

EPISODE 76

[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.

Our guest this week is Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai, a Senior Staff Writer for VICE Motherboard. Lorenzo covers hacking, information security, and digital rights. Prior to his current role, he was an intern turned reporter at Mashable and an editorial intern at Wired. During the episode, Lorenzo starts by sharing about the high number of irrelevant emails in his inbox, the growth of the cybersecurity team at Motherboard, answers an audience-asked question, and more. Let's hear from Lorenzo now.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:08] BB: Welcome, everyone. This is OnePitch's Coffee With a Journalist. We are – I don't know how many episodes in. 60 something. It's been such a time talking with so many great journalists from all over the states of various national outlets. I know you guys have been now listening here. Today, I'm very honored. I think this is our first from VICE. I'm pretty sure Jared will yell at me if this is our second. Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai. Did I get that right, Lorenzo?

[00:01:37] LFB: Yeah, that was great.

[00:01:38] BB: Excellent. My Italian's coming into practice here. You cover hacking, information security, digital rights at VICE Motherboard. Thank you for being here.

[00:01:49] LFB: It's great to be here. Thanks for having me.

[00:01:50] BB: Yes. Now, you're not drinking coffee. You're on in Brooklyn. I'm on in the DC area, and it's late in the afternoon. So what are you drinking instead?

[00:01:58] LFB: I'm drinking green tea. I've actually been sort of giving up coffee for a while. It's like a weekend treat now for me. I feel like green tea gets me a little bit more balanced.

[00:02:08] BB: Good. Was there a reason for this? Were you like, "Oh, my god. I'm getting too wired on coffee."?

[00:02:12] LFB: Yeah. I think it was contributing to some trouble sleeping, so I was trying everything I could and I find that not drinking coffee helps me to have better sleep at night.

[00:02:24] BB: Excellent then. For me, I'm only one cup. Well, not actually cup of coffee but latte a day. That's it. That's all I can do.

[00:02:32] LFB: Yeah. I feel like that's fine. But as an Italian, I'm a little ashamed that I don't like coffee. But it is what it is.

[00:02:40] BB: Yes. Well, as I mentioned, we are excited to chat with you today. Let's start with your inbox. How crazy is it in your inbox?

[00:02:49] LFB: It's hard to tell because I don't know. I can't see the inboxes of other journalists, but it's bad. Like a couple of weeks ago, I went on vacation and I did a conscious effort not to check my email. When I came back, I was very overwhelmed with all the emails I got. A lot of them are not really relevant at all to me. I get like pitches about some indie rapper or rock band releasing a new mix.

[00:03:17] BB: What?

[00:03:18] LFB: Yeah. It's weird. I mean, I guess, I have a VICE email, so we cover all kinds of stuff and obviously a lot of cybersecurity pitches. Those are relevant, at least, by a lot of random stuff and yet way too many emails.

[00:03:34] BB: What do you do with pitches? Do you file, delete? Do you do the mass delete thing just to get them all out? What would you say?

[00:03:42] LFB: Sometimes, I have the email tab open all the time and sort of like in the corner of the screen so that I can check it. But I've tried to like get away from that because most of the time even a good pitch is not really urgent, so I can check it later. So what I've been trying to do more in the last year or so is to just check it once or twice a day and maybe three times a day; morning, midday, and end of the day. Sometimes, I do like I sit on the couch, check it through my phone. So I can just focus on that, rather than being in front of the computer and being distracted. Yeah. I don't know. I mean, that's kind of my main strategy, and I try to reply to the pitches that are relevant. But sometimes, there's just no time, so I just archive.

[00:04:26] BB: Got it. Do you do what I've heard many journalists now do? They'll do their own like search, kind of like their own private Google. They'll go, "Oh, okay. I'm looking for that one pitch about that." They do a search and then they find it from seven months ago. Does that ever happen for you?

[00:04:40] LFB: Well, that never happens to me. Most of the stuff that I get pitches are actively timely. So if I don't do anything with it for a couple of days or at most a week, then that email is now irrelevant.

[00:04:53] BB: Got you. For your particular beat, so this is why I was particularly intrigued to chat with you, you're covered hacking, digital rights, security. You've got your PG – I don't even know what this is, PGP fingerprint on here. Actually, first let's start with that. What is that? I'm assuming that's a super secure way to get to you.

[00:05:15] LFB: Yeah. That's just the way to send me an encrypted email, but it's a very outdated technology that's honestly kind of useless at this point. I don't know why I still have it there.

[00:05:25] BB: It's on your page there, your author page.

[00:05:27] LFB: Yeah. There's better ways now.

[00:05:29] **BB:** It is intriguing at least.

[00:05:31] **LFB:** Yeah. Well, maybe if that's the reaction, then I guess it's useful. But there's better ways to do secure communications these days. Even WhatsApp is pretty secure, Signal.

[00:05:41] **BB:** Signal I was going to say. Yup.

[00:05:42] **LFB:** Stuff like that. Even iMessage is relatively secure. So all those are good ways to talk to me.

[00:05:47] **BB:** Do you actually get pitches through any of those or scoops perhaps?

[00:05:52] **LFB:** Through an encrypted email not really anymore. I probably get a handful of encrypted emails a year at this point. On Signal and other chat apps, yes, all the time. That's actually the best channel for me to get pitches or tips. Yeah, Signal, and I'm on all kinds of chat apps, so WhatsApp, Telegram, Wire, Wickr.

[00:06:16] **BB:** Damn. You have so many inboxes to look at then.

[00:06:19] **LFB:** Yeah, exactly. It's like, again, when I went away for a week at the beginning of the month, when I came back, it was like a torrent of notifications to go through, and I didn't even know where to start.

[00:06:30] **BB:** Gosh. Did you eventually dig out of it? Or did you kind of mass delete at one point?

[00:06:34] **LFB:** It took a couple of days because I do try to respond, especially to people that reach out to me via chat apps or Twitter, Twitter DMs because those are more personalized. A lot of the emails I can tell that PR folks have sent to a lot of people, which is fine. I understand that's their job. Of those I don't feel the need to respond necessarily, just to read them quickly and figure out if they're useful or not.

[00:06:59] BB: For stories you are doing, for example, I'm looking at one here that talks about, well, police busting a major ransom gang situation in Ukraine it looks like, I'd imagine that's kind of breaking news that you're covering. Not something that comes from a pitch. So the question is for stories that are less news breaking, how do you come up with those story angles?

[00:07:23] LFB: Yeah. So as you said, there's a lot of the bread and butter is breaking news. In that case, that one we saw on Twitter. There's a huge cybersecurity community on Twitter, so it's a very useful tool. When it's not breaking news, yeah, it could start as a pitch. Again, I think most of the interesting stuff comes through people that messaged me on Twitter or one of these chat apps like Signal or WhatsApp because in those cases, it's people actually doing something like hacking them. They're hacking something. They found a vulnerability in something else.

In terms of like PR pitches, the most interesting ones are those from cybersecurity companies that are doing research. By that, I mean, maybe they're studying a particular device or technology, and they found a vulnerability. Or more often, it's a company that has found new malware or computer virus or some sort of cyber espionage campaign. Those are interesting for us because they are more relevant to our audience. We don't really cover things like investment, new companies, mergers. Those are things that are kind of outside our scope.

[00:08:35] BB: Speaking of, could you describe for us, for those who do not know, what Motherboard covers specifically for VICE?

[00:08:41] LFB: I think the one line is we're attacking science website. So everything that has to do with tech and science falls under our purview. But more in particular, we've had always a very good back in coverage over the years. That's a lot of what we do and we care about and also a lot of privacy and surveillance. So facial recognition news, stories about citizen, that sort of vigilante app that is freaking a lot of people. We have in the last couple of years, thanks to two new excellent reporters, Lauren Gurley and Edward Ongweso, we have been covering a lot of labor news. So strikes, attempts to unionize at Amazon, Uber, and companies like that. So anything that has to do with gig workers and unions falls under that. That's been a huge beat for us because in the last couple of years, people have really started caring about this. The tide has turned in terms of how people see these companies and their relationship with their workers.

[00:09:44] BB: Quite true. I wonder how much that is driven though by great coverage.

[00:09:48] LFB: Yeah. I mean, I guess, you never know what started, right? I don't think people just wake up and say, "Hey, I don't think Amazon is being fair to their workers. I don't think Uber is being fair to their workers." Readers are busy. They have their lives. We can't ask that from them. So, yeah, I probably started with some initial college years ago. We weren't the first ones. The New York Times has done great work on that. Gizmodo did some good work on that a few years ago. So, yeah, I think it was from our editors, sort of like a concerted effort to recognize that this was a huge new avenue for news and coverage. We invested in it by hiring two new reporters and a new editor.

[00:10:29] BB: We have Lorenzo a audience-asked care. This is from Colin Jordan from it looks like Egnyte or E-nyte. It's spelled with an E. He asks or this person asks, "How much freedom do you have in writing, editing, and publishing your own articles?"

[00:10:46] LFB: Good question. So I'm trying to like guess exactly what they mean by freedom. In terms of like choosing stories and getting assignments, I am among the lucky ones. I have a lot of freedom and I think that's a very Motherboard way to look at what to cover. Our editors, even the ones that have left, always believed that it's important to give writers freedom to cover what they're interested in because they will do a better job if they write about what they care about. So I can choose. Yeah, I have a lot of freedom to choose. I get assignments as well and I think that's healthy. I think it's good to have editors that sometimes tell you what to do because there are some days in which I may be not as inspired or maybe I don't get a good tip, and so I need something else to do. That's the sort of pitching and writing process within Motherboard.

In terms of editing, my stories get edited by at least one editor or sometimes two. If it's very controversial, then maybe even a third, and maybe we send it to the lawyers. But that's rare, luckily. In terms of publishing, we do have – Everyone has access to the CMS. But that's just really the last step. Everything is locked in. The story has been edited, so it's just a matter of like copy pasting the text and putting it out.

[00:12:04] BB: Man. If you're getting lawyers involved on a piece you're going to publish, you know it's serious.

[00:12:08] LFB: Yeah. You kind of want to avoid that because –

[00:12:10] BB: Yes. That was what I was going to say.

[00:12:12] LFB: It slows down the process, and that's their job, and we love them for that, but if you can avoid it. We've gone through some legal processes before, and so we know what to look for and when to call in the lawyers or not at this point.

[00:12:27] BB: I was going to say, I have never seen your time speeding up when working with lawyers.

[00:12:34] LFB: Yeah. I think they love slowing things down.

[00:12:36] BB: Oh, my gosh. Oh, tremendously.

[BREAK]

[00:12:42] 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]

[00:13:06] BB: I have a little fill in the blank section here, Lorenzo. So I'll give you the tip of the phrase. Then you can fill out the rest. So first one is my favorite sources always –

[00:13:17] LFB: Give me good tips.

[00:13:19] BB: There you go. The most annoying sources always –

[00:13:23] LFB: Send me a lot of follow up emails, even though I haven't responded.

[00:13:27] BB: How many is too many, by the way? This is always a question on this show. Three, five?

[00:13:32] LFB: Yeah. I think three is the red line. As I said, like I get a lot of emails and I can't say that I read them all. Sometimes, I skim through the subject line, so I think the subject line is very important, and sometimes that's all I need to see. The subject line is company X raises 30 million. I know that I don't need to read that. So I think it's okay to follow up once and look maybe even twice. Let's say once or twice because sometimes I do miss stuff and maybe I archive too quickly and maybe I misjudge what the subject line says. So, yeah, I think following up is okay. But after three emails, there's a reason I'm not responding. I hope I don't sound like I'm evil, but that's part of the business I guess.

[00:14:16] BB: No. This is part of the business. You are not alone definitely in that. Okay. You will get a response from me if –

[00:14:25] LFB: If you know who you're talking to. Sometimes, we get – Well, I get and I know that my colleagues as well get pitches that are clearly outside of our scope like I was talking about, like a pitch of about a new album. I've never written about music. As much as I would love to, I don't write about music. So I can tell that for some reason, my email ended up on that PR's task or list, and they didn't even know who they were emailing. I don't know. I've never worked as a PR, so I can't really understand the challenges. But I can't imagine that just blasting a lot of people that have nothing to do with what you're trying to pitch is useful.

[00:15:05] BB: Lorenzo, let me tell you they are. That is the problem. That is the big problem out there, unfortunately. Now, I will say that's the worst of the worst. I mean, you get a list from – You download your big media database and you're like, "Great, 275 names. Let me just CC that whole thing." I mean, yes, that is happening, unfortunately. So that is there in the problem we are trying to solve on the OnePitch side of things. So that does happen. Okay. You'll never get a response from me if –

[00:15:34] LFB: If you're too insistent with things that are not relevant. Again, yeah, I mean, if you're following up on emails that are clearly outside of my scope, I will end up recognizing your name and being very skeptical when you send me something. I'm very reluctant to flag people or emails as spam because I'm a little skeptical that these filters really work and I am too scared to miss something.

[00:16:00] BB: Interesting. So it keeps you like not doing anything just because, shoot, you might miss something.

[00:16:06] LFB: Yeah. I have a little bit of FOMO in this sense because every journalist is as good as the tips they get. So if I miss something because this person has sent me an email that wasn't relevant and I overreacted by flagging him as spam, then I will be very mad at myself. At the end of the day, I don't get like thousands of emails a day. I'm happy to read the same names and subject lines. That's okay. That's part of the process. It's also – Sometimes, pitches that I don't end up writing about still give me an idea of what's interesting out there. Maybe like in the last few months, there has been way more emails about ransomware, and that's because there's been a lot more ransomware. So I'm paying more attention to that topic, and it's interesting to see that we're getting more pitches about that too.

[00:16:53] BB: I've heard that from several journalists that they'll start to connect themes when they're going, "Well, wait a second. Why am I getting seven pitches today about X or why in the last month have I seen a volume increase? Okay, maybe this is an area for me to look into." So it's kind of a little trend barometer.

[00:17:08] LFB: Yeah, exactly. That's when what you were talking about earlier comes into play. That's when maybe I will search and see and also trend somewhere. I'll realize that I got a report that in and of itself wasn't interesting because we get this a lot. So, for example, a company has done a survey or looked back at the year and has some sort of statistics about what happened last year in terms of ransomware. We don't usually cover them. But if I'm writing a story about a specific ransomware incident, then I can go back to the email and use it as context, use it as a little paragraph saying, "This incident falls into this context of ransomware."

[00:17:46] BB: It would be a huge help if you –

[00:17:48] LFB: Read my bio and read a few of my latest stories to know what I'm covering and what I cover usually. To be fair, I don't want to sound like a jerk, but like most people do know that. I would say that 90, 95 percent of the emails I get from PR people are relevant, so people are doing their jobs. It's just that once in a while, we get like a – I get like an email that it's completely out of scope, and sometimes it gets me a little mad.

[00:18:14] BB: Wait. You said 90, 95 pitches are on point?

[00:18:18] LFB: Maybe I'm being a little optimistic but I would say –

[00:18:20] BB: I was going to say –

[00:18:21] LFB: I mean, on point, I don't mean that they're like absolutely incredible pitches that I want to write about. It's more than they are about cybersecurity, that they talk about the person who made maybe an interesting source down the line. Yeah. That's another thing that I don't know if PR folks realize, and I'm sure that they're not super happy about this because they want responses every time. But sometimes, it happens that someone reaches out and says, “Hey, I have this great person that you can talk to.” But maybe that day or that week, that person is just not useful because I'm writing about something else. But it does happen that then I go back. Maybe search for a keyword. Maybe I'm looking for a former FBI agent. Maybe I'm looking for somebody who's an expert in infrastructure hacking or some critical infrastructure, for example. Then I can see, “Oh, okay. This person emailed me a few weeks ago or even a few months ago about this person.” This person all of a sudden is relevant. That email that maybe I hadn't even responded back then now is relevant.

[00:19:20] BB: The best compliment I received about my work was –

[00:19:24] LFB: Maybe this will reveal the fact that I'm a pessimist, but I don't really remember the best compliment.

[00:19:30] BB: That's horrible. Oh, man. Okay, I'm going to have to like send you a random note in the next month or something.

[00:19:37] **LFB**: Yeah, please do.

[00:19:36] **BB**: Lorenzo, I loved your article and how well you executed this complex topic and spelled it out so easily. Okay. That's a signal for PR people then, hopefully. Throw you some love on a piece that you did.

[00:19:49] **LFB**: Yeah. If you reference an old story, that helps. If it's relevant to – If you say, “Hey, I read this and I thought about my client or this person that you can talk to,” that helps.

[00:20:00] **BB**: Yes. There you go. Okay. The last best thing I ate or cooked was –

[00:20:06] **LFB**: The last thing I ate or cook, it was an omelet today for lunch.

[00:20:10] **BB**: That sounds good. What did you have in it?

[00:20:12] **LFB**: Cheese, shallots, and sausage.

[00:20:15] **BB**: Sounds delicious.

[00:20:16] **LFB**: Yeah. Pretty simple but a good lunch and quick too.

[00:20:19] **BB**: Yeah. Quick, hearty, good protein. Quarantine has taught me –

[00:20:25] **LFB**: That it's okay not to overwork yourself. I think that one of the concerns we all had at Motherboard was that by working from home, we would just be working all the time. So we were lucky that our editors, their first concern was, “We don't want you to work all the time. It's also very tough. It will be challenging times. We know that you have to take care of family and friends and other things.” I think we all made a conscious effort to put some boundaries and respect those boundaries as much as we could.

[00:20:55] **BB**: You guys did that as a news organization?

[00:20:57] LFB: Well, VICE is very siloed in many ways. But I can say that, in general, the company has been very good at that. They've given us random days off here and there. They've sent us emails saying, "Please take your vacation days." People are not taking vacation days because there's no place to go to. But even if it's just to stay home and rest and not look at your computer, you should do that. So I really cannot complain about how they've treated us in this last year and a half.

[00:21:24] BB: That's lovely. My perfect Sunday is –

[00:21:29] LFB: Hanging out with my loved ones and not working because that's what Sundays are for. Yeah. Maybe watching some movies, playing some video games, or if the weather good going to the beach or going to a bar, which is now possible to do, luckily.

[00:21:43] BB: It is. It is. What about soccer? I'm hearing that you like to argue about soccer?

[00:21:50] LFB: Yes. I love to watch soccer. I used to play with some friends.

[00:21:53] BB: There you go.

[00:21:54] LFB: Nothing professional or anything. But, yes, I like sports, especially soccer. So, yeah, if there's a game on Sunday, then I will watch that. Yeah.

[00:22:02] BB: Okay, Lorenzo, I would love to hear, as I like to hear. This is my favorite part probably of this show. What are you listening to, reading, watching? We'll take any stories you're consuming. What would you say?

[00:22:15] LFB: I have a lot of interests, and one thing that I've tried to do in the last year and a half as well sort of as another work-life balance thing is try not to consume more career stuff when I'm not working. But obviously, occasionally I do read some cybersecurity books. But right now, I'm reading a book about Israeli Palestinian conflict, sort of like a look back the last 100 years by a Palestinian author. I'm watching a lot of anime for whatever reason. It's light. It's fun. I just watched this really good Filipino anime on Netflix called Trese. I recommend it.

[00:22:49] **BB**: Trese. Okay. All right.

[00:22:51] **LFB**: Yeah. I also play video games, and my recommendation will not surprise anyone, but Zelda: Breath of the Wild is a great game, if anyone is into that.

[00:22:59] **BB**: Zelda. Wait. Breath of the Wild. Yes. The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild. Just the full title.

[00:23:06] **LFB**: Yeah. It's not a new game, but I'm catching up with stuff.

[00:23:10] **BB**: Yeah. It was, I just looked it up, initially released 2017.

[00:23:14] **LFB**: Yeah. It's so old that there's going to be a sequel soon.

[00:23:18] **BB**: Wow. The first question that comes up on Google when it says like, "People also ask," the first question is, "Is Zelda: Breath of the Wild worth it?"

[00:23:28] **LFB**: Yes. The answer is a resounding yes.

[00:23:31] **BB**: Yes. Someone on Business Insider speaking to media, it says, "It's easily one of the best games for the Nintendo Switch, in my opinion. Absolutely worth buying." That's great. Okay. So gamer, a little old school. Is there any games you're looking forward to being released soon?

[00:23:45] **LFB**: The sequel to Breath of the Wild. But, yeah, I've stopped playing video games for a while, so I have a lot of backlog. I'm not too worried about the new releases.

[00:23:54] **BB**: Shoot. Right. You got to catch up. Man, it's like getting behind on series, and you're like, "Shoot."

[00:24:00] **LFB**: Yeah. There's too many TV shows. There's too many video games.

[00:24:02] **BB**: There's too many.

[00:24:02] LFB: Too many. Too much content.

[00:24:03] BB: It's a crisis of content, as I say. Exactly. Exactly.

[00:24:08] LFB: Yeah. Please slow down. Creators, slow down.

[00:24:11] BB: Please, slow it down. They keep getting money. That's why it keeps going I think. That's the problem. Well, and also we get to be so blessed to have all this content, so there's that. They've definitely keep us all engaged during this quarantine time. There's no dearth of that. Okay. Well, Lorenzo, totally switching here. What do you feel the future of journalism looks like?

[00:24:34] LFB: It's a hard question and it's something that I think about a lot because I love journalism. I think there will be a move away from ad-based publications, at least in part. I don't think anyone can give up ads completely. Even the successful publications like the New York Times or The Washington Post who have very solid subscriber bases, they still run ads. But I think we're going to move more towards subscriptions, like podcasts that are under some sort of pay wall like Patreon style.

Again, I don't think anyone can really afford to completely exclude people that don't want to pay. But I believe that you can offer like an extra tier for your loyal readers and charge them even just three or five dollars a month. I think that's going to be the future and I think it's good news because just relying on ads is really hard, and it's unpredictable, unreliable, and ultimately just very stressful.

[00:25:34] BB: Speaking of the content crisis though, with so many things of like, "Oh, this plus, Disney Plus. Everything is a plus." Then you have every single media outlet online like also asking for the subscriptions. It's like, "Oh, dang." You could easily spend a couple \$100 a month on all your subscriptions, and that I'm kind of like, "That is troublesome."

[00:25:55] LFB: Yeah. As a reader or a consumer of movies and TV shows, that is annoying. But I think that the good news is that you can't get them all, right? There are very few people

that want, that need to read The Wall Street Journal and Motherboard and WIRED and The New York Times and The Washington Post. There's enough people out there to sustain everyone. There was a time when maybe this wasn't the case, especially in the early 2010s. There were so many online outlets that cover the same stuff, especially for technology, which is what I've been involved in. It always felt like maybe there's too many of us. Unfortunately, that's what's happened. A lot of websites have closed their folder or they've merged. That has been tough for a lot of people that have lost their jobs. But I think that ultimately, they will end up with a more sustainable ecosystem for readers.

[00:26:53] BB: We shall see. Lorenzo, we have come to our mad libs section of the podcast, which is super fun. So I will give you the word, and then you give me your response. I'll fill it in, and then I'll read back the whole paragraph, and we'll see what we get. Does that sound good?

[00:27:11] LFB: Okay. Let's try.

[00:27:12] BB: Okay. We'll try. Sometimes, they're silly. Sometimes, they're shockingly accurate. It kind of runs the gamut, so here we go. First, what is an emotion?

[00:27:23] LFB: Happy.

[00:27:23] BB: Happy. Okay. What about an adjective, any adjective?

[00:27:29] LFB: Thrilling?

[00:27:31] BB: That'll be perfect for this. Okay, thrilling. What's another adjective?

[00:27:35] LFB: Passionate.

[00:27:36] BB: Passionate. How about a greeting, any type of greeting?

[00:27:41] LFB: Hello.

[00:27:42] BB: Hello. Then a verb.

[00:27:45] **LFB**: Chat.

[00:27:46] **BB**: A noun.

[00:27:48] **LFB**: Cat.

[00:27:49] **BB**: A adjective. An adjective I should say.

[00:27:53] **LFB**: Boring.

[00:27:54] **BB**: Boring. Got it. A cringe-worthy PR term or phrase.

[00:28:04] **LFB**: Struggling to think of one because my brain has blocked them all.

[00:28:08] **BB**: That's okay.

[00:28:11] **LFB**: Do you have any suggestions? I don't believe this is cheating.

[00:28:16] **BB**: No, that's totally fine. We could put, "Just following up for the third time."

[00:28:21] **LFB**: Yeah. Although I have to confess I do that. But, yeah, that's definitely cringe-worthy.

[00:28:26] **BB**: Okay. Let's put that. Okay. What about a part of a pitch?

[00:28:30] **LFB**: Like the one that awkwardly pivots from current news or something that has happened to a person that actually doesn't really make sense for that kind of story.

[00:28:40] **BB**: Really? Okay. I'll put awkward pivots. How about that?

[00:28:42] **LFB**: Yup.

[00:28:43] **BB**: Perfect. What about a length of time?

[00:28:47] **LFB**: 25 minutes.

[00:28:48] **BB**: 25 minutes. Okay. Name of a real person, ideally alive.

[00:28:57] **LFB**: Leo Messi.

[00:28:58] **BB**: Lastly, an emotion, another emotion.

[00:29:01] **LFB**: Nostalgia.

[00:29:02] **BB**: Nostalgia. You know what? Funny enough, you're not the first person who said that. Someone just recently did nostalgia, nostalgic. Yes.

[00:29:11] **LFB**: I was thinking that maybe it's a byproduct of the pandemic. We haven't been able to see people. We haven't been able to go places, so we're nostalgic for all of this.

[00:29:20] **BB**: Okay. Here, Lorenzo, is your mad lib. When I think of the future of journalism, I feel happy. The pitches I receive have gone from thrilling to passionate. If I receive a pitch that starts with hello, I chat with that person. When I write stories on cats, it can get a little boring. My favorite pitches include just following up for the third time and very specific awkward pivots. I normally take around 25 minutes to respond. But if it's Leo Messi, who's, by the way, an Argentinian professional football player, I had to look that up, I will absolutely respond. If you do not get a response from me, you should know that I'm very nostalgic for you.

[00:30:05] **LFB**: Most of that I would say is accurate.

[00:30:07] **BB**: There, right? Shockingly, it is. It really has some thoughts to it and some legs. I delight in these. They're quite fun.

[00:30:15] **LFB**: Yeah. Other than the cat part. I think if I wrote stories about cats, they will be funny. I wouldn't get bored of those.

[00:30:21] **BB:** Probably funny. Yeah, not boring but probably funny. Yeah, for sure. Only an accuracy out of that whole thing.

[00:30:27] **LFB:** Yeah. That's pretty good.

[00:30:29] **BB:** Oh, man. Lorenzo, thank you so much for being on with us today. Such a joy. I hope you get good pitches. I hope you get good ones through Signal and all the other apps that are out there for all the stuff. Please do not follow up with Lorenzo for five times. He does not want that.

[00:30:46] **LFB:** Yeah, please don't. But feel free to follow up once or twice.

[00:30:49] **BB:** Okay. Once or twice.

[00:30:50] **LFB:** Don't give up.

[00:30:50] **BB:** Thanks, Lorenzo.

[00:30:52] **LFB:** Thank you, Beck.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:30:56] **ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Ben Stegner from MakeUseOf. 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]