

EPISODE 67

[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 Coffee with a Journalist, we're chatting with Jane Thier, an associate editor for CFO Dive. Jane covers new surrounding financial executives for major companies to politics, and universities. She previously worked for Sauce Magazine, SmartAsset and Thunderfoot as an editorial intern. During the episode, Jane tells us more about the various publications underneath the Industry Dive, how often she's producing stories and what she includes in them, what she values in a pitch and more. Let's hear from Jane now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:15] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist, I'm Beck Bamberger, founder of OnePitch and also BAM that represents all kinds of venture back, crazy technology companies. We're an agency, we talk to media people all the time and that is why we are here today. Jane Thier from CFO Dive, she's the associate editor at you guys just all heard. Welcome, Jane.

[00:01:38] JT: Thank you so much for having me, Beck.

[00:01:40] BB: Yes. You were just talking to me saying, you drink a lot of coffee, but purposely you did not coffee for this.

[00:01:47] JT: I don't know how it didn't cross my mind that based on the title of the episode, it would make sense to have coffee next to me, but I was too focused on getting the chance to talk to you, and I was too excited that it totally slipped my mind to prepare a pot just for this call. But rest assured, if this had been any other time of day, I would likely have coffee next to me.

[00:02:05] BB: You're normally on it. Yes. By the way, what is with the bagels? I'm looking at your Twitter, and I see the absolute bagels photos. Is there a story behind this?

[00:02:13] JT: The story is, that's the best bagel shop in New York City in my experience. I'm from New York. I grew up in Manhattan. I've tried a lot of different bagels, and that one, I believe it's cash only and the bagels are like \$1.25.

[00:02:26] BB: I freaking love cash only. I mean, right now, not very good touching wise COVID, but oh, I'm looking. I'm looking right now.

[00:02:37] JT: They're so good. I mean, people have different preferences, like in DC. What people say is the best is call your mother, and they're a lot thinner. These ones are huge. Like you could eat one and you're good for the day, but I think that's what you want out of it. I really love it, I miss it a lot.

[00:02:53] BB: Oh, yes. I don't even think they have a website. Oh, this is awesome.

[00:02:57] JT: I doubt they do. Yeah, they're very tiny.

[00:02:58] BB: No, they don't have a website. Those are the best places. Cash only, no website.

[00:03:02] JT: No website.

[00:03:03] BB: Call a number.

[00:03:04] JT: Yeah, and probably someone won't pick up and the storefront is very unassuming as you can see in that picture. That's how you know, they're focused on exactly

what they do and that's it. Which is a rare breed these days. I love it a lot. I've set that as my header right when I opened my Twitter account, right when I started my first day of work at Industry Dive almost two years ago. Because my manager suggested, you should really have somewhere where you can publicize your work. I had no idea what to put there. I briefly considered like a ticker or like an Arab, like something stocks related. Then I was like, "We don't need this." I moved in and I did an homage to a bagel place that I've been missing, because I'd only moved to DC like two weeks before.

[00:03:41] BB: I love it. By the way, they have a great Yelp page, with like 1,400 reviews and it's unclaimed. I mean they probably — oh, I just love it. It's so old-school.

[00:03:50] JT: It's good. I promise.

[00:03:52] BB: Well, that was fun. For those who don't know, let's start with just CFO Dive. What's on there? Tell us more.

[00:03:59] JT: CFO Dive is a daily business newsletter that is based out under industry dive, which is our larger parent company, which is a B2B business journalism startup based here in Washington, DC. It has a bunch of daily newsletters that are directed at different industries. They're all B2B focused. I'm on CFO Dive, which is based at finance leaders and the issues that they care about, but we also have a marketing dive, and a healthcare dive, and retail dive, and restaurant dive. We're adding more all the time.

But I'm on the one that is particularly focused on executive turnover, and IPOs, business news of all kinds. I started there just after graduating college in summer of 2019, and yeah, I've been on the beep since then, and I've learned so much, and it's really cool and really exciting and the company is fantastic.

[00:04:50] BB: Nice. Tell us a bit about your inbox, how crazy is it in there?

[00:04:55] JT: Well, I keep a zero inbox first of all.

[00:04:57] BB: Oh, you're zero. Okay.

[00:04:59] JT: I go crazy if I don't. I mean, even my collage inbox that I don't use anymore, I can't have something unread. It's just — I'm very much easy to figure out from like data perspective, and that I see that little red ping that I have something unread, and I can't rest until it's gone. So they have me locked and loaded. Inside my inbox, let me literally open it right now. Yeah, I have a lot of emails.

[00:05:22] BB: How many is a lot?

[00:05:24] JT: Since we started this call 14 minutes ago, I've only gotten three new emails, because the last thing I did before I get on the call was read all my unread emails. But the main thing that I would find when I open my inbox on a given day, as I spent more time with my publication, my pitches have slowly but surely gotten more focused on what I write about. I think PR reps have started to figure out what I'll respond to. But when I first started, I didn't get many pitches at all, and I had to comb through the headlines each day to find what I was going to write about. Because as part of my daily newsletter, we go out Monday through Friday, 6:00 AM so I typically turn something around every day.

But now I'm lucky enough to be in a position where the stories for the most part come to me, and I can spend the rest of my research time considering longer-term stories. But I'll tell you, I'm looking at this right now, it's pretty clean because I delete things that I know I don't need right away, so the pitches that I'm going to delete right away, this might not be best practices, but are the ones that don't open with, "Hi, Jane." Because I know they're just sent out and they didn't even try. I got one earlier today that just said, "Hi!" and then brackets like name here.

[00:06:26] BB: Oh, no! That's the worst.

[00:06:28] JT: Yeah, it's not great. It happens all the time. My method, I mean, it's full proof because I'll often get a really fantastic pitch, and I think it's so personalized. Then later I find out, it's been sent to our entire team, or the whole newsroom of my company. But there are a few PR reps who will consistently send me pitches that I don't open, because they don't at all align with my coverage. I'd look into just blocking those, so they don't come into my inbox. But once in a while, they'll clue me into something and they want it cover, so I keep them around. But

generally, just addressing me by name is kind of my number one. I'll much more likely to open if it's like, "Hi, Jane!"

The most common pitch I get though, like what I'm most likely to find in my inbox is somebody attaching a press release to an email and they're offering up their new CFO hire for an interview. They're saying, "At this company, we've just got this new guy. Here's where he came from and we would love it if you could feature this on CFO Dive." I get these constantly, and I probably follow up with between one and three, or one in four of them depending on the week. One rule of thumb that I maintain for my own coverage is that if I don't get to interview the CFO themselves, I won't run the piece. Because there's nothing insightful to our readers about me just rewording a press release. So when I get that pitch from PR rep, my mandatory response is going to be, "This looks great. Thanks for sending this. I love to speak with this person in a phone call, or an email Q&A and ask them what they want to tell our readers directly." If they're not available, I will likely pass."

[00:07:51] BB: I have to ask. You make that request, do you ever have some go, "Nevermind." Is there ever a no denial from that, from a PR person.

[00:08:01] JT: They have rebuffed me. They've said like, "Oh, he's busy" or "He's still getting oriented in the role, he won't have time for another six weeks."

[00:08:06] BB: Or hopefully she.

[00:08:07] JT: Or she. That will be annoying. But if they're a really good get, and I think they would still make a great undo, I have to then take the initiative to kind of keep track of that, and circle — so if they say, "Oh! We're in earnings period right now, we're really busy. Circle back at the end of April." At the end of April, I have to be the one to remind myself to circle back. Otherwise, that email is lost forever.

[00:08:25] BB: Yep. Okay. You get to zero inbox. By the way, how often is that? Like every day you got to get to zero?

[00:08:32] JT: Oh, I don't let them. I mean, if I have like right now, I have my inbox open in another tab, and I see I have four emails. As soon as we're finished with our conversation, they're going right in the trash. I can't have it not unread.

[00:08:44] BB: You're one of the vicious people. You're like Ryan from BuzzFeed, who does like — he's also a vicious — delete it, I got to get to zero. I got to get to zero.

[00:08:53] JT: I won't go so far as to say it's a reflection of my style as a worker. I think it's just more the aesthetic of I feel a little bit calmer approaching my day if I know there's not. It's kind of the equivalent of a stack of like mismatched files on the desk, like I just — even though, I wouldn't say that it's like a trait. I'm sure there are incredible journalists whose inboxes are a nightmare. I think it's just like, this is an easy actionable thing I can do.

[00:09:16] BB: Trust me, there are many. I talk to them on this show and they're like, "They let it ride, 47,000 emails, no problem." I mean, I mean it really is an interesting preference as I talk to people of like, "Wow! Hey, you go to find your style."

[00:09:31] JT: You got to find your style. If that enables you to do your best work, and you can still find a way to produce excellent coverage, then who cares how you do it.

[00:09:38] BB: Jane, as you're thinking about a story that you're going to do, we like to think, we want to go into, well, how do you come about thinking about a great juicy story. Okay, of course, you do the CFO profiles, but you had recently like a Trump organization, bank records, subpoena thing. You had, CFO's excited about SPACs piece, so it's more shake shack CFO wants to be — somewhere like hard-hitting news versus more theoretical or trend pieces. Where do you come up with those stories?

[00:10:11] JT: This is something my manager and I have been working on a lot as I've been with the publication for longer, and longer is I'm trying to really form more of my own ideas. I think it can be very easy typically because this past year has really not come up short with news for businesses and things executives want to read, so I have to take it upon myself just because I'm getting a lot of pitches each day and I could ride on that forever. I need to still carve out time

each afternoon or whenever to do some thinking and some forging for new or insightful ideas. If it comes down to a more creative story, or a great story, a story I'm really proud of.

I've recently wrote one a few weeks ago, I wrapped it up about higher education CFOs and how they've been really struggling this year to make their universities sustainable. I'll walk you through little bit of how I got there. I think that's a good piece to think about, because it's fresh in my mind. I graduated college in 2019, so I made it into the workforce just before COVID hit. I was able to witness just how much the pandemic has really challenged colleges, both their administrators and their students. There's another publication at Industry Dive that focuses, they're called Higher Ed Dive. They look at universities exclusively. I was really fascinated by their coverage.

Throughout 2020, I covered comments from the CFO of Harvard, which if you do not know is the richest school in America by a landslide. Their CFO had told the Crimson, their newspaper about the school spending cuts and acknowledged the outrage and confusion among the student body about how money had been allocated. For context, Harvard has a \$40 billion plus endowment and people were confused as to why they couldn't just use all that money to ensure that none of their students or faculty were left in the lurch. This got me thinking, why is the CFO answerable to what must be a decision in someone else's hands, and also, why can't the endowment be drawn at a time like this. I had this idea in the back of my mind for a few months before I finally decided to investigate.

In early February, I started charting out along research project, which we call a deep dive on CFO Dive. My guiding question was, how did university CFOs survive 2020? What decisions did they make? What was the most important thing to do? I gathered that ostensibly. Being university CFO was a lot harder than being the CFO of a private company, but I couldn't really articulate how. My first move was getting the lay of the land, so I spoke with my colleague, Hallie, who is the senior editor at Higher Ed Dive about what an endowment really is, what it's meant for, how much universities are allowed to use of it each year. I also spoke to a consultant at a consultancy geared just towards higher ed, and she referred me to a few college finance leaders. and she helped me shape my questions.

All said and done I had three 45-minute interviews with the CFOs of my alma mater, Washington University in St. Louis, as well as Denison University, and the University of Alabama. I asked each of these individuals about their early spending decisions, the decision-making process at school versus that of business, and how they spent their endowment and their CARES Act funds. The piece took just shy of two months from start to finish, and the hardest part was definitely cutting it down because our readers and me, myself as a writer don't really know much about the intricacies of the endowment or higher ed spending generally, just because it's really complex.

I had to constantly rework my intro with my editing team and my explanatory paragraph to ensure that I wasn't overdoing the explanation, but was still giving proper context. The piece ran last month under the title, How University CFOs Survive the 2020 Pandemic? and I'm really proud of it.

[00:13:39] BB: Nice. Okay. That's a great example of — didn't come from a pitch by the way. Took some deep digging, it's also a deep dive and lots of interviews. Then you had to explain it, and contextualize and all that stuff. Do you ever get story ideas that are as lengthy as this from pitches?

[00:13:58] JT: I wouldn't say I get the actual story idea. I think it will often — when that's happened, it's been unintentional, like somebody will offer up an executive at their company or an executive they represent and say, "You can speak to this, this, this" and then I'll have an idea of like, "I've been thinking about this lately." Maybe I should write a bigger piece on this, and feature their voice.

[00:14:17] BB: Oh! There you go.

[00:14:18] JT: At the beginning of the year, environmental, social and government standards, governance standards, ESG reporting has become a huge thing upon companies. Because people are demanding a lot more from their companies and the corporations that they support in terms of making clear what they believe and what they stand for ethical practices, diversity, commitments, fairness and equity, that kind of thing. I put together a piece where I was asking a bunch of different CFOs how ESG requirements fall under their control as opposed to HR's

control, or any public facing control. That was really interesting. I wouldn't say I got that idea from a pitch. I couldn't even tell you who it was at this point, but there was a PR rep who said, this executive can speak to how he is imparting ESG changes or how he's made it a priority at his — or maybe they said, "Our company just crossed this threshold or they just allocated \$10 million to this fund or that fund, and here's somebody who can speak to it."

The idea will really percolate after I've gotten enough people with a similar idea come to me. They don't realize that they're adding fuel to the fire. It's definitely the adding of multiple people along similar lines that the wheel start to spin.

[00:15:26] BB: You just piece it, piece it, piece it. Okay. Now, back to the inbox. Do you ever use it and find people through it? Like a lot of journalists I speak to on this, specifically say, "I just use it as like, it's my Rolodex nowadays." I go and go, "Oh, is she. Let me put that in my search file." "Oh, yeah. Those are those 10 people that spoke to me or sent me an email six months ago as a pitch that I dig up." Do you every use your inbox like that?

[00:15:51] JT: I definitely do. When I was really early in my role and I couldn't quite get as many interviews, because people didn't know about our publication, and we weren't familiar with my work, we are much smaller than we are now. I had a lot of trouble getting people to talk to me, so I would find a few executives who had spoken to me in the past, and I would just keep going back to them for more and more and more. Because anytime something happened, I just wanted to be able to get someone to weigh in. Earlier in my career, I definitely relied on a few people who I just happen to have spoken to. I remember, like I would speak to executive search firms, or research firms and I would call their press contact and asked to be connected to a certain representative that I've spoken to before and I knew was really good at explaining things. Just because I was trying as best I could to form a network.

But pretty early on, probably six to eight months in, my manager recommended to me that I start sending LinkedIn connection requests after each successful interview. Now, LinkedIn has kind of supplanted my inbox as the definitive source of like, here's who I can rely on because the people who are most active on LinkedIn and are sharing the research or anything else pertaining to their work, they are kind of putting themselves in front of me, so I can be reminded. "Oh, they were great/ I should ask them about this."

[00:17:02] BB: You're the first person I've heard who has found LinkedIn to be helpful. I'm trying to blow up my stuff on LinkedIn too. The algorithm I have to say is very generous, because like the more you comment, the more you like, the more it teases you up. Oh my God! I'm getting 20, 30 emails now a day on there for people.

[00:17:22] JT: I love LinkedIn. I think of it as a social networking site. I can't get enough. I've really made a commitment this year to cut down my own social media use, so I don't use Facebook, or Instagram. or Snapchat or a lot of other apps, so I do have really —

[00:17:33] BB: Or TikTok, or Clubhouse or which one do you want to —

[00:17:36] JT: Unfortunately, I do still have TikTok and Clubhouse. Okay, one day at a time. But I just can't seem to quit TikTok. I'm cleaning out and starting with the new stuff. But with getting rid of these apps on my phone that were just total attention sucks. Now, LinkedIn, I just find myself scrolling as though it's Instagram. It's a question of just form, follow, function. I think when you have such a similar interface, it kind of propels people to treat you like it's a Facebook status, and the lines become a little bit blurrier. I think ultimately, that may not be wise just because work on my part, it may not be wise, because work should be pretty distinct from your own social life or social networking. But I have to say, over my time being really active on LinkedIn, I kind of seen this shift happening.

[00:18:17] BB: Yes. That's what they're pushing for.

[00:18:18] JT: I can tell.

[00:18:19] BB: So far it seems to be working.

[00:18:20] JT: It is for sure.

[BREAK]

[00:18:22] 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]

[00:18:47] BB: Okay, Jane. We have a little finish the sentence spot here. I'll give you the phrase, and then you just give us the first word, or two, or three that come out.

[00:18:56] JT: Sure.

[00:18:56] BB: Well, some of them are a little bit longer. Okay. You get the gist. My favorite sources always.

[00:19:02] JT: Female CFOs.

[00:19:04] BB: Oh! Now you're going to get blown up a gazillion PR people who are like, "Me, I got one. I got."

[00:19:09] JT: I'm ready.

[00:19:10] BB: Okay. Excellent. The most annoying sources always.

[00:19:14] JT: The most annoying PR pitchers I'd say are the one very clearly don't know what the publication covers, and will message me again and again with the same pitches, and just not see that that's not at all where my focus is. It's especially sad because we're at a company with so many different verticals. That I'll occasionally get a pitch and like, "This would be so perfect for our retail team, or our medical technology team." I don't have time to redirect everyone, but it's just like, "If you've made it to the CFO Dive website, you can make it to these other websites. They have links all over. I don't want to sound mean though. I love when people

want me to write about things. But ultimately, yes, the worst pitches I got are ones that are just not close to my coverage.

[00:19:54] BB: You'll get a response from me if...

[00:19:56] JT: You address it with, "Hi, Jane." In fact, you know what. Just this morning, I interviewed the former CFO of WeWork about his new role at Transportation Solutions Company. Aside from the obvious intrigue of speaking to somebody who was the CFO of WeWork, I love the way the PR rep opened the email, so I'm going to shout him out. This was his opening sentence, he said, "Hi, Jane. Knowing you cover the movers and shakers in the finance world, I'm thrilled to share the news that former WeWork CFO, Christian Lee is now the new CFO of Transfix, taking his career from the logistics of office space to the logistics of everything." In that one opening sentence, he acknowledges my work, he backloaded the work I've done, introduced me to the subject and even added a little kicker. It was a great interview. It's going to run in our newsletter tomorrow.

[00:20:39] BB: There you go. You'll never get a response from me if...

[00:20:42] JT: You don't say "Hi, Jane" at the start of the email.

[00:20:46] BB: You can follow up with me if or when...

[00:20:51] JT: If you found a clear link between my coverage and the proposed story. Like if I get an email that's just like, "You should cover this" or "I want to volunteer this person," and I don't read it or I'm assuming this isn't a fit, so I'm just not going to respond. If that person comes back and says, "Hey, Jane! I saw you just covered this study last week, and then this study the week before. It's so funny this dovetails so neatly with what X executive has been doing at this company and he could talk more about it." Like showing a little bit of effort, like let me help you, like this would work well with your continued coverage on this topic. That's an automatic and I appreciate that someone has done that kind of legwork and it makes me more excited, and it totally sells me on the subject.

[00:21:28] BB: The last best thing I ate or cooked was...

[00:21:32] **JT:** Oh my gosh! Last night I made the best, I just realize as I was going into the sentence how controversial this is. I made the best Hawaiian pizza. I made it myself.

[00:21:43] **BB:** Oh yeah, quite controversial, yes.

[00:21:45] **JT:** It was so delicious. I don't know why don't do it more often. I ate like an entire pineapple by myself. It was so, so, so good.

[00:21:53] **BB:** What made it so good? Did you make the dough yourself? Wait, we got to break it down.

[00:21:56] **JT:** Everything from scratch.

[00:21:57] **BB:** You broke that scratch.

[00:21:58] **JT:** Well, awesome. It is a pandemic, you got to stay busy. I've really, really gotten better at cooking this year, but I could give you a million like answers. But this is pretty simple and it was so good, and I probably I'm going to do it again tonight if I'm going to be honest.

[00:22:12] **BB:** Okay. Speaking of, quarantine has taught me...

[00:22:16] **JT:** The value of remote work.

[00:22:19] **BB:** Yeah, definitely. My perfect Sunday is...

[00:22:24] **JT:** My perfect Sunday is wake up, do a workout, get a workout in before breakfast, clean my apartment, read a few chapters of a book, meet up with my friends to go to the farmers' market, come home and cook with all the stuff I got at the farmers' market and then get ahead of my email, so that I will be closer to inbox zero on Monday morning than it otherwise would be.

[00:22:44] **BB:** Oh, that sounds great.

[00:22:46] JT: If you're ever in DC, we'll go to the farmers' market and you'll see how great it is. The Dupont Circle farmers market.

[00:22:51] BB: Okay, getting tips here. Okay. We do have an audience ask. This one comes from Bruna Barbosa from Clearlink. Bruna is asking, "What are one or two things that you commonly seen missing from pitches that you wish you had?"

[00:23:09] JT: You would be surprised how many pitches are so clearly copy and pasted from their — I don't know where pitches originate, but the font will change when it likes say, "I think X will be a great fit at" and then they'll put in CFO Dive, and it's like three points font smaller or —

[00:23:25] BB: Oh, no.

[00:23:26] JT: Yeah. Or we think this coverage could be great. Like just the very obvious. I just say this because as a writer, I know that my copy is kind of a reflection of my own process and my own attention to detail. So when I see these, now there are certain names, when I get in my inbox, I will just delete right away because it's clear this person has done no research at all about what we're doing, so I might as well just focus on the pitches that have put time into and make me feel valued as a business partner. As, I know you're busy, I'm busy, let's see if we can do something here with my client. It's like, of course, I am in no position to turn people away for silly reasons. But I would say over time, I've come to see there are certain names that pop up, and when they're missing the basic like addressing my name or consistent typeface through the email, that I definitely don't give them as much consideration as others.

[00:24:14] BB: Yep, sounds about right. You did mention Jane that in your perfect Sunday, you'd be reading. What are you reading right now? But we'll also take listening, reviewing watching, all the ways of consumption of media. What you got?

[00:24:28] JT: Sure. Okay. This is kind of funny thing I do. On the books front, I like to alternate between fiction and nonfiction with every book I read.

[00:24:37] BB: Oh, you do. Okay.

[00:24:39] JT: Sometimes I'm good, sometimes I'm not. Shortly after the inauguration, I've read Joe Biden's memoir, which is called *Promise Me, Dad*.

[00:24:44] BB: Oh, yeah. I haven't read that. Was it amazing?

[00:24:47] JT: It's a really quick read, and it's really good and it made me really excited. Most recently, I just finished a great novel by Rumaan Alam called *Leave the World Behind*, a fiction novel. Then I also read a book of philosophical essays, by the founder of n+1 magazine, his name is Mark Grief and the book is called *Against Everything*. Last night, I finally started *Uncanny Valley* by Anna Weiner.

[00:25:09] BB: Oh, yes. That's on my list.

[00:25:12] JT: My friend loaned me her copy and she insisted it's worth the hype, so I'm excited to get into it. It's really, really good.

[00:25:17] BB: Really? Okay. Because that's been in my inbox. I heard it was very Silicon Valley caddy-ish, but I'm like, "Yeah, it's kind of space we're in." I don't know.

[00:25:25] JT: I'm only 50 pages in, and so far, we're still on the phase of her moving from New York to San Francisco and getting acquainted. I've never lived in San Francisco so I really can't judge. But I've heard enough good reviews that it's time I got into it.

[00:25:36] BB: Well, I'm on the page right now. It's in a New York Times review editor's choice in the 2020 January index next pick. Oh! It was an Amazon best book in January. Okay. Okay. I'm going to get it. I have three credits right now. So done, bought. Okay. Great. I get all my suggestions from this show, Jane. That's my secret.

[00:25:55] JT: Oh, good. No, where else to go?

[00:25:57] BB: Yeah, exactly. Okay. That's awesome. Anything else you want to share?

[00:26:00] JT: I want to give some shoutouts to some journalist that I'm obsessed with, who are much bigger than I am, and I'm sure who are not listening to a podcast of me praising them. But I want to just say that because I spend my day writing and reading business news, I love to read more creative and personal stories off the clock. I'd say my favorite journalists who I read all the time and I really think have informed my own writing style are Jane Mayer at the New Yorker, Robert Kolker at New York Magazine, and Taffy Brodesser-Akner at the New York Times. I think what ties those three together is a deep knowledge of their subjects, because they clearly always do research before they interview, which I really think comes across. And another thing is that they're clearly curious about their subjects, which I consider to be the only imperative of journalism of any kind. It doesn't matter what you're writing about, so long as you're genuinely curious about it.

[00:26:49] BB: Yeah, good recommendations. You are prepared, Jane, I love it.

[00:26:53] JT: Thank you very much.

[00:26:56] BB: Is there one thing you wish you wrote in your last —?

[00:27:00] JT: Oh, absolutely.

[00:27:01] BB: What's an example?

[00:27:02] JT: Okay. This is an unconventional answer, but I'm going to give it. When I was senior in college, I read GQ's cover story of Justin Bieber, the singer. It was a profile written by a journalist named Katie Weaver. I'm not a Bieber fan, neither is she but I was completely transfixed by the way that she described him. It was equal parts, it was charitable, it was empathetic but it was also honest, and it was harsh, and it was also really funny. Being able to pull off those kinds of descriptions, and balance them with candor, a gentle voice and journalistic entry. I think it was so skillfully done and I would love to be able to create a voice of my own like that one day. Because now, I can read the story and see that it's Katie Weaver's voice. I think being able to form that or form an interview style that is so recognizable regardless of the topic is really, really professional. I remember reading it when I was an undergrad and I was like, "Oh, this is good. This is good."

[00:27:58] BB: I heard a quote from — Daniel Pink has written a number of books saying, “A good piece of writing should make the reader pause.” Instead of going like, “Okay, what’s the next piece” or whatever. I was like, “Oh! Isn’t that?” Just like get to the pause. I just love how that was said because I’m like, “Oh! I want everything I ever write to give that pause.” Even if it’s two seconds, just for the person to go, “Huh! Wow!”

[00:28:22] JT: Oh, I like that a lot. Get to pause.

[00:28:24] BB: Right.

[00:28:24] JT: What I like about that is it doesn’t have to be a certain kind of piece. Like I read business news for a B2B audience, and I could still accomplish that pause if I’m careful. I’m going to think about that.

[00:28:34] BB: Well, Jane. You are a recent graduate, so you’re not someone who’s been in the game for 27 years, which we’ve talked to people like that who have been in the game that long. This is a different question for you, which is, what do you think the future of journalism is? And actually, maybe even more appropriately, why did you go into journalism, being as young as you are?

[00:28:52] JT: Yeah. That’s a tough one. As you mentioned, I only joined the workforce about two years ago.

[00:28:58] BB: Yeah, fresh.

[00:28:58] JT: To be honest, my entry into the journalism world has kind of been marked by the shifts and the changes in direction that it’s undergone. I would say that there obviously are more seasoned journalists than me who could better answer to where it’s going in the future. But I’ll say that I can’t imagine where journalism will be in five years. I’m sure it will be more digital. I’m sure print will slowly dry up. But I do hope that whatever form it comes in, that people continue recognize how important it is to have somebody reporting it all times and to be an honest source of truth. I also think there’s something so special, like if you scroll down the Coffee with a

Journalist podcast, you talk to people in all different fields, all different experts. There's no area that isn't worthy of coverage or worthy of attention. I hope that that enthusiasm continues growing as the world becomes so much more insular. I hope that people still have a curiosity to look outwards and better understand their surroundings and the people around them.

[00:29:51] BB: I would say quite optimistic then.

[00:29:55] JT: I mean, I have to be optimistic because I am a former English major and I'm writing every day. I recognize the people who really are committed to this field are so good at what they do and so important at what they do. I'm grateful to be working alongside.

[00:30:10] BB: Yes, I love it. Okay, Jane. We've come to our mad libs part, which is very fun. I'm going to give you the thing, whatever the fill in the word thing is and then we'll read it back.

[00:30:24] JT: Let's do it.

[00:30:25] BB: Okay. The first thing is an emotion.

[00:30:27] JT: Intrigued.

[00:30:30] BB: An adjective?

[00:30:31] JT: Happily.

[00:30:33] BB: Happily. Another adjective?

[00:30:36] JT: Wait! That's an adverb. Hold on. Oh my God! I have been out of the game for too long. Okay. An adjective. Yellow.

[00:30:47] BB: Yellow. Okay. Another adjective?

[00:30:50] RT: Rough.

[00:30:52] **BB**: Okay. A greeting? Any greeting?

[00:30:55] **JT**: Shalom.

[00:30:56] **BB**: A verb?

[00:30:57] **JT**: Run.

[00:30:57] **BB**: A noun?

[00:30:58] **JT**: Lamp.

[00:31:00] **BB**: An adjective?

[00:31:01] **JT**: Striped.

[00:31:02] **BB**: A cringe-worthy PR term or phrase?

[00:31:08] **JT**: Oh! Oh my God, of course I can think of any, but there are so many. Futuristic.

[00:31:17] **BB**: Futuristic, great. Then what about a part of a pitch?

[00:31:21] **JT**: Just following up here.

[00:31:24] **BB**: Okay. An amount of time?

[00:31:25] **JT**: Two days.

[00:31:26] **BB**: A real person, name of a real person, ideally alive?

[00:31:32] **JT**: Ideally alive. I will say Jill Biden.

[00:31:36] **BB**: Jill Biden. Then an emotion?

[00:31:40] JT: Relieved.

[00:31:42] BB: Relieved. All right. Here is our mad libs. Let's see if it's accurate or just funny or whatever. Wait. Well, let's see. Okay. When I think of the future of journalism, I feel intrigued. The pitches I received have gone to yellow to rough. If I receive a pitch that starts with "Shalom, Jane," I run. When I write stories on lamps, I get striped. My favorite pitches include futuristic, and very specific, "Just following up here." I normally take around two days to respond to my emails, but if it's Jill Biden, I will respond immediately. If you do get a response back from me, you should know that I am very relieved for you.

[00:32:22] JT: That's really, really good. I did not think this was going to be OnePitch themed. I really did think it was going to be like truly like kids' mad libs.

[00:32:30] BB: No, no. That's a surprise. Yes! Jane, thank you for being on today. This was so insightful and a lot of fun.

[00:32:38] JT: Beck, thank you for having me. This was fantastic.

[00:32:41] BB: Yes. Now we know, for everybody who's listened carefully, female CFOs.

[00:32:47] JT: Any of them please.

[00:32:48] BB: Jane is always on the look out.

[00:32:49] JT: Always.

[00:32:49] BB: Jane is ready.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:32:54] ANNOUNCER: Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Jane Thier from CFO Dive. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to

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[END]