

**EPISODE 127**

[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, business news, and beauty and wellness. We discuss their role, the types of stories they cover, what their inbox looks like, and how they connect with sources. Head to [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) and look for the video page to learn more about our new video series, featuring journalists from the show.

Joining us on the podcast today is Karla Pope, freelance writer for Good Housekeeping. Karla also writes for Woman's Day, People, Parade, BET.com, WebMD, and more. Her coverage includes entertainment, beauty, lifestyle, parenting, and fashion content. During the episode, Karla talks about working both at an agency and being a freelance writer, how you can make your pitch stand out in her inbox, how to best time your pitches for her coverage, and more. Let's hear from Karla now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:24] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, and you are here, hopefully, to learn more about how to work with journalists because we need to always be improving our relationships with journalists whom we rely on so much as publicists and communicators here. I made OnePitch because the need was so great to get better relationships started with journalists. I also have an agency named BAM, so I'm in the trenches of working and observing how pitching is going and what it takes to write a good pitch and all that good stuff. That's why we're here on the show.

Today with us, coming live from New York, I always love our New York journalists, Karla Pope. She's a freelance writer, contributes a lot to Good Housekeeping among very many other outlets. She's also a Senior Editor at Group SJR, which we'll talk about in just a second. Welcome, Karla.

**[00:02:13] KP:** Thank you so much for having me, Beck. I'm excited.

**[00:02:15] BB:** Yes. Karla, you have written for many, many outlets, Parade, People, Good Housekeeping, WebMD, BET. I mean, all over the place. You're also a candy lover, as you put on your Twitter page. I love that.

**[00:02:27] KP:** Yes. I love candy. Gummy bears, of course.

**[00:02:29] BB:** Oh, gummy bears. Okay, gummy bears. Mine, and this is horrible, horrible, but you know those pumpkins for Halloween, those horrible –

**[00:02:36] KP:** Oh, yes. They're just pure sugar. Yeah. I love them.

**[00:02:37] BB:** I love those things. They are. They are. I only want a day. Yup. Same, same. Okay, it's the first time I've probably admitted that. Okay, there it is. Karla, for those who don't know, what is Group SJR?

**[00:02:51] KP:** Group SJR is a content marketing agency, I want to say. I've been with them for six and a half years, and we have clients that run across like all industries, from automakers to beauty. You name it, like we have a lot of different clients. Yeah. I don't think I'm at liberty to name them but –

**[00:03:12] BB:** Yes. That's okay.

**[00:03:13] KP:** Every like household name, name it, we've worked with them.

**[00:03:16] BB:** Yeah. You touched that you work with them. You write their stuff, all the stuff. Then in the meantime, you're doing all this freelance work.

**[00:03:23] KP:** Well, yes, on the side, during some downtime or weekends and stuff like that because I still love journalism. In my day job, I'm not receiving pitches like from people. I'm

working directly with the client, so it's totally different. But my love is still there for journalism, so I still dabble in it here and there.

**[00:03:45] BB:** Got it. Okay. So how is your inbox? Do you have lots of pitches in there?

**[00:03:52] KP:** Right now, my inbox is literally 112,000.

**[00:03:56] BB:** What? I think it's a record, Karla. 112,000 unread?

**[00:04:01] KP:** Yes.

**[00:04:02] BB:** Oh, wow.

**[00:04:02] KP:** Well, they're read. They're read.

**[00:04:04] BB:** They're read.

**[00:04:05] KP:** I just don't delete.

**[00:04:06] BB:** You just – Oh, I do the same thing, though. I have about like probably 300,000 or something. They're read. They've been answered, but I don't delete ever.

**[00:04:13] KP:** I never delete. I never I delete because you just never know.

**[00:04:17] BB:** You never know. You never know.

**[00:04:19] KP:** Yeah. That inbox that I'm referring to is not my personal one. It's the one that I started for my blog, actually, which called Brown Girl Gumbo, which I've been doing for 15 years.

**[00:04:33] BB:** I love it.

**[00:04:35] KP:** Yes. So that inbox, which I also get pitches from like for Good Housekeeping and Woman's Day, everything in that one.

**[00:04:42] BB:** Everything. Oh, everything. Okay. So it's rare that we have someone who's coming on and writing for various outlets. Is there a preferred email address, a preferred place you like stuff, your pitches?

**[00:04:54] KP:** Yes. I like them sent to my Brown Girl Gumbo address. But, I mean, it really doesn't matter, I guess. I don't have a preference because they all kind of go together because I receive pitches, yeah, from my Gmail, my personal account too from publicist. I'm like, "How do they –" I don't even know how they found – I don't know how they got that but –

**[00:05:16] BB:** They found it somehow. They looked you up. Oh, my gosh. So the best email for you is the one that's on your Twitter, your Gmail one, yeah?

**[00:05:25] KP:** Oh, is that on Twitter?

**[00:05:27] BB:** Yes, it is, Karla. That's probably how.

**[00:05:28] KP:** Oh, gosh. That's how they found.

**[00:05:34] BB:** Mystery solved.

**[00:05:36] KP:** Mystery solved.

**[00:05:36] BB:** Mystery solved.

**[00:05:37] KP:** Oh, gosh. I had no clue that my Gmail was on there.

**[00:05:41] BB:** Yeah. Oh, yeah. Okay. Wow.

**[00:05:43] KP:** It makes sense now.

**[00:05:44] BB:** Now, it does. Now, it does. I love this epiphany we've had live here. This is so exciting. Well, Karla, given all those pitches you do receive, what are the three elements that you look for in a pitch that make you go, "Yes, I want to respond to that,"?

**[00:05:59] KP:** Well, first, I love personalization. If you're like, "Karla, you have to –" I know it may seem cheesy to some. But for me, if they personalize and put my name like in the subject line, like that gets me to open it. That really gets me to open it because at least I know who they're pitching. They know who they're pitching. Because I do receive a lot of pitches, and they're addressed to someone else.

**[00:06:24] BB:** Like Bob or something?

**[00:06:25] KP:** Yeah. I keep getting one for like Roberta, and I'm like –

**[00:06:29] BB:** Roberta. Yeah, that's clearly the wrong name.

**[00:06:32] KP:** Yeah. That happens. So you said the three elements?

**[00:06:37] BB:** Yeah. So right name, obviously. Personalization, personalization. Yes.

**[00:06:42] KP:** Just like a real like newsy hook. I mean, something that's just going to really catch my attention. Let's see. I really like it when they refer to my latest piece, and they start it with, "Hey, Karla. I read your latest piece in Good Housekeeping, and I love the story. Can I somehow get my client or my person involved in what you're writing about?" So I really like that because it's like, okay, they read the story, so they know what I write about. For me, that just shows that they're paying attention. Yeah. So that's really what I look for.

**[00:07:23] BB:** Okay. Acknowledging and saying, "Hey, this piece," and even mentioning what the piece was about because I definitely know some people who are like, "Yeah, I saw you wrote a TechCrunch piece." Like, "Yeah, duh. I'm a reporter for TechCrunch." I have 17 articles in the last month. Yes.

**[00:07:38] KP:** Right. But, no, the ones that actually read it, and then they can point to things that you mentioned in the story.

**[00:07:46] BB:** Okay, everybody. I hope we're listening hard here. I like it. What's one of the best subject lines you've ever seen?

**[00:07:53] KP:** Oh, gosh. This is actually recent. I was like –

**[00:07:55] BB:** Oh, we love a recent one.

**[00:07:57] KP:** Yeah. I just got one recently that said, “Rapid trivia all about the booty,” and it had a peach emoji in the subject line as well. I was like, “All about the –”

**[00:08:07] BB:** No way.

**[00:08:09] KP:** Yeah. I was like, “All about the booty. What?” So, of course, I –

**[00:08:11] BB:** And a peach emoji. Hell, yeah. You opened that?

**[00:08:14] KP:** I opened it, and it's actually for like Preparation H. So it was really cool. It was really cool.

**[00:08:21] BB:** That's so creative.

**[00:08:22] KP:** It was super creative, and it really caught my attention. I was like, “Yeah.”

**[00:08:26] BB:** You didn't feel at all like you were being duped or anything. Because I know journalists get mad at that, of a subject line that's hyperbole. You open it up, and you're like, “Oh, it's about a SAS programming company.”

**[00:08:37] KP:** Yeah. No, I mean, I felt like that when I kind of could figure out what it was going to be about, like something with your derriere. Like I didn't feel like it was going to be something

for like WebMD, like something more serious that I write about like health story. I didn't think it was going to be like that, so I thought it was pretty cute.

**[00:08:57] BB:** Okay. I like that. I have not heard on this show a subject line with an emoji in it that gets attention, nor obviously a peach one. So that's new terrain that we're bringing in here. I like it. Oh, I have a fill in the blank section, Karla. So let me give you the statement, and you could fill in the rest. Are you ready?

**[00:09:18] KP:** Sure. Yes.

**[00:09:19] BB:** Let's do it. My favorite sources always –

**[00:09:23] KP:** Get back to me in a timely fashion, like before my deadline.

**[00:09:27] BB:** There you go. You'll never get a response from me if –

**[00:09:31] KP:** You address me by the wrong name.

**[00:09:34] BB:** You can follow up with me if –

**[00:09:38] KP:** I have not responded within 48 hours. I'm pretty quick with respond. I'm really quick.

**[00:09:45] BB:** Oh, 48. That's good. People aspire to that. The appropriate amount of lead time for a story is –

**[00:09:54] KP:** That one, for me, it really depends because for some outlets, I write like well in advance. Then some it's like kind of quick turn. So it really depends for me.

**[00:10:07] BB:** And by well in advance, are you talking months?

**[00:10:10] KP:** Yes.

[00:10:11] **BB:** Okay. Is that because it's something like you're doing for the fall, for instance? So you need to know about it in July.

[00:10:16] **KP:** Exactly, exactly.

[00:10:17] **BB:** Okay. Got you.

[BREAK]

[00:10:20] **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 journalists to pitch your news to. Sign up for your free account today. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:10:44] **BB:** Oh, what's an example of that?

[00:10:46] **KP:** An example of that is I just received a pitch for like cool backpacks for kids because I do a lot of gifting stories for Woman's Day and Good Housekeeping. They're pitching me now, which makes sense, because you don't want to wait till like September or the end of August. So, yeah, I've actually received things for back to school season. What's this month? July. So I was receiving those in June.

[00:11:11] **BB:** Excellent. So that far off in advance. That's good. Also, gift guides are a whole other terrain, as we know.

[00:11:17] **KP:** Oh, yes. And I get quite a bit of those.

[00:11:21] **BB:** My favorite stories to write are –

**[00:11:24] KP:** Stories that I would like to read, like things that I relate to. I'm a mom of two. I'm over 40. I still like to look good, beauty stories, lifestyle, and things that pertain to like black women issues. I really enjoy writing about those stories.

**[00:11:44] BB:** That's good. You're open to pitches, of course, accordingly. So being a mom, being a black woman, gift guides, backpacks, how am I going to get my kids to school, all the above?

**[00:11:52] KP:** All of the above.

**[00:11:54] BB:** All the above? Oh, it's so nice when you have a freelancer because it's a much wider array that is possible, I think. Yeah.

**[00:12:01] KP:** Absolutely. Because I'm a blogger, and my blog is really like – It's called, again, Brown Girl Gumbo, and it's like a mix of everything, so I kind of cover –

**[00:12:10] BB:** I see that.

**[00:12:12] KP:** Yeah. I cover a lot. I think it lends itself well to my day job, obviously, because I could write something for a FinTech client to an automotive company. So it's like I pretty much – I've written about everything that you could possibly think of from like dog names to like adultification bias.

**[00:12:33] BB:** It's wide. It's great. It keeps you curious and keeps you sharp. I think that's wonderful.

**[00:12:39] KP:** Thank you.

**[00:12:40] BB:** Speaking of – So the wide array that you cover. For example, on your blog, it's about San Francisco, how to make a cake tower for birthdays, seeing Janet Jackson. There's a whole array of things here. How do you come up with the stories you do, especially from a freelance perspective?

[00:12:57] **KP:** Oh, gosh. I mean, a lot of it does come from publicists.

[00:13:03] **BB:** Okay. So it is a publicist-driven thing, hopefully.

[00:13:06] **KP:** Yeah, some of it. The cake tower was just something I decided to do for my daughter because I consider myself to be a little bit crafty. So I did that. For the San Francisco one, I also get pitches for travel stories, so yeah.

[00:13:22] **BB:** So pitches do help.

[00:13:24] **KP:** Yeah, it helps.

[00:13:26] **BB:** Good. Okay. This is a very positive show, I think, session here for agency people, publicists, all the people that pitch journalists. Now, you did mention you have two kids. You're working the full-time job. You're doing this freelance stuff while you can fit it in. Is there anything you're reading, loving, watching, listening to? We just love to know where journalists get their stories.

[00:13:50] **KP:** Sure. I admittedly don't watch a lot of television. I don't know. I just never finished a series. My husband, I'm just like, "Go ahead. You can watch it. I'm not going to finish it." I'm just not going to finish it. I really enjoy reading the New York Times, obviously. I'm living in New York. I love –

[00:14:06] **BB:** You live in New York.

[00:14:08] **KP:** Yeah. That's like something I do every day. I really prefer documentaries and autobiographies and biographies. I'm not into fiction really. Yeah. I've never been, which I guess it kind of goes back to like reporting the news. It's like facts.

[00:14:28] **BB:** Yes. Oh, do you have a particular biography you love right now?

[00:14:32] **KP**: Right now, oh, gosh. Let's see. I haven't read one in a while, but those are the ones I gravitate toward. I think the first one that I read, I think I was like 10 years old, and that was La Toya Jackson. I probably shouldn't –

[00:14:46] **BB**: Oh, wow. Because your love started early for biographies.

[00:14:50] **KP**: Yes.

[00:14:51] **BB**: Yes. Love it. I'm usually not one of the like memoir biography genre, but I've had two lately that I totally loved. One is Viola Davis's memoir, *Finding Me*.

[00:15:04] **KP**: Oh, yes. Oh, my gosh. Yes. I forgot about that.

[00:15:06] **BB**: Fantastic and she narrates it if you listen to it, and it's excellent, excellent. Then, oh, God, who's my other guy? *Greenlights*. Who's the actor?

[00:15:18] **KP**: Greenlight?

[00:15:19] **BB**: It's called Green – Yes. Oh, it's on the tip of my tongue. Blonde guy from Texas, Matthew McConaughey.

[00:15:25] **KP**: Oh, Matthew McConaughey.

[00:15:26] **BB**: There we go. There we go. Yes. Oh, his is also great. Again –

[00:15:30] **KP**: I've heard great things about that one too.

[00:15:32] **BB**: Fantastic. When they narrate it, it just brings it to light, especially I think actors doing their own story. It's like another level of storytelling that is so much deeper. I love it. So anyway, there's some good –

[00:15:46] **KP**: Wait, I did start the audio book of Tabitha Brown.

**[00:15:49] BB:** How's that?

**[00:15:51] KP:** It was pretty good. Again, I have a tendency to not finish things, but I'm going to go back to it. I loved her voice. When you said the Audible part, like her voice is so soothing.

**[00:16:03] BB:** I do like a good narrator. Also, totally distracts you if you get a bad narrator and someone. You're like, "I can't stand it." Anyway, Karla, we always like to end with the question of the future of journalism. You are in an interesting position because you dabble in journalism. You contribute to a lot of journalism, but you also have like a full-time job that is storytelling but adjacent. What do you think the future of journalism looks like?

**[00:16:27] KP:** That's a tough question. I'm optimistic.

**[00:16:32] BB:** Yes. Don't we all need to be?

**[00:16:34] KP:** I know. I'm just trying to stay optimistic. I feel like the credibility for journalism just isn't there. But I feel like the younger generation will help get it back to where it was. I don't know. I'm hopeful. I'm really hopeful, and I feel like it's going to persevere.

**[00:16:54] BB:** I believe, as well. Do your kids ever mention it to you or say something like, "Oh, Mom. What article are you writing? What are you doing?"

**[00:17:02] KP:** Sometimes. Like we'll see a commercial and – Like for my day job, my son would say, "Oh, did you work on that," and I'm like, "No, but I have written scripts for things or written articles."

**[00:17:14] BB:** That's fun. They're like, "Mom made that. She probably did it." Oh, that's cool. I love that.

**[00:17:19] KP:** Yeah. But they're not really excited about it. They're like, "Oh, okay. Yeah." My son is – My daughter's a tween, so she's like, "Eh."

**[00:17:26] BB:** Nothing mom does is cool. Yeah.

**[00:17:28] KP:** No.

**[00:17:30] BB:** Oh, God. Oh, God. My best friend has two little girls who – Well, they're not little anymore as much and like one's about to hit the tween time. I'm like, "Uh-oh. Uh-oh." I've been with her since like day one. Yeah, it's a different time. I don't have kids, but I observe the difference that happens.

**[00:17:49] KP:** It really is. I didn't think it would happen. I'm like, "Oh, my God. She's so sweet." Like, "She's always going to think I'm cool." No. She's 12. She's almost 13. Yeah. She's –

**[00:18:01] BB:** She's only 24.

**[00:18:02] KP:** Yeah. Everything is one word answer. Or if she sees me in the picture or I show her – I recently attended Essence Fest, and I did this –

**[00:18:10] BB:** Yeah.

**[00:18:11] KP:** This little video. She was like, "Oh, cringy."

**[00:18:15] BB:** Oh, no. She gave you the cringe comment.

**[00:18:18] KP:** Yes. That's her favorite word, cringy.

**[00:18:21] BB:** Oh, God. Karla, well, we don't think you're cringy at all. Thank you for being here. Thank you for being on today. It was totally a delight to chat with you. Definitely check out your Twitter profile to see if you want to change that email on there.

**[00:18:38] KP:** Will absolutely.

**[00:18:40] BB:** Yes. Absolutely do that. Everyone, please check out because it's quite colorful, quite in-depth, [browngirlgumbo.com](http://browngirlgumbo.com) for the blog and all other great pieces from Karla all over the wide Internet, including Good Housekeeping. Thank you, Karla.

**[00:18:55] KP:** Thank you so much. Thank you for having me.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:19:00] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Karla Pope from Good Housekeeping. If you enjoy listening to our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. And 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](https://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]