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Jered Martin:

Welcome to Coffee with a Journalist, a podcast by OnePitch, featuring well known journalists from the top U.S. based publications covering technology, lifestyle and culture, health, science, products and services, and more. The goal of our show is to uncover the real person behind the real stories you love to read. We discuss their beat and news coverage, what their inbox looks like, the types of pitches they receive, and lots more.

Jered Martin:

On today's episode, we're joined by Peter Adams, a reporter from Marketing Dive, and an umbrella company of Industry Dive. Peter's coverage includes news, updates and cultural trends in the marketing industry, and most recently has written about the industry shifts due to Covid-19, marketing amongst social movements, and generational consumer behavior. Today, Peter shares about his favorite canned coffee, what makes Marketing Dive's daily newsletter unique, the types of stories you can pitch him, and more. Let's hear more from Peter today.

Beck Bamberger:

Hi everyone. Welcome to Coffee with a Journalist. Today, Peter Adams, reporter for Marketing Dive, is on the show. Hi, Peter.

Peter Adams:

Thanks so much for having me on, Beck.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. Do you have any coffee with you right now?

Peter Adams:

I don't. It's close to 4:00 PM my time. If I drink any after, I'll be up all night, for sure.

Beck Bamberger:

I just finished mine.

Peter Adams:

I am an arted drinker earlier in the day, of coffee.

Beck Bamberger:

Good clarification. Now, okay, especially in your Covid lifestyle, do you drink a couple cups, is it just you got to max, or what do you do?

Peter Adams:

Yeah. This isn't a very sustainable way of handling it, but I'm kind of addicted to these, they're almost like energy drinks. It's like lattes in a can. The brand I buy from is La Colombe. I'll do one of those in the morning and then one after lunch, and it has me pretty much set through the day.

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Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. That's no joke. That's a strong coffee out of those guys.

Peter Adams:

Honestly, a bit of a pullback from my awful habits.

Beck Bamberger:

What?

Peter Adams:

Yeah. At the office, we have a machine installed. I would make frequent trips. If anything, I'm being a little more conservative now, which is not a good sign. Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Wow. Way to cut back. At least you don't have the office to distract you. Also, Peter, because this is a quote on your profile for Marketing Dive, it says you're passionate about movies, especially if they're trash. Please expand.

Peter Adams:

I grew up being really into horror movies, '80s horror movies in particular, B-movies, sci-fi stuff. We actually had a channel, that I don't think exists anymore, called Monsters HD as part of our cable package. Whenever my parents were away, I would sneak in a viewing of something. I just watched this weekend, actually, The Blob remake from the late '80s, and there's a very Matt Dillon with very '80s hair in it.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh yes.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Wait. What is that called? Let me tee that up. Is it on Netflix? Where is it at?

Peter Adams:

I rented it. I will shell out to check out a movie I'm interested in. I'm that dedicated. Or look for low quality YouTube rips.

Beck Bamberger:

Also a good source. Okay. What's your favorite '80s horror movie?

Peter Adams:

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The Thing.

Beck Bamberger:

The Thing. Yes.

Peter Adams:

Yeah. Pretty much any John Carpenter stuff, all that. I have a real love for that whole aesthetic. Something like Stranger Things captures that pretty well.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes.

Peter Adams:

So I'm big into that type of programing, or like Stephen King adaptations.

Beck Bamberger:

You know, my sister used to watch this. What was it? It was on the sci-fi network where the little aliens commented on the B-movies. What was that called?

Peter Adams:

Oh, Mystery Science Theater 3000, right? Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. That's what it was. Yes. Yes. I hope that's on the internet somewhere.

Peter Adams:

They brought it back briefly. I know Jonah Ray hosted it, but I think it got canceled. That's definitely one of those shows where they could ...

Beck Bamberger:

They could ratchet that back in. And cheap.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

It's puppets talking to ... Yeah. Nothing. Production cost on that is nothing.

Peter Adams:

Yeah. No. That's the right ballpark for my taste, as well.

Beck Bamberger:

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Yes.

Peter Adams:

Yeah. It's just also been a thing my roommates and I have been doing.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh yeah. It's a perfect Covid activity.

Peter Adams:

Yeah. We do like movie nights and stuff, and we'll piss off any guests we have just talking through them.

Beck Bamberger:

I love it. You should start recording them and do your own little YouTube series or something.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Anyway, Peter, for those that are not aware, what is Marketing Dive?

Peter Adams:

Yeah. We're a daily newsletter publication. We're under the umbrella of a digital media company called Industry Dive. Sort of similar to our model, we focus most of our coverage on digital transformation's impact on the industry, whether it's brand strategies and trying to reach consumers, or the behind the scenes stuff, the partners they're working with, whether it's agencies or, increasingly, consultancies. We've over time also ramped up our coverage of advertising technology, adtech, martech, all that stuff, which is in some ways become one of the bigger stories in our industry. Yeah, our content model is the idea that an executive wakes up in the morning and hears the news they need to know. Our key content format is called The Brief, that just has the biggest bits of news up top, then we do sort of informed analyses down below to give a little more fleshed out insight to the story.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. It's quite compact. You get what you need, you can move on, you don't need to scan through 40 different articles. I like it.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

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Beck Bamberger:

Yes. Tell us, how's your inbox looking these days? Is it filled with pitches? Is it mostly crap? What's going on?

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Peter Adams:

This is definitely a quiet period of the year.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh.

Peter Adams:

August, early September always is. I think a lot of people are still out on vacation. Maybe some of the Fall plans haven't ramped up as much. We're starting to see some more of a trickle in, but I feel like the combination of it being a slow period, and also everything else that's going on, to hit some bottom lines, the peeling back on some marketing budgets, it's quieter than it usually is. Just as a personal thing, I tend to keep my inbox pretty clean.

Beck Bamberger:

Now, are you one of the zero inbox people?

Peter Adams:

Yeah. I try to be. Sometimes I will put things off. I am a habitual procrastinator. Inevitably I have one or two that I need to get back to, and don't in the near term, but in my ideal world, yes, I don't like the numbers being there. I don't like the little red notification.

Beck Bamberger:

I do not like that.

Peter Adams:

Which is bad because on a long weekend, like this past Memorial Day weekend, I was checking my inbox because I don't want there to be like 70 emails when I get back into work the next day.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh yeah. Because then you're like, "God, I'm already in the hole."

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

I'm already in the hole. Yeah. I don't like that stress. I'm on the same page with you. I'm always inbox zero every 48 hours. I can't do it every day, but it's got to be pretty clean.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

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Beck Bamberger:

Now, how many pitches do you get though, would you say, on a weekly basis?

Peter Adams:

On a weekly basis it's probably close to 100 I would say.

Beck Bamberger:

That's not crazy.

Peter Adams:

I don't know. That might be a little farther north. Yeah, I don't actually quantify it that much. It's a lot. It's a lot to sort through, for sure. That's one of the reasons why I get a little anal retentive about making sure it's cleared out, so I really only focus on the ones that I need to respond to in the near term.

Beck Bamberger:

Is there any subject line that particularly grabs you?

Peter Adams:

Yeah, if there's a breaking piece of news. We'll cover most things that impact marketers. But we have a very servicey model almost. Like I said earlier, we want to make sure the stakeholders in our industry are getting the news that matters to them and thinking about actionable takeaways they could have on it. If I get something that's like, "TikTok could be acquired by Microsoft or Walmart," the broad landscape stuff that's, first of all, going to be covered everywhere, but it also doesn't serve as much value to our readers. But if you can come to me and say, "We have an agency expert who works in social media and knows how this will affect our marketer's strategies," like day of, when it happens.

Beck Bamberger:

That's helpful.

Peter Adams:

That's something that I will at least read. There's no guarantee I'll use it in a story.

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Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. Then, for when you are writing a piece and you're doing this brief, what gives you the kernel of an idea to do a story? Does it ever come from a pitch, from example, for example?

Peter Adams:

Yes and no. You can get a story idea anywhere. Some people sometimes come to you and they say, "We have a brand that's working on a really interesting campaign or with an interesting technology partner." We try and focus on brand side activations. Those are things I will definitely look into. Case studies as well. But for the most part, again, looking at the service side of journalism and what we do, if I write

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three briefs on a particular type of campaign, using a certain technology or a type of platform, within a week of each other, and it all kind of looks the same, that's a story idea for our readers. Why are all these companies jumping on a trend at a particular time? Why do these all look the same? Is it worth getting in on that? How can you kind of activate it in a unique fashion?

Beck Bamberger:

Are you ever out taking a walk, drinking your crazy coffee, and you're like, "Oh, something just pinged me"? It's from the ether.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

And you're like, "Yeah. I got to do something on that."

Peter Adams:

For sure. I think part of that also is the way I'm into TV, I'm into movies, I'm into pop culture. A lot of that stuff is ad supported. I'll just be browsing platforms and see something and say, "Oh, wow. That's new," or, "That's interesting." For sure, I'll have those just sort of thinking about something, because I've been doing this long enough now that my brain is wired to think, "Oh, what's the implication for marketers?"

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, exactly.

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Peter Adams:

A story I started working on at the time we're recording this, it was after some of these player boycotts in the NBA, that has huge implications for marketers. That might not be the main takeaway for a general news audience, who's more focused on the activism, social justice side. That's something to look forward to as NFL season kickoff is next week.

Beck Bamberger:

Yep.

Peter Adams:

Is there something going to happen there?

Beck Bamberger:

I don't know, but it's juicy to think about. I think, too, in this time when you're like, "Okay, I'm running the multi-million budget of Pepsi." God, where do you even park your dollars?

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

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Beck Bamberger:

You going to do a Super Bowl ad? In a way, I'm like yes, because everyone's home, so where else they going? Might as well. Anyway, interesting time, if you're dealing with mega budgets, to think about, where do you park that?

Peter Adams:

I don't know. [crosstalk 00:11:07] for sure.

Beck Bamberger:

No I don't. No. Yeah.

Jered Martin:

Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch? Are you curious to learn more about the unique ways OnePitch helps connect journalists with brands and sources? Head to OnePitch.co for more information about how we're helping each side save time and connect more effectively. Sign up for your free account today. Now, back to today's episode.

Beck Bamberger:

Quick word association game, Peter. So I'm going to give you a word, and then you just tell us what you think, first word out of your mouth.

Peter Adams:

Okay.

Beck Bamberger:

Let's do it. Food.

Peter Adams:

Chinese.

Beck Bamberger:

Drink.

Peter Adams:

Coffee.

Beck Bamberger:

Hobby.

Peter Adams:

Drawing.

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Beck Bamberger:

TikTok.

Peter Adams:

Hectic.

Beck Bamberger:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Advertising.

Peter Adams:

Trouble.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. Gen-Z.

Peter Adams:

Elusive.

Beck Bamberger:

Virtual events.

Peter Adams:

Repetitive.

Beck Bamberger:

Branding.

Peter Adams:

Tedious.

Beck Bamberger:

Facebook.

Peter Adams:

Bad.

Beck Bamberger:

Agencies.

Peter Adams:

That's another trouble spot. That's first thing that comes to my mind. I'm sorry.

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Beck Bamberger:

Trouble spot? There you go. Journalism.

Peter Adams:

Precarious.

Beck Bamberger:

Pitch.

Peter Adams:

Response.

Beck Bamberger:

That is the first time I've ever heard someone say that in a positive thing, in a positive way.

Peter Adams:

Really? Oh no.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. You're the only. Good for you. Peter, we know you are into the movies and the B-movies and so forth, but what do you read?

Peter Adams:

This is maybe bad journalism practice, but when I'm off the clock, if you can be in this profession, I tend to read a lot of fantasy. I'm currently reading a book called Johnathon Strange & Mr. Norrell by Susanna Clarke, which interestingly enough, intersection with marketing, when it came out back almost two decades ago or something, I think it was like 2002 or 2003, had one of the biggest marketing campaigns in publishing history.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh really?

Peter Adams:

Maybe just in the UK. A really significant push behind it. It was built as Harry Potter for adults. It's basically about an alternate history where magic exists in England. It's a tome. It's like 800 pages or something. I've read a lot of really long books during this period because I need to occupy my downtime in a big way.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. It's like an Atlas Shrugged level one. Geeze.

Peter Adams:

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Yeah. Fantasy's a big escape. Also, read a lot of Ursula K. Le Guin. I've never read any of her before, but I bought all the Earthsea books at the start of this.

Beck Bamberger:

How are those?

Peter Adams:

It's kind of like Harry Potter. Originally written for children, but there's quite a bit in there that's relevant to today, and pretty rich thematically. She had a lot of interesting viewpoints on the world and on fantasy's function in literature.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. She wrote A Wizard of Earthsea.

Peter Adams:

Yeah, yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Found and the Lost. Right? This is coming back to me.

Peter Adams:

Yeah, yeah. Her books, they have sort of the typical staples of the genre, there's dragons and magic, but she's very deliberately not centered on war or fighting. It's very character driven. It has interesting insights to say about ... The one I most recently finished, the Tombs of Atuan, is about being very bought into a certain world view based on the way you're raised, and how you kind of crack out of that shell. There's a lot of great lessons in there, and she's a really vivid writer.

Beck Bamberger:

I always get all my book recommendations from this podcast.

Peter Adams:

Yeah. Not a bad channel to get it.

Beck Bamberger:

It's my number one source. No, it's not. Now, is there anything you read on the daily, like newsletters or anything from the internet that keeps you up to speed?

Peter Adams:

Oh yeah. I mean, I try and check all of the traditional trades. I read Ad Age. I'm a subscriber to Ad Week, The Drum, Campaign, Digiday. In terms of the broader business publications, I read Bloomberg every day. I read The Journal and the CMO Today newsletter.

Beck Bamberger:

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You do the rounds? Yep.

Peter Adams:

Yeah, definitely. It's the first thing I do in the morning. I've got my dangerous energy shot drink. Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Turbo charging through all those things. Yes.

Peter Adams:

Probably the best period to retain information. Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

It is. That actually is my favorite time in the morning, when you're like, "Okay, I'm getting ready to sit down and crank. I'm fueled. I'm like poised to go."

Peter Adams:

Yeah. By the time we send out our newsletters about the midday break, I definitely need to take a walk or something.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. You're on the downhill at that point, I think.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

What do you think, Peter, is the future of journalism looking like? You haven't been in journalism too, too long.

Peter Adams:

No. Four years now.

Beck Bamberger:

Only since about, yeah, about four years or so.

Peter Adams:

Or at least working.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. Would you tell yourself back then, maybe five years plus, "Hey, yeah, definitely go into this industry?"

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Peter Adams:

I think I would. There's plenty of analysis out there. It's as important as ever. Getting to the truth of the matter, even though the scrutiny is so much higher, it kind of reinforces being a good, diligent watchdog for institutions is invaluable.

Beck Bamberger:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Peter Adams:

One of the things my professors in college reinforced to me is getting into B-to-B. I did not plan on, when I was an aspiring student coming up, writing about marketing and advertising. I don't really know anyone who did, even other people in my space. But there's niches out there that need to be filled, for sure.

Beck Bamberger:

Absolutely.

Peter Adams:

The easier insider takeaway is to say, "Write about what you love or what you know." In terms of being a good journalist, I think part of it is learning new things. I didn't know anything about the mechanics of advertising and marketing. It's been exciting in a kind of eyeopening experience to do that for the past four years. I would definitely reaffirm that commitment.

Beck Bamberger:

Did you, in your younger days, did you have a moment, as a ... Some people have as a kid, like, "Oh my gosh, when I was 10, I had this teacher say my writing was amazing, and that inspired me to ..." did you have something like that? Or was it kind of like, "Oh, I took a class and, cool, I fell into it?"

Peter Adams:

Yeah, definitely English teachers I had in high school. It was the first time I ever felt positive about anything academic related, was writing. I never thought of myself as particularly smart or insightful until high school when I wrote some papers and got feedback. That was like, "You could potentially do this." Yeah, I joined my high school newspaper, and I was initially a film critic, which was my first.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, that's how you got into that. Didn't you also write for Northwestern University's paper too?

Peter Adams:

Yeah. Their digital publication. It's also a quarterly magazine, but it's predominately, most of the content is digital, North by Northwestern. I started out there doing nightly TV recaps and eventually kind of evolved to cover more student based stuff.

Beck Bamberger:

Wow. You were doing nightly?

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Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Like Monday through Friday? Like on the college cable channel thing?

Peter Adams:

No. Not necessarily. Nightly is not the right word to describe it. I was doing recaps of TV shows, so if an episode aired at 11:00, I would have to have something up for the next morning.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh my god.

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

That's time pressure for a college campus. My god.

Peter Adams:

I was less diligent about my sleep schedule back then, for sure, which is probably why I have a crippling caffeine addiction at this point.

Beck Bamberger:

That's what happens. Well, to round out our time today, Peter, we're going to play a little Mad Libs. I'm going to tee you up with the phrase, or whatever it is, and then I'm going to read back the whole thing.

Peter Adams:

Okay.

Beck Bamberger:

Are you ready?

Peter Adams:

Sure.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. First of all, a catchphrase.

Peter Adams:

To be a big dork, I'm going to do my company's one, which is, "Serve the reader."

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Beck Bamberger:

Okay. Journalist scare phrase.

Peter Adams:

Oh man. A correction request.

Beck Bamberger:

Correction request. Empowering journalism word, buzzword, something. Something positive.

Peter Adams:

Watchdog.

Beck Bamberger:

An adjective.

Peter Adams:

Expeditiously.

Beck Bamberger:

Damn. That's great. Part of a pitch.

Peter Adams:

Hi, Patrick.

Beck Bamberger:

Hi, Patrick. There you go.

Peter Adams:

I've gotten that one a few times recently.

Beck Bamberger:

Wait, wait, wait. Wait. Really?

Peter Adams:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Your name's Peter.

Peter Adams:

Yes.

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Beck Bamberger:

Do you go by Patrick? How does that happen?

Peter Adams:

Just someone kind of fumbling the ball.

Beck Bamberger:

Wow. Okay, another adjective.

Peter Adams:

Strong.

Beck Bamberger:

Strong. Another part of a pitch.

Peter Adams:

Reaching out on behalf of my client.

Beck Bamberger:

I don't like that. We'll just go with reaching out. Okay. Amount of time.

Peter Adams:

A day.

Beck Bamberger:

Another adjective.

Peter Adams:

Forcefully.

Beck Bamberger:

How about a singular noun?

Peter Adams:

Cow.

Beck Bamberger:

Cow. We're almost done. Topic.

Peter Adams:

Adtech.

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Beck Bamberger:

Then a verb ending in -ing.

Peter Adams:

Running.

Beck Bamberger:

Running. God, someone else today mentioned that. This is the third time I've heard running.

Peter Adams:

One of my things I've been trying to do to keep my head off everything else.

Beck Bamberger:

Your aspiring hobby. Excellent. Then, another verb.

Peter Adams:

Throw.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. All right. Are we ready?

Peter Adams:

This is going to be something really special, I can tell already.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, I think so. Sometimes they're accurate. Let's see. "To me, tech journalism is serving the reader. It consists of correction requests and being a watchdog on the daily. If a pitch has an expeditiously, 'Hey Patrick,' I will absolutely respond to it. However, if a pitch has a strong, 'Just reaching out,' you can expect no reply from me. If a day goes by and you don't see an email back from me, you can just assume I am not forcefully about it. The best stories always have cows and usually about adtech. The best way to reach me is by running it over to me, but can also throw it to me."

Peter Adams:

Nice. Not half bad.

Beck Bamberger:

I love it. Love it.

Peter Adams:

Kind of on the money. I've recently written a campaign about cows, so that's one of the reasons they were top of mind.

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Beck Bamberger:

Wait. Which story was this? I didn't see this in your ... I see a Ben and Jerry's piece, but what? What?

Peter Adams:

It was a Burger King campaign a few weeks ago. It's about sustainability. They're trying to cut down on methane emissions from cows.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh. Yeah. How's that going?

Peter Adams:

Good. It actually ended up proving a little controversial, I think. I don't know.

Beck Bamberger:

Thank you for being on today, Peter. This was fun.

Peter Adams:

Yeah. Thanks so much for having me.

Jered Martin:

Thanks for tuning in to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Peter Adams from Marketing Dive. If you like our show, make sure to subscribe on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts. And, if you have a moment, leave us a review to share your thoughts about the show and today's episode.

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