

EPISODE 250

[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 over to our website at onepitch.co to learn more. On today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, our guest is Jared Newman, a freelance technology journalist specializing in consumer tech for Fast Company. Jared also writes for the popular Cord Cutter Weekly column and has a tech advice newsletter called Advisorator. In this episode, Jared and Beck dive into the challenges of managing cluttered inboxes, the elevated expectations freelancers face when pitching stories to multiple editors, what actually makes a pitch stand out, and the role of LinkedIn and Slack. Enjoy.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:55] JN: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalists. I'm Beck Bamberger. And we do this show because we want publicists to better understand how to work with journalists, not other publicists, sometimes, but journalists, reporters, editors, all the people that make the media world go round because we need to work together to make it all happen.

And I'm very excited today because, coming from his blue background, I want to talk about that, Jared, in just a second, is Jared Newman. He is a freelance technology journalist that covers many outlets and goes into and has a newsletter himself. So we're going to talk about that. He writes about all things tech. Jared, thanks for being here.

[0:01:32] JN: Thanks for having me, Beck.

[0:01:33] BB: Yes, yes. Okay, first off, what's with the little blue in the background? Wait. Oh my God, is this like the dress thing? Is it actually blue, or am I making that up?

[0:01:42] JN: You mean the walls?

[0:01:44] BB: Yeah, yeah, your walls.

[0:01:46] JN: Yeah, those are just the walls.

[0:01:48] BB: Okay, just making sure. They're just like a nice baby blue going on.

[0:01:50] JN: It is a nice baby blue. I don't know. That's how the office came when I moved in here and I decided I kind of liked it.

[0:01:58] BB: Staying with it. I love it. Okay. Jared, when we have freelancers on here, it's a little bit different of a game than when it's a reporter who's like working at the one desk and they have the one beat and they're bombarded with lots of pitches and so forth. But you often have to send pitches, but you also probably get pitches. First, let's start with your inbox then. How does it look in there?

[0:02:22] JN: Not great. Well, actually I keep a pretty clean inbox.

[0:02:25] BB: Keep it tight?

[0:02:26] JN: I do.

[0:02:28] BB: Are you a zero?

[0:02:28] JN: I'm not exactly in box zero, but I'm like in box like four.

[0:02:34] BB: Me too, I get to that a lot when I'm like, "Oh, it's only four. That's very good for me."

[0:02:37] JN: Although, actually today it's like inbox 30, because I try to be good about – I only go through like once every day, you know. So things pile up and then I go through and get rid of them. But I'm pretty good about keeping things clean. I move things out when they're not relevant or not needed.

[0:02:54] BB: Okay. And by move things out, do you mean straight delete, or are you filing, or what are you doing?

[0:02:58] JN: Usually delete. Get a lot of bad pitches. Those, I just delete. There are ones that I archive or move into a potentially interesting folder, something like that, or like stories I'm working on folder. Yeah, I do a lot of deleting on-sites. Occasionally, archive, if it's like, "Oh, this person, I might need their contact info for later." But I do delete stuff.

[0:03:19] BB: Okay. And for those that you do the archiving with, tell us a little bit about how you go back to find those people. Because this is a whole sleigh that I think publicists need to know more about, like having the keywords in there so that journalists can find easily, "Oh, yeah, there's that expert on this." "There's this resource that is Y." And of course –

[0:03:39] JN: Just based on a company that we've already covered or something like that or really directly related to what – I mean, you probably heard this before, but as a freelancer, it's kind of – maybe it's an even higher bar than with a staff writer because it has to be something that, to your point, I then have to like go justify –

[0:03:58] BB: You pitch it.

[0:03:58] JN: – somebody above me. If it's just directly from a company's PR story, that's a pretty high –

[0:04:05] BB: That's a pretty – no. Mm-hmm. You're quite active on LinkedIn, obviously, for those who are looking. Just one hour ago, you put something on Vampire Survivors with Epic Games today. You said interesting right there with like, "It is not interesting." Define a little bit more interesting, not just press release from publicists, from a company. How would you describe interesting?

[0:04:28] JN: I don't think it's that complicated. It's just like, "Hey, I actually paid attention to what you cover. And this is directly in that field of interest." I do a lot of writing, not exclusively, but I do a lot of writing about streaming TV and cord cutting and that kind of thing. I was

probably one of the first people that really started writing about that whole field before everybody canceled their cable and all that. Those kind of pitches get a lot of attention from me.

Streaming service that's coming out with something or somebody that I got a pitch from a company I'd never heard of that is selling an interesting device and they wanted to see if I wanted to review it. That was a good pitch. You know, it's just highly relevant to what I read about. But those are rare.

[0:05:12] BB: Okay. What is really standing out to you where you're like, "Yes, that's a subject line I love and I want to open it," or just in general?

[0:05:20] JN: I just prefer like direct, you know? I had a subject line that was – it was just Younifi News. And the Younifi is Y -O -U -N -I -F -I. It's a company. I've written about them before. And the subject was company news, and that's it. And I opened it. Versus I got one that was interesting. The company was kind of interesting. I ended up writing about them, but the headline was like, "Former sling box and jawbone." It didn't say executive, but I think that was implied. Former sling box jawbone now tackling climate change, which is kind of kind of misses the mark for me because it's not about what the actual company is about, right? It's not about the product. It's just about kind of trying to do these associations. And I just prefer like direct and tell me what the product is so I know if I need to actually look at it or if it's completely irrelevant.

[0:06:15] BB: Yeah. Okay. So you said products. Tell us a little bit more about products that maybe are sparking your interest.

[0:06:22] JN: I'm always kind of focused on the user of technology. I'm not so much business side. I mean, I do some of that for Fast Company. But even when I do that, it's kind of like, "Well, how is that still relevant to somebody who uses the technology?" So I'm always trying to help people be better technology users and get more out of it and understand what they're doing. That's what my newsletters are mostly about. So anything that I can tie back to that, a product that would be useful to somebody who is just a regular technology user.

[0:06:54] BB: Yeah. Consumer.

[0:06:56] BB: An app that solves a problem for somebody, a browser extension, a website, a device, a phone, something like that. That kind of stuff is going to be interesting to me versus an expert talking about the implications of AI in 2026, you know?

[0:07:11] BB: Are you getting a bunch of those, by the way, right now?

[0:07:13] JN: Oh, yeah, of course.

[0:07:14] BB: I'm sure. I'm sure. They're like, "Yeah." Mm-hmm. Okay. Jared, a little bit to demystify the pitching process that you go through, could you give us an example of that? You get a story, you go like, "hey, I like this pitch. I could use this." What happens then?

[0:07:31] JN: Depends on the outlet. But for something like Fast Company, I might even, if it's short enough, just copy the body of the pitch and be like, "Hey, is this of interest?" Or sometimes I might add a little spin to it if it's – depends if it's like a product of interest and they're coming out with product news, that might just be more directly like, "Hey, is this worth covering?" Versus sometimes it's a little more like, "Oh, this company is pitching this and kind of ties into some other stuff I've been thinking about, and maybe there's a story there that is pulling on a few different threads." But I'll just go into Slack and, hopefully, we'll have a conversation about it that will –

[0:08:09] BB: Oh, wait a second. Do you pitch via Slack to your editors?

[0:08:13] JN: Yeah, yeah. I'm freelance, but I'm kind of like contract for Fast Company and for PC World. And so both of those outlets, I'm like in the Slack and have that kind of direct relationship with the others.

[0:08:25] BB: That's efficient. That's awesome.

[0:08:28] JN: Oh, yeah.

[0:08:29] BB: How great is that?

[0:08:29] JN: If you can get that as a freelancer, don't let that go, you know?

[0:08:33] BB: Yeah. Yeah. I think you're the first I've heard say that. Just let me just drop a Slack and see what the – wow, awesome. And just, I think, a showcase of how dominant Slack is. I mean, everyone is on Slack, in my opinion. Maybe those on Teams and so forth, which I cannot stand Teams and all that crap. But for those in the current century, Slack is where it's at. So that's good to know.

[0:08:55] JN: Yeah, I consider myself lucky that we all kind of moved to one thing. I think one of the outlets was on like – what was like HipChat for a while? Which I didn't have a problem with it, but I just wanted – I have a Slack for my friend, like my high school friends. And then I have a Slack for newsletter subscribers. And I have a Slack that I'm in with some tech journalists. And so just having that all.

[0:09:18] BB: Wait a second. Wait a second. You have a Slack with your friends? Not a text chat. You have a Slack with your high school friends?

[0:09:26] JN: Yeah, I read an article about it once. It's great. I don't know.

[0:09:29] BB: Oh, I didn't see that. When is this article? I didn't see this.

[0:09:32] JN: This is a while ago.

[0:09:32] BB: I was going to say, I didn't go deep into the archives. Okay.

[0:09:34] JN: Yeah. No, I'll send it to you.

[0:09:36] BB: Please. I love this.

[0:09:37] BB: I don't know. There's something – I think, I don't know exactly how it came up. I think it was because a bunch of us were using Slack already for work. And I think what's kind of nice about it is that we have these like rooms, right? Like we have like a general room, we have like a video games room that some people are less tuned out of. And there's like music. What

music are you listening to room? And so we have these kind of threads that some people are more interested in than others. It kind of works out, you know?

[0:10:05] BB: I kind of like that. It's a different adaptation to just the random text thread because some people will be like, "I don't want to hear about the sports game. I'm not interested in that."

[0:10:15] JN: Yeah, yeah. And you can have the threading and all that. And some of us are Android people versus iPhone people. And so we don't like to discriminate iMessage versus –

[0:10:23] BB: The green versus the blue, yeah.

[0:10:25] JN: Yeah.

[0:10:26] BB: Okay. Wow. That's pretty cool. Okay. Jared, is there anything that bugs the crap out of you with publicists?

[0:10:35] JN: Probably everything that you've heard before, like four or five emails on the same thing. I don't love being called on the phone, personally. I think some people maybe do. I really don't. I see my email. I'm pretty good about email and I see everything that come through.

[0:10:52] BB: You got it.

[0:10:51] JN: I don't really need the phone call. And I'd say it's exceedingly rare that a phone call is going to like put me over the edge. And mostly, I just don't even pick up the phone. Yeah, that annoys me.

[0:11:03] BB: I mean, I typically don't. If I don't know the number, no. Why would I? I get so much –

[0:11:08] JN: Long pitches.

[0:11:10] BB: Okay, long pitches.

[0:11:11] JN: Yeah. I need like, I don't know, three sentences or three paragraphs, three short paragraphs, and a link is good. I don't need like a whole – I guess if we're getting into like the email pitch, just like the 10,000-foot view paragraph before that gets to like what you're actually pitching. If you're pitching a streaming service, I don't need a whole big thing about how people are streaming video more these days and getting more conscious about which streaming services they're paying forward. I know. That's what I do. I cover that already. I don't need the context, I just need the information about what you are –

[0:11:50] BB: Mm-hmm. On the opposite side, anything that you absolutely love?

[0:11:54] JN: I like when I have a relationship with – relationship is a strong word.

[0:11:58] BB: Yeah, you know the person. You know the person.

[0:12:01] JN: Somebody that I know that – to the point, this email that I mentioned earlier, it's a person that goes way back. And I know that, generally, if they're pitching me, it's something that's probably like at least worth a look. And PR people that really go out of their way to get you what you need.

[0:12:22] BB: Yes. Efficiently and quickly.

[0:12:24] JN: Sometimes I'm the one trying to get the PR person to set me up with an interview or give me a certain information on a tight deadline or whatever. And it's not always easy to find people that will help you out when you need it. And so that's always great when somebody – I'm like, "That person did me a solid." I'm going to remember that.

[0:12:43] BB: Good. Oh, good. Ooh, I think publicists need to hear that more of like, "Do that solid. Do the extra mile. Let me just get this to you, whatever it is." Because, yeah, you do remember. And not that we want to have tit for tat relationships back and forth. But you know. You remember when someone helps you, for sure.

[0:13:00] JN: I'm bad at remembering PR people's names, because there's so many pitches. Do you remember E3? The video game?

[0:13:08] BB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[0:13:10] JN: I think maybe it was like the first or second E3 that I went to. And I was like a nobody. I was writing for a tiny blog. There was one thing that I was – I was trying to see this one video game. I was doing more video game stuff back then. And a writer from like a big outlet came in and cut the line and I wasn't actually able to see this thing. That was one experience. And then there was like another experience where it was actually like a Sony booth and this like one PR person was like, "I'm just going to get you everything you need. I'm gonna take you around and make sure that you see all the specific things that you wanted." She was just like, "I'm just going to –"

[0:13:49] BB: I'm going to adopt you.

[0:13:50] BB: Yeah.

[0:13:52] JN: I remember that person.

[0:13:52] BB: Yeah. That's great.

[0:13:55] JN: I appreciate it.

[0:13:56] BB: Yeah. See? Look, you remember her name.

[0:13:59] JN: Yeah. It was, I don't know, 12 years ago.

[0:14:00] BB: Wow. Wow. This is what I love. These are the impressions that you can make on someone that you don't even maybe know. She might not even remember this. Right, Jared? But you remembered it. And I love stories like that because there's people you impact in ways you're never going to know. A little tiny way. We're all helping each other out. We're trying to, at least for the most part. And I love something like that because you're never going to forget her. Probably. I love it. I love it.

[BREAK]

[0:14:29] 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]

[0:14:52] BB: Okay, you inferred a little bit on relationship building, Jared. Do you want to have relationships with publicists? You were saying relationship is a hard word. But how does that kind of look for any relationship building for you?

[0:15:04] JN: I mean, I went to J school. So I was kind of trained to have a slightly antagonistic relationship.

[0:15:09] BB: Yeah, view of – yes, okay.

[0:15:11] JN: Why? Because relationship is a strong word. There's a part of me that's always like, "No, don't do that." We are ultimately like working together on some capacity. You have things that you want and things I want. And we need to interact to make those things happen.

[0:15:26] BB: That's the whole point of the show. Yes, exactly.

[0:15:30] JN: Yeah. Yeah, that happens.

[0:15:34] BB: Okay. Could you elaborate a little bit more on just – you're in Cincinnati, right? For the most part. If someone's coming to town, do you ever want to get a coffee or are you like, "I just want to talk to you on email." Never call me, as you were mentioning. How does that – let's not say relationship. But how does a correspondence –

[0:15:52] JN: Yeah. The PR, let's get a coffee and just hang out. Something that's super appealing to me. I mean, I don't know, like I've done it here and there's people that are here just

because it's so rare that there are people here. But oftentimes even I'll get something that's like, "Let's catch up over the phone about like what you're covering and what you're interested in." And I don't really like that too much just because I don't have the time really like. And the things that I'm interested in I feel like are out there. You could just look at my coverage and you could see what I'm interested in. I feel like that's me – that's asking a lot of me, I guess. I don't know. That sounds stuck up.

[0:16:33] BB: No, that's fine. That's fine. Jared, I have a rapid question list that I'd love to tee up to you. First one is video or phone interview?

[0:16:43] JN: Oh, yeah, phone. It doesn't happen anymore. Because the thing is that I've been working from – this is maybe a longer answer than you want. I've been working from home since 2008, whenever I started freelancing. And so video calling was not the standard for long-distance interviews. And I kind of like the phone. I feel like I'm more relaxed when I'm asking questions. I don't have to worry about my posture or what I'm looking at or my appearance. I can just focus on the conversation. I kind of like that, but it's kind of gone away because now everybody just expects –

[0:17:17] BB: But phone is – I'm finding, by the way, when I get to have someone just on the phone, it's almost this like new dimension. And you're like, "Oh, I'm just so into this voice." And I could be looking at my books and who cares? I'm looking over here. Is that funny how that kind of works?

[0:17:30] JN: I have kind of like a posture when I'm on the kind of –

[0:17:33] BB: Yeah, exactly. I could be like, "Who cares? I'm emptying the dishwasher. Okay? That's what I'm doing right now." And it doesn't matter because you're good and you're on the call too. Okay. More calls. More calls. Bullet points or paragraphs in pitches?

[0:17:47] JN: I don't think I have a strong opinion about that. But short paragraphs.

[0:17:51] BB: Okay short paragraphs, which is the next question, short or long pitches? And short. I want to do short. Images attached or a Dropbox zip file?

[0:17:59] JN: Okay, I'm going to say Dropbox zip file, but don't put tracking links on it. That's another thing. I didn't mention that earlier. Don't track my email. Don't track that I opened it. Don't track that I clicked on it. Just don't do that. Don't do that.

[0:18:12] BB: Yeah. How do you know?

[0:18:14] JN: Oh, how do I know that it's –

[0:18:16] BB: Yeah, yeah.

[0:18:16] JN: Well, sometimes there's – I used to have an extension that blocked the open rate thing. Now I have a different extension that still does that, but it doesn't like call it out explicitly when it's been detected. I don't know that as much. But if I hover over a link in Gmail, I can see when it's going to the link versus like going through a bunch of tracking junk. So I can tell when – and sometimes I won't click on something because I see that that's happening and that just annoys me.

[0:18:44] BB: Oh, good tip. Okay, I haven't heard that one lately. Good. Email, or Twitter DM, or any DM, whatever, any DM?

[0:18:51] JN: Email.

[0:18:52] BB: One follow-up or multiple?

[0:18:53] JN: One.

[0:18:54] BB: One and done. Direct or creative subject lines?

[0:18:58] JN: What do you mean? Direct or creative subject lines? Direct. Yeah, yeah, direct.

[0:19:02] BB: Do you ever want a press release or a media kit?

[0:19:05] JN: I like a link I like that, if it's linked. I don't necessarily need it all in email. But a short pitch that's like, "Here's more information."

[0:19:13] BB: Okay. Okay. Okay. Good. What about the time you read pitches, if at all? Is there a time?

[0:19:20] JN: When time permits. It doesn't really matter.

[0:19:22] BB: When time permits, yes. Night time, day time, all the time. Actually, this is my last question for you. Is there anything you want to tout, promote, discuss? I know we talked about newsletters earlier.

[0:19:33] JN: Yeah, I write a couple of newsletters.

[0:19:36] BB: Okay. Yes, you do.

[0:19:37] JN: Yeah, there's one that I write about with streaming video and cord-cutting. I've been helping people save money on TV for a long time. And then I have another one that is just tech advice to help you discover new apps and cool tricks and things like that. If you just go to jarednewman.com, you'll see it.

[0:19:56] BB: You'll find it. You'll get all the stuff.

[0:19:57] JN: It's kind of for both of them. That'd be pretty cool.

[0:19:59] BB: Cool.

[0:20:00] JN: I'm never going to be able to think about that thing.

[0:20:04] BB: Send me an email when you do. We can like script it in somehow.

[0:20:06] JN: Yeah.

[0:20:07] BB: Jared, thank you so much for being here today. This was so helpful. Now we know about tracking. Don't track the emails, everybody. That's good to know. Jared Newman is a technology freelancer for multiple outlets, including Fast Company. Jared, happy holidays, all the things. Thanks for being here.

[0:20:25] JN: Thanks, Beck. Appreciate it.

[OUTRO]

[0:20:28] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode featuring Jared Newman, a freelance technology 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]