

EPISODE 66

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist brought to you by OnePitch. The guests on our show include some of the most notable journalists from the top US-based publications who cover topics including technology, lifestyle and culture, health, science, consumer products, and business news. We discuss their role, the types of stories they cover, what their inbox looks like, and how they connect with sources. If you're an avid listener of this podcast, we'd love to hear from you. Leave us a review to share your thoughts about past episodes and help spread the word to new listeners.

Today on the show, we're joined by Brena Nath, a managing editor for HousingWire+. In her role, Brena breaks down the daily news cycle for insights and analysis around the housing industry. Her coverage aims to connect, build relationships and spotlight top industry voices. Brena has worked on both sides of the aisle throughout her career, not only as a reporter and editors, but also as a PR and community manager. During the episode, Brena talks more about HousingWire's general coverage area, and their move into the B2C space, the hundreds of pitches she receives per day, the importance of building connections with sources and more. Let's dive into the episode now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:26] BB: Welcome, everyone. Welcome to Coffee with a Journalist, the podcast with journalist sometimes drinking coffee. Let's see what we have today. Brena Nath from HousingWire, where she is the managing editor. We're so excited to have her. Brena, are you drinking coffee?

[00:01:42] BN: I am drinking coffee.

[00:01:44] BB: Yes, me too.

[00:01:45] BN: This is my second cup of the day.

[00:01:47] BB: Yes, cheers to that. Me too. We're taping this early in the morning, so that probably is one of the reasons why. Well, I'm glad to hear that, because shockingly on this show most people are not at all drinking coffee. Sometimes we get water, sometimes alcohol, sometimes other things, kombucha, whatever. But that is great to hear. We're on brand for today. Excellent.

[00:02:07] BN: I definitely wanted to stay on brand, and I think if you have me on it three in the afternoon, I would probably still have a cup of coffee.

[00:02:13] BB: You probably still do? Yes. Brena as we heard, just at the little intro, you've been slowly creeping up on your prominence in HousingWire. I'm sure you're going to tell us a bit about that, but for those who do not know, can you give us a rundown on what HousingWire covers?

[00:02:32] BN: Yes. We report on the mortgage, real estate, financial technologies, servicing, which falls under mortgage kind of industry, that whole real estate housing finance spectrum of the industry, which I can classify it as a B2B publication. So we're writing for the folks in the industry, it's a highly engaged industry. We started to dabble in our growth a lot more into I guess the technical B2C world, so we have a lot more content these days that are going for the consumers, reaching the educational market around real estate. As we all know, it's a hot housing market right now.

[00:03:06] BB: I was going to say, what a time to be in real estate reporting, I'll say.

[00:03:10] BN: Such a busy time, and everyone has a lot of thoughts about housing right now too.

[00:03:14] BB: I can imagine. Speaking of, how are your pitches going? Are you getting blown up via email?

[00:03:20] BN: Man, I was listening to all the other people you've had on the podcast. I love this question. It's something that is fun to gauge, but what is normal when it comes to your email? I have a bad habit of trying to be inbox zero.

[00:03:37] BB: That's great. Me too.

[00:03:37] BN: I probably shouldn't let my inbox own me, as much as it does for me always checking it. But I would say, I probably get south of 500 a day.

[00:03:45] BB: Pitches?

[00:03:47] BN: Not pitches. I'd say half of that is pitches, so probably like 200, 250 pitches.

[00:03:52] BB: Okay. Wow!

[00:03:54] BN: Numbers may be not all accurate, so I won't fact check any of this, but I was trying to do the math earlier about like, "What does my inbox look like after a day of PTO?" That's what I would say and say half of that is probably pitches.

[00:04:08] BB: Wow! Okay. How do suss out all those pitches? Do you read them? Do you delete them? Do you do one of those fire-drill deletes, you just delete all of them? I've had a couple of those.

[00:04:19] BN: I am a fire drill. I'm not going to say this is the best tactic, so I'll try to read pitches. I get a lot of emails that are not technically — like year-on other email things. I do select all for the 50. We have Gmail. I select all of them, and then I unclick the ones I want to read, and then I open the rest that I don't want to read. Those are like your normal emails, maybe like someone ordered something, both something. Then anything else that I wanted to read, then I go through, and I open it, I read it. I am a big advocate for snoozing emails, so I can actually answer them all at once. So anything actually I want to get to our respond to, I'll snooze for a time of day that I know I have time for. I often will snooze thing for the very end of day. Of if I'm checking my email throughout the day, I'll snooze it for the next morning, so I can go through in

one smooth swoop and respond to everyone. Trying to not like my inbox own me and try to be a little bit more strategic. I wouldn't say I'm the best out of them.

[00:05:16] BB: Yeah. Okay. Of those pitches that you are responding to, what catches your eye?

[00:05:26] BN: Oh! That's a solid thing that I wanted to think about after I heard the question, and kind of what would I open. I oversee a couple of things. There's some podcasting that we do as well on our end, and so I tend to open a lot of things for like — we have a podcast on like female financial empowerment, so I'll open like new area there. Anyone that I usually have worked with. I've been with HousingWire almost on an off for eight years now, so people who I've been connected with for a while. Then I would often go to the subject line. I'll write a lot of the same things or have the same type of beats or things that I oversee HousingWire. Anything that I know pertains directly to what I'm doing, or could possibly an idea, or something we want to dabble in that I'll open it. I wish I knew the percentage of what that was, of total, but I'd say decent amount of them. If it's an actual pitch, I try to open. It just kind of keep a good pulse on what's going on at least.

[00:06:23] BB: I'm sure also at this point, given your time that you've had at HousingWire, given the niche focus, you've got some of your favorite publicists. Like you know, "Okay, that person's email. Oh, yeah. That's who I know. I'm going to always open their email."

[00:06:37] BN: Yeah, 100%. In this industry, a lot of the PR people have kind of been also there for a long time. After eight years of kind of working with the same people, and I'm very much a relationship-based journalist, relationship-based person. I really value those relationships over the years, pre-COVID conference driven, so I've been able to meet a lot of these people in person. That connection definitely has value.

[00:07:06] BB: Usually I wouldn't ask this, but given how you said the relationships are important. and you had the before times. The before times, you were at conferences. I'm sure you did events and those things. How have you kept up any of these relationships now? I know a lot of publicist want to know like, what do I do? How do I get to know this person in this horrible digital landscape I'm in?

[00:07:29] BN: I laughed one day I was on a call with my CEO and he was screen sharing his LinkedIn, and he had this like personality test included in his LinkedIn, and he could click somebody and put their name into his and it would tell them like, “This is how you should communicate with this person. This is how this person operates” and you could select in a drop-down list. Like, “I want to give this person feedback. I want to give this person this.” Then it would tell you how to have that conversation with them.

[00:07:56] BB: What is this? Map?

[00:07:57] BN: It’s so fascinating. It’s like a plugin for LinkedIn. It reminded me of like the personality, like Myers-Briggs, any enneagram thing, and LinkedIn is fascinated. He did his personality in mine. I cracked up laughing because it was very muted, and I felt like I just got a quick like analysis of, “Oh! You connect with me as a journalist.” The number one thing was, “If you were trying to talk to Brena, he’s a relationship-based person, don’t try to sell her off the start. That’s the fastest way to get her to turn away if you’re just trying to use her.” The opposite of that is very true, so a lot of the journalists or the PR people, publicists I’ve known for a while. Like if you’ve met me at conferences, if you just sat down with me during the busiest of the day, or if you video called me and was able to chat with me for a while and get to know me, that matters to me a lot. Versus actually just using me as a transactional relationship. The more you try to come across as a transaction, the faster I’m just going to like turn off.

[00:08:56] BB: Yeah, you’re done. Interesting. I would wonder if we did this like poll with journalists what they would say. Because I very much get the impression from some people I talk to. It’s just like, “Hey, publicist. You have a function. You have a function for me, which is getting me the information I need to know in the most efficient way possible to help me with my story,” and it’s not as relationship oriented. Wow! Okay. This is good to know. Seriously, you need to follow up with and tell us like, what is that plugin? What is that tool?

[00:09:28] BN: I will. I’ll ask him about what it is?

[00:09:30] BB: I’m like, I’m fascinated.

[00:09:32] BN: It's so helpful. It's such a great way to connect and see who your — you can compare yourself to like maybe the person you aspire to on LinkedIn and then put your names together and see where do we bond or how do we work together as employees. I think it's helpful and really goes into — because one thing I love about this podcast is like, every journalist is different and unique, and it's really understanding like that person, what are they like as an individual and it seems like that's — at least, not to speak for all journalist or even people, a common thing of like see me as a person, as an individual and what I like. Tailor it to me, tailor it to who I am, customize it. I felt like that LinkedIn plugin really got at the heart of that desire.

[00:10:08] BB: By the way, I think it's called Crystal. Crystal is the app that tells you anyone's personality, improve your outreach strategy and sharpen your management skill with Crystal's chrome extension. All right. That's a whole other combo which — okay, I'm going to play with that later. Fascinating. Okay. Brena, when you're thinking of a great story, and you're going to write it, or perhaps one of your staffers is because I know you're an editor, where does such inspiration come from? In other words, do 85% of them come from pitches, or you want to walk, or you're taking a shower, or you contemplating eating macaroni and cheese. I don't know. What is it that makes you go, "Ah! We really need to do this type of story"? Obviously not when it's breaking of course.

[00:10:56] BN: I did have to put on breaking news the other day. It's been a while. I was in a middle of a conference, and I was like, "Okay. We can do this. We're going to multitask. We can be flexible." But I am often not the breaking news person. But since we were all busy that day, for me, maybe a lot of this interview is going to come back to personality test, which clearly, I have a problem with. But I just took a new personality test called the Working Geniuses and it's like the different types of ways you want to operate in work. My working genius is like the ideator, the person who likes to come up with ideas, so I really do. I feel like in my free time, when I'm just walking the dogs, or just doing anything, that's when I really like ideator. I'm like, "Okay. What really do I feel like what's unique? What do I feel like new conversation I had?"

Then I try to fuel that thought process I would say, by constantly being in communication with industry, so we've been on clubhouse a lot, the new app that is quickly gaining steam. So spending a lot of time trying on the phone to not always just have a call with purpose, but really an open-ended conversation of what are they saying, what's going on in the space. Because

I've long been a remote employee, and so I don't want to just be a person at a desk, connecting with an industry, but really also kind of be in it as well. Having a lot of those phone calls, or pre-COVID going to conferences, or going and meeting someone locally. I'm based in Colorado Springs. We're a huge growing market meeting with people locally, seeing what's going on.

I would say a lot of my ideas try to come from actually building connections with people, and then taking the top articles or the top stories that we're seeing right now and looking deeper into that. A lot of the heart behind what I do is, my title is technically digging deeper into the why behind the news, so I get the benefit of saying, "Okay. Here's what's trending." Well now, let's ask some of the questions about why is this trending, why are people invested in this. What does this mean for five years from now? What does this mean for six years from now, and asking those questions to like, "Look a step further."

[00:12:58] BB: Got you. That goes back to relationships.

[00:13:01] BN: That's common theme.

[00:13:03] BB: Yes.

[BREAK]

[00:13:07] ANNOUNCER: Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious to see the unique ways OnePitch helps PR professionals and marketers pitch journalists? Head to onepitch.co to learn about our new OnePitch score and see how easy it is to find the right journalist to pitch your news to. Sign up for your free account today. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:13:30] BB: Okay. Brena, let's play a little word fill it in game. Finish the sentence if you could. I'll give you the phrase and you fill it in if that sounds good.

[00:13:41] BN: I'm here for it. I'm excited. Pressure's on.

[00:13:44] BB: Pressure's on. My favorite publicist always...

[00:13:48] BN: Connect with me as a person. Maybe this is getting too redundant back to the relationship-driven person. I think my publicist don't try to just swoop in, they know what I'm working on, they know what's going on. Actually, they have a good pulse on the newsroom, or HousingWire, or even my specific role.

[00:14:10] BB: The most annoying publicist always...

[00:14:12] BN: I would say, this was more apparent when I was in the newsroom, but it was very obvious, we'd all get spammed at the same time, and would all be the exact same email and our desk all faced each other. So we knew when we all get the same email or worst, when we all got the same phone call and they're about to respond and — I wish I could have just showed this PR person our newsroom and like, "We're all sitting next to each other, and we all know that you were just bouncing between person." Maybe there is success there. I see the reason for pinging every single person, but I don't usually think that's a great way to go.

[00:14:50] BB: How do they call? Would they hang up with one and then they call the next number?

[00:14:53] BN: The next one. Well, not everyone answered too, so if one didn't answer if they were busy, then they'd call the next one.

[00:14:59] BB: Oh! You just hear the phone ring, ring, ring, ring.

[00:15:00] BN: Yeah. Ring, ring.

[00:15:02] BB: Oh!

[00:15:02] BN: It's a round robin.

[00:15:03] BB: Gosh! You'll get a response from me if...

[00:15:08] BN: You'll get a response from me if you probably did your research. A lot of what I am working on is decently public knowledge to publicist, so you can see, I edit the magazine. We have monthly features, stuff like that. So if you kind of know what's going on and if you're proactive, a lot of what I do is also on a timeline with print deadline and online. I have time because what I write is digging deeper into the newsroom in what I edit, so I have time to play now. If you're proactive with me, you know what's going on and say, "Hey! I see you have this coming down the line, or this feature is happening." Not so much a person who doesn't understand print deadline and pitches me the month of when magazine goes to the printer much earlier than the day before the month.

[00:15:57] BB: There you go. You will never get a response for me if...

[00:16:01] BN: A lot of people have had the same answer to this one, so I want to think of something else. I've definitely been a Brenda, a Brianna. I had a coworker whose name was Ben Lane, he got Blane a lot.

[00:16:12] BB: Oh, it's the wrong name. Yeah.

[00:16:14] BN: Yeah, I know. Outside of the naming world or pinning it wrong, I'd say you wouldn't get a response from me. Maybe if you're like telling me to do this or you're falsely advertising what you're pitching, or maybe looking two steps ahead, you wouldn't get a response from me if you fall asleep pitch me before and I gave you a chance. The second time around, the first time you said you aren't going to be self-serving and then it turned out to be self-serving. So the next time, I want my guard. I try to give everyone kind of a chance, so that would be something that reflects me.

[00:16:47] BB: Yeah, understandable. You can follow up with me if...

[00:16:50] BN: I would consider myself a very open inbox. I could not think of a single reason why I would not let someone follow up with me.

[00:16:59] BB: Okay. Wow! It would be a huge help if...

[00:17:04] BN: A lot of emails I would say maybe go straight into their own angle, and I like a mixture of both. This is just to me personally when it comes to pitches. There's a lot of different areas that I write on and work on, and maybe what you're pitching doesn't directly fit one area, but I could see you in another area of what I do. Maybe you pitch for a podcast, and really it might be a great source for a magazine piece that we're working on. Maybe get a little bit more broad in your pitch, about what this person is an expert on, and then feel free to say, "This is what I think is an angle" or "This is my pitch." But also, maybe being a little bit more, "There are the people that I have, or this is why this story is unique and leaving it a little bit more open-ended with some suggestions on what they could work.

[00:17:51] BB: I was going to mention this is why we have one pitch, because there needs to be standardization in pitches. How many other people can I talk to? What assets? Why is it important and what is it? But anyway, I digress.

[00:18:02] BN: Also, one thing that thing that made me really sad recently is, I also watch for the diversity in pitches. There are many times where I will pitch, and ask for a female and they pitch me back a male. Or many times, I have a podcast that's a female financial empowerment podcast and they'll pitch me a male. We try to spotlight females who are in the industry or in a finance role. Those are the moments, that's just kind of like make me turn my head a little bit about like, why don't you want to give this person a voice? This is the person I asked for. A lot of people, they want to pitch their CEOs or they want to pitch who they have in mind. If people were maybe more open to who we first ask, or even the diversity of who they're sending us, I think that might answer any of your questions. It'd be quicker to open an email, quicker to spotlight them.

[00:18:55] BB: What is your exact pitch when you're like, "Oh! Wait! Well, I don't have what you ask for, but how about —" I mean, that's a little bold, I'd say. Interesting. Okay. My perfect Sunday is...

[00:19:13] BN: Well, I live in Colorado and so I moved here for the sole purpose. I love what I do. There are many days where maybe might be burning the midnight oil. But at the same time, I want to be able to go and feel like I have vacation, adventuring, hiking, so close. Most of my

weekends are spent up in the mountains, so lately, we've been snowboarding on our weekends, which has been really nice, and I felt like good for like a work-life mental health balance. Which I try to make sure I'm creating time for kind of like self-help. That's lately. This past Sunday, we're up in the mountains. It's pretty crowded, so I wouldn't say it was a calming one.

[00:19:52] BB: Yeah, remote time.

[00:19:53] BN: In that case, it's usually a cup of coffee, wake up. My husband drives, I sleep in the car. We have our two dogs with us, because we don't like leaving them at home. We put them in day care up in the mountains, and then we spend the day on the mountains. That's my perfect Sunday. I'm not very much like an easing into the morning person, I like want to go out.

[00:20:11] BB: Nice. Okay. So you want to like, boom, first thing, wake up, hit the snow. Let's do it.

[00:20:17] BN: Wake up, hit the snow. Sit in the care for two hours first, binge a couple podcast along the way. Get to our destination and then get on the mountain a little bit.

[00:20:26] BB: The nicest thing I ever heard about my work was...

[00:20:30] BN: Lately I've been really trying to spotlight stories of the non-typical borrower, so maybe the underserved borrower, maybe minority homeownership. Pieces like that, the hope is to bring more awareness around it. I would say like the best maybe tip or piece is when someone read those articles or re-shares the pieces that I'm most passionate about, that I hope or really wish more people would like to read, or share. And someone says, "Oh! I share that here. I put it here" and bring more awareness to it. Those are the moments at least this past year and recently, that have meant a lot to me.

[00:21:13] BB: The last best thing I ate was...

[00:21:17] BN: Well, I'm vegan.

[00:21:19] BB: So do I, good.

[00:21:20] BN: I think not a lot of people would love. I'm also not a foodie. I should be better at eating meals. I'll take any life advice on prioritizing eating meals when you work from home than taking a lunch. But I think the last best thing I ate was, I was up in Breckenridge and up there we always get — I'm a French fries person. I could eat French fries every single meal and they have amazing sweet potato fries and like a good impossible vegan burger. It's probably my meal every time we leave, the best meal. I'm just a bigger and fries kind of girl, just make it vegan, which I'm sure that's a lot of people.

[00:21:52] BB: Who cares? It's fine. There are alternatives now these days, so everyone can have a burger.

[00:21:57] BN: So many. I'm sure too, in San Diego, I feel like there's got to be a plethora of options.

[00:22:01] BB: Oh, many many. In California, all the vegans, paleo, whatever, vegetarian, whatever you are.

[00:22:09] BN: What do you need? We got it.

[00:22:10] BB: It's all here. Okay. Quarantine taught me...

[00:22:15] BN: Quarantine taught me that it is okay to slow down, or maybe that it's okay to not be going a mile a minute. I think it's been really nice to watch one as all be more present at home and be a lot more present, I feel like in our home lives and our community where we're at. Right before the pandemic hit, I was out of town for almost all of February last year. I'm almost gone for half of December and January. It's really nice. I am very much a go-away person. I'm extrovert to the extreme, don't like being by myself. Being out fuels me, so I am not the person who wants to often sit at home and be in her feelings. It really taught me the power to slowing and down being present.

[00:23:09] BB: Okay. Troubling time for extroverts.

[00:23:12] BN: Troubling time. I wish I got — the mountains would have been my saving grace this past year, and my dogs. I got a new dog. I got a puppy. That really helped.

[00:23:20] BB: Ah! Pandemic puppy. There's been so many. I love it. My favorite stories to write about are...

[00:23:27] BN: This goes back to like that underserved I guess borrower kind of community. I just wrote an article that I was really passionate about for the magazine. It was about. It started off just five different companies and what they're doing to address like the affordability crisis, what they're doing to address. One of them dealt with, it's a credit card company, it's a FinTech startup. They try to give credit cards to people who move here on a visa and we're credit-based country. So many people right now can't get a house, or get a credit card because they don't have any credit history here to. There are so many eligible people in that department, so who's filling that hole or finding that need in filling it.

Another one was addressing the student loan kind of barrier to homeownership, and how can we actually stop turning away all these barriers, and it's a great time to buy a house, and help actually fit them into a home. There are stories of the people who are questioning the status quo, and actually doing something and not just creating technology to make money, but actually creating technology that can make an impact and help change of financial industry. Especially housing has long been pretty antiquated in its technology, and so creating something that could help actually fulfill to some is still the dream of owning a home, and the dream of homeownership, and the power of homeownership. That's the backbone of so much in the country and wealth building, so it's really cool, an honor for me to be able to tell the stories I love, storytelling. It is something that you're passionate about too.

[00:24:55] BB: Yes.

[00:24:56] BN: Telling the stories of people who are making a change. I mean, helping people buy a home, that's generational wealth out there. Those are the stories I love being able to tell.

[00:25:05] BB: Got it. So good. Brena, we have an audience ask and I think you might even know who this is. Actually, this is from Bill Brian for Remedy PR. Do you know him?

[00:25:16] BN: I do. He is probably one of — eight years, you get to know this industry and he is that one who has been a great person to work with over the years.

[00:25:27] BB: Amazing. Well, here's your bestie, and he asked, "On average, how long do you spend on a story?"

[00:25:33] BN: On average, I would say, at least currently, so I'll answer in current day. With the magazine or HW+ pieces, I would say they probably float around in my head to having interviews, trying to develop the different sources. These types of stories are like your daily news one, so a little bit more deeper dives, would probably range a week to two weeks. That might — I don't know what's average, but as far as like my day-to-day is what at least I need in order to be able to sit down and write it. I'm the person wants to be able to sit down uninterrupted to write a piece. So usually, that takes me about two weeks to get to a point to be able to kind of execute on.

[00:26:14] BB: Okay. He has a second question which is, "Ever turned down a story because of the length of time it would take to create and you didn't have the bandwidth?"

[00:26:22] BN: Boundaries have been another big lesson for me this year, about what you do and don't have time for. I'm sure we all could use a lesson in boundaries. Or hopefully, if you have it all under control, take any tips. But that's something I've never done, but there have been sometimes after the fact, and I'm very thankful for some people's patients. One thing I tried to do a lot, maybe two years ago is actually give myself deadlines or verbally give myself deadline, since I want to be true to my word. So I'll often say, "Hey! I'll have this done at this day" or "I'll have this day" type thing. There was a point there at the beginning of the pandemic when the news, you just couldn't account for what was going to come out the next day, what's the economy going to do, what's housing market going to do. That I would give a day and then news would happen, and all hands-on deck. My dates were quickly moving with these evergreen type of news stories, so I rarely have ever said, "No, I don't have the bandwidth, but I would like to write it."

There have been times I say, “Hey, let me come back to you in like a month when I have more time.” Then I might put it off down the road, a little bit, and then I appreciate when they follow up, “Okay. It’s that time again. What do you think now? Is this a good time?” Especially if the story is a good story we’re telling.

[00:27:34] BB: Got it. Well, thank you Bill for those audience ask.

[00:27:37] BN: Great questions.

[00:27:39] BB: Brena, is there anything you’re reading, listening to, loving watching, whatever? We just want to know any good other content. You said you like to binge those podcasts, so tell us.

[00:27:48] BN: I do love to binge podcast. I’ve been trying to be better at content consumption, especially these days —

[00:27:56] BB: Content diet.

[00:27:57] BN: Yeah, getting online. I do try to read a book. I used to have a goal last year. I did not hit my goal, but it was to read a book a month. I did not hit it at all. But I did, I had a one epiphany I would tell people a lot about the goal to read a book a month. Then often times, people would refer back to me just like a book by a male CEO, which kind of disappointed me because I wish there was more diversity in what was being recommended to me. I made it my goal this year to actually read books by more like diverse authors, and then also, instead of a book a month, I’m just trying to get a couple pages a night, and that’s good enough. We don’t have to set goals that we’re not going to keep.

[00:28:41] BB: You don’t have to kill yourself, that’s right.

[00:28:45] BN: It’s a very accurate way to put it. So I’ve been reading two books, so I’ve been going back and forth. One of them is *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man* by Emmanuel Acho.

[00:28:52] BB: Yes.

[00:28:54] BN: I know you have a whole series on conversations. I thought it was really cool. It's a book that I've been slowly going through. It's a chapter-by-chapter type of book, where you read one, and then you really want to pause, think about it, digest it and the book where you read into the next book. That's one that I've been slowly going to that I would highly recommend. Then the other book I'm reading, it's called — a friend actually wrote it. It's called *What They Taught Me* and it's a book about mentorship by Kelsey Chapman. It's a book about the power of having people that you mentor, and also being a mentee type of role and how they could show through life. That's been something I've also been focused on this year's, like mentoring the next generation and sending the elevator back down but also making sure that I'm not just like giving a whole bunch and like seeking out mentors in my own life on where do I want to go on with my career.

[00:29:43] BB: So important.

[00:29:45] BN: Yeah, two self-helps I guess. Deep books.

[00:29:47] BB: Yes. Love that. We have one of our — well, I know you've looked at some of our stuff, but we do a quarterly book series on the Bam side, not OnePitch but on Bam side, and always bring in some author from a diverse background. The one coming up this week is *White Feminism*, and that's quite the scorcher. So if you're into interesting book, show up, I would love to have you there.

[00:30:09] BN: I will.

[00:30:10] BB: I'll send you the link after this. It's such a well-done book. Koa Beck wrote it, who used to be — actually used to be a journalist. She was the editor in chief of Jezebel, so a journalist-written book. We love those. Two-for-one, get a nice journalist, get them promoted, all good.

[00:30:24] BN: Yeah, especially promoting that, reading it. Then I think it was this one person who I hear about audiobooks. I think that's my other thinking, is start doing podcast in the road,

maybe switching to the audible side. I tend to switch around our podcast, readings on the road. I probably switch to audible.

[00:30:39] BB: You could.

[00:30:40] BN: Audiobooks.

[00:30:41] BB: Brena, I know you've been in journalism for a while, although you've been in a focused niche of housing in particular. But what do you think the future of journalism looks like?

[00:30:53] BN: Maybe I should just boilerplate all my answers with, don't want to speak for all journalist. The future of journalism I think is an interesting one. I've had the pleasure of watching HousingWire change and grow. I think Mary Ann Azevedo was also in this podcast and she was at formally at FinLedger, which was our new kind of journalism startup. Then we also just acquired a company called REAL Trends, turning them a little bit more into a journalism role.

To me, the angle I would go with this answer is really not saying that the journalist should be the face of the brand by any means. But I definitely think the modern journalist needs to be very adaptable and very flexible. I think it's changing industry and so taking that answer with being willing to do the podcasting route, being willing to do the video route, being willing to kind of mold with where the audience is, and I think the audience is constantly different places. There are so many different I think a more flexible answer about, the stories, I feel like the journalist in the news has been the forefront of a lot of people's thoughts this past year. So I'm a big advocate for like niche journalism.

When I see housing get to the national level, and make national headlines. It's a unique perspective to see, "Okay. I am a deep dive journalist when it comes to housing finance or when it comes to mortgage finance and knowing how that narrative is plaid out." So I feel like — two way answers there would be willing to be flexible and adaptable with the times, but also I guess maybe staying true to knowing your field. Kind of that two-fold. It's definitely a question that I've been asking a lot, I've had to change and adapt. I now oversee our HW+ program, which is our paid community, so you have to pay in order to read our longer form content.

Sometimes I look at my role having to shape this is, I don't want to say this new world of journalism, but like watching different areas kind of open up, and what does this look like, and following the digit day of world, which is the publisher that writes about republishing is going and following their trend. And also, being like, "Okay. What can I be open about? What can I be idea-generated about?" or follow this vision, but also stick through to like the importance of telling this new story, or digging deeper into this because it's the story that needs to be told. Seeing both sides of that and I think having an open mind and being flexible.

[00:33:25] BB: You got to be flexible, I would say. I would say the flexibility is quite a key big time or you're going to go dinosaur, so you got to. It sounds like you're positive though, is what I'm inferring.

[00:33:43] BN: I am a positive. I do think I have a positive bent in life. I think it comes with being an extrovert. My personality is relationship-based. I'm very grateful and very thankful to work in an industry that at least in housing finance, a highly engaged industry. The housing finance industry is changing fast. Every single new political administration that comes in, they can change the rules back to the other direction. Every four years, I think I've worked through two administrations, I guess three terms of rules changing. With that, I mean you see how much industry needs or is focused in the engagement or knowing what's going on here. Having the power of being able to tell the truth, or tell the story, or go behind the scenes, get the deep dive for things that they need to do in order to do the job. But also, still get in-person into the home or the person who wants the dream of homeownership. I think for an industry that just really wants to connect and just needs news often.

[00:34:40] BB: Yeah. I'd like to transition. I was going to get into another spiral of that, but we don't have 17 hours for today, Brena. Why don't we go to our mad lib and kind of take it from here? I know you're listening to a couple of them. We changed it up a little bit so let's see what we get today. I'll give you the word, you give me a word and then I'll read you back the whole section. Does that sound good?

[00:35:02] BN: Roger that.

[00:35:03] BB: Let's do it. What's an emotion?

[00:35:03] **BN**: Disappointed.

[00:35:07] **BB**: What about an adjective?

[00:35:09] **BN**: Beautiful.

[00:35:11] **BB**: Beautiful. Another adjective?

[00:35:14] **BN**: Jittery.

[00:35:17] **BB**: Jittery. Too much coffee. Greeting, any greeting?

[00:35:21] **BN**: Howdy!

[00:35:24] **BB**: Howdy! A verb?

[00:35:26] **BN**: Running.

[00:35:29] **BB**: Running. A noun?

[00:35:32] **BN**: Laptop.

[00:35:33] **BB**: Laptop. An adjective?

[00:35:36] **BN**: Impeccable.

[00:35:37] **BB**: Impeccable. I love that word. A cringe-worthy PR term?

[00:35:43] **BN**: Must read.

[00:35:45] **BB**: Oh gosh! Must read. No, I do not must anything. Part of a pitch?

[00:35:52] **BN:** New product launch.

[00:35:54] **BB:** New product launch. Length of time?

[00:36:00] **BN:** A decade.

[00:36:02] **BB:** Decade. Name of a real person, preferably alive.

[00:36:09] **BN:** Preferably alive. I'm a big Taylor Swift fan. I'm going to say Taylor Swift.

[00:36:14] **BB:** Taylor Swift. Great. Swifty people, okay. Then an emotion.

[00:36:21] **BN:** Joyful.

[00:36:22] **BB:** Joyful. Okay, Brena. Here we go.

[00:36:26] **BN:** I'm ready.

[00:36:27] **BB:** When I think of the future of journalism, I feel disappointed. The pitches I receive have gone from beautiful to jittery. If I receive a pitch that starts with, "Howdy, Brena," I run. When I write stories on my laptop, I get impeccable with the stories. My favorite pitches include must reads and very specific new product launches. I normally take about a decade to respond to my emails, but if it's Taylor Swift, I will respond immediately. If you do get a response back from me, you should know that I'm very joyful for you.

[00:37:03] **BN:** That's accurate.

[00:37:03] **BB:** I love it.

[00:37:05] **BN:** I'd answer Taylor Swift in a heartbeat.

[00:37:08] BB: I love it. That was fun. Brena, thank you so much for the time today, and your energetic, coffee-enthused answers. I love how you also listen to so many of the other episodes. Wow! So impressive. Look at you with the research.

[00:37:25] BN: I appreciated that. Big advocate for people supporting people, so I love the podcast, the people you're interviewing and the message that you're telling. I think it's cool to hear everyone's unique stories.

[00:37:32] BB: Thank you. It is. Now hopefully, for all those listening, now you know, Brena wants a relationship, so don't be transactional.

[00:37:42] BN: Don't be transactional. Listen to the whole podcast.

[00:37:45] BB: Listen to the whole podcast. There you. Thanks, Brena. Great having you.

[00:37:51] BN: Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:37:54] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Brena Nath from HousingWire. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. If you have a moment, please leave us a review to share your thoughts about the show and today's guest. To learn more about the latest tools on OnePitch and to subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter, head to our website at onepitch.co. We'll see you all next week with a brand-new guest and even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]