

**EPISODE 150**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious how OnePitch can help you find relevant journalists to pitch, including guests on this podcast? Head to our website at [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) to learn more.

Our guest this week on coffee with a journalist is Jessica Bursztynsky. Jessica is a staff writer for Fast Company covering the gig economy and consumer Internet companies. During the episode, Jessica talks about connecting with the right sources, why subject lines are important to her, why she prefers phone calls before agreeing to embargoes, and more. Let's hear from Jessica now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:57] BB:** Welcome everyone, this is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger on episode, I don't know what this is, more than 100, almost 200. I feel like it is. We're here today with staff writer from Fast Company, Jessica Bursztynsky. She is here to give us the download on all things that she likes about pitching and not liking and her inbox and so forth. It is 2023. We're here for some good energy. Hi, Jessica. Thanks for being here.

**[00:01:26] JB:** Thank you so much for having me. I know I'm not the first episode to drop off 2023. But New Year's resolution is to get through that inbox. So, I feel like this is perfect timing.

**[00:01:38] BB:** This is a perfect show then for you. Okay. First, I like to start with for those who are not maybe as familiar, how would you describe the content that's on Fast Company?

**[00:01:49] JB:** Yes. So, I'm going to take this just from the tech angle, your cover both established and emerging players in the field, in both established and emerging segments. So,

social media, the gig economy, which is what I cover, web three, which is obviously a newer thing, productivity, innovation, and all of that.

**[00:02:12] BB:** Okay, and more specifically for what you're covering gig work. Expand a bit more on what you're looking for.

**[00:02:21] JB:** Yes. So, I cover the gig economy, and then some other consumer Internet companies, which when I first went into journalism, that wasn't what I was planning on doing at all. It was actually an editor at CNBC when I was there who said, "Oh, we need someone to cover these companies. So, can you please do this?" And I said, "Yeah", and I ended up really loving it. I describe it as the apps that make our lives easier, or that we really rely on day to day.

**[00:02:53] BB:** Like DoorDash?

**[00:02:55] JB:** Yeah, DoorDash, Lyft, Uber, Airbnb, Instacart, and then I also cover dating apps, which is extremely fun for me.

**[00:03:05] BB:** You know what, I just saw an article that was talking about how the US is the top user of dating apps. Did you see that piece? I freaked out. Where was it in? I think it was in New York Times, like, by far. I'm going to find it for you and send it because I was like, "Wow, America, they really just were on the apps."

**[00:03:25] JB:** Yeah, we definitely are. I think there's a lot of –

**[00:03:28] BB:** By a wide margin too, interesting.

**[00:03:29] JB:** Yeah. I think there's definitely a lot of penetration for other markets for these companies to really establish like their global presence. So, I think we're going to be seeing that a lot in the next coming years.

**[00:03:42] BB:** I agree. Now, to your resolution, Jessica, you mentioned in inbox zero. Was it inbox zero?

**[00:03:50] JB:** Yes, inbox zero.

**[00:03:51] BB:** How are we doing so far? It's January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**[00:03:55] JB:** Great question. I recently came back to the office I took like about a week and a half off. So, I really, really need to clear through these emails. Prior to this, I had done just, I would kind of scroll through periodically my inbox and if something interested me, I would either flag it for later or if I was looking at my phone, I would screenshot it because for some reason my brain really will remember things if I screenshot it on my cell phone and go through my camera roll later on. So, even if my personal life, if there's like a text message, I need to respond to, I'll screenshot it and I'll be like, "Okay, yes." Instead of flagging it somewhere.

**[00:04:41] BB:** This is the first time I've heard that technique. It works for you?

**[00:04:44] JB:** It works for me. I don't know if it's the best, but it works. So, I have created folders, which I know people have like talked about doing on here for specific companies and specific beats that they cover and areas like that. If you know you need to find a source who is an expert in work trends, you can easily go back and search through that. Hopefully, that helps one clear up my camera roll and two, just kind of like streamline the entire press.

**[00:05:17] BB:** Yes, I do like that. So, Jessica, with the pitches you receive, let me ask you on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being ridiculous, and I can't keep control of it. One being, I hear crickets most days, how would you describe rates, the flow of pitches coming to you? And then we want to talk about subject lines.

**[00:05:35] JB:** Right. It's definitely a range depending on the season. We're coming back from the holidays in the past couple of weeks. I really haven't gotten many pitches aside from CES related, which is the big tech show that's happening right now.

**[00:05:52] BB:** Is that even relevant to you?

**[00:05:53] JB:** It's not. I mean, I'm sure it could be – I could have probably gone, but I am actually, I'm moving to San Francisco in a few weeks and I need to just be in New York and get everything sorted out over here.

**[00:06:18] BB:** Yes. Okay. So, you have some life changes happening? Plus, you need some perhaps new friends in San Francisco?

**[00:06:24] JB:** Yes.

**[00:06:26] BB:** Okay, she's ready for friends.

**[00:06:29] JB:** I will accept pitches for good restaurants and coffee shops.

**[00:06:34] BB:** Okay. So, that's a relationship building question, which let me ask you now, given that you are moving to San Francisco, so I think it does depend on life changes. Are you open to having coffees, dinners, even lunches, happy hours, et cetera? Is that a way in which people can make relationships with you?

**[00:06:54] JB:** Yeah, absolutely. I feel like that's genuinely, probably the best way to do it. Because you really get to take half an hour, an hour, an hour and a half out of your day, and really connect one on one with this person. I think kind of both show both sides, your intentions. So, I can say, I'm here to work with you and I want to put out the best and most accurate story with the information you can provide. I want you to think of me when things are happening within your company to want to come to me and be able to trust me.

So really, I think it's just a great time to show like, hopefully I am a person you can trust and connect with. And then, it's also good sense to ask the person you're with, who are your colleagues I should be connecting with? Or how is your company's team breakdown? So, who

should I be reaching out for this specific topic? Rather than this other topic? Because I think I've noticed with a lot of these large tech companies, everyone is in charge of different things, and you don't really want to be wasting anyone's time by going to the wrong person.

**[00:08:25] BB:** No, you really do not. And that is part of the tension of publicists and reporters, I would say. The ongoing tension between getting just the wrong stuff to you. So, let me ask now, Jessica, I alluded to it before about subject lines. Do you pay attention to subject lines or not?

**[00:08:44] JB:** I do pay attention to subject lines, because it is a great way to really weed out just very quickly what you know won't be relevant to you. I hope that doesn't sound mean. Sometimes –

**[00:09:01] BB:** Oh, no, not on here.

**[00:09:03] JB:** Sometimes there's just subject lines that you just know for a fact isn't going to be worth pursuing in terms of a story. I get a lot of pitches for NFTs, and the metaverse and I get a lot of fashion pitches, which I don't understand because I cover technology. So, it's very easy to go through those subject lines and say like, “Okay, this fashion matter versus launching. I can just delete that.” But if someone is straight to the point and they say, company name exclusive related to safety or whatever, then I'll know right away to click on that.

**[00:09:49] BB:** So, it sounds like you do use subject lines as your own filter if you're even going to open the email to begin with?

**[00:09:55] JB:** Yes, and I do open emails at some point, it's just usually, it's like the speed at which I'll delete.

**[00:10:07] BB:** The speed. It's a function of speed in deletion. Got it. Yes. That's perfect.

[MESSAGE]

**[00:10:14] 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](https://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 CONTINUED]

**[00:10:38] BB:** Okay. Do you have any subject lines right now in your inbox, Jessica, that you're like, "Oh, I'm definitely opening that." Any little sneak peek you – any little peek that you could give us perhaps?

**[00:10:49] JB:** So, I put out a call on my LinkedIn for some –

**[00:10:55] BB:** Oh, on LinkedIn too?

**[00:10:55] JB:** Health tech companies, because that is something I do want to start focusing on. But just like a tiny bit more. Just asking what are investors looking at? What are the trends that we're going to see in 2023? What are some companies that we should keep an eye on? And they'll say, people will email me and say, following up from LinkedIn, health tech, blah, blah, blah, like these companies.

**[00:11:25] BB:** Oh, they're putting in the subject line, specifically where the impetus for their pitch is coming from?

**[00:11:32] JB:** Yes, so that it doesn't seem so out of the blue. I haven't gotten much. I'm just trying to do like a quick scroll right now. I feel like I haven't gotten much in the past couple of

weeks. A lot of end of the year trend recaps, which I'm sure in some of those, there could be some data –

**[00:11:54] BB:** Yeah, there might be.

**[00:11:56] JB:** That I can just file away somewhere. Lots and lots of CES, which maybe I should have put out that I'm not going to be there this year, I don't know.

**[00:12:05] BB:** It's still get stuff though. We all know that. So, I don't know that actually.

**[00:12:10] JB:** It's true. Something I have noticed is I recently put my proton email, which is, this email inbox on my social media just to – if there's a tech worker or someone who wants to share information, I feel like it's better to have that information so readily available than risk emailing a personal email and then asking for that email. It seems more streamlined and easier. I have noticed people are sending me the same exact pitch at the same exact time to multiple of my email addresses. They're never really relevant and so, I do tend to just automatically not even open, delete those.

**[00:13:02] BB:** Yeah, yeah. Okay. exclusives or embargoes?

**[00:13:08] JB:** Oh, yeah, always.

**[00:13:08] BB:** Always. Okay. Well, preferences, usually for exclusives. But do you have any embargo do's and don'ts?

**[00:13:18] JB:** Embargo do's and don'ts. Great question. Usually, it's amazing if you do get an embargo if the company is willing to give you even just a very brief interview with some of the key players, because sometimes, with embargoes, they'll say, here's this press release, this is all you get, and it includes, maybe one quote that has probably been looked through dozens of times by like legal teams and comms teams and all of that. And so even just asking to have just a quick phone conversation with the person who's the manager or the product designer,

whoever is in charge of this specific announcement, just really, really get a better sense of why this update or piece of news is important, rather than just you know, regurgitating a press release. I think is really, really helpful.

**[00:14:22] BB:** Yeah, no one wants the resurfaced press release. That's a whole other topic. I'm not even going to touch that for right now. Okay, we covered relationship building with you, Jessica. You want to know all the good spots in San Francisco, everybody invite her, invite her to the good stuff. So, now I want to do a little rapid-fire question session with you. Are you ready?

**[00:14:47] JB:** Okay, yes.

**[00:14:47] BB:** Okay, here we go. Video or phone interview?

**[00:14:50] JB:** Video.

**[00:14:52] BB:** Bullet points or paragraphs?

**[00:14:55] JB:** Bullet points.

**[00:14:55] BB:** Short or long pitch?

**[00:14:58] JB:** Short.

**[00:14:59] BB:** How short?

**[00:15:01] JB:** Well, it depends if they're saying, we have embargo news for you, or because sometimes people will say I have news under embargo, and then they send me the entire bit of news and I feel like that isn't really the point of an embargo. So, they're like, "Hey, we have the story coming up. Are you interested? Let me know by this date." Amazing, or just a very, like a



few sentences. “Hey, I'm working with this company on this item. Do you think you would want to learn some more information?”

**[00:15:35] BB:** Yes. There you go. Okay. pitches in the morning or at night?

**[00:15:40] JB:** I've been asked this before, and I don't really know if I have a preference.

**[00:15:46] BB:** Okay. Well, then what about – what do I have here next? Oh, images attached or Dropbox zip file?

**[00:15:53] JB:** Attached. Because I am skeptical of links.

**[00:15:58] BB:** Same. Email or Twitter DM?

**[00:16:02] JB:** Twitter DM.

**[00:16:04] BB:** Okay. One follow up or multiple?

**[00:16:07] JB:** One, because sometimes things do fall in the cracks. Sometimes I have missed emails that I wish I had gotten to a few days prior. And that follow up is genuinely really helpful. But then sometimes a person will follow up five times, and I feel bad and I feel like at that point, I should have just responded in the first place and said, thank you so much, but this isn't really related to what I do.

**[00:16:34] BB:** Yeah, direct or creative subject lines?

**[00:16:36] JB:** Direct.

**[00:16:36] BB:** Press release or media kit or neither?

**[00:16:41] JB:** Media kit.

**[00:16:44] BB:** Okay. And then, actually, Jessica, that concludes our little rapid-fire part, which is great. But to wrap us up completely here. For last words, do you have anything you want to promote for you personally? Or is it just like, “Hey, everybody, follow me on Twitter?”

**[00:16:58] JB:** Oh, yeah. So, I would love everyone to follow me on Twitter and preferably LinkedIn, because we don't know the future of Twitter or any other social media platform. I think we learned –

**[00:17:11] BB:** For that matter. Good point. Good point.

**[00:17:14] JB:** I've also recently started a series for Fast Company called Life and the Gig Economy where every week we interview a different gig worker in a different field. So, whether it's the dog walker, or a DoorDash Dasher, or a consultant, like a freelance consultant, very different, so it's just really – it's a nice told too, really sharing their day to day life and I would love if everyone would check that out.

**[00:17:47] BB:** Yeah. Oh, I bet that's got to be juicy too.

**[00:17:49] JB:** People got to share the juicy stories.

**[00:17:51] BB:** That's also true. If so it depends on who you get. Excellent. Well, I would say for everybody listening here. Hey, if you got a client that has gig workers, that has a cool story, this is your girl. This is your person to pitch. There you go.

Jessica, thank you for being on Coffee with a Journalist here today. It was such a delight, way to hit off the new year. And please, people do not email her CES stuff.

**[00:18:17] JB:** Thank you.

**[00:18:19] BB:** Yes, Jessica. Happy New Year. Appreciate you.

**[00:18:22] JB:** Happy New Year.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:18:23] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist featuring Jessica Bursztynsky from Fast Company. For more exclusive insights about the journalists on this podcast, subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter at [onepitch.co/podcast](https://onepitch.co/podcast). We'll see you all next week with even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]