

EPISODE 237

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:08] 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 Journalists is Anya Meyerowitz, freelance editor and journalist. During the episode, Anya highlights what subject lines PR professional should avoid, her interest in meeting publicists in person, but not after hours, and the process as a freelancer to make a pitch work for the current news cycle.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:43] BB: Welcome everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalists. I'm Beck Bamberger, a publicist, and we do this show to help journalists and publicists, mostly publicists, learn better about how to work with reporters, writers, editors, freelancers, all the great people that make the media world go round, because we, frankly, need to all work together to make this thing happen, called Wonderful Free Media in this world. With us today, coming all the way from London, it is cloudy, but it is okay. Is freelance editor and journalist Anya Meyerowitz. Thank you for being here and thanks for hopping on here.

[0:01:21] AM: Thank you so much for having me. I like listened to lots of episodes of the podcast and I always find it fascinating. Thank you for having me on.

[0:01:28] BB: I love that you told me that you've messaged a few people that have been on. I've been like, "Oh, my God. I can't believe you said that on this show."

[0:01:36] AM: Yeah. I think it's interesting, isn't it? Because I see that the whole purpose of this is bridging that gap and there doesn't need to be a bridge and many more bridges between journalists and editors and all the people you mentioned and PRs and publicists. There needs to be honesty in that bridge, but I think some of the – that you've had on have said it much more,

kind of boldly than perhaps I might. It's brilliant. I have a huge respect for it. I was really in awe of these people. I said in a message saying, "I totally agree, but I can't believe you said it, so just so off the cuff."

[0:02:08] BB: People have been frank. People have been frank on here, which I completely welcome and adore. So, with that, could you Anya, just give us an overview of all the outlets you're covering, because it's glamour, it's Conde Nast Traveler, it's many things. Tell us more.

[0:02:22] AM: Yeah. So, I mean, it's kind of, I would say it's a constant convey about Schmorgas board of publications. I've been a journalist and editor for 13 years, so sometimes, there are publications that I write for more frequently than others, but I've arranged the publications that I have written for the couple that you mentioned, Tatler, The Independent, Red magazine, Harper's Bazaar, Evening Standard, The Sunday Times. So, a whole range of women's glossies, but also newspapers, and also locks my real focuses in the digital space.

[0:02:56] BB: You also help publicists better understand how to pitch. Is that right? Am I making that up?

[0:03:02] AM: No, no. I'm totally not making that up. About six years ago. I mean, because I would get sometimes emails from PR saying, "We've just got some questions." I didn't have time to answer them with my journalist hat on. I've got five inboxes, which is quite –

[0:03:16] BB: Five? Wait, wait, wait. You've got five? Why five?

[0:03:19] AM: I've got five inboxes, because I've got various inboxes that are attached to the publishing houses that I write for weekly. Then one for travel, and one for general journalism. Then one for my PR coaching. So, that seems that would help me keep everything really in line actually to divide it out in a five, but actually it's just chaos across the entire lot.

[0:03:45] BB: Wow. Okay.

[0:03:46] AM: I know you've had some people on here that are inbox zero and have really neat folders. I have a system similar to my wardrobe system, which is more organized chaos. I know where everything is, but if you came to my inbox, it would just look like chaos.

[0:04:01] BB: Oh, okay. It's chaos in there.

[0:04:04] AM: Yeah.

[0:04:04] BB: Tell us more about that chaos. Especially when you have then the five. I've never heard someone say that, by the way, on here, that they've got the multiple inboxes. How do you exist with this or you don't? I don't know.

[0:04:17] AM: How do I make it work for me?

[0:04:18] BB: Yeah. Everyday you're like, "Okay, I got to hit every inbox. I've got to hit every inbox. I've got to get it to zero.

[0:04:25] AM: No. I never get it to zero. I gave up getting it to zero, because I felt for me, it was a bit of a red herring and I was spending a lot of time trying to work out where to put this person, how to apply to this person. Should I reply to this person? Where does this go? How can I use this? Actually, it wasn't the best use of my time. So, now what I do is I will immediately delete something that just isn't for me and all likely ever be for me. I start things from experts. I'll keep those in a folder and I will go through once a week and move those over and check that I've got all of those in a folder, so that when I'm looking for sources or experts to comment or whatever it might be, I can check their first.

Then I try and get back to either PRs that I have a good relationship with, or that I want to work with on whatever the pitch was that they sent over, or that I want to start a conversation with, because perhaps they represent a brilliant expert or a brilliant brand, but the angle they sent over wasn't quite for me. Yeah. It works a little bit like that. There is quite a lot of admins that comes with it moving people from one inbox to the other. Thanks for emailing.

Actually, the email address you want is this one and trying to get people aligned with the right inbox. It goes more smoothly, sometimes than others, but I'm used to it. I've had – inboxes for many years.

[0:05:48] BB: Yes. Okay. Yeah, you're masterful now at this level. Okay. You did say that you had some subject lines that stood out to you. Yes?

[0:05:57] AM: Yeah.

[0:05:58] BB: That you want to share here. Yeah.

[0:06:01] AM: I know people have a past guess of shared the subject lines that they get that they are less than impressed with.

[0:06:07] BB: Yeah. Very much so.

[0:06:09] AM: Those were the ones that I picked out. Then – happy to put the ones that I love. A couple that stood out and I was going through my inbox having a look the other day. So, the first one is people that just send something that says, my clients or client update. Then either a list of their clients just by name and – yeah. No, it was nothing. Also, it cuts off after the first client. I don't know if your clients are in the wellness space, and the travel space, and the relationship –

[0:06:41] BB: Wait a second. Wait a second, though. You're getting client update, and then you just get a list of clients, nothing, nothing, like links? Do they get links?

[0:06:50] AM: In the body of the email, not always, actually, but I will just get, you know, until I should refresh on who my clients are, which isn't necessarily unhelpful, but it is unhelpful, if your subject line just says, my clients. Very often the people sending those emails, I don't have a pre-existing or at least not a particularly strong pre-existing relationship with. So, when you say, my, I don't know who my is.

[0:07:14] BB: What we're talking about. Yeah.

[0:07:15] AM: Yeah. It doesn't mean anything to me. I actually, it seems to come into my inbox quite often. I always wonder with things that with subject lines and particularly bad subject lines that flow in quite often. I think they must be working somewhere for somebody, otherwise they wouldn't send them in, but I've had lots of conversations with colleagues over the years. They don't seem to be working with them either, but I'm sure somewhere in some space they're being picked up, otherwise I'm sure they would –

[0:07:42] BB: But are they? This is the – you know, I almost think and I need to pick up, I need to have publicists on here as like a reversed one to be like. Tell me how that horrible pitch, I'm sorry. Did it didn't work ever or did you just send it, because the boss, boss, boss or whomever was like, “Hey, you have to send out 57 pitches. I don't care to who.” Like what are we doing here?

[0:08:03] AM: Or a client, sometimes I can see this.

[0:08:05] BB: Oh, a client. I need to see the list. Did you send a list? Did you send like – it's like, well, yeah, no.

[0:08:11] AM: I really feel for PR than that. I know.

[0:08:13] BB: I know.

[0:08:13] AM: I can always feel when there's an urgency. Oftentimes as well from junior PRs.

[0:08:18] BB: Yes. Yes, I know.

[0:08:21] AM: I feel for them.

[0:08:22] BB: Oh, God. Okay. Anya, now, especially with you, you're in London, as I mentioned. Are there any ways publicists can make relationships with you that you find helpful, or is it? No, just send me good pitches. Bye-bye.

[0:08:37] AM: I really, really love meeting PRs. At the moment, I've had a couple of months where I've returned from mat leave and I don't have full time childcare for my daughter. At the moment, mid-September, when I do, I am really trying to book all of those coffee meets, or breakfast, or brunch, or whatever it is, but coming for them going forward, because I really, really love, A, just having that face-to-face conversation, and particularly, because we're not in an office as much as we used to be and especially me as a freelancer.

Also, just because so many interesting conversations happen around, yes, they're clients, but also, who they are, what they think of – an industry and you know, building that relationship that we talk about being so important in the media or industry and between journalists and PR. I really love doing that. I don't love going for meeting PRs, the kind of after work drinks, or dinner, or that's not really my bag, but certainly breakfast, brunch, coffee, amazing. I'm always up for that.

[0:09:46] BB: Okay –

[0:09:47] AM: So, yeah. That means –

[0:09:47] BB: We so swimming in London, ladies or publicist. Hit her up. Coffee brunch. Okay. This is good. This is good. Now, you, Anya, when we've had freelancers on here, editors, writers, etc. you know there's another layer here, which is you got to pitch your stories that you want to write or perhaps maybe even with editing and so forth. Could you tell us a little bit about the process of you get a pitch from a publicist, you like it? Now, where does it go?

[MESSAGE]

[0:10:18] 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 CONTINUED]

[0:10:40] AM: I think I'm a bit of a confusing one, I think, for lots of PRs, because I'm very often in house.

[0:10:48] BB: Yes.

[0:10:48] AM: But also, I pitch in as with more of a freelance hat on as well. Sometimes PR think I'm covering a web director role or a digital editor role. I'm sitting in that one publication. Sometimes as you say, it's that I'm taking that pitch and then reformatting it and then sending it on to an editor from home. I guess the process for me, if I'm talking about really freelance pitching into various outlets would be that I would look at a pitch, see what angle they're suggesting. I always, always look for what is the hook here, what makes this relevant now. Sometimes I get pictures that are really interesting, but I just can't find a way to make it relevant to the moment.

It's actually something that I don't love about journalism. I think we're very focused on news. Actually, sometimes we just want to read about something, or talk about something, or listen to something, because it's just interesting, not necessarily –

[0:11:52] BB: That's right.

[0:11:53] AM: A celebrity said it, or a study said, but that generally tends to be a lot of how the media worked. You'll know, firsthand. So, I always look to see what the news hook is. If I think it's a particularly strong pitch, I would sit down and do some research on the news hook myself, or I really love it when people tell me the search value of something. For example, I once got a pitch about barn conversions. Barn conversions don't really feature on the radar. I'm not particularly interested in them. I've never spent much time thinking about barn conversions, but because the person that pitched this told me that there had been a 300% increase in Google searches for barn conversions.

[0:12:38] BB: Bond conversions, like the financial bonds?

[0:12:41] AM: No. Barn as in, on a farm.

[0:12:44] BB: Oh, barn. Oh.

[0:12:48] AM: Yeah. Barn, but yeah, totally different thing, barn conversions. I then wrote a piece for Conde Nast Traveler, for Tatler, and for the Telegraph at different angles. That was because of that high value piece of information they gave me about search volume, which showed me that there was a readership there. That was really a powerful hook then for my editors.

[0:13:08] BB: Yes. Okay. So, using the search volume as an interesting way.

[0:13:13] AM: I think it's really, I think, and obviously that this works mainly for digital, although arguably if it's being searched for, it's also there's obviously going to be an offline appetite for it as well. Whenever I speak to PRs, whenever I coach PRs, whenever I give workshops for PRs, I always talk about it as this really underused resource. Most people will have access to those, kind of SEO tools. If not, you can sign up to one for free where you get 10 searches a day, that's more than enough, but it's really, it's so valuable, especially when publishing houses and publications are being measured on kind of SEO and organic traffic – thing. I don't really understand why more PRs don't do it.

[0:13:55] BB: Yeah. That's kind of an unlock. I haven't had someone here on this show, to my knowledge, mention that – showcase that, like imagine you put in your pitch. Hey, did you know Anya, the search for barn conversions is up 272% on Google as of the last 30 days. This is a hot trending topic. Don't know you write about it. By the way, that's so easy to find.

[0:14:16] AM: Yeah, exactly. It's really easy to find. It just gives like a bit of a gold dusting to whatever it –

[0:14:24] BB: It does. It does.

[0:14:25] AM: Even if you sent me a pitch about barn conversions, even if you told me something that would be really interesting to people that care about barn conversions, I wouldn't really know.

[0:14:35] BB: Exactly.

[0:14:35] AM: Giving me a piece of information that does resonate with me to show me that there is an appetite out there, even if I don't understand the ins and outs of it, which by the way, I do now I've written three pieces on it, and then updated those pieces continuously. It's just that nudge over the line that a pitch needs sometimes.

[0:14:52] BB: Anya, we don't have much more time, because we farted around on this thing, and then we were chatting about weather in London and all this stuff. I want to get into our rapid-fire questions, if that's okay. Then we can wrap it. Okay. Video or phone interview?

[0:15:07] AM: Phone.

[0:15:08] BB: Oh. That's trending, by the way. More phones. More phones. Bullet points or paragraphs in pitches?

[0:15:13] AM: Paragraphs.

[0:15:15] BB: Paragraph. Also, an unusual answer. Short or long pitches?

[0:15:20] AM: Short.

[0:15:21] BB: Images attached or a drop box zip file?

[0:15:25] AM: Oh, images attached. I can't spend hours going through a drop.

[0:15:27] BB: No, seriously. I cannot either. Email, well, we know you got the inboxes or a DM of some sort. Do you want any DMs for a pitch?

[0:15:34] **AM:** You know, I actually don't mind. I don't mind either.

[0:15:37] **BB:** Interesting. Interesting. Okay. One follow-up or multiple?

[0:15:41] **AM:** It depends. Sorry. That's a bit of a cop out –

[0:15:44] **BB:** That's okay. That's okay. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:15:48] **AM:** Direct.

[0:15:49] **BB:** Time you usually read pitches?

[0:15:51] **AM:** I normally read pitches between seven and nine when I'm sitting down getting my coffee coming back to –

[0:15:58] **BB:** London time.

[0:15:59] **AM:** Yeah. Yeah. London time where there's not so many people needing my time. Then I probably check again just after my lunch break, sort of like 1-2 PM.

[0:16:08] **BB:** When you say check, you mean you check all five boxes or what do you do? Because you have five.

[0:16:14] **AM:** Yeah. Because I have five. If I'm working in-house, I will check the relevant inbox there, because I'm not going to be sending pictures out elsewhere, but I will in the morning check across all five, because obviously, there are going to be things that are crossover that are relevant, whatever the publication is that I'm in-house for. But generally, on any day to day where I'm not in-house, I will, yeah, check across all five.

[0:16:36] **BB:** Amazing. Much respect, Anya. Not managing one inbox, but five. Wow. Thank you so much for being on here. My one last thing though, is there anything we can do to promote, celebrate, tout give you a little PR, shout out, whatever?

[0:16:52] AM: Yeah. I mean, I always am pointing people towards my PR coaching staff, so you can find me on Instagram for that, which is @anyaprocoach or my website, which is anyameyerowitz.co.uk.

[0:17:04] BB: Okay. Everybody. Anya Meyerowitz, thank you so much for being on here all the way from London. It's digital though, so it doesn't really count, but still. Thank you again for being on. It's so good.

[0:17:16] AM: Thank you so much, Beck.

[0:17:17] BB: Send her your pitches in one of her five inboxes. That is wild. I'm not going to forget that. Oh, man, Anya. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:17:26] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalists episode with Anya Meyerowitz, freelance editor and journalist. 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]