

EPISODE 228

[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 journalist? Head to our website at onepitch.co to learn more.

Our guest on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Jillian Quint, Editor-in-Chief at PureWow. During the episode, Jillian discusses PureWow's mission to empower women, how she organizes her inbox as an Editor-in-Chief, effective pitching strategies, the value of expert opinions, and even more.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:39] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. We are in deep season two, by the way, with 200 something plus episodes now. We're really rolling, and hopefully you are here, listener, as a publicist wanting to know how we better connect and work with our fantastic reporters, journalists, editors, editors-in-chief, by the way. Look at us enrolling in this season. Speaking of, today we have Jillian Quint, who's the Editor-in-Chief of PureWow. Wow, Jillian, thanks for being here.

[0:01:13] JQ: Thank you so much for having me.

[0:01:14] BB: Yes. Oh, I'm delighted to have you. I do read PureWow. I have to say all the things. First though, for folks who maybe are not as familiar. How would you describe in brief the content array that PureWow now encompasses, because it's evolved over its time?

[0:01:32] JQ: Yeah. It really has. My like official spiel is that PureWow's goal is to better and brighten women's lives. We think of ourselves as doing this in like a very easy to achieve, come as you are, judgment-free space. In terms of what this looks like, you know, because you read PureWow, yay.

[0:01:50] BB: Yes.

[0:01:50] JQ: But we really cover a vast array of what would traditionally be called women's lifestyle subjects. What we cover ranges from books and family content, to fashion and beauty, to wellness and travel, to what our favorite celebrity is wearing, or that new TV show that everybody is talking about, which yes, in case you're wondering, is My Lady Jane on Amazon.

[0:02:13] BB: Yes. Oh. Yeah, are you loving it?

[0:02:15] JQ: I have to admit, I haven't watched it, but our entertainment team is obsessed with it, so I need to get on that.

[0:02:20] BB: Oh, shoot. Okay. See, this is why we talked. This is why we look at these outlets, like PureWow. Okay. Now, Jillian, you are editor-in-chief. That's like the top of the top. As I've had editors on here, I think it's different from what the inbox can look like. It's always busy, but can you give us an idea of what's in there and how do you maintain or control it?

[0:02:41] JQ: I mean, you would be horrified to look at it. I'm one of those people –

[0:02:44] BB: I'm just curious.

[0:02:46] JQ: I don't know what the opposite of a zero-inbox person is, but I am that person. I have something like 20,000 unread messages if you look at my little thing. I do as I say, not as I do. I don't really know, but bottom line, my inbox is full every single day with tons of emails not only from publicists, but obviously from internal staff, from people across the company at PureWow and at Gallery Media Group, but in terms of the publicist portion of it. I'm getting somewhere between like 75 and 100 pitches a day. It's a lot to go through. I definitely have my systems, but clearly my systems don't 100% work or I wouldn't have 1500 unread messages.

[0:03:33] BB: I just love though, the array in the journalism world, because there are the diehards of zero inbox. We just had a British Vogue editor on. She's a zero. Then you, who's just like letting it roll to the upper thousands. I love it, but you have to survive somehow. You did say you have somewhat of a system or something, so what does that even look like? For instance,

for anyone listening here who should be like a publicist, they're going, "Wait a second. Will you ever respond to my pitch from maybe three months ago?" Does that happen?

[0:04:02] JQ: It does happen. In terms of the publicist pitches, when I'm getting these pitches coming in, I'm looking at them all in real time. I'm definitely addicted to the phone person. I see all my emails come in and I'm opening the ones that make sense to me. Some do and some don't. Of the let's say 100 emails that I'm getting in a day, I'm opening probably more than half of them. If something is definitely a no go or not relevant, I often will move on from it, but if something has any potential, I will open it. I'll take a look and I'll do the relevant thing with it, which might be saving it for later. I do use folders for that. I save things a lot. I will respond if it makes sense to respond. I will forward it to the relevant editor if that's the case, because remember –

[0:04:56] BB: That's right.

[0:04:57] JQ: I'm overseeing the content, but I'm not – relevant and sometimes it's more applicable to the editor who's be to this.

[0:05:04] BB: Exactly. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Okay. Yeah. Traffic control is a big component for being the editor and so forth. I also imagine do you get freelance pitches as well? People who want to write articles?

[0:05:15] JQ: We do. Some of those we respond to, some of those, again, I would punt to the appropriate editor if we have somebody who reaches out and says, "I'm a beauty fanatic." I would forward that to my beauty director and have her take an initial call to see if there's a fit there.

[0:05:29] BB: Okay. How may Jillian, if any way possible, can publicists make your life easier besides just not pitch you?

[0:05:41] JQ: No, you should pitch me.

[0:05:41] BB: Yes. Okay. Good.

[0:05:44] JQ: I think that the caveat here is that most publicists are making my life plenty easy. I think publicists –

[0:05:50] BB: Oh, good. Yeah.

[0:05:51] JQ: I have very little to complain about. I think that the biggies are sending pitches in a way that is really readable and useful to me and we can get into what that looks like, but it's also a few other things make my life easier. One is being open to sending samples. That's something we need to test just about everything we write about. Being open to providing experts and being responsive when we're trying to coordinate on a product review or an interview or something along those lines. Then finally, understanding if we say something isn't a fit.

[0:06:26] BB: That is good. Do you have any pitches right now that you're like, “Oh, yes. Thank you. That's a good one.”

[0:06:33] JQ: Yes.

[0:06:34] BB: We love a show.

[0:06:35] JQ: You want me to give you the specific –

[0:06:36] BB: Yeah. I mean, yes, yes. Most people don't share like the bad ones with naming names or anything. We don't do that here, but if you want to shout out anybody or just like anonymize it, however you wish. That's great, because we want to know like what is it that gets that open, because you mentioned like 50%. I want to be on the 50% that gets open. So, that's what I'm going for.

[0:06:55] JQ: In terms of like what gets an open from me, to some extent, it's capitalizing on whatever we're working on at the moment, so if we're writing about something and a timely pitch comes in that's relevant, that's really, really helpful, but there are also a few other concrete things that I look at when I'm trying to vet what pitches to take and to move on. I mean, one is if it like teaches me something that I genuinely don't know, like does it reference an enticing trend

I've never heard of? Does it mention a product that I didn't know existed that clearly solves a problem? That's the type of thing I'm absolutely going to open and read.

Another one which I mentioned before is the idea of offering up an expert or the promise of samples, both of which we need for a lot of stories, so I know that a lot of the work has already been done for me upfront. Then how direct it is, like do I need to do too much digging to figure out what exactly this pitch is about? I have a few examples. I have two good examples and –

[0:07:57] BB: Oh, yes. Share, share, share. Yes.

[0:08:00] JQ: Okay. So, a great pitch I got today, which I think is really useful is, this is the subject line. Amazon Prime Day. Summer pet essentials. Samples available.

[0:08:10] BB: Oh, nice. Tells me everything. Yeah, that tells me everything.

[0:08:15] JQ: Yeah. If we're working on Prime Day right now, we cover pets. We need samples. I guess, I don't know what the pet essentials are from this email, but I'm going to open it.

[0:08:24] BB: You're going to be like what's – yeah, exactly.

[0:08:26] JQ: Yeah. Do you want to not use for one?

[0:08:29] BB: I mean, yes.

[0:08:30] JQ: Okay. I'm not going to name the –

[0:08:31] BB: No, no. We don't need the name. Yup.

[0:08:34] JQ: Okay. This one said, "Too early for a great first impression. Back-to-school grooming with insert brand name." So, number one.

[0:08:47] BB: Yeah. Tell us. I mean, I already know, but tell us.

[0:08:50] JQ: Is back to school grooming a thing? Like I have kids. We have never talked about back-to-school grooming.

[0:08:55] BB: Yeah. Oh. Okay –

[0:09:00] JQ: But even if we pretend the back-to-school grooming is a thing, they starting with the too early for a great first impression. That's a long line. It takes up basically the bulk of my Gmail. I get no information from the subject line, unless I click to see more. Already, it's starting off on a not terribly useful note. Then ultimately, unless I'm familiar with the brand, I don't even really know what product I'm getting pitched.

[0:09:26] BB: Yeah. Thank you for those real examples. So, so helpful.

[MESSAGE]

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Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:09:57] JQ: Wait, I've got one more that is a good example.

[0:10:00] BB: Yes. I love the good ones. Let's go.

[0:10:02] JQ: This was the best pitch line I got all year, so I actually – I went back through my inbox, because I remembered it. This is from Christmas, as you'll see.

[0:10:12] BB: Okay.

[0:10:12] JQ: The subject line was, “The emotional labor of being mama clause expert available.” This is an example of something where the subject line that I was pitched ended up becoming the story. This is one where they were pitching a psychologist who could talk about the emotional labor that women have to go through during the holidays. This is a subject that we cover at PureWow. We cover emotional labor that women do, maternal burdens, that kind of thing all the time, but we never covered it from a holiday perspective. I was like, “That is such a great headline.” We ended up jumping on it. We interviewed the expert and that was exactly the headline of the story we ran.

[0:10:56] BB: Oh, dang. Okay. I like that you point that out. Thank you for sharing the great examples, because this has come up a couple of times on this show, but elsewhere, I want to get your take. Writing the subject line in the email as if the article headline in a way. Do you – because it sounds a little bit like this person did that and you were like, “Oh, yeah. It's perfect.” Not the subject available part, but to indicate to you like, “Hey, this person's here, you can talk. You can run with it.” As you said. I think that's pretty nice, but –

[0:11:26] JQ: Yeah. I think if it's done well, it's awesome. If it's not done well –

[0:11:32] BB: You're tanked.

[0:11:33] JQ: Exactly.

[0:11:35] BB: Good try, but no. Yeah. Okay. That is super helpful. What about and I feel like, oh, I know the answer, but I don't know the answer, so I'm going to ask relationship building with you from a publicist perspective. Is that just send me good consistent pitches and get your shit done or is it, yeah, on occasion, I'll see you for a coffee. I'll see you when you're in New York. Don't invite me to things, like how would you look at that in terms of relationship building if there's tips and tricks for that for you?

[0:12:08] JQ: I think it's both. I do love meeting people in person.

[0:12:13] BB: Right. Me, too.

[0:12:14] JQ: I love coffee as much as the next person, but there's also only so many hours in a day. I think it's a balance. A lot of my best relationships start from a very specific working relationship on a story. If we've worked on a story together, you pitched a great idea. We went back and forth. We made the story happen from there. We have this foundational relationship and oftentimes that's when we'll say, let's meet up for a drink the next time you're in town and take it from there.

[0:12:44] BB: Yes. It's built from a good trusting relationship of already working together.

[0:12:50] JQ: Exactly.

[0:12:51] BB: Before you bridge to a coffee and in person, a date or what da, da, da. Yup.

[0:12:56] JQ: Exactly.

[0:12:56] BB: Yeah. Because otherwise too risky, if you ask me. So, I totally get it. Totally get it.

[0:13:01] JQ: Also, we were in the worst part of Manhattan. We work at Hudson Yards, so anybody who's willing to come to Hudson Yards, like gets my – love.

[0:13:08] BB: Oh, yeah. Oh, I hear you. I hear you. Although it's, well, it's hotter than heck right now in New York City, but I was going to say, otherwise it's very beautiful over there. I was just there like two months ago, but yeah. Okay, this is good to know. Is there anything that you would like to just convey, Jilian, it's just like, “Please, publicist. No, never do this.”

[0:13:27] JQ: I mean, there's been some pitches that are so off brand where I'm like, “Have you ever read PureWow in your life?” I think that if you're pitching me a men's professional athlete for an interview, that kind of thing where I'm like, “Okay.” So, I think any indication that you haven't actually read our publication, including this is the biggest no, no, not changing the name in the subject line, but these are few –

[0:13:58] BB: That's a bad copy, paste. Okay. I'm glad you say it's few and far between. Okay. That delights my soul a little bit. Publicist, we're getting better out there. Hopefully. Hopefully. Okay. Jillian, I have a quick rapid-fire question set here for you. If you're ready.

[0:14:13] JQ: I'm ready.

[0:14:13] BB: Let's do it. Phone or video interview?

[0:14:18] JQ: Phone.

[0:14:19] BB: Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch?

[0:14:22] JQ: Both. Probably start with a paragraph to explain why you're here. If there's relevant bullet points, if it says like a product where you want to outline some of the things that it does, or it's a restaurant where you want to highlight some of the key things on the menu, then bullet points to follow.

[0:14:39] BB: Okay. Images attached or a Dropbox zip file?

[0:14:43] JQ: Attached.

[0:14:44] BB: Attached. Email or a DM of some sort somewhere? Instagram X, whatever, all the things.

[0:14:51] JQ: Email. That probably tells everybody everything they need to know about my age, but email.

[0:14:56] BB: No, literally, this is a 97% email rate. Yes, I'm still – very rarely where we hear someone who says like, “Oh, yeah, DM me.” It's extremely rare. We could look in the backlogs to see if we got three people. Anyway, perfect. One follow up or multiple?

[0:15:14] JQ: It's okay to remind me as I've here disclosed, I lose things in my inbox sometimes, so it's okay to get a few follow ups once we're getting to five or six, that's probably too many.

[0:15:25] BB: That's too many. Okay. Direct or creative subject lines? We've covered this a bit, but just to emphasize.

[0:15:31] JQ: Direct.

[0:15:32] BB: Yes. Press release or media kit?

[0:15:35] JQ: It doesn't matter. Maybe slight preference for press release.

[0:15:38] BB: Okay. Okay. Anytime you read pitches and prefer to read pitches.

[0:15:44] JQ: No, I'm a maniac. I'm always –

[0:15:45] BB: Yeah, you're always. Yeah, you mentioned all the time, all the time is good. Perfect. We didn't get too much into this, but sources or are you like, "God, I always need this type of expert." You mentioned the one from like the holiday timeframe, but is there a type that always needs to be in your rolodex?

[0:16:02] JQ: Yeah. Experts are interesting, because, and wait, this is not a rapid-fire answer. If you just want me to –

[0:16:07] BB: No, no, no. Yes, tell us. I actually don't know why that question is down there actually, because we need to – yeah, anyway.

[0:16:13] JQ: Experts are something that we need a lot more of now than we did six months or a year ago, because of, and I'm sure other journalists you've talked to have said as much, because of the Google algorithm. They tend to prioritize stories with experts more, so we've always needed experts.

[0:16:30] BB: Oh, good to know. Okay. Ah, you have been the first to share that insight, actually. Yeah.

[0:16:34] JQ: We have always been the first to need experts for, I mean, we've always needed experts for certain types of stories if we're talking about a diet or something health wise. We would talk to a doctor, of course, but now we're finding that we want to have experts for other types of stories as well, like we just did a story on how to dress well when you're pregnant. We talked to a stylist who has specialized in maternity wear. That's the type of thing – we definitely want more experts than we've had historically. We did a story on what to do when your dog is grieving. We talked to Cesar Millan who gave us tips.

[0:17:08] BB: Oh, yeah. When your dog is grieving.

[0:17:12] JQ: Bottom line. Project confidence.

[0:17:14] BB: Okay. I had no idea. See, again, another reason to read this. Okay. Thank you for that insight. Jilian, is there anything we can do to celebrate, tout, cheer, all the things you're doing and what you're doing all there? Some people say like, “Oh, yeah, see our report that's coming out on next.” Whatever. We're just here to celebrate you.

[0:17:35] JQ: Well, I would turn that over to the team here, because again, they're writing the actual great stories, but I feel like I have the best job in the world, because here's like a list of the things that after we get off the call, I get to go look at today.

[0:17:49] BB: Oh, tell us.

[0:17:49] JQ: I get to go look at I'm just looking at my to-do list here. I get to edit a story where one of our editors tried everything on the three for me menu at Chili's.

[0:17:59] BB: Oh, my.

[0:18:00] JQ: I get to edit a think piece about Gen Alpha fashion trends. I'm dying to know what those are.

[0:18:05] BB: Gen, oh, no. Are we talking? Oh, no. Okay. Yes. Yes.

[0:18:11] JQ: I get to look at a dermatologist vetted story about how taking Ozempic affects your skin.

[0:18:19] BB: Oh, oh, okay.

[0:18:21] JQ: So, doesn't that all sound so juicy?

[0:18:22] BB: That's so juicy, and how fun? If this didn't just sell to everyone here listening, like you got to be on PureWow, every day and check this thing out. There you go. This is great. Jillian, thank you so much for being here today. Such a wonderful time. Maybe some people will try to bug you and see you in Hudson Yards. We'll see. But thank you, Jillian Quint, Editor-in-Chief at PureWow. Look at you. Wow.

[0:18:47] JQ: Thank you so much for having me. This has been a lot of fun.

[0:18:51] BB: Ah, I agree. I agree. Thanks, Jillian.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:18:55] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode featuring Jillian Quint, Editor-in-Chief at PureWow. 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]