

EPISODE 246

[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 Coffee with a Journalist episode is Nicole Ortiz, Healthcare Editor at the Morning Brew. Nicole shares that she appreciates well-researched pitches that correctly target her current role at Morning Brew. She loves creative subject lines like why are hospital gowns so ugly and explains that she also occasionally reports on sustainability topics.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:46] BB: So, thank you for being here, first off.

[0:00:47] NO: Yes, thanks for having me.

[0:00:48] BB: Yes, first off, I like to ask people, even from the biggest outlets, how would you describe the outlet coverage of Morning Brew? It's changed over time.

[0:00:58] NO: It has, yeah. So, actually, I'm on the professional side, so there's a bunch of different focuses. We have CFO, IT, tech, healthcare, HR, marketing, and retail. And with us – so, Healthcare Brew is our newsletter, we publish three times a week. We're focusing on basically all things that people working in the business of healthcare need to know.

[0:01:23] BB: Which is a lot.

[0:01:24] NO: Quite a lot, yes. You know, pretty easy, straightforward.

[0:01:27] BB: Yes, this is a small, small. And Nicole, I'm so glad you're joining us today. We've been doing a lot more editors on the show. So, we're going to talk about your inbox in just a

second. But it's quite a distinction seemingly from sometimes reporters and what they go through versus freelancers. So, we like to have an array of people on here. So, let us talk first about your inbox. How is it in there?

[0:01:52] NO: Any given day is kind of stressful and a little chaotic.

[0:01:55] BB: A little bit. A little bit.

[0:01:57] NO: I also subscribe in addition to getting press releases and various pitches. I also subscribe to a bunch of newsletters. So, there's always just like a daily barrage of news that I'm keeping up on. So, it's quite a lot. I think maybe that's something that people don't always realize, is that, we're not just skimming the press releases. We're also digesting all of the day's news, and from many different outlets, and many different perspectives. So, information overload, and then you get a pitch and you're like, "Oh my God, more information."

[0:02:28] BB: What's the ratio of pitches, would you say, to the rest of stuff in your inbox?

[0:02:33] NO: I would say, it's probably about a third of it.

[0:02:37] BB: Oh.

[0:02:37] NO: Yes, it's a lot. I recently realized that more than I realized was going to spam directly, because I think because we're hosted on Gmail.

[0:02:47] BB: Oh, yeah, it's like a big filter. Yes.

[0:02:50] NO: Yes, it's confusing. I didn't realize it, and then I felt bad because I was like, "Oh, no, all these people probably think I'm ignoring them," and I had no idea this was even going into my spam."

[0:02:59] BB: Yes. So, do you check your spam regularly then, just to double check?

[0:03:03] NO: I do. I check it to make sure there's not something particularly interesting or timely that I want. Then, I'll pull it back into my inbox and mark it as not spam, so that person doesn't get flagged anymore.

[0:03:15] BB: Got it. Okay. Yes. So, that's your, your protocol. Now, what do you do with all the other pitches that you get? Do you do mass deleting? Do you do foldering? Do you do anything?

[0:03:23] NO: Yes, I'm a meticulously organized person. So, I have folders for everything and I have a potential source and potential story folder. So, certain things if it's interesting to me, but I don't quite see a fit for it, I'll put it in that folder, and then, periodically, I'll skim that folder to see when I'm looking for story ideas to assign, I'll like go through that and see if there's anything that jumps out at me. Some things I mass delete. Some things, if I really like the pitch, but I don't see it being quite relevant yet, I might respond to them and just give them a heads up, like not at this time, but keep pitching me. And then, others, a lot of times, I honestly don't say anything and I will forward it to my reporters, and I'll assign it to them that way. So, you might not hear directly from me, but if you're hearing from someone on my team and you had emailed me, that's likely why.

[0:04:12] BB: So, you do some deleting, you do some responding. I know you came prepared, Nicole, with some headlines or some subject lines that you really liked. Would you like to share any with us right now?

[0:04:23] NO: Yes. I did a mix of ones that I like and then ones that I don't know that they particularly work. One that I really liked, it was, "Why are hospital gowns so ugly?" I just, immediately, I was like, "Why are they so ugly?"

[0:04:38] BB: Yes. And someone did just do a story on this. It wasn't you guys. I want to say it was like the New York Times or something, but this is a topic that's been discussed.

[0:04:46] NO: Yes. I feel like it's something that immediately would pique a reader's interest. So, I was like, "Oh, that's great. I love that." So, I like the idea of asking a question that really grabs somebody's attention.

[0:04:57] BB: Got it. So, in that subject line, it was kind of written as a headline in a way, and intriguing.

[0:05:03] NO: Yes.

[0:05:04] BB: So, let me ask you then. So, what was in the pitch? Was it that why they're so ugly? What?

[0:05:09] NO: It was more like a source who could talk on it, and then, actually, I was a little bit in the pitch. It ended up not really making sense for our audience, so I didn't even move forward with it, but I at least grabbed my attention.

[0:05:20] BB: Okay. Yes, grabbed your attention. Okay. Another example?

[0:05:23] NO: Okay. So, this one, I feel like it isn't necessarily a favorite, but it says, "Expert thrive in the AI and digital age, staying relevant with future ready skills." So, I chose that one because I feel like on the surface, it looks like it could be really helpful, but it's actually just like a lot of vague jargon. To me, I don't necessarily, like I look at something like that. I don't know going to be about, and I don't know if that's going to be helpful, and I feel like that would end up being something that I would end up deleting when I'm just like skimming.

[0:05:57] BB: Yes, okay, got you. Anything else?

[0:06:00] NO: Yes.

[0:06:01] BB: I love it.

[0:06:01] NO: This one is more of vent.

[0:06:03] BB: You came prepared.

[0:06:04] NO: I did. I came with five, but we don't have to go through all five.

[0:06:07] BB: Yes, we rarely get that volume here. Yes, let's bring it Nicole. This is gold, gold.

[0:06:13] NO: Okay. One of them is, it just says, "News to announcements." I was definitely intrigued, but I also wanted more.

[0:06:24] BB: But intrigued because it's so bad, right? What are you going to do with that?

[0:06:28] NO: Yes, exactly. So, that one was another, like, not a great one. And then, I think I can bunch these other two together, because I've selected them for the same reason. So, one says, "Pitch for Nicole, feature on El Tequila Lino, Tequila's 65-year growth in their future." And then the other says, "Selena Gomez –"

[0:06:48] BB: Tequila? Wait, tequila?

[0:06:49] NO: Yes. So, the other says, "Selena Gomez, Rare Beauty's first brand campaign with Fred and Farad Los Angeles." So, the reason I got these is because I used to work at Adweek and I did like, obviously marketing, campaign, editing, and reporting there." Then, the tequila one, I wrote during a period when I was freelancing last year. I wrote a story about an alcohol brand. So, I feel like these two, they did their research, but not well enough where they knew where I'm currently at.

[0:07:22] BB: So, this is what I want to talk about for a second. Why is it that an article you wrote two and a half years – okay. This is why OnePitch, this is why we built OnePitch, by the way. Obviously, I look for OnePitch. Something you wrote two and a half years ago that someone clearly saw and now has your current information, your email for, which is very different from where you were that two years ago and still emails you. This is what I can understand, is like, I would understand if the pitch went to, "Oh, that old email and it bounced back from Adweek, or Ad Age, or whatever." Like, "Okay." But now, it's like, "No, I'm purposely emailing you at your new outlet, doing your new thing with something that is very old." I'm like, that is such a miss.

[0:08:02] NO: I know. Honestly –

[0:08:04] BB: What are we doing?

[0:08:04] NO: For me, I mark those as spam, because to me it just shows, okay, you're not doing your research. Like, you found me and you looked me up, and that's nice, and you've learned something about me, but it's not like I haven't been vocal in the same way as I have with those past articles. I've been vocal about my new job, and joining this team, and this new title, and everything. So, like, you would probably easily find that information alongside where you found this information.

[0:08:31] BB: Exactly. Therein lies the conundrum.

[0:08:33] NO: Yes. So, those are all I brought.

[0:08:36] BB: Nicole, thank you for all those great juicy examples. So, so helpful.

[BREAK]

[0:08:42] 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]

[0:09:06] BB: Okay, you're doing health care. There's a lot to uncover there. What sources are you looking for?

[0:09:13] NO: Primarily, we look for like payers, pharmaceutical experts, and hospital experts, and then anyone in that realm, like analysts, academics, legal, who can comment on those things. If you could comment on like big news happening that you think is applicable to people working in those fields, like if somebody's working at an insurance company, if somebody's working in a hospital. We don't necessarily focus too much on regional things, so that could get

a little niche if you're a specific hospital perspective. Trying to look at it from a national perspective and commenting on recent news always helps.

[0:09:53] BB: Okay, this is good. Further in that, you're talking national, so even I would – like lobbyists or regulatory, anything like that?

[0:10:01] NO: Yes, regulatory for sure. We're definitely looking at how like the election might extend or expire certain things. That's definitely something that's like on our minds and is in our pitch meetings.

[0:10:14] BB: Oh, yeah. God speed on that. Nicole, you also though write about, on occasion, sustainability. Do you want to expand on that?

[0:10:24] NO: Yes. That's something that I kind of started doing when I was freelancing. I was originally writing about it in the marketing space, but now, obviously, being in healthcare, it's something I'd still like to write about. So, if you have specific pitches about sustainability or just ideas, sources, et cetera, you could definitely send those to me as well.

[0:10:42] BB: Okay. So, sustainability. What sparked it in you to start doing that on a freelance level? It was a personal interest. Like in my personal life, I am very sustainability-minded. I'm also very outdoorsy. I really like hiking and biking. When I was working at Adweek, I used to write about the outdoors and recreation industries. Then, when I was like kind of freelancing it on my own, I was like, "Well, actually, there's no parameters. I can kind of write about sustainability in marketing and in these spaces in a different way." So, I did it for a couple outlets when I was freelancing.

[0:11:16] BB: Good to know. Okay. Sustainability pitch is welcomed.

[0:11:20] NO: Thank you.

[0:11:21] BB: There you go. Now, what about – you're based in New York City, and there's a lot of publicists of course in New York City. What about relationship building with publicists, if at all? Do you ever want to see them? Do you ever want to go on a drink? Do you ever

want to go on a walk? Do you, never talk to me in my life?

[0:11:38] NO: Well, I'm actually based in Hudson Valley now. So, I come down to the city like a couple times a month, so I'm not opposed to meeting people though. It's like when I'm in the city, it's usually for a specific purpose, so I'm usually tied up with other things and it's hard to step out in the day. But that being said, I'm happy to meet, like chat with people on a video call or on a phone call. I think that's kind of like my preference, because I can also organize my thoughts and take notes better than if we're getting coffee or something.

[0:12:09] BB: Yes. Okay. Good to know. So, you are available. You are open to that. Then, is there something that publicists can do just in general to make your life better? Obviously send you correct pitches, but what else?

[0:12:22] NO: Yes, definitely the correct pitches. This is, I think one of my biggest pet peeves is to not message me in my personal inbox because I hate getting pitches in my personal Gmail. I think most reporters and editors I know hate that, and it just is immediate deletion. Like, it could be the best pitch, it could be the most relevant pitch, but to me, that just shows that you're not doing your research. Because my work email is readily available, and my personal email is actually, I've tried to make it harder to find.

[0:12:56] BB: Yes. What happened with that? Where was it on the internet somewhere?

[0:12:59] NO: I have no idea. It must have been somewhere. So, that's like my biggest pet peeve. Then, just making sure you read our site. I get a lot of pitches that are consumer-facing, and like, while interesting, it's just not something we cover. We cover the business, we're B2B, and that's got to be our focus, and that's got to be the take away. So, if you're sending me things that have too much of a consumer focus, I'm just not going to even really look at it.

[0:13:26] BB: Yes, we're not going to do that. Yes. Okay. Okay. I have a quick flash list of questions for you. Nicole, if that sounds good, shall we do it?

[0:13:35] NO: Let's do it.

[0:13:36] BB: Okay. Then, we want to talk a little bit more on just editing versus the reporting and stuff. So, we'll get to that in a second. So, let me do these rapid-fire questions first. Okay. Video or phone interview?

[0:13:47] NO: Phone.

[0:13:48] BB: Phone. Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch?

[0:13:51] NO: Paragraphs.

[0:13:52] BB: Oh, paragraphs. How short or long for pitches?

[0:13:55] NO: Short, like two graphs.

[0:13:58] BB: Okay. Images attached or a Dropbox zip?

[0:14:02] NO: Images.

[0:14:03] BB: Email or a DM of some sort? But I think you answered that, email, not your personal email.

[0:14:07] NO: Yes, my work email.

[0:14:08] BB: Yes, yes. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:14:12] NO: I don't know. I guess, I kind of like both. I think I prefer direct just because it gets to the point quicker.

[0:14:17] BB: Yes, that's usually the preference for people. Okay. Press release or media kit?

[0:14:21] NO: Press release.

[0:14:23] BB: Any time that you review pitches, or is it all the time? Because you're crazy with keeping it clean.

[0:14:29] NO: Yes. I'm an inbox zero girl. So, I try to review it through the day. I don't think there's like a specific time. It's basically like, do I have spare time? Okay, I'll go through my inbox now.

[0:14:40] BB: Got you, okay. What about the story review or approval process, Nicole? So now, you're an editor and we want to demystify as much as possible just how do stories come to be? Because it doesn't necessarily just come as a pitch to a reporter, and they go, "Great, I'm going to write about it tomorrow." No, there's internal discussion and stuff. So, how does it work there for a story to get live?

[0:15:01] NO: My team does like a weekly pitch meeting. So, I meet with my reporters and they'll come prepared with a couple of stories that they want to work on. Most pitches come with like a working headline, the nut graph of your story, which is like your main idea, and where you answer the like, why this topic, and why now. And potential sources they'd like to talk to. I think that's generally that happens like at a lot of publications when you have a pitch meeting. And we'll discuss things and give each other feedback. The whole team is very collaborative and communicative, and we'll kind of chat, and like suggest other sources or suggest additional things to cover.

Then, when I'm assigning things, I'll either get something in my inbox or I'll be reading something and think of a story angle or an idea, and I have one-on-one meetings with my reporters. So, if it's a longer story, I'll bring it up in our one-on-one, and kind of float the idea by then. We'll have a conversation about it. I'll ask them to come back with like a more formal pitch to discuss in our Friday or like pitch meeting on Fridays. Then, for shorter stories, like if we're just recapping quick news, it's usually just forwarding over a press release, forwarding over something that we want to cover, a quick Slack conversation, maybe a huddle, and then kind of hammering it out there, and going from there.

[0:16:21] BB: So quite fluid. It's not necessarily a big, scary, long thing or something. No, it's moving quite great.

[0:16:25] NO: No.

[0:16:26] BB: Okay, yes.

[0:16:27] NO: Yes, we're pretty easygoing on our end, I think. Like, not too overly formal, which is nice.

[0:16:33] BB: Some places, it's way more formal.

[0:16:35] NO: For sure.

[0:16:36] BB: I wanted to ask. Nicole, is there anything we could do to tell, promote, talk about just how great Brew is and what not?

[0:16:44] NO: Yes.

[0:16:45] BB: A little PR for you.

[0:16:46] NO: Tell all your friends about Healthcare Brew. Tell the doctor, or nurse, or PA in your life to sign up for our newsletter. It hits your inbox three times a week, and you follow us, me, and my reporters on LinkedIn. You can find us very easily on the newsletter. I think it links to our author site, and our LinkedIn, and our Twitter accounts. Yes, just follow us.

[0:17:12] BB: Just follow us, okay. Nicole, thank you so much for being on today. Everyone, this is Nicole Ortiz. She is the Editor, the Healthcare Editor at Morning Brew, Inc. Do not pitch her personal Gmail. Do not. Do not. There's other means.

[0:17:31] NO: Yes.

[0:17:32] BB: All right. Thank you, Nicole. I appreciate it. Have a good rest of the day in New York.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:17:34] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode with Nicole Ortiz, at the Morning Brew. 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]