storing it. Then later on, I use the search method all the time. If I don't answer to your pitch right now, you might get an answer later when I find you, when I am searching a keyword that I'm writing an article on.

**[00:03:26] BB:** I'm so glad you mentioned that because so many people do this, journalists. You save it. You just put it somewhere. Five months later, you're looking for something. You pull it up. Tell me a little bit more on when you mean later. You're talking like months. Have you reached out to someone like eight months later?

**[00:03:44] CC:** I have. I have. I think sometimes people are maybe confused. But I always try to prep. It's like, "Sorry. This is from so long ago, but actually I'm working on it right now."

Sometimes, people get back to me, and they're like, "Oh, that person actually isn't working for us anymore," or whatever. But a lot of the times, they will help figure something out and give me someone to talk to and it's super helpful. I think it's probably a delightful surprise for them, too.

**[00:04:08] BB:** Oh, for sure. There's nothing like that.

**[00:04:10] CC:** Yes, exactly. Definitely.

**[00:04:13] BB:** Love it. Love it. Okay. You do get back to people months and months later. The keyword thing, I've wanted to emphasize this to publicists before. You don't see ever on a bottom of the pitch typically like keywords. I do that in my academia time like, "You had – on your dissertation it says key words, transformational learning." In the search that you're doing as an academic, you could be like, "Oh, yes. That is on clinical psychology of ADHD and teenagers," whatever.

Have you ever seen a pitch have those keywords? Or how do you get the best keywords in the pitch? Or have we even thought about this? Maybe that's that.

**[00:04:50] CC:** Yes. No, that's a good question. I definitely haven't seen it fully put out like that where it's keywords at the bottom. I don't know if I would like that or not. It would help them, but I'd be like, "Oh, what is this about right now?"

**[00:05:01] BB:** Yes, exactly. You'd be like, "Hmm, hmm."

**[00:05:04] CC:** Yes. But I think it's just being intentional about the word choice that you use when you pitch. It's the same thing. When you think about SEO, right? You just want to make sure it's easy to find. I think it's okay within —

**[00:05:13] BB:** Exactly.

**[00:05:14] CC:** In your inbox, so just being really smart about the language. Obviously, if you're doing something on artificial intelligence, it's like, "Okay are you going to use AI, artificial intelligence, gen AI, maybe all of them so that I can hit everything when I'm searching?" It really runs the gamut, but I think that it is helpful to be smart with your word choice.

**[00:05:36] BB:** Okay. Now, you aspire for inbox zero. Do you click open every email?

**[00:05:44] CC:** I do. I click open –

**[00:05:45] BB:** Oh, my God. This is like superstar status, I think, when you open every email and you're inbox zero. How do you survive that?

**[00:05:55] CC:** Yes. I mean, it is hard. But I wrote an article about this actually about team inbox zero. Is it performative, or does it help productivity? Maybe it wastes productivity if you're spending so much time in your inbox and not doing actual work. There was a lot of people I talked to for this one.

**[00:06:12] BB:** You kind of have a meta thing here because you write about work, and email is work. Therefore, you – you know what I mean?

**[00:06:17] CC:** Exactly.

**[00:06:18] BB:** I mean, on a side note, a lot of my story ideas are from my own experiences and also my friends into like over dinner, and they're complaining about work. I'm like same and then that's an article. But anyways, about the inbox zero thing, a lot of people I talked for the article I interviewed said it's really out of an anxiety thing, which I think that's where I'm more in line where I'm the anxious overachiever where I just hate seeing a bunch of emails that are just sitting there and not being opened.

I'm very much someone who's like I just do it for that. I just want these all opened. I want the notification to go away. I want to have a clear docket, so I have a more, I guess, approachful to-do list, that sort of thing.

**[00:07:03] BB:** Okay. I feel you on the anxiety. By the way, since you went down the little path like dinner with friends, and they're complaining about something, and you're doing that, I love that that's how you seek your stories. Do your friends know this about you like, "If I go to dinner with Cloey, she might write an article."?

**[00:07:20] CC:** I think there's a little bit of that. Honestly, my friends are – they support me and appreciate it. I can't interview my friends, so it's like –

**[00:07:28] BB:** No, no. There's no quotes. Yes.

**[00:07:30] CC:** Yes, now quotes there. But it gives me direction of like, "Okay. Now, maybe what they said, I'll see if other people are in that boat." There might be a little bit of that. But at the end of the day, I think they're happy to give me what's going on in their lives.

**[00:07:45] BB:** Could you give us a little glimmer into what is going on to their life? Are they concerned about AI taking over their job? Are they complaining about return to work? Please, I hope not. I hope we're done with that story. Tell us a little.

**[00:07:59] CC:** Yes. I would say that. I mean, it feels like maybe a lot of people are talking about AI. But in my daily life, I wouldn't say that's what's being discussed all the time through dinner or catching up. I would say my group chat of friends will send a message of – even I just got one five minutes before this, and someone sent a picture of their work calendar. She had three meetings all at the same time and said, "I'm supposed to be in all these meetings at once."

There's a lot of, I think, discussion right now from at least my circle around meeting fatigue. I know that's been a through line for a lot of people recently since the pandemic really of just feeling overloaded of having to be in a bunch of places at once. I would say that's a hot topic of like, "All right, I don't understand how I'm supposed to do all this and be in all these places." Another one said, "I thought it was supposed to be no meeting Fridays," and again a picture of their Friday calendar booked, back-to-back meetings.

**[00:08:57] BB:** Oh, burn, burn. What do you think? I know we're getting down into it a little bit, but I have to give you a shout-out or just an acknowledgment of unlike other reporters who are

maybe doing real estate deals or AI SAS tools. You're not bringing this to a dinner. But for everybody, the most part, hopefully, you're employed. You got a job. You're doing something, right? Unless you're gloriously retired or whatever, or maybe you can't or whatever, or you choose not to. Okay, da, da, da, da.

But we can all relate to it in a way, so I can see you getting bombarded or just easily able to discuss this with so many people at a dinner party, with your friends, and so forth. That's just interesting, I think. But my question that I was leading to was what do you think of the four-day workweek? Because we did that at BAM, and it's been absolutely glorious.

**[00:09:51] CC:** Yes. I would say –

**[00:09:52] BB:** Shockingly so.

**[00:09:53] CC:** Yes. I'm a big fan. I mean, Digiday has technically four and a half. All year, we have – it feels like summer Fridays.

**[00:10:02] BB:** Nice, nice, nice, nice.

**[00:10:03] CC:** Yes. We're done around 1pm, so that is really great.

**[00:10:05] BB:** Oh, that's freaking great.

**[00:10:06] CC:** I feel even right now, with people having their summer Fridays kicking back up, I think that people are excited about that and probably wonder why can't we have this all year round. I think that –

**[00:10:18] BB:** Right? Haven't people asked that? Why is this only a summer thing? I understand the light but okay.

**[00:10:24] CC:** Definitely. People want it all year. I mean, who wouldn't, right?

**[00:10:27] BB:** Yes. Well, who wouldn't want the four-day workweek if you ask me?

**[00:10:31] CC:** Exactly.

**[00:10:32] BB:** Even my husband and I discussed this because he's like, "Yes, but you don't manufacture things. You don't ship things." I said, "Okay, fair point, fair point. Yes, fair point."

[BREAK]

**[00:10:44] 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]

**[00:11:08] BB:** Cloey, what about subject lines? Are there subject lines you go, "Yes, I definitely have to open that email."? Or does it not matter so much because you open every dang email anyway?

**[00:11:18] CC:** Yes. I mean, I would say either way, I'm going to open it. But what really maybe will make me open that first before another –

**[00:11:24] BB:** Oh, there we go. How do we get front-of-line status?

**[00:11:27] CC:** Yes. I think that a big part of that is thinking of, okay, send your email with the subject line that would be a headline, right? Something that's going to grab my attention, could grab my reader's attention. Whatever it might be, don't bury your lead. We don't do that in journalism. Don't do that for you guys so that we can work together and know what the story is. It's clear. It's upfront. Any data can kind of really put things over the edge a little bit more of like, "Okay. Wow, that's a good story because that data point is so interesting."

The data point can also work the other way, too, where I'm like, "All right, this sounds like every other data point around DE&I or AI usage right now or whatever." I think you kind of have to

know what will work with that. But when you get it right, I think it goes a long way to have that piece of data in there. But overall, really just writing it as if it is going to be the headline of the article, and it is going to grab attention.

**[00:12:19] BB:** Oh, write it like the headline. Do you even, though, Cloey, then, I've heard from some people, put pitch in the subject line? Or you don't care.

**[00:12:30] CC:** For me, I don't necessarily feel like I need that most people in my inbox are pitching me. I don't really get emails that aren't. I mean, sometimes, you're like –

**[00:12:37] BB:** Yes. You're like, "Everyone has a pitch."

**[00:12:39] CC:** Yes. I mean, it's almost better if you do it the opposite. If you aren't pitching me and want a coffee chat, put that in the headline or the subject so that I know that. Otherwise, I kind of just assume that most people in my work inbox are pitching me.

**[00:12:53] BB:** Okay. Is there a way for publicists to make better relationships with you?

**[00:13:00] CC:** Yes. That's a good question. I feel like it is like any relationship, right, where it starts with, okay, I would love to in a perfect world actually meet in person. Grab a coffee or a tea or whatever and then understand who your clients are and how we might work together. But with everyone stretched so thin, I feel like that doesn't happen as often, which is totally fine. We can do it virtually when our schedules allow.

I think a lot of it is relationship building because, for me, it's easier to respond to someone that I have a relationship with and have worked with in the past. Because if I haven't – this sounds maybe mean to say, but it's a little bit easier to ghost that person because I've never worked with them before.

**[00:13:47] BB:** It is. How sad. Yes.



**[00:13:49] CC:** I have no tie to them. It's just I'm so busy, so I'm not going to take the time to respond to someone that I just don't usually work with or don't plan on working with soon. I try to answer everyone. Sometimes, it's not possible.

But if I have a working relationship with you and I've interviewed some of your people before, I think that that goes a long way because maybe you'll send me a pitch, and maybe that pitch isn't for me. But that now I'm going to actually answer and say why it didn't work for me. Okay, hopefully, we'll be able to work together again soon or whatever it might be.

I think it really is just building that relationship, which is hard because everyone is so busy. We're super busy with reporting, researching, writing, interviewing, everything else. I think just even when you do hop on a call, making sure that the people that you are suggesting for interviews are well spoken and that [inaudible 00:14:43] is then, okay, that person was really good. If you have a really good spokesperson, we're going to go back to you on that topic [inaudible 00:14:52] it might be. I think it extends many ways.

**[00:14:55] BB:** Okay. I would agree. Build it slowly but surely. Show that you're reliable. Show that you show up. You got good people, and you're not sending me crap.

**[00:15:05] CC:** Exactly.

**[00:15:07] BB:** It sounds so easy. Yes. Okay. Do you – I know we talked about this just a little bit, Cloey, when we first got on. You're in New York State but not close to New York City. Do you ever go there? Then if so, are you down for a coffee, a cocktail, a da, da, da, da, da, whatever? Or is it like, “Yes, I don't do that.”

**[00:15:25] CC:** Yes. Yes. I am in Hudson Valley, so I'm about an hour and a half from New York City on the train. I do go in. I'm going in a couple times this month. We're doing some in-person office tours and getting [inaudible 00:15:37]. So I'm super excited for that. Yes, it's like once I'm down there, I want to chat with people. I want to have any smaller meetings with people while I'm there. Definitely, I'm open to it. It is a little bit harder for me than maybe the journalist who is based in New York City fulltime.

**[00:15:55] BB:** Yes. [inaudible 00:15:56]. Yes.

**[00:15:57] CC:** Definitely, I still suggest people reach out. We can try to make something work. Also, I'm open to the virtual coffee chat.

**[00:16:05] BB:** Okay. This is good. It's good to know, which some people are very anti about, so I'm glad you called that out. That's good. Okay, Cloey, we talked about relationship building. We talked about the subject lines. Is there anything on your list of like, "Uh, please, please, publicists, no, no."?

**[00:16:25] CC:** Yes. I mean, there's always something where I'm like, "Oh, I just wish this was a little bit different or a little bit better." One thing that's been on my mind recently and I'm seeing happen more is that I send out a lot of journal requests on Twitter and LinkedIn, and it's super helpful because I feel like then publicists do reach out. It's creating new connections, new people that maybe I wouldn't have found on my own.

Sometimes, they'll just very vaguely, I guess, connect me with someone who might be really good. But then they say, "Oh, I'll let you guys take it from here." Sometimes, that's helpful because I don't love having that person on all the time. I don't need them to be on the call, but what bothers me and stresses me out is that they'll just put all the planning to me. I'm kind of like, "I wish." Since you guys work together, I'm like, "I wish that you just sent me over their avail, sent me a calendar invite, sent me a calendar hold."

When someone does do that, it makes such a difference for me because I'm like, "Perfect. This is on my calendar. I don't need to go out and send the invite or figure out their availability or whatever it might be." I'm like that really makes my life easier and makes me want to work with you again when you just send a calendar hold. It sounds so small, but recently I've come across more and more people who are just like, "Here's the person."

**[00:17:45] BB:** Here you go. Yes, yes.

**[00:17:47] CC:** Yes. I need more than that.

**[00:17:49] BB:** Yes. If I can make your life easier, I will. As a publicist, I will do it because my God. This is one of my favorite things to do, and this probably doesn't apply in your case at all. But it's like if I'm asking someone to make the intro to someone, "Here I wrote up the intro for you to send." So you just copy-paste it if you want. Modify it as you deem fit. Okay, fine. But I already included the links, my LinkedIn, my da, da, da, da, da. You just can literally copy and paste. Please, please. Yes.

Especially when you're asking the favor for publicists, especially when you're, obviously, going for the coverage, and you want this. How do I make the reporter's job easier? Okay, that was a great insight. Anything else you got?

**[00:18:36] CC:** I feel like some other ones probably people have heard before but kind of just thinking about like, okay, if you're also on the call, make sure that you're in the background.

**[00:18:45] BB:** Shut up? Oh.

**[00:18:47] CC:** Yes. Also, I hate when their camera is on because it just feels like a –

**[00:18:52] BB:** What?

**[00:18:52] CC:** Third person. I don't know. But it's like just someone looking at me just in silence. I'm glad they're –

**[00:19:00] BB:** They're staring. Yes.

**[00:19:02] CC:** You're just staring at the conversation. It's like just go camera off. It's so much easier. If you have to listen in, fine. But make yourself feel invisible that I don't feel like [inaudible 00:19:13].

**[00:19:16] BB:** Yes. That's not good. That's not really good.

**[00:19:20] CC:** It's hard. Yes.

[00:19:21] **BB:** Oh, man. Okay. Yes. That's another good tip. You're so full of them, Cloey. I appreciate this so much. Okay. We have a rapid-fire-question section that we can get into right now. Video or phone interview?

[00:19:35] **CC:** I'll say video. I guess.

[00:19:37] **BB:** Okay, video. Video. Okay. But not if you're a publicist staring into the abyss.

[00:19:40] **CC:** Exactly. I do like to have the actual connection with whoever I'm interviewing. Overall, video, but yes.

[00:19:47] **BB:** Okay. This is good to know. Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch?

[00:19:51] **CC:** I like paragraphs. I guess I don't mind. But give me a couple bullet points in there, so I know what the key takeaway is. Tell me what I need to know. If I'm doing a too long didn't read, give me that. Give me something that I can get the quick. If I'm interested in the quick, then I'm going to go dive into the paragraphs that you sent.

[00:20:11] **BB:** Okay. Then we already talked about short or long pitches. Images attached or Dropbox zip file?

[00:20:17] **CC:** Images attached.

[00:20:19] **BB:** Okay. Email or a DM to wherever they could go?

[00:20:23] **CC:** Email. But if you DM me, I'm not going to be super upset.

[00:20:27] **BB:** Okay. Some people are like, "You will be trashed, and I'll never speak to you again." Yes, yes. One follow-up or multiple?

[00:20:36] **CC:** I think just one is best.

[00:20:38] **BB:** One and done. I like it. Press release or media kit?

**[00:20:41] CC:** I'll go with media kit. I kind of like a kit myself. I want to click to the thing. But, oh, that's a good clarification, though. I just want to hear your take. But what I don't want to do is sign up and then send an email and then check my email, too. If the link to the media kit, because I do like travel writing stuff, is a 13-step process to get to the Wii transfer thing, no.

**[00:21:07] CC:** Yes. That's how –

**[00:21:08] BB:** No. Then it expires. I just had that today. I was trying to get some assets from this hotel, and I'm like, “And now I got to ask you to –”

**[00:21:15] CC:** Oh, my God.

**[00:21:16] BB:** Because the link expired. Okay.

**[00:21:18] CC:** Yes. It has to be easy if it's going to be that way.

**[00:21:20] BB:** Yes. Is there a time you usually read pitches? Or is it all the time because you want to get to that inbox zero?

**[00:21:26] CC:** Yes. I would say it's all the time, except when I'm not writing. When I'm finally writing my article for the day, I'm definitely not looking at my inbox for those couple of hours. But other than that, for sure in the morning, right when I sign off, but throughout the day.

**[00:21:42] BB:** Okay. Then are there any sources you were really wishing you had in your inbox?

**[00:21:48] CC:** I guess right now we are really looking for some HR experts. I would say we have a big push where we want to focus a little bit more on HR and what's going on in their world. I just want a little bit more of those folks who are HR people themselves or people [inaudible 00:22:06] folks or employee engagement. Anything like that of just people who have been in the industry for a long time who can share some insights on how things have evolved and how things are shaping up this year and some of their challenges. That is definitely on my

radar right now. I won't say like there's, oh, a specific person I have in mind, but for sure some HR folks.

**[00:22:28] BB:** Okay. HR folks who I'm sure never are talking to media often, so wonderful. Cloey, is there anything else we can highlight, promote, tout for you, the newsletter, for example, anything else?

**[00:22:44] CC:** Yes. Over at WorkLife, we have a lot going on. But one of the most recent things, for sure, since you're listening to this podcast, check that The Return Season 3 is out. We focus all on middle managers in the podcast and their [inaudible 00:22:59] and how they make everything work. We spoke to people from Microsoft and all these different people. It was a great listen. It's a quick six-episode podcast series all about middle managers and their challenges today with the modern work.

**[00:23:12] BB:** Oh, yes. Then you also have two to The Return, an eight-episode podcast about Gen Z entering the workforce.

**[00:23:20] CC:** Yes.

**[00:23:20] BB:** There you go.

**[00:23:21] CC:** That one was my baby. That was my first time hosting a podcast, and it was super exciting. I am a Gen Zer myself. I spent –

**[00:23:29] BB:** There you go.

**[00:23:30] CC:** On that for a narrative podcast, so that one is really highly recommend. Head over there. Listen to that one, too. The middle manager one is a little bit quicker, Q&A format, but really a deep dive for season two of The Return about Gen Zers in the workforce.

**[00:23:46] BB:** Okay. Cloey Callahan, thank you for being on today. She is the Senior Reporter at Digiday Media's WorkLife. Read her newsletters, people, and be on video but not in a creepy way. There you go. There you go. Thank you, Cloey.

**[00:24:01] CC:** Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:24:05] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode, featuring Cloey Callahan, Senior Reporter at WorkLife. 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]