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Beck Bamberger: So we're going to be recording. I'm going to actually scoot this a little bit closer. Do you need, you got water? You got coffee?

Max Willens: I got coffee.

Beck Bamberger: Well we call it Coffee with a Journalist, so I'm actually glad to see you have a coffee.

Max Willens: I came prepared.

Beck Bamberger: When we've done later ones in the afternoon people are like, I don't have a coffee. How about a cocktail? Anyway, anyway, okay. Now in another time I'm going to do a whole little overview and this and that, but we're just going to jump right in. Hey everybody. Today we are honored to have Max Willens, a reporter at Digiday with us here in New York City. He actually has coffee. It happens to be the morning here, so he is prepared. Is it just a regular coffee or what's in there?

Max Willens: Just black.

Beck Bamberger: Just black. That's how it... Sounds like a journalist.

Max Willens: I don't need oat milk. Not an oat milk guy.

Beck Bamberger: Excellent. So currently Max, you're writing about platforms, but you've covered a lot of stuff on Digiday. You're very into sports. We just had a little discussion about that. First off, let's jump in with what it takes to make a great story when you're actually compiling one and looking to do a great piece.

Max Willens: I think that what it comes down to ultimately is having enough time and being prepared to have all the necessary ingredients. I think that when you talk about digital media in particular, things have gotten really fast. All of a sudden it's not, "Take a couple of days to write the story." It's, "Take a couple hours." And I've done great work under those circumstances before, but I find that consistently the thing that kind of puts me in position to feel like I'm writing a good story is just getting the time necessary to talk to the right people, think something through in a thorough fashion. It's really more about time than anything else I think.

Beck Bamberger: And with time, is it like a particular right time? Like do you have to be like, "Oh, in my right space?" Is it like a Sunday morning would be better for you than like a Monday morning? Is like time different in that sense?

Max Willens: No, I think it's really just more a question of, I mean because the thing too about being a reporter is you're always hunting for something else to write. I can't, I don't think I've ever been in a situation where someone has pitched me or I've come across a story idea and thought I'm not even going to think about this right now because I need something for next week, for next month. And so really there's not really like an optimal time provided there's enough kind of runway.

Beck Bamberger: And how have you, so you were mentioning previously, Oh you'd have maybe a few days, like maybe you get the story assignment Monday, you turn it in on Friday, now you got 1:00 PM and you need it in by 6:00 PM let's say. How have you adapted to that? Is it just like, "Okay, no one email me, no one talk to me, I'm in the dark hole. I will come out?" Like do you do that? How do you do that?

Max Willens: Well, I think a lot of it boils down to it's a combination of sort of newsworthiness and if something breaks and I need to kind of pounce on it, I will just kind of lock down, close as many tabs on my browser as I can and just sort of get it done. But for the most part it's really trying to just, being smart about juggling my time management, right? So, and understanding that, "Okay, I can start writing this at 10:10 AM on Monday, it'll be done by 1:30." Maybe work with the editor, clean it up, and then I have, I'll have three to five hours back end of the day, what am I doing, how am I setting the table for the rest of the week, the rest of the month?

Max Willens: Do I have longer term assignments that I need to kind of get into shape? And so it's really just more of a question of if I'm doing my job properly of kind of keeping the pipeline kind of like well oiled and full.

Beck Bamberger: Quite a pipeline?

Max Willens: Well it's mid December so it's-

Beck Bamberger: It's shriveling up.

Max Willens: It's shriveling up. I mean we actually, I feel really grateful, so Digiday closes between Christmas and new years. So I don't have to worry about the pipeline during that week. What we do though is what we, basically like we write an extra week's worth of content and schedule it. But yeah, I mean there's, it's like anything else, right? I mean, August is a little sleepy. January is a little tough if you're not at CES. But I think more or less, I mean, I cover media and media is, there's always something crazy happening. So in that respect, I'm lucky.

Beck Bamberger: Yeah, you got a good topic beat that's always filling your coffers. So when you're talking about you got to have the time, you lock down into the space, where are

you getting the pieces for the construction of a story? Are you getting actual pitches? Are you having people call you and give you text message? Are you hearing on Twitter? Like where do the essence of the stories actually come from?

Max Willens: Well, it comes from everything. I mean, I think what it really boils down to is that it's really kind of a mostly a relationships thing. I can count on zero fingers the number of times someone that I don't know has called me and said, I've got a great idea for you that has never gone well. I mean, maybe it's partly it's me who knows, but pretty much everything that... I try to also, as much as I can like build and follow my own nose a little bit. So it's working with people that I know kind of know things that can help put things together. It's working with finding maybe finding sources of information that can confirm a hypothesis that kind of floats into my head. But it really, I mean in all those instances it's in an ideal world it's about doing things with people that I'm familiar with. And thankfully having covered media for a couple of years, I feel like, I know who to talk to and when and so on, but there's always more people out there to learn from.

Max Willens: But I do think that getting kind of like blitz in an era... And it's funny too because like I'm kind of on the older edge of the millennial generation, but I'm still kind of firmly in that pocket of people that doesn't like phone calls from numbers I don't know. As a reporter that means like one of two things. Either it means a pitch from somebody I don't know, or maybe I've gotten something wrong and I'm about to get yelled at and-

Beck Bamberger: Does that happen? People have called you to say, "Hey sir, you just got this wrong, incorrect, factually mistake?"

Max Willens: Once...I mean, listen, I'm, none of us are perfect. It's happened once or twice. Yeah.

Beck Bamberger: Wow. I didn't even know people would call them to do such a thing. They would drop you an email. But anyway. Okay.

Max Willens: Some people like to lead with calling and screaming that, yeah.

Beck Bamberger: Wow.

Max Willens: It's a generational thing.

Beck Bamberger: I think it is a... Okay. Yeah. Has any millennial done that to you-

Max Willens: No.

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Beck Bamberger: That you could... Yeah. Okay. Just to clarify, just to clarify. Okay, so speaking of your inbox, so with pitches that come in it, making an assumption, it doesn't sound like then you're going to be opening pitches you don't know.

Max Willens: I wouldn't say that. I would say that I, the kind of margin for error is narrower. If I get an email, if I get a pitch that's all caps, doesn't have any punctuation in it-

Beck Bamberger: What? What? This happens?

Max Willens: Probably like five, six of them a day at least.

Beck Bamberger: [inaudible 00:07:28] serious?

Max Willens: Yeah. Yeah.

Beck Bamberger: Jeez. Okay.

Max Willens: There's a lot of that. It's regrettable, but I think, yeah, like the margin for error is lower. I mean, basically like I think I'll read anything that seems to indicate that they know what I write about. There are lots of pitches that I get and this is even from people that like know me fairly well, that I think maybe they understand that they just have to tell their client that they tried, that they put something in front of me. Even though they know I don't write about marketing tech for example, but they'll still say, "Here's why you really need to write about what's going on with Adobe."

Max Willens: And I'll say, I'm too polite to say, "Where have you ever seen a story from me that involves this company or doing a specific thing?" But anyway, I guess now I'm like rambling a little bit.

Beck Bamberger: That's okay.

Max Willens: I guess what is... To sum it up, like if it comes from someone that I know, then I'll give it a fair look. If it's from someone I don't know, it just has to reflect that they have taken a bit of a look at what I do and that they think it's worth my time. That's really all they need to get me to open it. What happens after that is a different story. But like, just in terms of like clicking on the email that as long as it seems like they've thought it through a little bit, I'll take a look.

Beck Bamberger: So the subject line is pretty synch?

Max Willens: I mean, if it's not a good subject, I'm not going to look-

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Beck Bamberger: Yeah. Forget it. Yeah.

Max Willens: I have 57,000 unread emails in my inbox.

Beck Bamberger: Seriously?

Max Willens: Yeah. I have 57,000 unread emails and a lot of that is just like-

Beck Bamberger: Dating back from when? Don't tell me like this year.

Max Willens: No, no, no, no, no. This is, but it's like two, three years.

Beck Bamberger: Wow. And what are you going to do with the 57,000 or do they just live there in perpetuity, perpetuity or how do you-

Max Willens: Perpetuity.

Beck Bamberger: Perpetuity? Yes.

Max Willens: I don't know. At some point I'm sure our administrator will go, "Why is there so much crap in your inbox? Get rid of it." And I'll have a big deleting party, but...

Beck Bamberger: So you're one of those people that isn't maniacally stressed by the... You're just like, "Nope."

Max Willens: [crosstalk 00:09:39] I am not an inbox zero guy. I don't care. I'm not an inbox zero guy. No.

Beck Bamberger: No.

Max Willens: No.

Beck Bamberger: And you're just like, "Hey, 50..." It's like mileage on a car almost.

Max Willens: Yeah.

Beck Bamberger: You're going to be like celebrating when it hits 100,000.

Max Willens: I'm going to, yeah, when I get to 100,000 I'll screenshot that. I'll put that on Twitter. It'll be, I'll feel good about it.

Beck Bamberger: Stay tuned everybody for the hundred thousand mark. Okay. So then in your actual inbox, if you then don't click on it within what? 24 hours, like you assume

it goes into that 57,000? Like how do you manage that from let's say your editor emailing you something, "Hey, we need to do this by this time." Do you filter? What do we do?

Max Willens: Well, I basically, I mean it's funny, I feel like most of my colleagues are a lot more organized than I am. Basically my, I don't know, my weird lizard brain sort of is good at just sort of glancing at my inbox. I have notifications set up so that if people, things come in like there are certain people that if I got something from them it will appear kind of more visibly on my radar screen. But generally speaking, I mean that's a fair point too actually, which is that like if I get a pitch, especially if it's sent at like a weird time, like if you send it outside of normal business hours, excuse me, it's likely that I'm not going to see it. And you're going to have to check in, nudge me, whatever.

Max Willens: That's definitely a thing that has to happen because, and also too, I mean the other thing is that like I spend a lot of time looking at my phone and at my desk computer, but I work on a lot of things that at my job. And sometimes I'm being pulled into meetings, I'm going to meet with sources, I'm at events, taping podcasts. And I could get a hundred emails in that time and sometimes I'll think I'll go through one page of them and go, "All right, whatever." The thing about having 57,000 unread emails is you don't remember if you have 57,560 emails or 57,610 unread emails. And so I guess that does mean that some stuff slips through the cracks, but I've never really known somebody really important to miss me because of that.

Beck Bamberger: Ah, so then you mentioned the nudge. You are okay that? You don't mind if publicist go, "Oh hey Max. Hey, just didn't know if you saw this, checking in." The perpetual followup.

Max Willens: Well here's the thing. I mean this is, this again gets at the thing I was saying earlier, like if this is a story that publicist, client, whoever thinks they've got a shot of me covering, alluding to whatever, I'll take a nudge. I don't mind it. I probably appreciate it. But if it's an email about Manhattan's best like plastic surgeon recently doing-

Beck Bamberger: Is that what people send you?

Max Willens: I get some of that. Yeah. I mean listen, like there's a lot of garbage in that 57,000. But yeah-

Beck Bamberger: Fascinating probably. Interesting to pull it all apart.

Max Willens: But yeah, so there's a lot of that. And people checking in just, "Hey just checking in. If you want to write about doctor [inaudible 00:00:12:45]." I'm just like, "No,

what is..." And it's not even worth the time and energy for me to write them back and be like, "You are wasting both of our times. Please stop doing this. But I do get a lot of that. But if it's a company that there's a reasonable chance of me writing about, I don't mind it. I will also say though, like one nudge is enough. I don't need two, three, four, one is enough.

Beck Bamberger: One and done.

Max Willens: That's right.

Beck Bamberger: Everybody for publicists there. How about, well actually before we get into what you're reading, I also see that you help do and facilitate the programming of some Digiday events, actually executing that. So you're kind of, I don't want to say event planning or executing, but having a role in somewhat of that.

Max Willens: That's right.

Beck Bamberger: Is that unusual and what does that entail?

Max Willens: I don't know if it's unusual. I mean it's one of the reasons that I like my job though. I mean Digiday is a very diversified media company and events are a very meaningful portion of our business and we program an awful lot of them. So I, for our media focused ones, I kind of moderate a lot of panels on stage. I help our events team program them, which means as you say not picking a vendor to do food, but deciding, "Okay, if we want to do a panel on, revenue diversification, should we get the chief revenue officer of Complex or should we try to get BuzzFeed? What kind of relationships can I tap into?" So that's a big part of my job and I really, I enjoy it. I mean, it's not something that I was good at when I started, but I feel like I can say with a straight face that it's a strength now because anyway. Yeah, that's true.

Beck Bamberger: Oh that's fun, that you get to get into that side.

Max Willens: Yeah.

Beck Bamberger: Okay. So reading. Is there anything you're absolutely loving right now? Book wise, article wise, anything wise? We always love to know.

Max Willens: It's funny, end of year stuff is always kind of weird because I find myself mostly like kind of binging on kind of lists of year end movies and things like that. The thing I keep waiting for and I haven't really read yet as a like a really great a roundup of the best pop music. I am someone who's been reading Pitchfork for probably too long to admit in a public space, but I haven't really-

Beck Bamberger: Pop music? I know you're into music, but specifically pop music or all music?

Max Willens: I mean everything really. I have a big, big appreciation for all kinds of music. But reading about pop is I think really important because when you get to be not a young person anymore, you need a little help. And I don't have time to trawl through SoundCloud every day or hunt around on TikTok. So it helps to find some that writes about it. But there's not a lot of good music writing anymore.

Beck Bamberger: Why is that? Just lack of revenue to come in and support it?

Max Willens: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, it's funny, before I got into writing about media, I wanted to be a music critic. And I would write stories for the Village Voice or for Music Magazine, whatever. And they'd say, "Good job. Here's 50 bucks." And this was 10 years ago. And I just thought, "I'm going to starve to death if I keep doing this." And so I decided to cover something with a little more business impact. But in answer to your question about what I've been reading a lot. I mean I think that mostly I've really, really been immensely impressed. People love to kind of make fun of Vice. There are a big time like punchline in media, certainly on media, Twitter, but I think that their coverage of technology has been just spectacular. The people at Motherboard are awesome and I'm very impressed and yeah.

Max Willens: It's funny, I was, before coming over here, I ran into another reporter. I won't say where.

Beck Bamberger: Keep it-

Max Willens: That's right. Keep him-

Beck Bamberger: Keep it closed.

Max Willens: This is a, yeah, he has sort of a private kind of oasis that he goes to, and that I stumbled into it by accident. And he had the Wall Street Journal is spread out in front of him and I thought, I asked him, "Is that like the locations copy?" He said, "No, no, no. I get the Journal every day. I read it and I got Harpers every week and I read it or month." Why did I start talking about this? I guess the point is-

Beck Bamberger: Oh, just what you're reading, but other journalists reading other content. Yeah.

Max Willens: Yeah, that's right. I mean, I guess and we just... Oh, so the reason that I brought this up is that I thought that's such an immense luxury. I got the Times delivered on the weekends mostly for the crossword, but it's not a good investment. But I was saying to him, "I'm really impressed because you actually sit down and read



something." I just kind of float from link to link .and I know which links I like and which I don't, but the Vice coverage of tech in particular I think has been incredible this year.

Beck Bamberger: Excellent. This year particularly, you've noticed?

Max Willens: Oh yeah. 100%.

Beck Bamberger: Yeah, I agree with that. Good. I read the Times or the Wall Street Journal every day in print. I love it. I love it. And I wish I had the New York Times every day, but I don't in California. But anyway. Any other thing book wise? Okay, so you don't have your pop book, but is there any type of genre of book that you like? Is there anything that helps you be creative?

Max Willens: It's funny as far as being creative, this is a thing that's happened to me more recently. It's actually been a non literary or non letters related stuff. I have gotten really into, I don't know who's responsible for this, but I've really gotten into kind of like crafty things. Like I spent-

Beck Bamberger: Crafty things like knitting?

Max Willens: Like Shibori and Sashiko. Do you know [crosstalk 00:18:19] either of those things are?

Beck Bamberger: No.

Max Willens: So Sashiko is like kind of a Japanese technique for mending. It's basically, it means getting like a really heavy thread and heavy needles. But it's like a kind of a great little handicraft thing. So like I'm, I spent this weekend making kind of like Christmas cards. Where I'm kind of knitting or sewing snowflakes into pieces of denim and mounting them in cards.

Beck Bamberger: What? Do you have one?

Max Willens: Not on me, no.

Beck Bamberger: Damn. Do you have a photo?

Max Willens: No, When I finish them, I'll put them on Twitter.

Beck Bamberger: Oh, please do. Wow. How long does it take to make a snowflake?

Max Willens: About 15 minutes. Maybe-

Beck Bamberger: Oh, that's not that bad.

Max Willens: Well, but that's the actual, there's a lot of prep. This is the thing, when I first looked at it, I thought, "Oh, that looks like it will be fun." But you've got to draw out a grid, you've got to map it out. You've got to... There's a lot of prep that goes into it, which is something that I think is also really in a way been valuable for me because you, it's really easy to forget that people think of creativity as a spontaneous thing, but there's a lot of prep that goes into doing it well. And that's true of Sashiko. It's true of writing and reporting. It's true of writing a short story. It's anything. So that's kind of the thing that's been valuable for me.

Beck Bamberger: I think of those cooking shows and you're like, "Oh, six minutes. You throw a little this, you throw a little that and it..." No.

Max Willens: No.

Beck Bamberger: Bullshit.

Max Willens: That's right.

Beck Bamberger: People had to get all that 29 things on the table and sprinkle it all out and then you're just, yeah. Actually I enjoyed the prep part of that. So I like to get everything measured and done so that I can have that like six minutes of glory of just like whipping everything together. But I think that is part of the creativity is that prep allows you to then go, "Okay, a splash of this, a little of that. Oh, oh." That's kind of fun. Okay, well cool. Now I want to do a little word association-

Max Willens: Okay.

Beck Bamberger: Game of sorts that we've been having a lot of fun with. So I'm going to give a word, make sure you don't see my screen, and then you're just going to say the first thing that comes to you. And I included some things specifically for you. So let's see. So first one is food.

Max Willens: Necessary.

Beck Bamberger: God, that's a boring one. Actually necessary. Okay. What about drink?

Max Willens: Gin. I don't know.

Beck Bamberger: Music.

Max Willens: Hildegard Von Bingen.

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Beck Bamberger: Good pick. Sports.

Max Willens: Knicks.

Beck Bamberger: Facebook.

Max Willens: In trouble.

Beck Bamberger: Fake news.

Max Willens: Not going anywhere.

Beck Bamberger: Publishers.

Max Willens: Also in trouble.

Beck Bamberger: Paywall.

Max Willens: Increasingly common.

Beck Bamberger: Paid advertising.

Max Willens: Changing.

Beck Bamberger: eCommerce.

Max Willens: Ascendant.

Beck Bamberger: Ad tech.

Max Willens: Confusing.

Beck Bamberger: Journalism.

Max Willens: Changing.

Beck Bamberger: Pitch.

Max Willens: Changing.

Beck Bamberger: Inbox.

Max Willens: Full.

Beck Bamberger: I was going to say 57,000.

Max Willens: I know, I screwed it up. That was the call back and I screwed it up.

Beck Bamberger: No, it's totally fine. What do you think as we're now mentioning the change that is upon us in probably journalism and various industries that touch it what do you think about the future journalism? I also like to ask, would you do it again? Would you go into this crazy world again? What would you tell your 10 year old, younger self?

Max Willens: Wow. I think I would've gone into it again. I got into the business a little bit... I'd wanted to do it from the time I was very little. And I think that's kind of the only thing that is suitable for my weird personality. I've tried, I worked briefly at agencies and I'm not good at client facing stuff. I need to feel, even though my editors, my boss and I, there are definitely consequences if I don't do what he expects. But I like the sort of perception of autonomy that media has.

Max Willens: In terms of what's going to happen in journalism and media generally, I think that in a weird way what's happening is even though it's, there's going to be a lot of carnage on the road here, like we're I think maybe going back to an era where journalism is supported principally by two things. One being people and the other being institutions. I think advertising is going to continue to play a role. But the days when advertising supported news in particular and was the principle kind of source of support for journalism are, I think going to start to fall away.

Max Willens: And I say that mostly thinking about this through the prism of local news. Like if you are in a teensy, weensy, little town and there's maybe manpower enough for three, four reporters at most and maybe 5,000, 10,000 people who are willing to pay you to do what you're doing, then one of two things has to happen. Either you have to create something that's so specific and so tailored to the needs of the people that live there that they're willing to pay you a little bit of money or something like the Knight Foundation or a local philanthropy or something is going to have to support you in some way. Only because the way advertisers think these days is so oriented around digital and if you don't have at least a little bit of scale that you can sprinkle in, it makes it really, really hard for small, specialized folks to have that. Again, be the main motive of revenue. I think that it's always going to be an ingredient. But like the days of that being the main source I think are eventually going to disappear.

Beck Bamberger: You're very similar to what other journalists say in the sense of one, of course it's changing, but two, local press that's super niche little paper printed in your

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little town with your 20,000 people. The shelf life on that is seeming to get quite small.

Max Willens: Yeah.

Beck Bamberger: I'll be curious to see also like what happens. And then where do those small towns get their little, "Farmer John down the street just grew the biggest pumpkin," like that crap? Like where are you going to get that? You're just going to go to Facebook? I don't know.

Max Willens: Well it's, I mean I think that Facebook might wind up being the kind of place in the connective tissue that provides that. I think what's tough is that like the biggest pumpkin, the like biggest snowfall, the here's how the SWAT meet went last week. Like Facebook's probably honestly like pretty good for that. The thing that's tough is like who then in that town writes the story about Bill's tannery and all the crap they're dumping into the river. Facebook's not as good for that. And that's the thing. That's where I feel like things like Report for America or... Well, Report for America is kind of the one that I'm thinking of most of these days. They're the people who are going to have to kind of step in and do the really like gritty, necessary, holding power to account type reporting.

Max Willens: And that's really what, that's the balance that everyone's trying to shake out right now. Because there's this product that Facebook, it's, I think it's maybe like 16 months old now, called Today In which is designed specifically for those local communities. And that's exactly what it's for. It's the craft fairs and the photos and the bulletin board type function that a lot of local newspapers serve. But there's no automated way to say that an Agra business is buying up people's land and making people sick or something. And so that's, figuring out where that comes from is the thing that everyone's going to have to think about that lately.

Max Willens: I don't know why I'm so fixated on local news. I don't really write about it that much. But I think about it more than anything I guess. Like just because it seems the most important. And it's also sort of the greatest abstraction. Because I write mostly about media companies, diversifying revenues and also like national media companies and so... But yeah, I don't know.

Beck Bamberger: A lot of people bring it up. I think it's either on the minds of, or you think of it just in a, almost like a token piece of culture that is evaporating before us in a way.

Max Willens: Well it's funny-

Beck Bamberger: And maybe it's that and we can all kind of even in like a fantasy way kind of think of that, "Oh that small town and what if I lived there and there were the 20,000

people and how would I get to know what's happening with Sally down the street?" Or things like that.

Max Willens: Yeah. I mean it's funny because I feel like often the reason maybe is exactly what you said, which is that when you think, when people ask questions like, "What's going to happen to journalism, with a capital J?" That in and of itself is I think kind of an abstraction. And so just in the same way that for me, yeah, like that local newspapers is an abstraction. I grew up in a big city and so I have no real practical experience with those tiny papers. I mean like to me a small paper is like going up and visiting my mother upstate and reading the Albany Times Union. And the Albany Times Union is a big, real metropolitan newspaper. But at the same time I also open it up and like, there's a lot of old stuff in there and a lot of stuff that's been reprinted from somewhere else and a lot of space that's just kind of eaten up by crosswords and comics and stuff-

Beck Bamberger: The AP story that ran two days ago. Yeah.

Max Willens: That's exactly right. Yeah. And so it's even though, even at that tier it's sort of like "Whoa, there's a lot of filler in here." And so yeah, even though as you say like it's kind of, I gave you an abstract answer about an abstract thing I guess like. Or I evoked an abstraction. Even at the like mid sized paper level it's evident that something major's about to happen in local news in particular.

Beck Bamberger: I wonder when? Guess we're going to see. Moving on to [inaudible 00:28:59] maybe something a little bit more light here Max. This is one of the last things we like to do and it's a bit of a catch phrase type of thing or a mad lib if you've done that in any recent time. I honestly had not done much of this until we were doing these for the podcast. So it's been kind of fun for me. And I actually messed up because I read it instead of you reading it back. But it works better if I actually read it. So I'm going to give you a handful of phrases, like an adjective or a part of a pitch and I'm going to plug them into our little story here and then I will read it back to you. Usually it's quite funny. You look suspicious. He's like giving me the like the stink eye, but that's okay. Let's see how it goes. So first thing is just a catch phrase. What is a catch phrase you'd say?

Max Willens: That I say?

Beck Bamberger: Or any catch phrase?

Max Willens: Just do it. That's not a, that's a slogan, but-

Beck Bamberger: We'll use that.

Max Willens: Okay.

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Beck Bamberger: Yeah, just do it. Okay. All right. Then what about a scare phrase that a journalist would use?

Max Willens: Like fake news or...?

Beck Bamberger: Yeah, that can be, yeah, I would use that. Yeah. Okay. Let's go with that. Yeah. And then what even about something that's kind of like a buzzword in the industry, even for publicists?

Max Willens: Why am I blanking on all these? How about, we'll just go with ad tech.

Beck Bamberger: Ad tech.

Max Willens: Yeah.

Beck Bamberger: Okay. Ad tech added. Okay. Then how about an adjective of any sort?

Max Willens: Sticky.

Beck Bamberger: Okay. Okay. Okay. Sticky. Yep. Then part of a pitch?

Max Willens: Like a component part or-

Beck Bamberger: Yeah, like a solid subject line.

Max Willens: Gosh. Exclusive:

Beck Bamberger: Okay. Okay. Exclusive. Got it. Great. Okay. What about an amount of time?

Max Willens: Five days.

Beck Bamberger: Five days. Got it. Adding that in. Okay. Then adjective?

Max Willens: Funny.

Beck Bamberger: Okay. Best stories always have a topic. What topic?

Max Willens: NBA trade deadline.

Beck Bamberger: NBA trade deadline?

Max Willens: Yeah.

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Beck Bamberger: He's really into basketball.

Max Willens: Knicks lost a close one last night.

Beck Bamberger: Damn.

Max Willens: I need to make some changes.

Beck Bamberger: Oh, okay. And then usually about another topic.

Max Willens: Sports media rights.

Beck Bamberger: Sports media rights. Okay. Almost done. Almost done. Verb with an ING at the end of it.

Max Willens: Flaking.

Beck Bamberger: Flaking. Excellent.

Max Willens: I seem to be hungry.

Beck Bamberger: Maybe.

Max Willens: Sticky, flaking.

Beck Bamberger: Yeah. Yeah. Croissant time. Yeah. Okay. And then another verb.

Max Willens: Racing.

Beck Bamberger: All right. Are you ready to listen to your Mad Lib? Here we go. To me, tech journalism is just do it. It consists of fake news and ad tech on the daily. If a pitch is sticky, I will absolutely respond to it. However, if a pitch has an exclusive, you can expect no reply from me. If five days goes by and you don't see an email back from me, you can just assume I am not funny about it. The best stories always have an NBA trade deadline and are usually about sports media rights. The best way to reach me is by flaking me, but you can also race me.

Max Willens: That's actually eerily... That's close.

Beck Bamberger: Right. Okay. We should copy and paste this for you and send that over.

Max Willens: That's really-



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Beck Bamberger: [crosstalk 00:33:24] That's fun, that's fun.

Max Willens: Yeah.

Beck Bamberger: Well, thank you for hanging with us today, Max. This has been fun. I hope your team does better.

Max Willens: Me too.

Beck Bamberger: God.

Max Willens: For 20 years I've been dealing with this, but yeah.

Beck Bamberger: Do you want to say a little plug for your team here? Just on here? Anything?

Max Willens: If they just don't fire Mike Miller, please. Just let him like play the season out. That's all I want. And then we can see, then we can see what happens.

Beck Bamberger: Okay. Okay. Thanks Max.

Max Willens: Thanks.