

Jered Martin:

Welcome to Coffee with a Journalist, a podcast by One Pitch, featuring the tech industry's most well-known journalists. 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, and a whole lot more.

Jered Martin:

On today's show. We're joined by Alana Hope Levenson, deputy editor at MEL Magazine, Alana shares the backstory behind MEL Magazine, the different ways she and her team identify new stories to cover, how you can pitch to the team at MEL Magazine, and a ton more. Let's hear what Alana has to say on today's episode.

Beck Bamberger:

Hey, everyone. Today on Coffee with a Journalist, we have someone in the lifestyle sector. I'm so excited about this. Not that I don't enjoy all our technology people, but Alana Levenson is here. She's the deputy editor of MEL Magazine, as of 2017. Alana, thank you for being here. I'm going to have a lot of fun here today.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Thank you so much for having me and mixing it up.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Someone from the lifestyle space, the dregs. We're the dregs.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes, this is exciting. It's exciting. First off, just for people who are not familiar with MEL Magazine, and it's prominently known in Los Angeles, could you just give a little overview of what's on MEL?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah, sure. So MEL Magazine is a men's magazine that was founded in 2015 by the brand Dollar Shave Club, which is a razor subscription company.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

But it operates as a full independent news organization sort of within the brand. It's a men's magazine, although we kind of like to say, because so many people of all genders read MEL, that it's a magazine from a male point of view. So it's really interested in issues around gender, culture, the Internet, politics, class, mental health, physical health, and how all those things sort of coalesce. The idea was always MEL was a magazine for men you know.

Beck Bamberger:

Men you know. Got it.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yes. Men you actually know, as opposed to some imaginary man that's shopping for a private jet or-

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, with chiseled abs.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah, something like that.

Beck Bamberger:

A 16-pack. Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Right, right.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

So that was sort of the original idea, and I think, over the past couple of years, there are a lot of just regular guys out there looking for stuff to read.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. Ooh, that must be fun to see. Oh, we're going to dive in to the content and things in just a little bit here, but before all of this, Alana, just so that people know, you've had quite a long range career, let's say, so far in media, but you've also been writing for Vice, Rolling Stone, Wired. You've been around, which is great.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I've been around the block.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes, and done long-form features. You've done investigative work, special issues, and so forth. One other thing I want to clarify for people, this just was brought up yesterday in a conversation with founders who were trying to pitch media, deputy editor, what does that mean? Do educate us.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Oh, man. I'll let you in on all the meaningless, weird different-

Beck Bamberger:

Okay, perfect, perfect.

Alana Hope Levenson:

... categories within media. Basically, the editor in chief is the head of the operation. They're the top dog. Deputy, the same way it would mean in other contexts, is sort of like the second in charge or right-hand man or woman. So that basically means that they're an editor with a senior position at the magazine. So they usually, in addition to doing actual day-to-day editing, oversee management of the staff and running the magazine and getting things up online and making sure that everything works together. So that's what they do. They also just do a lot of the management and the day-to-day.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

But the thing is, the title can totally mean different things depending on if you're in print versus digital.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes, yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

It could mean anything. So I'm sorry. I know that probably doesn't help you.

Beck Bamberger:

No, it's like, well, what's a vice president somewhere?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Right, right.

Beck Bamberger:

It's like it totally is different.

Alana Hope Levenson:

But I would say it's an editor that's high up on the masthead-

Beck Bamberger:

Yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

... and that probably works closely with the top person.

Beck Bamberger:

By the way, I just saw this. You were on Folio's 2020 Top Women in Media. Whoop.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Thank you.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I was. I love being an up and comer at 32. It was very cool.

Beck Bamberger:

Hey, awesome.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I love it. No, I love it. I worked a long time to become an up and comer. It makes me feel like I'm just starting out. I have a long time to go.

Beck Bamberger:

This is true.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Can we also talk briefly about your fantastic Halloween costume from this year-

Alana Hope Levenson:

Sure.

Beck Bamberger:

... or actually last year? Everyone, please, you can visit her personal website. You'll see it in the credits so you can go there, but tell us about this fabulous suit.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Well, I love Halloween. It's always been one of my favorite holidays. I just love dressing up. I used to have this meme series called "I call this look," and I actually still do it on social media, where I come up with different identities for my outfits.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh. Oh.

Alana Hope Levenson:

So Halloween to me is sort of like my Christmas. This year was actually kind of a simple year, because I just went with the straightforward pink Power Ranger, but it was really fun because, walking out, so many adults were stopping me and honking, and they were like, "We love your outfit." The Power Ranger seemed to bring people a lot of joy.

Beck Bamberger:

I love that about costumes, when it delights other people.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah, exactly.

Beck Bamberger:

That's one of my favorite things.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Exactly.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. Well, let's go into one thing we always talk about, which is the making of a story, how an actual story, from the concept to actual hit the print, publish button, occurs. How do you think of making a story come to life?

Alana Hope Levenson:

That's a great question. I know I said earlier I wasn't going to talk about a coronavirus story, but you know what?

Beck Bamberger:

That's okay. You can.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Inspiration strikes where it strikes.

Beck Bamberger:

That's right.

Alana Hope Levenson:

So, I mean, I would say I definitely very much came up on the Internet as a reporter and, earlier in my career, wrote about digital culture. So a lot of the ideas I do get are from Twitter or from Internet culture. That's just where most conversations are having. People are having conversations there. That's where they are.

Beck Bamberger:

Now, and are you just scrolling along and looking and seeing what's happening?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah, I think over the years I've just amassed such a weird, insane, intense list of people I follow from all different corners of the world.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay.

Alana Hope Levenson:

So I'm looking at that, but different trending hashtags and just kind of seeing what people are talking about.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

A lot of times, the story isn't that tweet, because we want the story to be more complex than just a tweet, but it will lead to a bigger story. So an example is when the lockdown first started, all the stores were closed and restaurants. It was announced that liquor stores were going to stay open, and I was just seeing a lot of tweets of people being outraged, like, "Why is a liquor store an essential business?" I was like, "That is a really good question."

Alana Hope Levenson:

So I had a reporter look into it, see Brian Smith, because he's our senior features reporter. He basically found that liquor stores are essential businesses because alcoholism is such a problem, and if people with alcohol problems couldn't get access to alcohol all at the same time, it would be like a public health crisis in addition to coronavirus. So we had to keep the liquor stores open so that people didn't have withdrawals from alcohol.

Beck Bamberger:

God.

Alana Hope Levenson:

That was a really interesting story, because it just came from one random tweet, and he ended up speaking to people all over at rehabs about sort of the fear of liquor stores closing and what that would mean for the addiction community and just what would happen to ERs during the time period.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Sort of a bummer story, but I thought it was really interesting, and it was answering the question that a lot of people were thinking at the time.

Beck Bamberger:

So in terms of where you're getting inspiration for stories, it just might be coming from your Twitter scroll.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yes. But it's also from ... I've always thought that ... I've never really bought the impartial journalist sort of myth. I think a lot of my best stories come from things I'm thinking about, things that have happened to me, things I'm noticing, and I always encourage the reporters I work to and tell them that, a lot of times, their best stories are happening in their own communities or in their families, in their own life history. So a lot of stories are also just from things I'm hearing and noticing in my own life.

Beck Bamberger:

Life.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yes.

Beck Bamberger:

Then what about for your team? You were saying you encourage them to do the same, but is that how you'd say your staff is generating story ideas? Are they scrolling through Reddit, for example? Are they looking at maybe all the Hearst publications, seeing what they're doing?

Alana Hope Levenson:

I think we definitely ... They're never pitching me something that's based on something someone else has done.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

They know that that won't get through. So it has to be original in the sense that, sure, it's from the Internet, but it hasn't been covered a bunch. If it has been covered by a Conde Nast publication, I'll probably say, "Well, it's already been done, so we can't do it." But I think MEL is a very editor-forward publication in that the editors do a lot of pitching and also, I think, sort of set the tone for how the pitching works. So I think a lot of them are either looking on the Internet, as I do, Reddit, Twitter, all that stuff, Facebook, or they're bringing stuff from their own lives, too.

Beck Bamberger:

Facebook. Wow. That still has relevance? I mean, yeah, two billion people are on there, so ...

Alana Hope Levenson:

I actually think there's a lot of good stories there, especially about ... We're in sort of the liberal bubble of Los Angeles.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I think there's a world that exists on Facebook.

Beck Bamberger:

There's a deep world. Yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

There's a deep world that I don't think that reporters, if they're living on either coast, would necessarily just bump into on the street.

Beck Bamberger:

So true. How about your inbox? What does it look like on a day-to-day basis? Do you have hundreds of emails, two emails?

Alana Hope Levenson:

I hate to bore you, but I am an inbox zero person.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. You're in the same camp. There's some people I talk to, they have like 40,000 emails.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I understand that. I wouldn't be able to sleep at night. I just can't do it.

Beck Bamberger:

So how often does it hit zero, weekly, daily?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Right now, I have one email in there.

Beck Bamberger:

One?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

We're talking on a Friday, by the way. That's good. Way to end the week.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah, yeah. I would say I try to keep it ... It's rarely above ten.

Beck Bamberger:

Wow. Okay. You have to tell us your secrets.

Alana Hope Levenson:

That doesn't mean that I can respond to every pitch, though.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay, gotcha.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Some things are being filtered to others.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. So then tell us a little bit ... How many pitches do you get a day or in a week?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Maybe 30.

Beck Bamberger:

A day? A week?

Alana Hope Levenson:

No, a week.

Beck Bamberger:

A week. 30. Okay. That's not crazy.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I mean, it totally depends.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I don't know. That actually is probably low, because we have a general pitch account that we're also getting emails that I look at.

Beck Bamberger:

Ooh, is that your job to look at that general one?

Alana Hope Levenson:

We all look at it. Yes.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, wow. Oh, wow.

Alana Hope Levenson:

That's the other thing, is we don't have an assistant. So we all kind of do stuff like that.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, man. So that's the first time I've heard that there's a ... I mean, I know every media outlet usually has that info@whatever email, but so there's a general inbox, and you guys go in there and you just scan it. Then you'll pluck out something you think is interesting. This is the first time I'm hearing that that's actually shared among a team, and they actually look at it.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I wouldn't say that a ton of pitches come through that, because, typically, I would say better pitches typically come directly to an editor that there's some sort of familiarity there.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

But I also think it's important to have an open pitch line for people that don't ... You know what I mean? To make it more egalitarian, and we do look at it. Yeah, we look at all of them. I don't think we get back to everyone, but we're reviewing it.

Beck Bamberger:

Got it.

Alana Hope Levenson:

We've had some of our ... One of my best writers came in through that.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, so someone got even a job [crosstalk 00:12:40].

Alana Hope Levenson:

Oh, well, he's a freelance writer.

Beck Bamberger:

Freelancer. Okay, yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

But, I mean, sure.

Beck Bamberger:

Still, that's great.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah. But, again, we're a small magazine, and we're run very, very differently. I highly doubt ... There's no way the GQ pitch inbox is being read.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, exactly, exactly. But that's good to know. Actual humans are looking at your general one.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

So if you don't know who to go to, you could, I guess, go there.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yes. pitches@mellindustries.com.

Beck Bamberger:

There you go. Would you prefer, though, knowing now that we know that, would you prefer them still to come directly to you, or are you like, "Yeah, just put them in that general", because then that's more democratic, and maybe someone else will look at it? What are my chances if I don't know you?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Well, I think your chances might be higher because there are a bunch of different editors with different interests that see that.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. Look the whole thing. Oh, okay.

Alana Hope Levenson:

When you're pitching to me, it's just kind of my ... I'm going to go with the things I'm most interested in.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. Okay. Good insight.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Unique perspective on this one. Congrats on your inbox of zero. Wow. Fantastic. Okay. How about we play a word association game? Are you ready?

Alana Hope Levenson:

I'm ready. I am ready.

Beck Bamberger:

You just say the first thing.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Okay. Let's see.

Beck Bamberger:

Let's do it. Let's do it. Okay. Here we go. Food.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Chicken nuggets.

Beck Bamberger:

Damn. That's a good one. No one has said that.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I'm having the craving. When you're having the craving ...

Beck Bamberger:

See, this is why you've got to just do it live. Okay. Drink.

Alana Hope Levenson:

7UP.

Beck Bamberger:

Hobby.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Knitting.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, yes. Print.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Magazines.

Beck Bamberger:

San Francisco.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Hometown.

Beck Bamberger:

New York City.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Never sleeps.

Beck Bamberger:

Los Angeles.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Peace.

Beck Bamberger:

Ben Affleck.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Hot.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. Just for people to know ...

Alana Hope Levenson:

I've been a big part of Ben Affleck hive fan.

Beck Bamberger:

Wow. Is there a name for such people? You wrote an article on him.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I did. I did. But wait, what did we call him in that? Oh, Bennonites.

Beck Bamberger:

Bennonites?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh my God.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I know. I hope he's listening to this.

Beck Bamberger:

I hope he is. We'll send it. We'll send it.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Thank you.

Beck Bamberger:

Features.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Amazing.

Beck Bamberger:

Branded content.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Mixed bag. How about that?

Beck Bamberger:

Mixed bag. Yeah. Journalism.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Sad.

Beck Bamberger:

Pitch.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Me.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, that's so good.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Am I the first person that's done that?

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, 100%, 100%.

Alana Hope Levenson:

My mind works in really mysterious ways.

Beck Bamberger:

I'm sure. Patrick can validate, our producer, but yeah. Okay. Then inbox. Well, I know the answer to that.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Zero, baby.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, that's so good.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I mean, look, now I'm saying this, it's going to pile up and get insane.

Beck Bamberger:

It's going to be like 15. It's going to be like 15.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. What are you reading right now?

Alana Hope Levenson:

So this is a great question to ask me, because I read so much for work. Because I'm editing primarily the features, which are the long stories, I'm reading all day as my job. Then I'm also reading other things to get a sense of what other people are doing and what's going on in the world. So the last thing I want to do is read in my free time, even fiction.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I love reading that, but that's just not always what I want to do. But right now I'm doing *The Artist's Way*. I don't know if you've ever heard of that. It's by Julia Cameron.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. You're not the first person who's told me this.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Oh my God. Yeah. So it's this amazing book that's been around for decades that's supposed to help people get past creative blocks or sort of unlock their inner artist. It sounds a little cheesy, but-

Beck Bamberger:

It says, "*The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*."

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yes, exactly.

Beck Bamberger:

25th anniversary edition is out.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah. Get it while it's good.

Beck Bamberger:

Get it while it's-

Alana Hope Levenson:

Hot.

Beck Bamberger:

Still young.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah. So I'm starting to read that, and part of that is it's a three-month commitment of close to an hour every day.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh.

Alana Hope Levenson:

You have to get up early and do these things called morning pages, where every day, first thing, you get up. You write three pages of just stream of consciousness before you do anything.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, wow.

Alana Hope Levenson:

It's really interesting. So I've been doing that.

Beck Bamberger:

Is it specific to writing?

Alana Hope Levenson:

No. The book actually works better ... It's designed for people who aren't artists. A lot of people that have best success with it are people who maybe liked art or writing or whatever it may be when they were younger, but now we're in totally different industries, and it's supposed to really help you get in touch with that part of yourself. It's actually really hard, it's harder for writers, because we ...

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

It's really hard for me to do stream of consciousness, right? Because I'm editing it in my head. I'm like, "That's terrible."

Beck Bamberger:

You're constantly ... Yeah. Yes, yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah. So I would actually say it's for everyone, probably more so if you're not a writer.

Beck Bamberger:

I just bought it. It's coming on Sunday.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Oh my gosh. I'm so excited for you. But anyway, I've loved reading that, because-

Beck Bamberger:

Yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

... journalism is very much a grind, and it is creative. It's easy to lose sight of that when you're in the grind.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. I think sometimes what often happens is something is fun to you, like cooking can be fun, but then as soon as you've got to do it every day or you've got to do it for someone else or there's expectations of you doing it a certain way, it's like now that's how it becomes not fun.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Absolutely, absolutely.

Beck Bamberger:

So totally can relate.

Alana Hope Levenson:

It's kind of helping me see writing not as a job.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes. That's good.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

What do you think about the future of journalism?

Alana Hope Levenson:

So yes, I'm sorry that I said journalism when I said sad was my first thought.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

The act of it isn't sad. It makes me sad to think about sort of the state of it right now. I mean, right now, we're just seeing, because of ... Honestly the industry was totally falling apart long, long, long before coronavirus. Honestly, the entirety of my career ... I graduated in 2009 into the recession, and there's never really been a great time. I mean, there was a moment in time where all of these venture capitalists were investing in news sites, and so there were all these sites to work for, like BuzzFeed and Fusion.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes, yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

These are sites that didn't exist anymore. So there was that brief time where we're all getting jobs, but it didn't last very long. So I've sort of just watched layoff after layoff after layoff. Now with coronavirus, it's just reached a fever pitch of it happening literally everywhere. I would say the only hope that I have, though, is that, at some point ... This can't get much worse.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

So maybe after this ... I have been saying for years the advertising model does not work. It's like a broken model, and the traffic model doesn't work. I think now, finally, everyone's accepting that. So whatever we do going forward, we all know the jury is in on the existing model not working.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Somewhere in there is hope. I still think that there is more potential. Again, we're in the middle of a recession, so even brands aren't doing great, but I still think that there's way more potential in brand-backed media, which is the model MEL has.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes, yes.

Alana Hope Levenson:

We have not done layoffs in our time, and we operate on a different sort of system, which has its own unique challenges. It's by no means right for every single newsroom, but I think there's some hope there.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, actually, let's educate here for a second. For people who don't know what a branded media outlet is, you already mentioned it's from Dollar Shave Club, but can you explain to folks listening so that they're very clear?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yes. Sure. So, originally, there was this idea of branded content, which was brands sort of funding journalism that was essentially an ad, but that read like an editorial, and this, for many reasons, was seen very poorly in the journalism community, because it's not journalism if it's being paid for by a brand.

Beck Bamberger:

Exactly.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Right. So it had this dirty word, and I think that's why people are really weary of partnering with brands in any way. But what we're in now and what MEL does is that the brand simply funds us, but lets us operate. We don't write about razors.

Beck Bamberger:

Independent.

Alana Hope Levenson:

We've never written about razors.

Beck Bamberger:

Exactly, exactly.

Alana Hope Levenson:

They don't actually weigh in on our content at all. But the mere association of having us increases their visibility and sales. So that's why we exist, sort of as like a marketing arm. But yeah, so I think a big hurdle it had in the beginning was getting over that perception that we're just ... and we still see it. It's so funny. We've done so many investigations and so much legitimate journalism, but people will be like, "This is owned by Dollar" ... Once in a while, they just can't get past that, and it's like I think we're going to have to get to the point where we do and realize that even our favorite newspapers are owned by big corporations.

Beck Bamberger:

Or billionaires.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah. So everyone is owned by someone.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, yeah. I mean, I wonder, does the Washington Post deal with this?

Alana Hope Levenson:

No. So we're always saying that. Well, why don't they get more criticism, or what about their coverage of Amazon or The Ringer and HBO?

Beck Bamberger:

Exactly. I don't think I've ever seen a comment in the user comments on, "Well this is Amazon's publication."

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah. Well, I think that's because they have the history, and it's hard when you're a new publication and you haven't already established a bunch of reader sort of sympathy and trust.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah, I think there is a future in that. Of course, taken too far can always be a slippery slope. So it's cool. Billionaires on it or whatever, and it's totally independent. But then when you get something that's not, it's like, "Ooh."

Alana Hope Levenson:

Sure. On the other hand, they've done such great work regardless and won Pulitzers under his ownership.

Beck Bamberger:

That is [crosstalk 00:23:12].

Alana Hope Levenson:

I think we're going to have to start to get comfortable with different ownership models.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

I think it's true, because otherwise, the ads aren't paying for these things.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yes.

Beck Bamberger:

There you go.

Alana Hope Levenson:

So I hope that wasn't too sad.

Beck Bamberger:

No, I don't think it's sad at all. Would you go into journalism again, now knowing the state of it?

Alana Hope Levenson:

No.

Beck Bamberger:

No?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

A few people say no. Okay. Well, then what else would you to be doing?

Alana Hope Levenson:

I'm not sure.

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, okay.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I don't know. Maybe I'll regret saying that, but I don't think it would be wise to advise anyone to go into an industry that's so unstable. I don't know at this point how you build an actual life in it, given how volatile it is. You know, what? If someone is independently wealthy, sure.

Beck Bamberger:

Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I think it depends on your circumstances as a person, but I think there might be another Golden Age, and my response to that would be different. But I think there's a lot of ways ... Even though I do lifestyle journalism, I do really like impacting the conversation around gender and inequality, and I love Internet culture and all that stuff. I think maybe there are other ways to be really impactful in that space that don't involve journalism-

Beck Bamberger:

Possibly.

Alana Hope Levenson:

... that maybe are a little bit more stable of a career. But I hope not everyone answers my way.

Beck Bamberger:

You're a rare answer, I'd say, in this camp. Even some people reluctantly say, "Oh, yeah, yeah, I still would. I love it too much."

Alana Hope Levenson:

Even since this past corona thing?

Beck Bamberger:

Oh, yeah. Yes, yes. We've got some diehards out there.

Alana Hope Levenson:

So many journalists are out of work. It's just really scary.

Beck Bamberger:

I know. I know.

Alana Hope Levenson:

But, I mean, I'm also in the lifestyle space, so I think it's slightly different.

Beck Bamberger:

It is a bit different if it's, yeah, the tech space.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yeah.

Beck Bamberger:

Well, let's end hopefully on a more positive note.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Okay.

Beck Bamberger:

Alana, let's see what we can do here. We're going to do our little mad lib. So I'm going to just give you the words, and then I'm going to put them all together and we'll read back what we get.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Okay.

Beck Bamberger:

Are you ready?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. First off, what's just a general catchphrase?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Just do it.

Beck Bamberger:

What's a journalist's scare phrase?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Plagiarism.

Beck Bamberger:

Ooh. Yes. What about an empowering journalism buzzword?

Alana Hope Levenson:

That's hard. Empowering?

Beck Bamberger:

A Pulitzer.

Alana Hope Levenson:

What's the example?

Beck Bamberger:

I said a Pulitzer. How about that?

Alana Hope Levenson:

No, that was actually my first thought.

Beck Bamberger:

Seriously? Oh, let's put it down.

Alana Hope Levenson:

But that's an award.

Beck Bamberger:

So what? That's empowering.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Sure. Let's do it.

Beck Bamberger:

Let's keep it. Let's keep it.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Okay.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay. Okay, adjective.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Yellow.

Beck Bamberger:

Part of a pitch.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Part of a pitch?

Beck Bamberger:

Another adjective.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Soft.

Beck Bamberger:

What's another part of a pitch?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Why are you laughing?

Beck Bamberger:

No, no. We'll see. We'll see. Okay. What's another part of a pitch?

Alana Hope Levenson:

What's another part of a pitch? Subject line.

Beck Bamberger:

Okay, okay. Amount of time.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Minute.

Beck Bamberger:

Another adjective.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Hard.

Beck Bamberger:

Hard?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Beck Bamberger:

Perfect. Singular noun.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Dog.

Beck Bamberger:

Topic.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Topic?

Beck Bamberger:

Like Ben Affleck.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Okay. Animals.

Beck Bamberger:

Then what's a verb that ends in -ing?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Running.

Beck Bamberger:

Running. Great. Then what's just a regular verb, just any verb?

Alana Hope Levenson:

Care.

Beck Bamberger:

Are you ready? I'm going to read it back.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I'm ready. [crosstalk 00:26:59].

Beck Bamberger:

Here we go. To me, journalism is just do it. It consists of plagiarism and Pulitzers on the daily. If a pitch has a yellow hook, I will absolutely respond to it. However, if a pitch has a soft subject line, you can expect no reply for me. That's probably accurate. If a minute goes by and you don't see an email back from me, you can just assume I am not hard about it. The best stories always have dogs and are usually about animals. The best way to reach me is by running to me, or you can also care about me.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Wow. Wow.

Beck Bamberger:

Is that rather accurate?

Alana Hope Levenson:

I mean, I loved that.

Beck Bamberger:

It's great.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I love it.

Beck Bamberger:

Alana, this was so fun.

Alana Hope Levenson:

This was so great. Thank you so much.

Beck Bamberger:

Thank you. Plagiarism and Pulitzers. That's my favorite part right there.

Alana Hope Levenson:

I mean, that [crosstalk 00:27:48], and I liked just do it, too.

Beck Bamberger:

Yes, yes. Thanks again.

Alana Hope Levenson:

Thank you so much.

Jered Martin:

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist, featuring Alana Hope Levenson from MEL Magazine. Make sure to subscribe to our show on iTunes, Spotify, and Google Podcasts. If you'd like to know more about One Pitch, head to our website at onepitch.co to learn about the unique ways we're helping journalists and public relations professionals start great stories. We'll be back next week with an all-new guest and even more insights about the tech journalists you want to learn more about.