

## Mandy Jenkins Interactives Editor, Digital First Media

### Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Welcome to It's All Journalism. I'm Megan Cloherty, here today with Mike O'Connell. Let's get social, as in social media, of course. Our guest today is Mandy Jenkins, the interactives editor at [Digital First Media](#). Before taking that job, she was the social news editor at [The Huffington Post](#), so it's fair to say she knows her way around Tweetdeck. Good morning, Mandy. Thanks for being with us.

### Mandy Jenkins, interactive editor, Digital First Media

Good morning. Thanks for having me.

### Megan Cloherty

Before we get into social media, tell us about Digital First and your new gig.

### Mandy Jenkins

Well, Digital First, for those that aren't really familiar with it, it's kind of a strange animal, cause we're a digital company that's overseeing two newspaper companies, essentially. So, our CEO John Paton said he's going to put digital people in charge and that's what he did. So, I work for kind of the national part that's overseeing newspaper companies, which, if you told me a few years ago that I would be working in newspapers again, I probably would've laughed at you. But it's an exciting place where we're doing a lot of experimenting and trying out new storytelling forms, just trying to figure things out. My role there, I oversee the data team and the video team, and I also work a lot in community engagement with our local newsrooms.

### Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Cool. So, is there any particular project that you worked on recently?

### Mandy Jenkins

Well, right now, we've kind of been essentially pulling the teams together. We're probably doing one of the craziest hiring sprees that's probably happening in newspapers right now. So, we've been getting our team together and getting the situated. But, one of the things that I've been working on quite a bit is rolling out a product that we built with a vendor called Social Media Wire. You can see that on the *New Haven Register's* [web-site](#). They were our first site to test it. It's really interesting. It's essentially pulling together local feeds of RSS, local blogs, YouTube channels, different tweets from all around an area to try to give a place to focus in on what's happening in social media there. So, I've been doing that in like 70 some cities, so it's been pretty crazy to build that.

### Michael O'Connell

So, is the idea behind that then is to sort of build community engagement for a particular news outlet?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Right. It's kind of trying to pull together the people who read newspapers and the people who read social media. Because this way, someone can see what's happening in social media on other sites in there area, but they don't necessarily have to be on Twitter yet to see that. So, it's kind of a blending of worlds that goes on with it.

### **Michael O'Connell**

That's so funny. I was at a sporting goods store a few months ago and it was for ... the Espy's was on. One of the broadcasters all of a sudden he said, "Well, if you look at the bottom of us, you'll see something scrolling by. That's our Twitter feed. Don't be afraid. You can sort of keep track of what's going on."

### **Megan Cloherty**

Like it was a separate world?

### **Michael O'Connell**

Exactly. Don't be afraid whatever this message is.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Watch out for that Twitter.

### **Megan Cloherty**

So, you have to figure out who are their original followers in that community and then maybe try and pull in some new ones? Do you go to each of these cities? How does that work?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Well, essentially, we're working with the local editors there and they're saying these are the sources in our area that our readers find interesting, which can be kind of hard for them, because a lot of time that means their competition is involved in these feeds too. Because we want it to be pretty well rounded. We want the reader to come this and it's just a box essentially that's on the side of a lot of their pages and then there's a full screen version where they can see all of this happening.

### **Megan Cloherty**

So they don't have to go to their competition, they can see it all there.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

They can just browse it there and hang out on the site and watch the news go by. Everyone's gotten so used to the bottomline on CNN and ESPN. It's kind of the next step.

## Michael O'Connell

Was there a tough sell for some of those newsrooms that, you know, "OK, you're going to have to acknowledge that you have competition and that they're part of this dialogue?"

## Mandy Jenkins

Some places, yeah. You can't necessarily blame them when you're thinking, "Why would I send someone to their website?" But, when we start talking about the fact that we're talking about people staying on this site, looking at it here. If they want to see more, they'll click off. But, I mean, they're going to come back if they know that this is here. We're creating a hub here. Once you kind of get that part going, it's a lot easier to digest. You're kind of at the local level of dealing with that.

## Megan Cloherty

You've build a career in social media journalism. How did you go from traditional journalism to social media? Did that happen sort of on it's own, or did you direct it that way?

## Mandy Jenkins

I definitely directed it that way. In hindsight, I kind of can't believe I guessed right. Because it was 2007, and I was a web producer for news for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. I was placing the news on their sites, watching their analytics, kind of doing a traditional producer-type job. And, I wanted to do something bigger. I wanted to be something more there. I wasn't necessarily what you would say "in-line for a management position." There was already a ton of managers there. So, I was like, "I need to find my place here."

I had started to notice more about social media. I was reading about it. There weren't a ton of news outlets using it yet. I think it was only the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Austin Statesman* that had been doing any big experimenting there. I was like, "I'm going to be our social media editor."

So, I wrote up this huge manifesto of sorts of why I thought our paper should be in social media, exactly what the structure should be for how we would roll this out to reporters, how we train reporters, the role that everyone would take in the newsroom, and using social media on our site, like comments and forums, plus Twitter and Facebook.

I gave this to our editor, thinking, "He's probably going to laugh at me, because who has a social media editor? Any newspaper in 2007?" They actually bought it, which I couldn't believe. So, February of '08 was when I became the social media editor, and I actually had to go do all the things that I put in that manifesto. I'm really glad I did. It was scary, because, really, I called the only two other social media editors that I'd even heard of and was asking them about their jobs, trying to figure out my way. But, it seemed to work out, so I'll take it.

## Megan Cloherty

How long did you stay at the paper before you decided to move to bigger things?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Oh, I was there until 2010, when I went to *TBD*, and that was just an offer I couldn't refuse.

### **Michael O'Connell**

We've had a couple of *TBD* alums in here, [Steve Buttry](#), [Jim Brady](#), of course. Can you just sort of just in a nutshell for those who may not have heard those podcasts and who may not be familiar with *TBD*, what *TBD* was and sort of its brief, bright, shining moment in social media and digital media in general?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

*TBD*'s kind of like the *Freaks & Geeks* of local news.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Thirteen episodes, that's all it was all.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Thirteen episodes. Everyone went on to do other things that were interesting.

But, essentially, *TBD* was a local news startup here in Washington, D.C., that was started by Jim Brady and he had come from [WashingtonPost.com](#) and wanted to do something new and different. So, we teamed up with Allbritton Communications, who had [Politico](#). And it had a very exciting atmosphere there because essentially they were going out hiring people kind of for non-traditional, local journalism roles. We had reporters and editors, but we had a big community engagement team. We were working with television. We were doing a bunch of experimentation with new tools and new kinds of storytelling. And I, coming from the Midwest, first of all, thought for sure they would never hire anyone from the Midwest for this job. And I think I was one of two people that was hired not from the East Coast.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Well, Steve Buttry was from Iowa.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Well, he's been everywhere. Buttry knows no borders.

### **Megan Cloherty**

That's true. That's very true.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

It was a very interesting place because we had a lot of freedom to try lots of different things there.

### Megan Cloherty

What are you doing now that you learned from that experience, because I know that that experience for most of people that we talked to was a huge take away. What are you doing from there?

### Michael O'Connell

And I think people looked a lot, I think, to what *TBD* had done. Some people clucked their tongues and said, "Oh, well, they lived and they died." But I think that they saw a lot of lessons that came of that, good lessons.

### Mandy Jenkins

Yeah, definitely. I think a lot of us took away, for one thing, how important collaboration is, particularly if you're working in smaller staffs. Not only just collaboration internally. I mean, obviously, working across your own departments, but working outside too.

We built a network of locals blogs here in the D.C. area that really made it so we're kind of pulling all this news together from D.C. and Virginia and Maryland that really hadn't been done. I mean, our main competitor newswise was *The Post*, and how do you even compete with *The Washington Post*? They're huge. But this is kind of like amassing an army of small things to tackle a big news problem, which was a lack of local news in some areas of D.C.

I think that collaboration was something that inspired a lot of us. A lot of us went on to do a lot more of that, a lot more with crowdsourcing, a lot more with working with other writers, and generally, just a lot more continuing to experiment with how we wanted to write news, report news and find sources.

### Michael O'Connell

I know we were talking before we started recording. You came and you spoke to the class that Megan and I were in at American University, [Amy Eisman](#)'s class, another guest that we had here before. And at the time you told the story of the sort of hostage-shooting thing at the Discovery Channel and how that was kind of a watershed moment for *TBD* and the way that you were doing your news. Can you sort of tell that story?

### Mandy Jenkins

Yeah, sure. We had only been going for about a month. We had launched *TBD* in early August and I think this was Sept. 1, when this happened. And, we had an initial report from I think it was the spouse of someone that worked here at the TV station had called us and said there was a hostage situation happening. So, we were able to kind of get our heads together really before it was reported that it happened. So that meant that, yeah, the news station sent their helicopter. We had a reporter going. But the place was already shut down. So, what I did, as being the social media editor, being nosy anyway, I opened up a bunch of Twitter searches, cause I was trying to find people who were ei-

ther tweeting from inside the building or near the building. Try to get an idea of how we could get sources that were already inside of there.

Doing this before the news was reported ended up being the best thing I could've done, cause it was so much easier to get it before people were reacting to it. So, just by doing a lot of keyword searches and doing some location based searches around that area, I didn't find anyone inside the building tweeting, but I did find people in the adjacent buildings who were also locked in. Think about if you're locked in a building because of a gunman. You are not getting any work done. Nobody is working when that happens, so everyone is on Twitter. They're taking photos out their office windows. They're tweeting them. I was getting in touch with these people via Twitter to say, "Hey, tell me what you're seeing. Can we use your photos?" And when they gave us permission, we used their photos on our site. We used them on television. It was a huge asset to have people who had this bird's-eye view and tell us what they were seeing.

I think we had at least three to five sources that were either contributing something online, or were actually talking on television. They were giving us tips of what they were seeing, what they were hearing. And it was something that nobody else really had because nobody could get into this perimeter. It was all shut down with the SWAT team.

It was a crazy experience for me, because, for one thing, coming from the Midwest, well we did have a fair amount of Twitter users in Cincinnati. I couldn't conceive of being able to actually pull off this kind of crowdsourcing and source finding and social media before.

It was honestly kind of a watershed moment for me too. It kind of took me to a whole other level of appreciating social media after that day. And I didn't move for like 10 hours. At the end of the day, I'd been sitting, I sit on an exercise ball when I'm working. I just kind of noticed like, "I haven't even moved my legs for 10 hours since hostage crisis started."

It was a wild day for all of us, though. Because we had a live, running coverage of happening. Everyone's working on this story. We're working with the TV people. It was just kind of a shining moment for us. I'd say that was our mountaintop during the short life of *TBD* was that particular event.

### **Megan Cloherty**

It was so interesting too, because I think a lot of times when people who don't know social media and they don't know how to use social media, think of it, as it applies to news, they think it's a side conversation to the story that's going on. And really, this was a perfect example of how it is the story. I mean, if you can crowdsource it and get people's thoughts and opinions and emotions as it's happening, it's such a cool way to tell a story.

### **Michael O'Connell**

It's like opening a window, like hundreds of windows or cameras or whatever in the vicinity of something that's going on at that moment. I'm thinking recently ... we're seeing it on tons of other stories after that. I'm thinking of the shooting up in New York where somebody walked into an office building, and suddenly there was all this material that was showing up on Twitter of people taking pictures in real time as the news outlets are tweeting as well and scrambling to get reporters and cameras and helicopters to a place. So, real-time reporting and crowdsourcing is really kind of amazing how this has changed newsgathering at this point.

### **Megan Cloherty**

A lot of our listeners are interested in learning more about how to do these things, how to do these things that you're an expert in. Last week, we had [Josh Hatch](#) on and told us a little bit about how to do data visualization. Is there a good way or a good set of —

### **Michael O'Connell**

Guidelines, principles ...

### **Megan Cloherty**

— guidelines to go through to crowdsource. Something's happening in your city. What's a good way to start to see what conversations are out there?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

The first thing I always recommend, and I do this even when I'm not working, which probably means that it's a disease, an addiction, but opening lots of keyword searches on Twitter. That means lots of different windows, trying lots of different things.

For this hostage thing, for instance, I put in "hostage, gunman, Discovery." I tried to put in the address to see if someone was just saying, you know, what they were seeing going past there. Looking for any kind of keyword combination that was going to start pulling people.

Doing that right away too. I really can't stress how important it is to make that an early part of your process. Because as soon as news gets reported, not only does your feed get filled up with people reacting to the news, but that's also when people start to actively try to make themselves part of the news.

People have definitely caught on to the fact that news organizations are out there doing crowdsourcing on social media and they inject themselves into it in a way to try to get themselves part of the story.

That's a whole other part of crowdsourcing that I always warn people. It's like, "You're finding this great stuff, but you cannot just take it at face value when you're seeing tweets on there." You have to get in conversations with people individually.



So, I usually say if you find something and someone that you want to talk to further for a story to cover that you found on social media, follow them. Maybe they'll follow you. Maybe they won't, but at least that way you can say ... you follow them, you send them a message and say, "Hey, I'd really like to talk to you more about this. Direct message me your phone number."

Because you can't keep it on social media. For one thing, you're not going to get enough information for what you need, but it's also the best way to start verifying who someone is and what their connection to the story is if you're actually talking to them on the phone. Because, if someone isn't necessarily representing themselves very well, the first thing that's going to fall apart is their story, as soon as they're actually talking to you. It's easy to pretend that you're involved with something on Twitter, but it's not so easy once you're actually in a conversation with someone on the phone.

Just really keeping our reporter instincts to us to say, "You know, a lot of these things aren't adding up." Or, you know, "Let me know where else I can find information about this. Who else is with you?" And once you see kind of more than one person is especially talking on social media about seeing the same things, you can really start to build kind of a narrative of what's happening there, at least in your head, as you're talking to people and putting the facts as you found them on social media.

### **Michael O'Connell**

And I remember when you originally told us this story about the Discovery hostage situation that the other side of this was, and you touched on it just a little bit, is that there was other reporting going on. There was other verification going on and you, as the social media person were doing your own stuff, but the fact is there was collaboration. There was a whole part of a newsroom that was involved in telling this story. So you were just telling one aspect of it to helped to feed some of that other reporting.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Definitely. Even the people I was finding through social media that I'm feeding over to producers, to editors so that they can interview them. They can talk to them. I'm kind of the initial contact in a lot of cases. And then there were people who were also being found through our more traditional ways. "Who do you know that works here? Who do you know that knows somebody that works here?" Kind of beating our way through those channels, not to mention police, not that they were talking a whole lot about the situation. But, what we knew, it was definitely something where we were able to attack that story from lots of different sides to get a better story because of it.

### **Michael O'Connell**

I know we were talking kind of about a breaking news story, but what about community engagement in the non-breaking news story. How does an editor, a reporter sort of day-in, day-out, build a rapport with their readers, their followers on Twitter, Facebook, et-cetera?



## Mandy Jenkins

I talk about this a lot to our local papers and through the [Online News Association](#) too. I do some work in that field. The thing that I tell everyone that's going to make this easy is to just be yourself. It seems like the easiest advice in the world. But just being yourself on social media makes people know that you're a human that they can talk to about things.

People sometimes take that to mean like, "Oh, I have to tell them what I'm into all the time and what I ate for lunch. I'm going to be one of those people that tweets about food and my life all the time." It's like, "No. It's about your comfort level and what you want to put into it." But, being responsive, answering questions, asking questions of people.

The thing I stress the most is, "You know, interject yourself into the conversation sometimes." In real life, it might seem kind of weird that you're at this cocktail party and you see two people talking and you're like, "Are you guys talking about *The Godfather*? I love *The Godfather*. We should all talk about *The Godfather*." But that on social media, that's not only acceptable, but welcomed.

If you are doing searches on social media for stories in your area, for issues in your area, or if something just happens to go past you, reply to that, jump into it, Kind of the best way to engrain yourself with people is to say, "Hey, I bring something into the table to this too. We should talk about this."

I know moving here to D.C. from Ohio, I didn't really know that many people and I'd come from my own little social media pocket in Cincinnati. And that's exactly how I personally built my little network in D.C. was just butting into lots of conversations about things that I found interesting.

## Megan Cloherty

When you came in and spoke with us last year, you were mentioning something about how to handle mistakes on social media, which I think a lot of people don't know how to do, cause it's so easy to delete it and they don't get that it really isn't deleted.

## Mandy Jenkins

Right.

## Megan Cloherty

Can you go into, I mean, obviously, big mistakes I think as a journalist you know you need to correct, put a correction out there, spelled somebody's name wrong or something. But, hey, it's just a spelling mistake, tell me how you handle that.

## Mandy Jenkins

Well, there's kind of different ways to handle different kinds of mistakes, I would say. For most mistakes, we're talking a fact that's either changed or maybe you got it wrong the first time around or a misspelling or a broken link, something like that. I always recom-

mend sending a follow up tweet or on Facebook sending a followup update of some sorts saying, "Ok, that last thing was wrong. This is the correct information." Just admitting to it and going on from there. Just tweet it again. You might even send the same exact tweet and just put in parentheses "corrected link," "corrected spelling." That way people know why it was sent twice.

And then I usually say don't delete. Deleting it, it's fine if it's in your stream. That's fine. But, if it is something where it's kind of a matter of public safety or it's something where it could be a potential libel problem, then you might want to delete it. But, you need to own up to the fact that it happened in the first place, because it is still going to be out there. It's either sitting in someone's Tweetdeck, because when someone deletes something it doesn't necessarily delete it from every client, or they took a screenshot if it's particularly hilarious or particularly bad. So, owning up to it is the most important part. Any time that you see people get really upset about a mistake on social media, it's usually because someone didn't own up to it, not because they did. They'll forget about it.

### **Megan Cloherty**

Right. It's about being transparent is what you said last time. It was just you need to make sure that, like you said, be yourself, own up to your mistake. I think that, especially at WTOP where I work, we're very into MT, RT, like the different kind of, what's the word I'm looking for?

### **Michael O'Connell**

Uh, stuff? I don't know.

### **Megan Cloherty**

Well, like Twitter-lingo. I think that a lot of news organizations worry about being cool and using the right lingo on Twitter, whatever, instead of just saying, "Hey, we spelled that name wrong. Sorry about that." What do you think about that?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

I think a lot of people just try to be a little too clever too. I mean, this is still, we're just still talking.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Right.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

We're just talking. It isn't about trying to be the coolest person in the world here, and everyone makes mistakes. Just own up to it.

Especially when I was running *TBD's* Twitter account, which was very, go back and forth. Everyone knew they could have a conversation there, ask questions. I had to admit to lots of mistakes, especially in the beginning when I didn't know my neighborhoods very well. I would get called out all of the time for being like one neighborhood off on

Capitol Hill. "Oh, that isn't Capitol Hill. That's the Atlas District. You can't confuse those two." I'd write back, I'd be like, "OK, sorry, sorry. You're right. This isn't Capitol Hill. It's the Atlas District. Oh, it's Eckington. Or it's not Bloomingdale, it's this." That was one that I'd get called out on all the time on *TBD*, where I'd see it on the map. "Oh, the man's not right." Google never knows these things.

So, owning up to those and, honestly, it led to me learning a lot about it. It led to people who often wanted to correct me on that, helping me out over the time. Even, sometimes when I was wondering about a neighborhood, I actually could direct message them and say, "Hey, you're the expert on this sort of thing, what neighborhood is this in?" They're like, "Thank you for asking."

### **Michael O'Connell**

It's funny. People like to have people be nice to them. We talk about best practices and things, but we almost need a Miss Manners for social media is to how to talk to each other. That's the funny thing. A lot of these lessons — be honest, be transparent, acknowledge when you've made a mistake and say you're sorry — that's just social etiquette. We're not thinking that we need to apply it into this new realm.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

They're kindergarten rules really, when you get right down to it.

### **Megan Cloherty**

Right.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Well, my rule is always, "Play nice in the sandbox."

### **Megan Cloherty**

Speaking of *WTOP* or *Huffington Post* or some of these larger Washington news organizations, what do you think that news organizations are doing right when it comes to social media now? Because they're kind of starting to get it, but I imagine that there are also pitfalls.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

For one thing, I always stand amazed at seeing just the growth in people using social media, not just using it, cause a lot of people have had Twitter accounts for awhile. But using it to find sources, using it to verify information. You're really seeing that happen a lot more often, just within the last year, the new year's too.

There for awhile, people would easily start up a hoax Twitter account for whatever, insert name of foreign government leader here. And they would believe it. It would turn into this news thing. Then they'd find out they were duped, and I think you're seeing a lot less of that. I'm remembering, when was this? Maybe six months ago, when someone had a created a fake Twitter account for the minister of the interior in Egypt. And it re-

ported that Hosni Mubarak had died. People exposed this account in like 10 minutes, like five different news organizations exposed this.

And I think that even six months before that, that probably would've been taken at face value by a lot of people. I think people are a lot more savvy in news about social media and it's pitfalls than it used to be. Obviously, mistakes still happen, but I think everyone's starting to really get engrained in themselves how important verification is, how important fact checking besides social media is. Obviously, it's not perfect. But we are getting a lot better at it, and I've really noticed that as being a huge change in a very short amount of time.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Tell us about your experience at *Huffington Post*. You were a social media editor, is that what it was?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

I was the social media editor for politics there, which was a pretty exciting job to have throughout the beginnings of the whole Republican primary. It was my time period there. It was a pretty crazy time.

*Huffington Post* is, really, it's an amazing news organization. There's just so many people there. They're really bright. And, it's probably the most fast-paced environment I've ever been in. Working in increasingly fast newsrooms, from newspapers to *TBD*, where I thought, "Wow, we're working really fast at *TBD*." And then I go to *Huffington Post* and I was like, "We were not working very fast at *TBD*, like not even close."

They are a well oiled machine as to how news gets in and out of there. It's really impressive to be a part of that. Because they have the reporters but also some of the best people in social media are there doing all of the scouring, doing all this finding of information. It was great to be a part of that. It really was.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Definitely, they're all over social media. I know that I follow several people on there and they break so much stuff, some of it very newsy, some of it not so newsy. And they're also they're also good about writing headlines and tags —

### **Megan Cloherty**

Teasing.

### **Michael O'Connell**

— that make you want to click on something, guiltily.

### **Megan Cloherty**

I think it's interesting too that you're teaching, that you're now an adjunct professor at Georgetown. This brings up a question, I was chatting with a friend the the other day

and he is a journalist. He has his own personal Twitter and then he has his handle, you know, his reporter handle. And so he's tweeting from his personal handle like it doesn't matter and he's tweeting from his reporter one very specifically about his stories.

### **Michael O'Connell**

His grownup Twitter account.

### **Megan Cloherty**

His grownup voice, right. And I told him, I was like, "You know, anybody can find either one of these. It's not like you disappear when you take your reporter hat off."

And I think it might be interesting to talk to you just about, especially for students or young journalists who are coming up, who have to think about sort of changing their voice or what they're throwing out there. And also, if it matters if you have your news organization name in your handle, does that change what you put out? I don't know. It's worth talking about.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

It's always interesting because so much of that depends on the news organization. Some news organizations have very strict social media policies that just stifle their staff, where they say they own your handle, "We own everything you're sending out here. Your Twitter account belongs to us. Your Twitter account is an extension of us and so you have to operate this way on there."

In that kind of circumstance, it completely makes sense that you might want your own handle to go off and talk about sports and talk to your friends. But if there aren't rules like that, I think it's great to have one place for everything, cause that's that part of being transparent and being myself that. ... For one thing, I only want to manage one. The idea of managing more than one personally is exhausting to me, especially when I was running news organization ones all the time.

But that's a place where yeah I talk about journalism a lot. I promote my [blog](#). I promote the work of people in my news organization. But I also put out angry tweets about football games and make fun of people on television just like everyone else. And I think that it's, everybody kind of has to find their own way as to how they want to present that, but they definitely need to be cognizant that matter what they're putting online and no matter where and no matter how much privacy they think they might have on Facebook or Twitter on a private account, that they still have to be thinking like a journalist and writing like a journalist. You can't use your personal account to berate the people on your beat that you're writing about objectively on another account.

### **Megan Cloherty**

That would be bad.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Which I have seen happen before.

### **Michael O'Connell**

And we've seen people who've lost their jobs for saying, I don't know if it's necessarily something against their beat or whatever, but saying something on their Twitter account that's identified with them as a reporter that is less than positive.

### **Megan Cloherty**

That's why I think it's interesting, especially for younger journalists or your students, because when you're in college, you're not thinking about five years from then when you're going to have a professional job and be a journalist. How do you talk to them about, not a code of conduct, but just kind of what to be aware of.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Yeah. You know, it's something, it's funny that I don't even just have to talk to students about this.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Right.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

There are lots of people who could use the lesson at times.

But, you know, I always say, especially when you're starting to get into looking for work that you need to clean up your entire social media presence. Everything needs to be examined and gone back over. Things need to be made private that should be made private. You definitely need to make sure your settings all reflect that no party photos of you are going to be visible on your page. That you're not talking about things that you wouldn't want a potential employer to see. Because even if you think that they're not going to find it, they're going to find it. And they're going to look for it. They want to know that you're savvy at what you're doing and that you're not an idiot who's going to be putting their company at risk once they hire you.

I stress that all the time. It's not to say they you have to be boring. But it's to say that you have to act like a grownup. So, no party photos. Maybe you shouldn't have a bunch of selfies of yourself all dressed up when you're not wearing very many clothes. You don't need to be taking a lot of those photos and putting them out on social media.

I always kind of use my personal example. In real life, I don't necessarily have the best language. I can be kind of colorful sometimes, but I would never curse on social media, ever. I just don't want that associated with what people see of me online if they don't know me.

### **Michael O'Connell**

You've got to brand yourself.

**Mandy Jenkins**

Right.

**Michael O'Connell**

You've got to go out there and the Mandy Jenkins Brand. You've got to make sure you keep it how you want it.

**Mandy Jenkins**

Yeah, so no F-words on the Internet.

**Michael O'Connell**

There we go. Clean it up. Clean up the language.

**Megan Cloherty**

How do you think reporters should be using social media that they're not doing correctly?

**Mandy Jenkins**

You know, I think the hardest thing — it's kind of funny, because I would often say in the past that the worst thing is that there's a lot of reporters that don't know how to talk to people like regular people. That they're very cognizant of using this as a broadcast method or even just as a very stiff method of communication. And where they're not being very personal or personable, not necessarily personal, but personable, being like a human.

But now, I feel like there's problems at both ends of that spectrum. There are reporters who definitely overshare. I won't name any names, but there are quite a few of them in Washington political coverage especially that just tweet all day long about whatever is on their minds at this exact moment. And I think that it's finding that happy medium between being relevant and being interesting and, you know, being fun too. But also, just keeping it from overwhelming people, being maybe a little too into yourself. Because I think it's finding that middle ground between those two places.

And I think that that's hard for a lot of reporters I talk to, because they see the one end of the spectrum of the people who are talking about themselves, their dog, what they ate for lunch, every little tidbit of news and what they think of it. And they're like, "I don't want to be that." And I'm like, "You don't have to be that. Please don't. Don't do that. There's enough of that out there." And I think that's honestly the hardest part for them, is finding where they're comfortable, what they have time for and still making it something that's engaging and interesting and making people know that they're there and they're listening.

**Michael O'Connell**



Tell us about covering local news with social media. How does that work? What's a good best practice for that?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

A lot of it kind of depends on exactly where you are. A lot of our newsrooms for Digital First, for instance, they do use Twitter and they use Facebook, but in a lot of these communities, cause we have lots of different size communities. All the way from big places like Denver and San Jose down to very small cities like Carlsbad, N.M., or Lebanon, Pa. We're all over the place.

But in a lot of the smaller communities and in, especially rural but not always, they are seeing a lot more use on Facebook than they are on Twitter. That's where a lot of their community is, especially because of the grown on Facebook of kind of more traditional newspaper readers. People over 60, for instance, are huge on Facebook right now. They're growing all the time. And so, a lot of what they're doing is doing some experimentation on Twitter and Facebook, seeing more on Facebook and saying, "You know what? We're going to do a lot of work here. We're going to put our stories here. We're going to get our conversations here."

And, I think that experimenting is actually the thing that takes more time and might be harder to kind of wrap your head around if you're a local editor who's just trying to get their website updated and get their paper out. But they've really gotten some good response from that. I mean, in some cases it's just, "Hey, the state basketball championship just ended. Our local team won. Let's just put a photo up. Just the photo of the team celebrating." One of our papers in Michigan did that and that photo is the most successful thing they've ever had on social media. Tons of comments. Hundreds of shares. This is a pretty small area. Everyone, you know, it's capturing that community excitement and trying to find ways to do that in every community, whether it's knowing exactly what buttons to push.

We have a community, it's in Torrington, Conn., and this was awhile ago. It was probably like six months ago. But I was there visiting and I was doing a social media workshop, and I was checking out their Facebook page. And for three days running, they had this ongoing conversation happening between them and their readers about people who believed they'd seen UFOs in this one particular area and everybody wanted to talk about these potential UFOs. They're like, "I've seen the lights. I've seen them at night."

This is, where else but in a local community that's pretty small and somewhat isolated, on the newspaper Facebook page would you get to see this kind of thing happening? It's great to see when you can find something that works that way. It really captures people's kind of gossipy desire to talk to one another about what's happening.

### **Michael O'Connell**

So, what do you think about people having this conversation on Facebook as opposed to in comments on your own site? This sort of phenomenon. I know there are a lot of

newspapers that are sort of wondering about that. Certainly, people you're trying to sell this concept to, you get the discussion going on Facebook, but what's the real benefit of doing that?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

I think for one thing, you're kind of getting people where they already are on Facebook. It's already a tough sell to get them to come to the site. And in some cases, it's even a tougher sell to get them to want to comment there. I mean, unless they're really fired up. Then you have to deal with how you moderate comments there, which is, that's a whole other podcast that I could go into great lengths about how horrible it is to moderate newspaper site comments.

But Facebook, you're getting them where they are. You're getting them somewhere where they're used to communicating, for better or worse. It doesn't necessarily mean they're going to be nicer to one another or nicer to you there. But, at least —

### **Michael O'Connell**

It's a pretty self-policing area, I think. If somebody starts being a dick, somebody'll call them to task or start yelling at them from another way.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Right.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Heat up that conversation as opposed to our comments boards. I'm thinking of our own comment boards on our website.

### **Megan Cloherty**

Well, it's interesting too, because especially your perspective, you have an idea of how people are engaging with the news stations in their market. How do you feel about the future of journalism now? How do feel about the future of social media journalism?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Well, journalism itself, I think, it's in a really interesting place right now. I think it's changing and it's kind of going through some growing pains. Everyone's kind of got their own opinions as to how that's going to end up. But I think it's going to end up in a great place. Not just because of social media, but social media is certainly plays a role in it because it is getting us in touch with readers that wouldn't necessarily be working with people like our tiny newspapers. They wouldn't necessarily be interested anymore, because they don't read a print product or something like that. So, I think social media is helping us in that sense.

I do think we're kind of moved past that. I think we already are. Not just from social media, but into different uses of it. Into building things into our sites that are more social. Into finding the next big thing that's not just Facebook and Twitter. Whatever that might

be, we have to be on the lookout for that and kind of try and get our way into that before it's too late.

But I think that we're moving past social. We're moving past looking at things that, "This is my little corner of the world that's happening on Twitter or Facebook and this is the news." I think we're moving past all of that where there is a mix.

We're the ones who're going to determine what that mix will be between social media and news and everywhere in between. And I think that this is the time period when you're seeing all kinds of interesting things happening with that. New tools. New products being built. People figuring out how to use APIs in ways that are going to be even more useful for their websites that can connect in with the social audience or with a larger online audience than they've already had. I'm just excited to see what happens from there. I know I'm planning to continue to work in journalism for a long time.

### **Michael O'Connell**

Well, thank you very much for joining us, Mandy. It was excellent, excellent incite into social media. Thank you for coming in.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

Thanks for having me. This has been fun.

### **Megan Cloherty**

And of course, where can we find you on Twitter?

### **Mandy Jenkins**

You can find me [@mjenkins](https://twitter.com/mjenkins). I'm frequently mistaken for two different football players on Twitter.

### **Michael O'Connell**

OK.

### **Mandy Jenkins**

But I'm the real mjenkins.

### **Megan Cloherty**

The real mjenkins.

### **Michael O'Connell**

So we've been speaking to the real mjenkins. This is Mike O'Connell and Megan Cloherty for It's All Journalism. Thanks for listening.