

**EPISODE 93**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to this weeks' episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. The guests in our show include some of the most notable journalists from the top US-based publications, who cover topics including technology, life sound 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.

Did you know we also have a brand-new video series featuring guests from the podcast? Head to [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) and look for the video page to learn more about subscribing.

Today on the podcast, we're chatting with Emmy Liederman, agency's reporter for Adweek. Emmy started at Adweek, has breaking news and audience engagement in turn in May of 2020, before being hired full time as E-commerce reporter. During the episode, Emmy starts by breaking down the effects of cultural moments and pitches she receives, her personal thoughts on the best branding, put the best sources can do to reach her, and more. Let's hear more from Emmy now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:21] BB:** Welcome, everyone, to Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger. The host you've been listening to, hopefully, for a while. We've done like 80 episodes of this with our wonderful journalists. I run OnePitch, which is helping of course publicists figure out how to get to journalists, and then also Bam, which is an agency that works with venture backed technology companies just to some context.

Today, someone who would actually cover Bam, well, maybe, probably never. But anyway, my hope Emmy Liederman, who's the agency's reporter actually at Adweek. Emmy, I love your Twitter timeline handle which reads agencies reporter Adweek, mildly irritating to mature audiences and deeply committed to the bit. I love it. Welcome.

**[00:02:05] EL:** Thank you so much for recognizing that. I thought mildly irritating to mature audiences was safe because it's not too self-deprecating, but it's just a little bit.

**[00:02:14] BB:** It's just a little. It's just a little nudge. I like it. Emmy, let's start with your inbox. How crazy is it in there with pitchers?

**[00:02:25] EL:** Oh my gosh, well, I'm sure everyone in their mother knows about this by now. But Facebook, I don't even know how long it went down. But all Facebook products went down this week for like a few –

**[00:02:36] BB:** It was mayhem, globally.

**[00:02:39] EL:** For me, maybe I'm just being ignorant because it's not like that really affected my job too much. I mean, I don't really put my stories on Facebook or Instagram too often right now. It's a lot of Twitter. I think a lot of journalists are on Twitter. But I've been getting so many pitches about the Facebook outage and how it's affecting brands and how marketers can pivot and I'm kind of just tired. I wish that people just took a little bit of a break and like went outside.

**[00:03:11] BB:** What are the pitches saying though? Like oh my god, no one could ship all birds this week. What's the pitch?

**[00:03:19] EL:** I don't know. I guess it's just about social strategies and if Facebook is down for four hours, apparently you can't sell whatever salty snacks on Facebook for four hours and that's heartbreaking to these businesses. I don't know, it's just a lot of journalists were talking about this on Twitter. It's kind of like sometimes when there's a cultural moment, you have to brace yourself for the way that people will pitch to you. This is one of those moments. I don't really know how much of a cultural moment this was, but it was kind of like after the January 6 protests getting pitches about how do corporations speak on this and what do you do next and sort of brand campaigns? It's like you know, there's all during these social moments, there are always going to be some pitches that just missed the mark a little bit.

That's one overarching theme and then another one is, I just keep getting this email about Crest doing a candy campaign which I find really funny because –

**[00:04:25] BB:** The toothpaste people?

**[00:04:26] EL:** Yeah. The toothpaste people are giving out a select few like safes for kids to hide their candy from their parents, which I get, that's fun, whatever. But it just so goes against everything that I thought Crest looks before. I kind of feel like they sat around in a board meeting and was like, we have to be more relatable guys. We got to get the kids. We have to acknowledge the block candy, and I don't know. It's just it It's funny to me. Sometimes I feel like brands kind of – from their own purposes because they want to appeal to the masses or something.

**[00:05:08] BB:** Yeah, they get a bit off kilter. Now, what do you do with the pitches that land in your inbox? Do you ignore? Do you master lead? Do you file? What are you doing?

**[00:05:18] EL:** It depends on my mental health.

**[00:05:22] BB:** That's an honest answer. I love that. Because most people are like, "Well, I do exactly this every time." And I'm like, "Really?"

**[00:05:27] EL:** I don't really have an MO like some people. First of all, a lot of people think my name is Emily. I mean, it's Emmy, and it's not short for anything. It's just my parents gave me a nickname for some reason. It's kind of frustrating when people pitch to me, and follow up a bunch of times, and say my name, or spell my name wrong, because it's just annoying. Sometimes people were like, forward me the same pitch, like without any words, just like forward me the stuff from below and it's like, are you just –

**[00:06:07] BB:** Just a forward? Just to forward, no note in the forward?

**[00:06:09] EL:** No like, "I hope you're doing well", whatever, I guess they're just trying to get straight to the point. So, I try not to be rude. I think that's a good thing to strive for in life. I try not to be an asshole. If there are some, I think pitches, when you can tell they're genuine and like someone put time into them and they didn't just spray and pray, I really try and answer. I think that a lot of journalists are trying to, because it can be overwhelming to have all these pitches all

the time and feel like you have ties to people in PR from across the industry. I think that a lot of journalists nowadays are trying to just have really close connections with like a few folks, and they'll go to them if they need a source or something like that, or whatever. So, that's what I'm trying to do. I guess that's not a great answer. But just as –

**[00:06:09] BB:** Real answer though, you know what, I like that.

**[00:07:07] EL:** Yeah. It's a long-winded way of saying depends on how much I feel like I can look at my Outlook inbox without freaking out. I would say a lot of people actually share that ideology, because you don't want to miss good pitches, but –

**[00:07:24] BB:** You don't. But it's hard to find them when there's too many. I mean, for your story inspiration, like I'm looking at your links here, you have something on Dawn, you have something on Nestle, you've got a beauty brand, you've got – spans the spectrum, hot sauce. How do you get the inspiration to do a piece?

**[00:07:48] EL:** Yeah, that's a good question. I think that when I started at Adweek, the thing that I was told by my editors is every time you write a story for us, and imagine a reader looking at it, they should take away something beyond just what that information of the campaign was about. They should take a marketing lesson, some sort of lesson about how to engage with a certain sector of the populations, advice on what not to do in their job. So, I think that it's not worth writing stories that don't teach lessons, because every publication wants to stand out to readers and be helpful, and do more than just regurgitate press releases.

That's what I want to do is as a reporter, that's what all of my colleagues are interested in doing. So, I think that that's not to say that you can't have thought and write about silly things. But I don't know, the hots for example, the hot sauce campaign, I was about to draft, this luxury hot sauce brand and they did an out of home campaign in Philly, and they just put up a bunch of billboards that were like, the best cheese steak in Philly is blank, and people could vote on it. I thought that was just so clever. Because it's not really directly branding the hot sauce in your face, but it's getting people to think about the name and it's getting people really rowdy about something that isn't controversial, but in a way kind of is to locals in Philly.

[00:09:21] **BB:** Yes. I'm looking at the piece now, I like that.

[00:09:25] **EL:** I just thought, it was like simple, but fun.

[00:09:25] **BB:** Oh, they had the vote now. Yeah, they couldn't decide to make their own you best restaurant list in a city or whatever. And they're just like, "Oh, we'll do with hot sauce."

[00:09:34] **EL:** YEAH. And then there's an incentive because they're donating a portion or they are donating a certain amount of money, I forget what it is, to the restaurant that wins. So, then the superfans are interested in voting more and spreading the word.

[00:09:49] **BB:** And then the restaurants start talking about it too, because they want to get the hot sauce. That's a pretty brilliant campaign. Good job.

[00:09:55] **EL:** Yeah. It's a nice snowball effect. So, I like that one.

[00:10:02] **BB:** With that one, particularly, how'd you know about it?

[00:10:05] **EL:** So, I had been in contact with the woman who is the marketing director, Michelle Gabe at Truff for a little while. I know we had written about Truff because they're just like this brand that completely started on social media. They had the Instagram handle @sauce before they were even a brand.

[00:10:25] **BB:** I wonder how much that cost.

[00:10:27] **EL:** They had a monopoly on on sauce, on condiments and Instagram, which sounds all the specifics, but it's important because hot sauce is like, such an – for some reason, is like always intertwining with –

[00:10:41] **BB:** It is. Even to the Beyoncé song.

[00:10:46] **EL:** Yes, and they've been in so many music videos. I talked to the dudes and they literally sounded like they had that run out. Their names are neck and neck. And they sounded

like they didn't have a detectable pulse. That's how chill they were. They just were like, "Yeah, we're making hot sauce. It's really good. We're just doing our thing." I feel like that just points to the best way that like the best brands, the best TikToks, the best content is just proving to people that you really don't give that much of a shed and about yourself, and you're just like tired. You're like, I don't care if you guys like this or not, I'm just putting it out there. I don't know why. It just always works.

**[00:11:35] BB:** Yes. It's something so alluring. It's also like, F you, I don't give a shit. It's so wonderful. That's kind of how I tried to be. It's nice, refreshing.

**[00:11:47] EL:** I try to be that one too. Anxiety kind of gets in the way of that. But I think that's the best way to reach people is create something and say, "If you don't like this, I don't really care. But if you do, that's cool too."

**[00:12:01] BB:** I don't care that much.

**[00:12:04] EL:** Maybe you can like secretly care.

**[00:12:09] BB:** God, that is so true. Emmy, I'm really enjoying this.

[MESSAGE]

**[00:12:15] ANNOUNCER:** Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch.

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Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[00:12:38] BB:** Okay, okay, we have a little fill in the blank section. My favorite sources always –

**[00:12:45] EL:** My favorite sources always – wait, can I take my time on this and then we can cut it?

**[00:12:52] BB:** Yes, please.

**[00:12:52] EL:** I think my favorite sources always explain things to me, like I'm five years old. I don't think that there's any benefit in journalism, of using a lot of flowery language, unless it really helps you explain things better. I think a lot of times people get wrapped up in language. And sometimes you just have to say it like it is maybe not five years old. Because I don't want people to like insult my intelligence, I guess. But I think, say things as simply as possible. I mean, I learned in journalism school that I know I'm done editing, when there isn't one word that I could cut.

**[00:13:37] BB:** Good advice.

**[00:13:39] EL:** That was powerful. That is transparent, well, whether it's an Instagram post or a pitch, anything.

**[00:13:47] BB:** I like that. The most annoying sources, always –

**[00:13:52] EL:** The most annoying sources always, I would say make sweeping generalizations without consulting enough people. I think a lot of times there's pressure to just get content out and get clicks all the time. I think we're all guilty of that. But at a certain point, you have to realize when it's compromising your storytelling. So, I think that sometimes reporters tell the story that they want to tell and not necessarily the story that's out there. So, they get some sort of interview that confirms the way that they already felt about a topic and then they run with it. And this is me honestly giving advice to myself, because I think that I'm learning and of course you want to – when you feel a certain way about something, you want to find evidence for it. I mean, that's just human bias.

**[00:14:49] BB:** Confirmation bias.

[00:14:51] **EL:** Confirmation bias, of course. But I think that that's being at least acknowledging that and understanding that it's a thing, is I think what the best sources do.

[00:15:02] **BB:** You'll never get a response from me if –

[00:15:05] **EL:** You'll never get a response from me if you've forward me. I mentioned before, but if you forward me your original pitch and say no words, to me that's the equivalent of like, trying to talk to me and then like coming out to me and poking me and like not saying anything.

[00:15:23] **BB:** It's like the ultimate laziness, too.

[00:15:25] **EL:** Yeah, it just feels so rude. I don't generally care about people respecting me or whatever. I don't think that I'm like deserving of respect. I'm like, 21 years old and never get out of my pajamas. But I just feel like that. It's something that is so disrespectful and it doesn't take a lot again, like for me to – I don't take myself that seriously to like, be like, “Oh, you're disrespecting me, whatever.”

[00:15:53] **BB:** Can we go back for a second? Are you in your pajamas right now?

[00:15:56] **EL:** So, I actually happened to – I put on the shirt that I got from Forever 21. I think you might have –

[00:16:01] **BB:** Yes, on our little recording.

[00:16:04] **EL:** I'm wearing boxers that I really don't know where they came from. They could be my mother's, they could be my ex-boyfriend's.

[00:16:14] **BB:** Second question. Second question. Are you 21?

[00:16:17] **EL:** Yes, I am.



**[00:16:18] BB:** Oh my god, that is amazing. So, you literally can go to Forever 21 because you are 21.

**[00:16:27] EL:** Oh, I didn't think about that. Forever 21 is making a comeback.

**[00:16:32] BB:** It is. They're trying real hard. I mean, not that I would know, I'm a millennial. I don't do stuff in there. But I've so heard, I've heard that that's the case.

**[00:16:42] EL:** They're really scary, because there's that old joke where you like, you'll see something at Forever 21 that you think is cute. And then it says in huge letters like, "God is good." And you're like, I don't know if that's – but yeah, I am 21.

**[00:17:01] BB:** Awesome. And look at you with the journalism job, all-star.

**[00:17:05] EL:** Thank you. I try to stay humble.

**[00:17:08] BB:** By not giving a shit. That's the key.

**[00:17:11] EL:** Yeah, maybe not give a shit outward brand, but then no one's around.

**[00:17:19] BB:** Well, the next fill in the blank. The best compliment I received about my work was –

**[00:17:23] EL:** I think, I wrote a story about Grace Wells, who is a TikTok creator and she made this whole series, where she really wanted to get into production, and she was into film. She made this whole series about making random objects interesting. So, she made a commercial for like a fork and random things that would never like have a commercial, and was able to make them enticing. I wrote this story about how she was getting signed and had all this paid work after she did a series. I just got so much nice feedback from that, from her, just saying that she really appreciated me telling that story.

But a lot of people seem to respond well and just said, "This is a story that marketers need to read to understand how to recruit the right talent in this day and age." A lot of channels that

aren't traditionally learned that like that, whatever thing that you could find your next video producer on TikTok, but if the talent is there, then why not? Those are the people that really do understand how to reach an audience on social. I think that was cool to be able to tell a story about someone that was a little bit untraditional and paving their way into the industry but reflected a lot of the trends that are going on today.

**[00:18:50] BB:** That's nice. I'm love when someone would reach out and say like, "Just thanks for doing that. That's kind of nice." Okay, my perfect Sunday is –

**[00:19:00] EL:** My perfect Sunday. Okay, I think that I would go to the beach really early, read on the beach, and then like fall asleep on the beach. Make sure that I drown myself in sounds first. Wake up on the beach, get like a whole sushi platter, and wine to eat on the beach. I would just like stroll around and window shop, I think, I don't know exactly where it's placed.

**[00:19:30] BB:** Okay. It's totally fine.

**[00:19:32] EL:** And then there's something about like taking a shower, after you go to the beach and then going out to dinner and like dressing, putting on your little jeans and a nice top and having your hair a little bit wet and you feel maybe you're like have a little bit of a suntan and you just feel that exhaustion from the beach, but you're relaxing over like your front genuine seat. I think that's such a beautiful day to me, and that's probably not an average Sunday at all. I mean, I've never experienced a day quite like that.

**[00:20:08] BB:** Quite a journey. I love it.

**[00:20:10] EL:** Just a lot of reading and sleeping and maybe some meditation. Just a little bit of exercise.

**[00:20:19] BB:** Exercise and get exhausted. I like it. That's a good one. I like it. Okay, my favorite hobby is –

**[00:20:26] EL:** My favorite hobby. I love to collect magazines and make them into collages. I wish that I had an example to show you, but it's always just like, very random words, and there's

really no words and pictures. And they're new words and I feel like there's really no way of explaining them. But they just make sense to me of it. It's something, it's a lot of time, but it's sort of mindless, but in a way still creative. So, it's a great way for me to just relax and actually read magazines, but tear them apart as I'm reading them and –

**[00:21:05] BB:** Yeah, make them into something. Oh, I like that. Okay. The last song I listened to was –

**[00:21:12] EL:** Oh, my gosh, the last song I listened to, I have to check my Spotify. I've really been into spa music 2021. It's a playlist on Spotify. I love listening to it in the background of writing because I can't – my brain doesn't work in the way that I can just like listen to a song with talking, with singing, and right at the same time. So, I've been listening to like, a lot of great spa music and meditation. Just meditation music.

**[00:21:52] BB:** Okay. I like it. How about my best Halloween costume was –

**[00:21:56] EL:** Oh my gosh, that's the perfect question for me because my mom happens to be incredibly artistic. She was just never okay with not giving us out of this world creative Halloween costumes.

**[00:22:09] BB:** Wow, really?

**[00:22:10] EL:** So, one day I was – yes, it was like one of the best parts of my childhood. So, she would just get so excited about this and it would be something that she would start creating, like a month or so or even more in advance. So, one year I was an Emmy Award, I had the wings, and the ball and I like posed and I had glitter all over my body. It took weeks for me to get the glitter out of my contacts, which was incredibly painful.

**[00:22:38] BB:** Yeah, glitter. Very bad.

**[00:22:39] EL:** But it was so fun and then another year I was a doll in a box. So, she made me a box and then dress me up. And then on the side, it was just so realistic. On the side you had Mattel and the TM and the barcode.

**[00:22:56] BB:** Wow. This is elaborate.

**[00:22:58] EL:** Yes. And then it was like collect all these styles for your doll. It was pictures of me in different outfits. It was really clever.

**[00:23:05] BB:** Oh my gosh. Wow, maybe you could send us one of those photos so we could admire this. I love asking that question because we're hearing all types of amazing things here.

**[00:23:16] EL:** That's a great question. How did you think of that?

**[00:23:17] BB:** Well, we had this for our little seasonal for like October people. We get to ask that because also, the last thing, last one here. My favorite part of fall is –

**[00:23:27] EL:** I think my favorite part of fall is transitioning away from the sweatiness and the clothes that are tied to summer. Shorts and the dresses that you chafe over. There's something, this is probably a very common answer, but it makes sense because sweaters are amazing. Like something really great about just lounging in a sweater, and I think that it's a lot easier to be trendy when you feel like you're not sweating, to the point of exhaustion. There are a lot more options and you just feel more together. It's less about the way your body looks and more about being fashionable and having a self-expression. So, I think that that's kind of liberating as fall comes.

**[00:24:23] BB:** Yeah, I agree with that. Nothing dampens your attitude than buckets of sweat. Literally and figuratively. Well, I mean, what are you reading, watching, listening to? We'll take anything because we like to consume all the stories.

**[00:24:38] EL:** So, right now, I'm reading *The Hilarious World of Depression* by John Moe. It's a book that's also a podcast.

**[00:24:49] BB:** Wait, I got to look this up on Audible.

**[00:24:51] EL:** Yes. And it's basically, I mean, part of the premise is the fact that a lot of comedians suffer from depression and they use comedy as an outlet and ends up, it's really just this common theme. It helps them shape their material. A lot of it is just about this guy who has experience with depression and he just speaks so candidly about it. I have the book in front of me right now, there was a quote that says, "This book is an excellent life raft for those of us who are so sure that we are alone in our struggles."

As someone who has both depression and anxiety, I think a lot of times when I'm struggling, I just assume that no one could ever understand. Even if it does feel that way, and it's hard to kick that feeling, it's amazing to just have this book in front of me and hear other people's stories and just say, like, "I can really relate to that." I mean, that's something that I've experienced and to be able to laugh about it. Sometimes your thought process when you're depressed is funny, because it's just so irrational. I mean, it's definitely not funny in the moment, like in the moment, the fucking worse, but have a little bit of space from it, you're like, "Did I really think that way about myself? Or did I really think that that was a good use of my money or time?" And not to trivialize it, but that's just my experience with it.

I have ways that when I have a little bit of that, I can laugh. And I think that, I mean, I said in my Twitter bio, I'm like, deeply committed to bit. I don't know how much we have if we're not able to laugh. That's just the ultimate test of mindfulness, the ultimate test of being able to be present and enjoy the moment and I just love that that book encapsulates.

**[00:26:46] BB:** I love that. I just downloaded it. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. I get all my inspirations from this exact podcast. This is everything that consumes my cultural input. Absolutely. I love it. Well, Emmy – were you going to ask anything else?

**[00:27:06] EL:** Oh, I was just going to say, have you heard of the podcast or no?

**[00:27:09] BB:** No, not the podcast nor that book.

**[00:27:13] EL:** Yeah, so it's *The Hilarious World of Depression*. And then he has another one that he just started up called *Depresh Mode*, and it's the same format.

[00:27:20] **BB:** *Depresh Mode*, I love it,

[00:27:21] **EL:** People on talking about their depression and he calls people with depression Sadees and it just like makes it something clever. In a way, it's not depressing. It's actually very liberating to feel like other people are going through the same stuff. Yes, I recommend that.

[00:27:42] **BB:** Good one. Emmy, we are going to now play the Mad Libs part. So, this is like the first word that you can think of, and I'm going to fill it in. So, I'm going to tee you up with a word, whatever word you think of right away, boom, we fill it in, and then I'll read you back the whole statement and we'll see if it's weird, funny, very on point. There's a whole range of how these can go, so are you ready?

[00:28:06] **EL:** Yes.

[00:28:09] **BB:** Okay, here you go. First one, what's an emotion?

[00:28:12] **EL:** Sadness.

[00:28:13] **BB:** Speaking up. An adjective?

[00:28:17] **EL:** Meaty.

[00:28:18] **BB:** Meaty. Another adjective?

[00:28:24] **EL:** Sparkly.

[00:28:24] **BB:** Sparkly. A greeting?

[00:28:29] **EL:** Mazel Tov. Does that count?

[00:28:30] **BB:** Mazel Tov, yes. I like it. A verb?

[00:28:39] **EL:** Why is it that every verb in English language escapes me when you ask this.

[00:28:47] **BB:** Right. Everyone struggles with us. It's funny.

[00:28:48] **EL:** Jump.

[00:28:50] **BB:** Jump. A noun?

[00:28:52] **EL:** Pickle.

[00:28:53] **BB:** Pickle. Another adjective?

[00:28:59] **EL:** fluorescent.

[00:29:01] **BB:** Oh, a good one. A cringe worthy PR term or phrase?

[00:29:07] **EL:** Oh, God. eMeet.

[00:29:09] **BB:** Oh, gosh, that is bad. Yes. Okay. A part of the pitch?

[00:29:14] **EL:** Part of the pitch. Like?

[00:29:16] **BB:** Like subject line or look book or media kit.

[00:29:23] **EL:** Media kit. I like that.

[00:29:25] **BB:** We'll go with that. We're almost done. Length of time?

[00:29:30] **EL:** Three hours.

[00:29:32] **BB:** Three hours. Name of a real person?

[00:29:34] **EL:** Paul Rudd.

[00:29:36] **BB:** Paul Rudd. And then, an emotion?

[00:29:40] **EL:** Fearful.

[00:29:42] **BB:** Fearful. Okay. Are you ready? Emmy, here we go. When I think of the future of journalism, I feel sadness. The pitches I receive have gone from meaty to sparkling. If I receive a pitch that starts with Mazel Tov, I jump. When I write stories on pickles, I get fluoresce. But my favorite pitches include eMeet and media kit. I normally take around three hours to respond to my emails. But if it's Paul Rudd, I will respond immediately. If you get a response back from me, you should know I'm very fearful for you.

[00:30:14] **EL:** Wow, why do I feel like the fearful one checks out?

[00:30:18] **BB:** There you go, sometimes quite illuminating, right?

[00:30:21] **EL:** Yes, that changed my life. Thank you so much.

[00:30:25] **BB:** There you go. Emmy, thank you so much for being in our little dorky podcast, little coffee, little journalism, all the good stuff. I can't wait to read that book actually. I really appreciate that.

[00:30:37] **EL:** Yes, of course. Well, I appreciate you thinking of me and reaching out to me. I'm happy, so happy to be in this industry and to work among so many people that I admire. And it was just great to be here.

[00:30:51] **BB:** Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:30:54] **ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for tuning in to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Emmy Liederman from Adweek. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts and anywhere else you listen to



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[END]