

**EPISODE 177**

[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 some of the guests on this podcast? Head to our website at [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) to learn more.

Our guest on today's Coffee with a Journalist episode is Aarthi Swaminathan from MarketWatch. As the housing reporter, Aarthi covers real estate and travel. During the episode, Aarthi talks about specific pitches she's looking for related to housing and mortgages, where you can find her source callouts, why she's on the lookout for new data, and more. Let's hear from Aarthi now.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:00:59] BB:** Welcome everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist, not to be confused with Coffee with a Journalist, which is our new ongoing coffee series that we're doing in person in a variety of markets. Stay tuned and look for our info on that, so we can meet you in person, publicists, and journalists.

I'm Beck Bamberger, this is Coffee with a Journalist, and this is our podcast to hear from real journalists, how best they want to be pitched and how also, they don't want to be pitched and how you may build a relationship, and so forth. Today, very exciting because we have the housing reporter and I know a lot of people want to know about housing right now. Very exciting. The housing reporter from MarketWatch, Aarthi Swaminathan. She's here with us to give us an overview of MarketWatch and then also, what she doesn't want to see. Aarthi, welcome and thank you for being here.

**[0:01:50] AS:** No, thank you for having me.

**[0:01:51] BB:** Excellent. First, Aarthi, for those who might not be as familiar, MarketWatch, what does that all encompass? Then we can get into your specific beat.

**[0:02:00] AS:** Yeah, MarketWatch, not to be confused with MarketPlace, or MarnieWatch, or whatever. Many people do get confused. Many people on the street. MarketWatch covers a bunch of things, but mostly tied to finance. We cover business finance, finance news. The stock market is a big part of our coverage. My role is more into personal finance and mortgages. What does that mean? Where are the rates, home prices. We talk about student loans. Anything and everything in business journalism and it's written for a digital audience. Not so much print and the journal and whatever. We try to keep it fast and light and informative. That's really what MarketWatch is.

**[0:02:49] BB:** Then specifically, more into your beat. You mentioned personal, so housing, student loans. I'm looking at a few of your pieces of coverage, for example. You're talking about, oh, gosh, home sales falling. Are home price is also going to be doing that? I saw also, you had a piece, only a tenth of mortgages have an interest rate above 6%. Blah, blah, blah. What do you want to get pitched?

**[0:03:15] AS:** For me, anything and everything to do with housing, I like to get pitched. Recently, I put out something on Twitter saying, I'm looking for pitches from academic. If you represent an academic, or a professor, their research, I want to know. Anything to do with mortgage rates, home prices, home sales. I'm very interested in insurance rates, homeowners insurance, flood insurance, stuff like that. Anything to affect the homeowner today and the aspiring homeowner, that's something that I'm looking for.

**[0:03:46] BB:** Got you. To double tap on that a bit, you mentioned academics, or people who have research. Can you expand a little bit more into that? Perhaps, for instance, not a company who's like, "We have thoughts about mortgages. They're going to go up." Not that. Drill in a little bit more on what precisely that expertise would look like.

**[0:04:07] AS:** Yeah. A lot of the data I work with is very complicated, right? Housing starts and home sales and everything. I need to explain that to people. I have talked to people with the leading housing companies. What more senior colleagues and I are thinking of is looking for

independent commentary, academics who spent an entire year looking about what are ideal mortgage rates should be. Someone who is not so much interested in selling. You talked to a mortgage company and they give you great insights, but you're always going away thinking, "I think you're saying that to improve sales."

I want someone who's just more independent and again, just has very, very deep knowledge. That's why I put it out. I put out all these calls on social media. To be honest, I don't know which is the best medium these days. I don't even know if Twitter, people use it.

**[0:05:01] BB:** Well, ex, or whatever we're now calling it. Yeah, exactly.

**[0:05:06] AS:** Are they calling it ex? I don't know. That's new to me.

**[0:05:08] BB:** Well, now it's supposed to – Anyway, that's a whole other thing. Do you find good quality responses from when you put out a signal out and about?

**[0:05:16] AS:** No.

**[0:05:16] BB:** No, okay. That's not working currently.

**[0:05:20] AS:** Sometimes works. I'm always on the lookout to find a home buyer and a home seller, because I'm trying to find people, like actual people who are participants in the housing market. It doesn't work. If I'm looking for a realtor, which also, I love talking to realtors and real estate agents, that works. They respond to my LinkedIn request. They respond to my tweets. Very mixed responses. The academics have not had any luck. If you represent an academic, please do. Yeah.

**[0:05:52] BB:** Okay. She's looking for academics. Okay, good. Now, what about your inbox? How do you maintain it?

**[0:06:01] AS:** Oh, my goodness. I do not maintain it. I have 7,383 unread.

[0:06:06] **BB:** Oh, you're a letter roller. Okay. You're not the zero camp. Okay. What do you do about those 7,000? Is it just rolling?

[0:06:14] **AS:** Yeah. When I go on vacation, I forget to set up like, I'm out of the office, whatever. They just –

[0:06:21] **BB:** They just keep rolling. They keep rolling. Oh, boy.

[0:06:26] **AS:** I search. I search a lot. If I'm looking for a specific data point, or something, and if it shows up, that's great. Yeah, I read most of the emails that I feel useful for my reporting. I'm sorry to everyone to say that I have 7,000 emails on my inbox.

[0:06:44] **BB:** Okay. But it sounds like you save them. You're not a mass deleter. You will use your own inbox as a search file.

[0:06:51] **AS:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yup, that's right.

[0:06:52] **BB:** Many people do. Many people do. Okay. Then is the subject line at all important? You said, you look at pretty much all of them. Do you open every email?

[0:07:02] **AS:** There are some subject lines immediately that turn me off. Just a sampling. If it's just a press release about something, like a new launch or something, I just immediately archive it. If it's a company, FOMC preview, I'm not going to read that, because I just – unless, I search it and housing is within that node. I'll read it. Most of these, I just immediately archive it. Future of mass transportation, those are not on my beat. I just archive it. Stuff that I do read anything with the word data, or MarketWatch in the subject line.

[0:07:40] **BB:** Oh, okay. Good tips. It says MarketWatch and it says – so it'd be like, “Aarthi, fresh data on housing market for MarketWatch.” That would be one you're like, “Yes.”

[0:07:49] **AS:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:07:50] **BB:** Look at that. Look at that. Okay.

**[0:07:54] AS:** Any new data. Just the word new data. If it's really new data, don't trick me by giving me data from someone else.

**[0:08:01] BB:** Data from someone else, meaning like, I think this is a flaw people fall into. If it's information you can access through a government federal website, that is not new data. That's not your data. That's not something you did. That is bogus. Not bogus in the quality of it, but it's just not what is truly the companies. Would you agree?

**[0:08:24] AS:** Oh, sometimes some people do that. They knew data, but then they're actually, what the new information is, what their source is saying, that's not really new. They just say, new perspective on data. Just being accurate in your –

**[0:08:40] BB:** Yeah. Okay. This is good.

[MESSAGE]

**[0:08:45] ANNOUNCER:** Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch.

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Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:09:08] BB:** Do you ever take exclusives, or embargos?

**[0:09:12] AS:** Oh, yeah. All the time.

**[0:09:13] BB:** What do you want to see with an exclusive pitch?

**[0:09:16] AS:** Oh, with an exclusive pitch, it's usually either some sensational news. That's usually when I work with companies who know me well. It's difficult. It really has to be pretty newsworthy. It can be a big announcement. It can be a big research thing, or it can be an exclusive with a pretty high-profile person. It just can't be any and every exclusive, like a new survey you're putting out. Unless, it's really going to be groundbreaking and going to get me a lot of traffic. I don't really know if that works. Embargos, we work with all the time. It's a little bit different.

**[0:09:56] BB:** Tell us the difference for embargos then, just to make sure it's super clear for everybody.

**[0:10:00] AS:** Embargos are like, if there's a new data point coming out and we're all looking with the embargo, I'm okay with that. It's just to level the playing field. Everyone gets access to the same amount of information. We work with the NAR, the National Association of Realtors, and they have embargos on their announcements. We all respect that embargo. It depends on if it's a data point, embargos totally fine. Don't embargo something for the sake of embargoing. There are some times where companies embargo send reports, and then they give me five minutes early. You can publish it five minutes early. That works if the news is big enough, but I don't really like those kind of embargos that much.

**[0:10:40] BB:** Got you. That's good to know. Aarthi, if someone doesn't have a relationship with you, they've never emailed you before, let's say. Is there a way in which someone can build a relationship with you, like meeting you for coffee in New York, seeing you at a conference, or you're like, "You know what? Just send me good pitches."

**[0:10:56] AS:** I often meet people. I like meeting people and relay it over.

**[0:11:00] BB:** Oh. Oh, okay. But?

**[0:11:02] AS:** But it has to be someone that I've had – if we worked on a story and I've successfully published it, then I want to meet you. That is something that we can build off on. If I've never met you before –

**[0:11:16] BB:** You're not starting with the coffee.

**[0:11:18] AS:** I'm not going to travel 45 minutes to meet someone that I don't really know if it's going to be helpful, right? But that being said, when I travel, I often set up meetings with everyone, like PR people, like professors and my sources and stuff. When I'm traveling, I'm very open to meet everyone, especially at conferences.

**[0:11:40] BB:** What conferences do you typically travel to, just so we know?

**[0:11:44] AS:** Basically, a big mortgage conference at the end of the year. Then there's NEHB, which the builders put on a big conference that was earlier this year, I think. I don't know. I don't even know which – how time is going by so fast. Those are the big ones. Then anything in New York City that relates to housing, I'll try to make it.

**[0:12:03] BB:** Okay. You're out and about on the streets. This is good. Ooh, Aarthi, we have a question that was submitted by our lovely audience. It's from Mike Donald. Can I go ahead and ask you the question?

**[0:12:15] AS:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. For sure.

**[0:12:18] BB:** Here we go. He asks, or I'm assuming, my guests, “Are you seeing any AI pitches in your inbox? If so, what are your thoughts on them?”

**[0:12:26] AS:** Oh, my goodness. It's difficult for me to think about AI and real estate, because right now it seems to be home sales, housing inventory, mortgage rates. The short answer is I am seeing some pitches, but it is not having an economic impact yet. It's not easy for me to do a story. I don't really do a lot of feature stories about the future of housing. Yeah. I see some pitches, but I don't respond to them.

**[0:12:55] BB:** Got it. It's a no mic, basically, on the AI front, sounds like. Okay.

**[0:13:00] AS:** I'm sorry, Mike.

[0:13:01] **BB:** From my guest. Sorry, Mike.

[0:13:02] **AS:** Didn't mean to disappoint you.

[0:13:03] **BB:** It's okay. It's okay. All right, Aarthi. I have a rapid-fire question section here, and just give us your quick response for these. Are you ready? Video or phone interview?

[0:13:16] **AS:** Phone. Phone interview.

[0:13:18] **BB:** Bullet points, or paragraphs?

[0:13:20] **AS:** Paragraphs.

[0:13:21] **BB:** Paragraphs. Why? This is a rare answer.

[0:13:28] **AS:** Because I can see the sentence in its full construction. If you just give me bullets, it's just like headlines. Paragraph, I can get your point fully.

[0:13:38] **BB:** Okay. Okay. Short, or long pitches?

[0:13:41] **AS:** Short.

[0:13:41] **BB:** Images attached, or Dropbox zip file?

[0:13:44] **AS:** Images attached.

[0:13:47] **BB:** Okay. Email or Twitter DM?

[0:13:50] **AS:** I don't use Twitter anymore. Email.

[0:13:51] **BB:** Okay. That's email. There you go. One follow-up, or multiple?

[0:13:56] **AS:** Oh, just one.

[0:13:56] **BB:** Just one and done. Direct, or creative subject lines?

[0:14:00] **AS:** Direct.

[0:14:01] **BB:** Press release, or media kits?

[0:14:04] **AS:** No. Press release.

[0:14:04] **BB:** Time you read your pitches. Or let's just say, most likely, optimal time.

[0:14:11] **AS:** In morning.

[0:14:12] **BB:** 24/7 in the morning. Morning. Morning. Early morning. P-E-T time. New York time. Okay. Last thing, Aarthi, to wrap this up for today. Is there anything you want to promote, plug, highlight? We just want to shine a little light on you and be able to say, "Hey, here's what's working for you."

[0:14:30] **AS:** I love covering –

[0:14:31] **BB:** Besides read your – Yeah.

[0:14:32] **AS:** No. Yeah, yeah. No. For sure. Read my articles. Reach out to me. I always want to learn more about housing and all the players in it. Just if it's a creative pitch and I don't respond, then it's fine. You have other clients, right? Please pitch to me the –

[0:14:49] **BB:** Yeah, you got other clients. You got other things.

[0:14:52] **AS:** Yeah. Just keep giving us information, because I think my job here is to write stories to give that information out to the public. The more information I have, the better my stories will be. I actually started my entire career in journalism with interning at a PR company. I understand it.

**[0:15:13] BB:** Yeah. She looks at the other side. Yes, she did.

**[0:15:15] AS:** I understand it. It's really hard. That's why I left. The information that you guys, you guys are gatekeepers to a lot of really useful information.

**[0:15:26] BB:** Very true. That's very true.

**[0:15:27] AS:** Please send it.

**[0:15:29] BB:** Please send it off. Oh, heard it here first, everybody. Please send it. Oh, also, send Aarthi your academics and new data, please. Right? She's not on Twitter, but she'd be looking at your emails. There you go. Aarthi, thank you so much for being here today. Aarthi is a housing reporter at MarketWatch. Send her data, put it in your subject line. Thank you so much, Aarthi. Appreciate it.

**[0:15:56] AS:** Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:15:57] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with the Journalist, featuring Aarthi Swaminathan from MarketWatch. 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 next week with even more insights about the journalists you want to learn more about. Until then, start great stories.

[END]