

DIGITAL MOMS

Twitter, blogs, money-saving mobile apps ...

These innovative women are using technology to revolutionize their lives.

Today's technology empowers women, moms in particular, like never before. Historically, once tribes began to break into individual families and people began living in solitary abodes, motherhood – once a community activity – became an isolated venture. Moms of generations past might have had a neighborhood coffee klatch or met in the park, but most of their daily activities involved staying at home with their kids.

That has all changed, thanks to a stunningly fast series of advances in digital-communication technology that allows today's moms to be connected 24/7.

Smartphones are an example: According to the BabyCenter's "21st Century Mobile Mom Report" – a study involving more than 5,000 U.S. moms – the number of mothers using these phones has risen 64 percent over the last two years. Further, 53 percent surveyed said they bought the phones as a *direct result* of becoming a mom.

The technological revolution's effects on moms have been dramatic. Now, they can run and promote businesses from their homes, connect with those with shared interests and save by uniting their buying power. But there's a fine line between efficiency and "time soaks." We talked to 10 digital-media mavens to find out what they've learned, what they love, what they avoid and how they stay current.



@tamrabarney "Anyone who follows me knows that I am short and to the point."

TAMRA BARNEY

Ladera Ranch | REALITY TV STAR

'The Real Housewives of Orange County'

A mother of four, Tamra Barney is all about social media. As one of the stars of "The Real Housewives of Orange County," Barney rocks 70,000 followers on Twitter, has 65,000 Facebook Likes, and runs a BravoTV blog that is a magnet for comments.

"I can work a computer like a tech at the Apple Genius Bar," says Barney. "OK, maybe I won't get that far, but I know what I need to know to make it work for my needs."

Barney loves social media for both personal and business use.

"The sites let me connect with viewers and fans, and they give me a chance to reach out to other moms who are also out there working and raising their kids as divorced parents," she says. "And professionally, as a real estate agent, I post my listings on a variety of digital media and connect with agents and clients mostly via email and text messages."

WHAT ARE HER DIGITAL PROS AND CONS?

"Tech is a blessing, but all the necessary 'tools' to survive in the digital world – smartphones, tablets, computers – can be a financial curse!"

WHAT IS HER BEST DIGITAL TIP? "Keep it short," says Barney.

HER APP OF CHOICE? USA Today, to get caught up quickly.

KELLY LEWIS

Tustin | **BLOGGER EXTRAORDINAIRE**

Just Spotted

Kelly Lewis, a mother of three kids under age 6 and the mastermind of the online family guide Just Spotted, calls herself a "virtual O.C. tour guide."

When not downing Cherry Coke and running marathons, you'll find her on Facebook, tweeting with her 7,000 followers or blogging at "According to Kelly." She also created Team Sparkle, which sells a line of racing skirts. Lewis has an MBA and hopes to one day teach social media in college.

"Just Spotted got started as a place to share our O.C. finds with friends, and it just

snowballed from there," says Lewis, whose site gets thousands of daily page views.

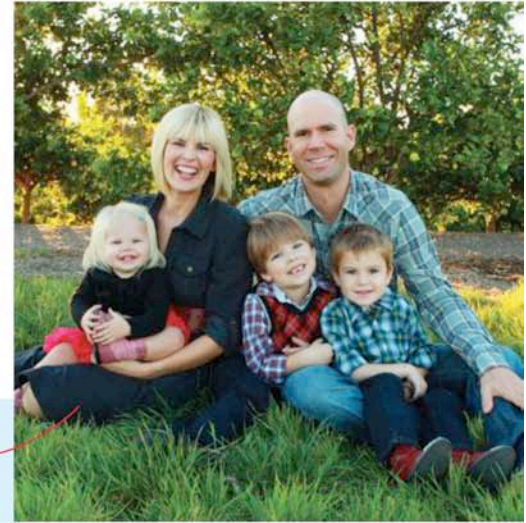
Lewis can't imagine a non-digital life. "I don't know how anyone survived before this technology," she says. "I check for local deals online, have my groceries delivered online, buy clothes online. The Internet is my recipe book, encyclopedia and dictionary."

She loves all the connecting online, but says: "I can easily get sucked in, so I've put time limits on myself."

THE WEBSITES SHE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT?

Twitter, Dailymile for athletes and Pinterest, which lets her pin anything for reference.

Cover Story



@according2kelly "Smartphones, email and social media let me efficiently run a corporation and household – multitasking on a whole new level."



MIA CHAMBERS

Huntington Beach | **OWNER**

Acumen Works

Mia Chambers carved out her e-path in 2007 to make her home and work life meld. She is a single mother of two boys, and owner of Acumen Works, a virtual-assistance and digital-marketing business.

"Being recently divorced, I had to work," says Chambers, a 2009 VA Techie of the Year, who wanted to stay involved in her kids' activities. "I did some research to find out what jobs were available. People

were working out of their home offices and managing all the details themselves. So I started providing support in a virtual setting." Chambers offers advice on Twitter, Facebook and vlogging videos on YouTube.

SO HOW DOES SHE FIND TIME FOR IT ALL?

"It's important to have a daily strategy," she says. "Distractions are inevitable, though."

HER FAVORITE SOCIAL MEDIA SECRET: "Be yourself. While it's no secret, it can be the best approach."

@miachambers "I did a quick search on Google, had a light bulb moment, and started my business."

GABRIELLE WINDSOR

Laguna Niguel | **MEDIA-FORWARD MARKETER**

Advertising and communications

Mother of two and progressive marketing VP Gabrielle Windsor is addicted to what's tech-next. "Digital is a fast-moving train, and the tracks are always switching," she says. Managing online planning for Land Rover, Boost Mobile and Vintage Senior Living, Windsor is digitally deep in social media, e-commerce and brand blogs. Technology connects her with her sons, too.

"We play Words With Friends, a Scrabble-like app, on our mobiles," Windsor says. "It

sounds silly, but it makes us feel closer."

She's all-apps for shopping, too. "Thanks to TheFind app, I headed to Macy's looking at a carry-on and found a GeoQpon carry-on luggage piece for 15 percent off. TheFind is a great way to check prices."

HER FACEBOOK 411 TO PARENTS:

"Have your kids add you as a Friend; do it while they're younger," says Windsor, whose college-age older son added her.

"It lets me have a better sense of what he's up to. He's a king of privacy settings, but his friends? Not so much," she says.



@ocred99 "Texting is the No. 1 way I communicate with my kids, husband and friends when we aren't face to face."

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JANE GILLESPIE

Irvine | PR CONSULTANT

Jane Gillespie Public Relations

See Jane tweet, Facebook and do all things digital. Jane Gillespie is the mom of 12-year-old triplets and a PR consultant to such swanky O.C. lifestyle clients as Fashion Island and The Irvine Spectrum.

A public relations pro for 20 years, Gillespie knows all the savvy ways to connect with her clients via social media.

"Years ago, we would mail out press releases, but now we can use Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, YouTube, email blasts, etc., to reach masses in just moments," she says. "And I've planned everything from blogger events to large Tweet-ups with O.C.'s biggest Twitter stars to help promote clients."

Gillespie thinks digital technology is invaluable for networking, too. "I have found great new sources and leads for work projects," she says.



On a personal side, Gillespie embraces the digital world's time-saving ways.

"It moves so fast and efficiently, and it can help save money," she says.

"It's good, too, to find people outside of your usual group of friends who can offer advice; I've discovered fabulous restaurants, learned about great deals, spa treatments and travel getaways."

WHAT IS HER LATEST TECH CRUSH? "I love the popularity of QR codes that you scan. It turns prints ads into multimedia and more."

@andreamemenas

"Technology can become a time suck if you let it. 'Plants vs. Zombies' on your phone, shopping, answering emails ..."

ANDREA MEMENAS

Laguna Niguel | CUSTOMER-EXPERIENCE ARCHITECT | **Lightswitch**

Andrea Memenas runs her own marketing company, is the mom of three and confesses to falling asleep with her smartphone in hand. When not building brands both on- and offline, she is co-founder and publisher of a digital national writers' collective. Her blog, "Adventures in Small Business," runs on OC Family's sister magazine website, ocmetro.com.

Memenas' baptism into blogging was completely accidental. "Years ago, research for a client landed me on blogspot.com," she says. "Within 20 minutes, I had created a blog and went live with my first post."

That blog surprised Memenas. "It became my private corner of the Internet," she says. "All mine. No kids, no husband, no clients, no rules."

HER SECRET WEB WEAPON? Freedom, an Internet-blocking software. "I activate it for a certain time, and it kills my access to the Web, email, IM, etc.," she says. "It's ironic that my favorite digital secret keeps me from being digitally connected."

@jgpr: "You can tweet the masses for their experiences with a company and get immediate feedback – positive or negative."

KIANA TOM

Laguna Niguel | FITNESS GURU
fitmomtv.com



The mother of two, Kiana Tom is a former ESPN celebrity trainer, actress and author who recently launched "FitMomTV.com," a healthy lifestyle web series. You can tune in for her exercise demo videos and cooking shows. She also does Fit-Mom blogs and vlogs via YouTube and Vimeo.

"The Internet makes it so easy to ready everyone," Tom says. "We used to have to film, edit and broadcast everything. Now, if I see something that'll motivate my viewers, I can video it on my iPhone, and it's live."

WHAT IS HER LATEST DIGITAL ADDICTION? "I love TweetDeck," Tom says. "It lets me schedule tweets and post my 'Fit Twits' to Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Buzz and Friend Feed all at once."

@fitmomtv: "Social media makes it fun to quickly share new exercises, recipes or get feedback on a new project."

FOR TIPS ON HOW TO PLUG IN, Check out our digitally savvy mom and dad bloggers at **ocfamily.com**



KIANA TOM PHOTO BY MALI WORKMAN AND BOSH IMAGES

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GREER WYLDER

Costa Mesa | FOUNDER

greersoc.com

Master of her always-fashionable digital domain, Greer Wylder, a mother of four boys,

@greerwylder "Twitter is a lot of fun. I love the comedians on there and the serious stuff."

CIARAN BLUMENFELD

Ladera Ranch | SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR |

iGiftThanks app

Few have their digital keystrokes as refined and efficient as Ciaran Blumenfeld, mom of four and a serious serial entrepreneur.

Blumenfeld spent years as an influential blogger, is the publisher of Momfluent Media, created FranciePants, developed popshopology.com retail therapy, is a social media brand consultant and has a blogger TV show in development. Most recently, Blumenfeld designed the iGiftThanks app – instant photo thank-you notes sent from iPhones. "I'd be lost without my iPhone," she says. "It's my second brain. I use it to check prices, as a camera and a lot more."

For productivity, her go-to is Google Docs. "I work with clients all over. The ability to share spreadsheets, photos, calendars and text docs in 'the cloud' is amazing."

WHEN DOES BLUMENFELD KNOW SHE SHOULD GO OFFLINE? "When I see my kids have completed every last level of 'Angry Birds' ever created, it's time to hit the beach," she says, smiling.

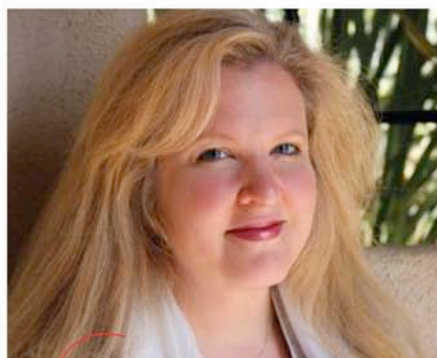
furnishes the latest on Orange County's online life and style. She founded Greer's OC in 2006, long before "e" was where it's @. Wylder shares the best in fashion, dining, music and events on her site; and is YouTube-savvy with her "Greer's OCTV."

"I vaguely remember writing stories in the pre-Internet age. Now, I like reading all news from my iPhone."

When not working in cyberspace, Wylder remains online with her kids. "We watch Netflix, I talk to my sons in college on Skype and I look up recipes on Epicurious," she says.

THE FAVORITE APPS OF THIS FORMER O.C. PRINT COLUMNIST SKEW TOWARD NEWS: She reads The New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Associated Press for updates.

APP CRUSHES? Wylder has several. "I love music, so the Shazam app is pretty cool," she says. "I like PictureShow for photos. And when I'm with my kids, Yelp! helps so much."



@momfluential: "Sometimes you have to unplug and walk away; I'm online all the time, so this is especially important."

WHAT IS HER CURRENT DIGITAL OBSESSION? "Instagram app for the iPhone," she says. "The photos look fantastic and broadcast across social networks," she says. The shots can be used with her app too. Keep up with Blumenfeld, if you can, at ciaranblumenfeld.com.



@ocfoodies "Thanks to technology, I can interact with new, old and virtual friends."

PAMELA WAITT

Laguna Beach | PRESIDENT

OC Restaurant Association

Pamela Waitt is the queen of the social network for everything delicious in O.C. She is the mom of two and is always cooking up some new event or tasty meet-up mixer.

If you've hit Orange County Restaurant Week or are one of 15,000 ocfoodies.com fans, then you know Pam, the culinary puppeteer behind it all.

"My kids tease me because I'm always attached to my iPod, phone or laptop" she says. "I'm so digital, they say I'm 'Robosapien' – of course I see this as a compliment."

An online entrepreneur since 2002, Waitt has watched the explosive growth in digital technology. "It's been fantastic to see it evolve so quickly," she says. "The digital world is this constant wave that never really hits the shore; it just keeps getting bigger. You need to grab a board and ride it!"

"I truly believe technology makes balancing my work life and my other activities easier. It saves a lot of money on gas," Waitt says.

HER SECRET OF DIGITAL SUCCESS? Pam's advice is to stay in a chosen specialty. "Don't try to be everything to all people. Always follow the quality-over-quantity method, and share only relevant information."

A MOTHER of two young kids and the creator of the blog "Debbie in the OC," Debbie Lavdas is a writer and former TV news reporter.