

**EPISODE 142**

[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 who write about topics ranging from technology to lifestyle and culture, health, and science. We discuss the types of stories they cover, their thoughts on exclusives and embargoes, their favorite pitches, 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.

Our guest this week on Coffee with a Journalist is Collette Reitz. Collette is a news editor at Elite Daily, where she's in charge of assigning and editing trending news coverage of all things food, viral, tech, social media, and travel. She also oversees Elite Daily's Life Behind The Likes and Chef's Kiss monthly content series. During the episode, Collette shares her thoughts on pitches labeled as exclusive, why it's important to include dates in your subject lines, her thoughts on brand recognition versus quality products, and more. Let's hear from Collette now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:01:27] BB:** Welcome, everyone. I'm Beck Bamberger. This is Coffee with a Journalist. We're so excited today because coming from us from Elite Daily, I think this is our first time with Elite Daily, which is part of the Bustle Digital Group, is news editor of Elite Daily, Collette Reitz. She is here to fill us in on all the stuff with pitches and what she likes and so forth. Collette, welcome, and thanks for being here.

**[00:01:53] CR:** Hi, Beck. Thanks so much for having me.

**[00:01:55] BB:** This will be fun, I am sure, because you get to cover a lot of fun stuff. Actually, I like to start now with, for anyone and even when it's like the New York Times, how would you describe Elite Daily?

**[00:02:08] CR:** So Elite Daily is for a Gen Z audience. We always say our readers are young women and femmes very on the younger end like 18 to 24. Either they're in college or working their first job. They're very up with tech and social media and basically super trendy. So that's sort of how we think of who's reading us.

**[00:02:30] BB:** Okay. So that informs them the pitches. I do like to talk, of course, about your inbox. How is it in there, specifically with pitches?

**[00:02:41] CR:** A lot. Too much.

**[00:02:42] BB:** Too much. Yeah. Okay. Then what's your system? What's your system? It's very rare that anyone ever has been on the show, and they're like, "You know, it's okay." No. It's disaster. It's bad. It's overwhelming, etc. Go ahead.

**[00:02:56] CR:** I think it was the beginning of this year. I attempted to be an inbox zero person. But I just found it wasn't like a great use of my time. So I'd rather just have – Because I get a lot of pitches, honestly, I think I wound up on a lot of Listservs that I don't know how I got there. So leaving those unread no longer bothers me.

I try to utilize label to keep track of pitches because we know I prefer food, tech, travel somewhat, social media. So I like to keep labels in my inbox. So even if something's unread, I can go to a label and still find it. I do a lot of searching in my inbox. Like I'll just search and if it's – Basically, I see all the headlines. Then if I see something that I remember, and I'm like, "Oh, let me search this term," and then I find the email.

**[00:03:42] BB:** That is a common technique we have found with journalists. They use their inbox as their own personal Google to find stuff. Yes. Okay. So is your labeling technique, though, at all helpful? I've heard people just say like, "Yeah. I started labeling, but that doesn't really help."

**[00:03:59] CR:** I would say – You know, it was funny. I think I probably agree with them. It's helpful in terms of like if – Say it's like a really slow news day, and I just go check all of my tabs. Then maybe I can find something that is something we'd write about, but wasn't urgent enough

that I was like, “We need to put this on the docket.” So I find it can be helpful that way. But in general, I have the brands that we cover a lot, so I'm always in touch with their PR people. The one thing I do like, and I don't even keep a tab for this but I keep a running list for myself, is embargoes.

**[00:04:30] BB:** Oh, we do talk about embargoes and exclusives on here. So, okay, open that up. Embargoes you like.

**[00:04:36] CR:** I like embargoes. I like to date in the headline. I don't like just embargo because, honestly, we're getting so many, and it's nice if you can just plan. Like, personally, if this embargo was a week from now, I might leave that email unread for a second because I know I have time in terms of like daily hits like product announcements or something like that, something that's not too intensive.

Yeah, an embargo all caps at the top. I like all caps embargo with a date and then specified in the email like in bold or red. Always great when you have the date and time. If you just send along the assets, that's always really great too.

**[00:05:16] BB:** The date in the headline, I have not heard – Or in the subject line. I haven't heard that necessarily before.

**[00:05:20] CR:** Yes, in the subject.

**[00:05:22] BB:** That's a great tip. Do you ever get exclusives?

**[00:05:25] CR:** Exclusives, I think, are less common in terms of a true exclusive and I used – Like I was younger starting out. I would really be enticed by seeing an exclusive in the headline. I'm like, “Oh, my gosh. What did we just get?” Then you read it, and you're like, “Oh, this isn't an exclusive.”

**[00:05:43] BB:** Yeah. Tell us, for everybody because this is a wide topic, what to you isn't a true exclusive?

**[00:05:49] CR:** I mean, exclusive to me in terms of what we cover, we do a lot of trending food, trending products. So I know that we'll likely not be the only person covering it. But if you say you can post at 7:00 AM, and everyone else is going to get this press release at 10:00 AM, like that's – We have – We can throw it on our Instagram, throw it on our Facebook, social things that's a fit. Yeah. Something where you can get like a big lead on the other outlets. Then, of course, something we're only talking to one person, and they're not talking to anyone else.

**[00:06:21] BB:** Yes. Yes. One to one is the rule. But how this gets confused boggles the mind, sometimes. So there's that. Okay. For a really good pitch, Collette, that you're like, “Yes, I want to respond to that,” what does that include?

**[00:06:38] CR:** It has to include what the news is. I know that sounds like obvious, but it's really – Sometimes, I'll get a pitch that's just like a sentence, and it's like, “Hey, I have this cool product coming up, and it's from TK brand.” Then that's it. I'm like, “I don't really know what the news is here.”

**[00:06:57] BB:** Wait, wait. Wait, wait. That's the whole pitch? That's the whole pitch?

**[00:07:01] CR:** It's not like as common, but I get it enough where I'm like, “I don't even know what I could build around this,” and I'm not going to go to research myself on it.

**[00:07:09] BB:** No, too much work.

**[00:07:11] CR:** So right at the top, right on the subject line, let me know what the new news is. Let me know what the brand is. I think the subject line, the best thing to have in there is the news, the brand, and a date. Again, I'm trending news so we're –

**[00:07:24] BB:** News, brand, date. Yup.

**[00:07:26] CR:** Yeah. I'm trending news, so we're doing a lot of daily coverage, and my docket is like loose and we're – Try to be nimble and cover what people are talking about. So I like to have the dates in there because I keep track of all the embargoes as well. So have your date, have what the news is. Be clear on if it's new. There's a lot of times where you'll get something

and it's not new. It's returning, or it's slightly different than something that existed. Yeah. And have high res images. If you're selling a product or a food image, please have them like right away. Most people are good with this. But sometimes, I find it a little odd that I have to ask for images, if I'm going to be writing about your product.

**[00:08:09] BB:** What kind of images do you get? Like crap sometimes where they're like, "Oh, wait a second. Yeah. We got this one that we took four years ago." Does that ever happen?

**[00:08:17] CR:** Well, there'll be some that they're just not as high res, and they maybe will be attached or embedded in the email. It's not as common. Like usually, when I follow up and I ask for high res images, they've planned for this release, so they've taken good photos. So I know they exist. It's just on the off chance when you have to like circle back and ask. It sounds like I might be complaining, but it's another moment in your day, where I can't just like forward this to a writer and be like, "Oh." They'll be like, "Oh, there's no images." Then it's like you have to go back and forth.

**[00:08:45] BB:** Yeah. With images, I know this has been debated and talked about, do you like them attach? Do you want to link to a Google Drive? Do you want to see it in a Dropbox? Do you have any preference for how those images or other assets are sent to you?

**[00:08:57] CR:** I'm not too picky in terms of how they get to me. Like a Google Drive is fine. I guess specifically something I can just share with my writer that they won't also need a login because I am – As an editor, I'm not doing a lot of the coverage, so I don't want to run into that obstacle.

**[00:09:14] BB:** Yes. Easy, no login. I've sent stuff because I do travel writing for Forbes. Then they'll send me like, "Oh, yeah. Here's your file, but it has this password and this thing." I'm like, "Why? What is happening?" It's just not. No, I don't want to do another login or sign up for a thing or all this stuff. No. Got it.

Okay, Collette, you sent us in some subject lines you love. Do you remember these ones? Or I could tell you what you sent us.

**[00:09:43] CR:** I think I do remember.

**[00:09:44] BB:** Okay, okay. The first one is an embargo. So tell us what you like about this one. It's about Bud Light.

**[00:09:50] CR:** Yeah. So this was one that embargo is usually something I will look at because it, one, means I have time to plan for it. Two, it's generally a brand that our readers are interested in. Just the embargoes I'm served, generally. This one, this is funny. We actually did it, and this is sort of the way that your editorial calendar works is we didn't actually have the bandwidth to cover this one yet. Possibly, we still will. But it was something where it's like, "Oh, these are brand new flavors. We have a chance to try it, so we can post with a review." But then like, unfortunately, some other things overtook our day that day, and we didn't get to it. So I still have that one sort of bubbling.

But, yeah, what I really liked about it was the embargo. Again, I think I said I would have preferred the date. Like I love the date. It's so nice to know because, again, as I'm reading my emails –

**[00:10:46] BB:** Reading my emails. Yeah.

**[00:10:47] CR:** Yeah. As I'm reading my emails, I'm already toying with like five other ideas that I'm covering today. So if this embargo does not live for two weeks, I'm not worrying about it right now.

**[00:10:58] BB:** Yup, yup. And just to read it out for everybody so that they can hear what the actual subject line was, it was under embargo, all caps, "EXCLUSIVE FIRST TASTE OF BUD LIGHT SELTZER'S NEW FALL INNOVATION, AND IT'S NOT PUMPKIN SPICE."

**[00:11:15] CR:** Right. And the exclusive there did not – I know it's not exclusive. But I do like being able to get the early taste. Yeah. That was nice that they did that pumpkin spice. I like that.

**[00:11:24] BB:** Yeah. Because you could have been like, “Oh, God. Okay. Yeah.” Okay. You sent us another one too, and we know you like the buy one get one free offers and all the good shopping deals and stuff. So what attracted you to this next one? Do you know which one I'm talking about, the Target one?

**[00:11:37] CR:** Yeah. Do you want to read it out?

**[00:11:38] BB:** Yes. Here it is. “Target holiday announcement. Return of deal days, holiday price match guarantee, and more.” Now, this is a fabulous big brand. But, okay, what caught your attention?

**[00:11:53] CR:** So deal days is something we've seen success with in the past. Also, it's just, honestly, I liked it because it let me know like this is like the canary in the coal mine. Like we're in holiday season. Like we are here. It is time to start planning. Forget your pumpkin spice. Peppermint Mocha is coming. Yeah. So I liked that.

Also, a lot of these brands, they change up the terminology sometimes every year. So I was like, “Okay, I need to like read into this. See what Black Friday might look like.” Same Black Friday already is stressing me out, but you can't avoid it. It comes. Yeah. So I just like that I was getting a lot of information, and it was able to help me prep/cover the news of the day that they were giving me.

**[00:12:41] BB:** Got it. Okay. Now, I can see some of people saying like, “Oh, well. I don't represent Bud Light or Target. I have this little dorky brand here that I'm just trying to help out.”

[BREAK]

**[00:12:52] 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]

**[00:13:16] BB:** Do you care about the size, the notoriety of the brand?

**[00:13:21] CR:** I mean, I think brand recognition is important. But having a good product is important too. So I think even if you're a smaller brand, and you have something – Like we covered a smaller chocolate brand earlier this year and maybe a few weeks ago, and they had like a candy corn-flavored chocolate. Like that was enough to – I'm like candy corn is divisive. They have a box of chocolates. But it wasn't the only flavor. So they had like a caramel and a peanut butter too. But it was all in the midst of this. It's corn kid, and I was just like, "Oh, okay. This is kind of a fun moment." I was like, "We'll try it. We'll see. We'll see what people –" Candy corn is something people will always talk about and have an opinion on, and I've never seen it really mixed with chocolate and like a fun little aesthetic bite like this. So, yeah, that was a brand that not like – It's not like Hershey's or anything like that that I was like, "Let's try it."

**[00:14:20] BB:** I do love a candy corn. But –

**[00:14:22] CR:** Okay. You're pro candy corn.

**[00:14:23] BB:** I am pro. You know what? Specifically the pumpkins, the pumpkins are – You just eat one, you're good. Don't eat five. You eat one, you're good. My sister and I actually mail each other a bag of the pumpkin candy corns every year.

**[00:14:39] CR:** Oh, I love it.

**[00:14:40] BB:** In a weird sister tradition.

**[00:14:40] CR:** Just an identical swap.

**[00:14:42] BB:** Just an identical swap. Yup. Obviously, any one of us could go and buy our own damn bag. But the point is it's just a little sister exchange. We know it's coming every year. It's just a cute thing. So anyway, the pumpkin rolls deep for us.

Anyway, Collette, how about we do a little fill-in-the-blank section, if that sounds good?

**[00:15:01] CR:** Yeah, perfect.

**[00:15:02] BB:** Okay. My favorite sources always –

**[00:15:06] CR:** I kind of talked about this, but I said provide details and high res images. I love that for my daily hits. Then for expert face pieces, I always like an expert who is keeping our demo in mind.

**[00:15:19] BB:** You'll never get a response from me if –

**[00:15:23] CR:** You try to secure coverage for an embargo two weeks from the embargo date for like a very run-of-the-mill release. That is a little bit of a pet peeve of mine. If you send me – Like today's October 11. If you say – I've gotten this before, where it's like, “Embargo November 5<sup>th</sup>.” Then they'll follow up tomorrow, “Do you think you'll be able to cover?” I'm like, “I have no idea what my editorial calendar for daily hits is going to look like on November 5<sup>th</sup>.” So I'll kindly send one response saying that.” Then if you reply again, no, I'm done.

**[00:15:57] BB:** Okay. Next thing. Let's go down to the appropriate amount of lead time for a story is, which you kind of talked on. But let's say it's a brand. It's not embargo. It's just a story. What's your preferred lead time?

**[00:16:09] CR:** I would say 48 hours for just a daily hit. I think that's appropriate. I mean, we've done **[inaudible 00:16:17]**, but it's like you only have so many writers and so many hours in the day. So it's nice to know what's coming.

**[00:16:23] BB:** Yes. And my favorite stories to write are –

**[00:16:27] CR:** Interviews with people who can shed light on something that affects your daily life. Like we did an iPhone camera story, where we talked to a photographer who uses her iPhone a lot, and she sort of dove into like what camera features actually make an upgrade worth it, and kind of revealed like, “The 11 Pro still has those three lenses, and you can get all

this like –” I just think it's interesting to be able to share that perspective, especially with our demo, who probably isn't upgrading their phone annually. Then I like fun viral moments like the corn kid or like reviewing some fun trending food.

**[00:17:05] BB:** Okay. Food. She likes food, everybody. That's good to know. Collette, what are you reading, watching, consuming, Netflix-ing? We'll take any version of storytelling. What you got?

**[00:17:16] CR:** I recently read a book called *What Would Frida Do* by Arianna Davis.

**[00:17:21] BB:** Yes. We had her on our BAM Book Jam. Yes.

**[00:17:24] CR:** Oh, did you?

**[00:17:24] BB:** Yes. She is so lovely. She's a former reporter or – Actually, I don't know if she's still maybe, I think, is a reporter.

**[00:17:32] CR:** Yeah. I had like a dearth of Frida Kahlo knowledge, and I got this book in, I want to say, a press package for Latinx Heritage Months. I was like, “Oh, perfect.” It was so good. It was such a great entry into her life and mixed with Arianna’s take in how she viewed Frida. It was really – I really like that.

**[00:17:54] BB:** Yeah. She was a fun interview too. Okay, anything else?

**[00:17:58] CR:** I mean, Abbott Elementary is back. So I'm watching that weekly.

**[00:18:01] BB:** Wait. It is? It is?

**[00:18:03] CR:** Yes. You can binge – There's like three episodes, I think.

**[00:18:07] BB:** Oh, oh, oh. How exciting. I thought that was the most charming damn show. I loved it. Oh, that is so exciting. Yay. This is why I do the show, Collette. I –

[00:18:17] **CR:** Yeah. Oh, my gosh. Quinta Brunson is – It's such a perfect take on like the Parks and Rec and The office, like the mockumentary.

[00:18:27] **BB:** Yes, yes.

[00:18:28] **CR:** Then, I mean, I always throw on some Bravo too. I just – I can't avoid it.

[00:18:32] **BB:** We can't. We can't help. What ever happened to – The only stuff I would watch on Bravo just is Millionaire Listing. Is that ever coming back? Do you know anything about this?

[00:18:42] **CR:** I think they have it. I think –

[00:18:44] **BB:** They do?

[00:18:44] **CR:** They have like a ton of cities.

[00:18:46] **BB:** Okay. I thought it was just LA and New York. Okay. I need to look back up on the shenanigans of that. I just like to see how they sold these ridiculous homes. Okay. There's that. Collette, what do you think the future of journalism is looking like? Especially, what would you maybe tell your readership about it?

[00:19:07] **CR:** Right. It's evolving. I mean, on our site, for example, we lean into so many different areas. I think those times when you can like dig deep and give something beyond your daily hits, in conjunction with keeping them up on the news, the things that they're looking at every day on Instagram, I think it's valuable to combine those, and it's what keeps people coming back.

Additionally, the impact of social media, I think, is already huge, not only informing stories but spreading stories. Like when I interviewed writers for a position at Elite Daily, they used to be timid to say they would like look at Twitter, Instagram, and not as like their main news source. But I was like, "It's really valid as a jumping off point." Like there's plenty of things I see trending, or I see on Instagram, and then I go and see what's really happening.

Then more and more, TikTok is becoming a place where Gen Z is like searching so many things. I think they said like 40% of Gen Z like uses it like a search engine.

**[00:20:07] BB:** Yes. Isn't that fascinating?

**[00:20:09] CR:** Yeah. So it's like the effect of social media, basically setting trends, and also spreading the news is something, I think, to keep an eye on.

**[00:20:18] BB:** Yes. Does that – Well, back to the question of what you would tell your demographic. Would you say to anyone who is maybe 19, going into college, say like, “Yeah, get into journalism.”?

**[00:20:33] CR:** Yeah. I think it's an exciting time and an exciting space because there are so many ways – It's not rigid anymore. Do you know what I mean? So there are so many ways to make it your own, to bring your own view to it, to provide good information still, but doing it in really unique and interesting ways. There are so many different platforms. Like even with Elite Daily, we have TikTok. We have Instagram. We're on all the socials. So there are so many places to do it, and there are so many different ways to get creative with it.

**[00:21:04] BB:** There is. I always think the storytelling is never going anywhere. That has been the test of time for thousands and thousands of years. The form in which it happens is ever evolving, and to your point, what an exciting time to get in there.

**[00:21:20] CR:** Right. Change can be scary, but it's happening, so might as well – I mean, I think I read somewhere that like YouTube is also like the number one within Gen Z, like people are watching YouTube a lot. So, yeah, as you said –

**[00:21:33] BB:** That surprises me.

**[00:21:35] CR:** Yeah. I'm surprised by that too.

**[00:21:37] BB:** I feel like YouTube is a little like MySpace. I don't know.

[00:21:41] **CR:** But then I sort of thought, because of the age of Gen Z, I was like, “Maybe it's because they grew up as like –” Like when I was younger – I'm a millennial, an older millennial.

[00:21:52] **BB:** Yeah. Me too.

[00:21:52] **CR:** They're like middle millennial.

[00:21:53] **BB:** I'm an elder myself. Yes.

[00:21:55] **CR:** Yeah. People – My mom would like stick me in front of Barney in front of the TV. But like when they were growing up, it's like –

[00:22:01] **BB:** YouTube.

[00:22:01] **CR:** Their parents had YouTube on their phones. So like they've grown up with YouTube kind of is sort of what I was saying.

[00:22:07] **BB:** It's their retro version of cable.

[00:22:10] **CR:** Right? Yes. They started commercials, though. They're lucky.

[00:22:15] **BB:** That's true. That's true. Well, Collette, thank you for being on today. You are the fabulous news editor of Elite Daily, which is part of the Bustle Digital Group, just for everyone to know, which is a huge empire of many different media outlets, which we'll be covering more here on Coffee with a Journalist. Thanks for chatting with us today, Collette.

[00:22:37] **CR:** Thanks so much, Beck. This was great.

[00:22:38] **BB:** This is so fun. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:22:41] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Collette Reitz from Elite Daily. 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 even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]