

**SWMS Editorial Teleconference Series:**

**Julia Angwin, senior technology editor  
The Wall Street Journal—WSJ.com**

August 2009



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Julia Angwin is the innovator in WSJ tech edit. In recent months she launched a new video series and a feature on new applications. She's the most senior staff expert on social media trends. Save your tactical correspondence for Andrew LaVallee, who runs the Digits blog day to day. Julia wants to hear the big idea, the concept that will get people talking and keep them talking. Remember, she's the innovator. She's a franchise builder. And she's willing to listen.

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**Highlights:**

**Reviews: "Worth It?"**

"Worth It?" aims to just expand on our review franchise... A totally different positioning than Walt [Mossberg]... Women reviewing gadgets... Things that people buy and need to make decisions on and aren't well reviewed

**New video talent**

Marisa Taylor, Lauren Goode, Courtney Banks and Stacey Delo

**Expanded opportunities**

"The truth is that we're an expansion team... We're the free content of the Journal that brings you to the tech page that makes you want to subscribe and get the website and get all of the content that is paid, so we're a teaser."



*Julia Angwin*  
*The Wall Street Journal*

**Julia's Role**

I run the tech section online. We hadn't really had anyone running it, and so the tech section online was the same content that you saw in the paper. My job was to expand on that. One of the challenges of that is that our website is mostly paid, so I've developed somewhat of a presence through some of the features that are free, so those can be distributed around the web and gain a little bit more awareness of our great technology coverage in the blogosphere, and just for things to spread virally.

**The Expansion Team**

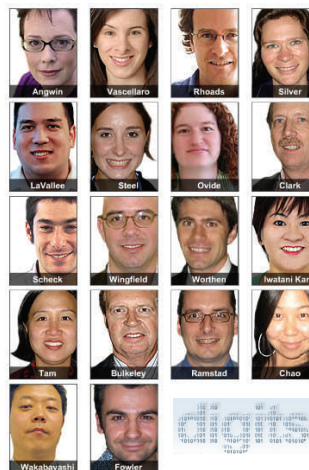
The truth is that we're an expansion team... We're the free content of the Journal that brings you to the tech page that makes you want to subscribe and get the website and get all of the content that is paid, so we're a teaser.

All, these young, fresh faces that you're looking at are not all old war horses. This is the Journal's tech staff, still is unrivaled in size and scope around the world. I also think it's important to note that the diversity of our staff, if you look at the competition on 42nd Street, they have their lineup, and it doesn't look anywhere near as diverse.

**Break news**

We're really news-driven, so Digits' first goal is to break news. We love to break news. We love exclusives. We have less room in the paper than we used to for those stories, so smaller breaking news stories or things that are just not material enough for the paper are things that go in Digits.

If you want to be really smart about getting in on breaking news, since that's our first priority, there is an opportunity there. We often take stories that are breaking and peel off a piece of them for Digits, so if you have a smart and quick analysis of something that's just happening—like Facebook is having some new feature—and your expert can point to a smart analysis or even better, something concrete like a place where some other site has used the same technique to better or for worse or something like that. Something concrete that's really within the timeframe of a few hours within the news breaks, that's a great, great opportunity to get onto Digits, so I would say that's the best way to do it.



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Julia Angwin  
The Wall Street Journal

In terms of trends, they have to be newsy. This is a blog. It's updated several times a day. It's not the spot for a think piece on the future of voice over IP, but if there's something really cool – a new, cool feature in voice over IP, we'll mention trends that are going on.

#### More on Digits...

Things that really work well right now on Digits are exclusive news, Q&A's with important executives. Sometimes we just can't get a big Q&A into the paper and Digits is a great place for that. We did one with [AT&T's] Randall Stephenson recently. We've also just recently started a feature called App Watch, where we pick one app a week to profile, so those are three things to know about on Digits.

#### First stop: beat reporter

The beat reporter is the first stop for everything because the beat reporters are really contributing to Digits the most... if you send it to me I will just forward it to them, and then they'll be annoyed, so honestly it's best to just go to them directly. However, you can copy in Andrew [LaVallee] if you want because sometimes when the beat reporters are too busy, they kick it to Andrew anyway, and if there's something that just falls between beats, Andrew is definitely the first stop.

#### Trends of personal interest

I'm obsessed with social networking... I do find it incredibly fascinating how this world is going to evolve and all these tiny companies that have grown up around the social networking sites. There's a huge monetization issue here, but all the eyeballs are there. I think it's going to be a great story that plays out over the next few years.

#### The Decoder [Julia's own column]

The way I think of it is that we now live our life online on the web in a way that we didn't before. My goal is to really help people navigate that experience. It's not a review, but it aims to be a guide for how to live online — not so much etiquette, but just what kind of scams are out there and how to behave in certain situations... It's a hard thing to pitch because mostly these things are generated from my own experience and although I do report them heavily, if there are really smart people out there with smart thoughts and really smart pitches, I'll be happy to take them, but I would recommend just looking through the archive to see what kind of stuff I've been writing.

#### Exclusives

We love exclusives. Embargoes are always really tricky for us...they just tie our hands too much. Generally it's not true that we don't take them, but it's very difficult for us to accept them, so it's best done for something really important. We have to go through a lot of layers of editors here to get approval to accept an embargo. I literally have to go up to the top editor of the paper to be approved, so if you don't have a topic that's worth of the attention of the top editor of the Wall Street Journal, you're not going to get your embargo approved, but exclusives are great.

One thing that we love online is something to post in the morning. Our best traffic is, like most websites, from 6:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. or 11:00 A.M., when people get in and start checking for fresh stuff, and we love fresh news that we can post at that time, and so if it's exclusive to us and it's only on the Journal, all the better.

#### Worth It?

- Worth It? aims to just expand on our review franchise. Mossberg is, of course, our top reviewer, and really the unimpeachable, best reviewer out there. Now the thing is, he can't review everything... A totally different positioning than Walt... Women reviewing gadgets... There's a whole world of gadgets out there... Things that people buy and need to make decisions on and aren't well reviewed
- What people are looking for online tends to be a lot more utilitarian – "What should I buy?"
- We do the cell phones that no one ever thinks about, that people really do have to make a decision about because they can't afford the iPhone.
- Digital cameras... We try to pick out a few every quarter that really stand out
- Radios...
- We did some earphones that are noise isolating
- The woman approach is also a nice one because it's very ungeeky. Does it work? Do the wires get tangled up in your purse? Basic questions.

*Sam:* It seems like a minefield, though, because it's a slippery slope to fall into stereotypes.

*Julia:* Well, it's not called Pink Gadgets. It's called Worth It? Is this gadget worth it? Is it worth the price? It's a very utilitarian message.

The woman aspect of it is pretty subtle. We just happen to use women reviewers because I find that they are (A) good on video and (B) they fill a



Julia Angwin  
The Wall Street Journal

niche in the market. Most reviewers are men, across the internet. On any website that reviews gadgets, the majority of reviewers are men, so I felt like it was a space that was unexplored, but it does not mean we're reviewing pink gadgets. We did one segment early on where we reviewed a few pink gadgets, just to make fun of them, and then we decided that that even was too boring and we gave up on pink altogether.

#### **Talent that is Worth It**

Marisa Taylor, Lauren Goode, Courtney Banks and Stacey Delo. Stacey Delo who's in our San Francisco office and has been doing Wall Street Journal video for a long time, is really the lead reviewer for Worth It? Lauren Goode works in New York and mostly has been doing production here in the video group until such time as I discovered her for Worth It? Marisa Taylor and Courtney Banks are freelancers, and I hope that can eventually bring them on staff.

#### **Generating ideas**

Every journalist has their own approach, but really great sources are my best approach. Smart people in the industry who I know well and admire their thinking are often the people who point me to trends. Some of those people I follow on Twitter but most of them I talk to one-to-one. I think most reporters would say the same, but that doesn't mean we aren't voraciously consuming everything else. We are reading all the tweets and all the blogs, and we're checking all of our feeds all the time, so being a journalist is like being a sponge. Sometimes you can't even remember where the information came from because you're just soaking in so much of it all the time.

#### **Events, shows**

I haven't been going to any shows. Our reporters go all the time, and they really get a lot out of it. I have, over my career, gone to so many. Sometimes it's just a little bit like being thrown into water with piranhas because you have that badge on that says, "Wall Street Journal," and people literally clomp onto you, and it can be very stressful.

#### **Facebook & Twitter**

My policy on Facebook is that I accept all friend requests. It implies no relationship between myself and the person because as a reporter who protects my sources, I couldn't think of a better way to just insulate myself from any sort of assumption, because PR people also try to figure out who your sources were by who your friends are. You can take many different approaches; you can close down your Facebook profile altogether. I just decided that I would be just be friends with everybody, and so feel free to friend me. It doesn't mean anything (Laughter), but I like to have a bigger friend count.

I have my own Twitter, juliaangwin, that is separate from Digits, although I retweet most of Digits, just to get the word out there to my followers, but my Twitter feed is a little bit separate because my identity is not only the technology editor but also about the MySpace book, so there's a little bit of a combination of both in there.

#### **Automotive Tech**

Some aspects of it we care about as technology, but we do have some automotive reporters, and we have a lot of automotive reporters who really spend more time and are smarter about this stuff, so they would be more interested on that topic.

#### **Venture Capital Dispatch**

Venture Capital Dispatch is the Dow Jones paid newsletter, and they have a blog. They also have their same free/paid distinction, so they have a free blog that is meant to drive traffic to their paid newsletter. They have really great content and now that some of it is free. We post some of it on Digits as a cross-post, just to help them out, and also because we think it's great content.

#### **Don Clark**

I'm a huge fan. I've always been, and he's a legend. I can't compete with Don Clark... We talk a lot. Don, Pui-Wing, and Steve Yoder really run the San Francisco tech coverage and I'm — a lot of times we're coordinating how to cover things for the web, so we talk all the time.

#### **Contact:**

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Email is always best. Oftentimes we're on deadline and phone is really intrusive. The blog moves fast, and we have to turn things around really quickly, so I tend to be a little sharp with people sometimes when they interrupt me on the phone. I do read the emails and I do pass them on. However, as I said before, you should go directly to the beat reporter first and then I should be the last resort. It should be beat reporter, then Andrew, then me.