



Hansel minutes

Hanselminutes is a weekly audio talk show with noted web developer and technologist Scott Hanselman and hosted by Carl Franklin. Scott discusses utilities and tools, gives practical how-to advice, and discusses ASP.NET or Windows issues and workarounds.

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Life Hacks with Gina Trapani

Scott and Carl talk about life hacks with Gina Trapani, web developer and author of the book "Life Hacker - 88 Tricks to Turbocharge Your Day".

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(Music)

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Support is also provided by .NET Developer's Journal - "The World's leading .NET developer magazine," online at www.sys-con.com. In this episode, Scott and Carl discuss life hacks with author and developer, Gina Trapani.

Carl Franklin: Hi, this is Carl Franklin, you are listening to Hanselminutes at Hanselminutes.com. Yeah, and I am here with Scott Hanselman and a very special guest hello, Scott.

Scott Hanselman: Hi, how are you sir?

Carl Franklin: Why don't you introduce our guest?

Scott Hanselman: We don't do a lot of guests here on the show of course, but we are very fortunate to have Gina Trapani, from Lifehacker.com.

Carl Franklin: Hi, Gina.

Gina Trapani: Hi, thanks for having me.

Scott Hanselman: We really appreciate you taking the time, I actually wanted you to be on the show because, we have some friends in the publishing industry and I got a pre-released copy of your upcoming book called *Lifehacker: 88 Tech Tricks to Turbocharge Your Day*, say that three times fast, and read it and just loved it. I think, I explained it to my editor saying that, you know a book is good, when you read it and you're jealous that you didn't write it yourself.

Gina Trapani: Oh, thank you so much.

Scott Hanselman: So, yeah, I was kind of bummed you beat me to it. I just say, "Oh this is a great book, and I need to write that." It's like, it's just like nice, short, but very productive life hacks to make everything better about your life. But we did a Life Hack Show before, I know that I listened to that show, but can you tell us a little about the origin of the term "life hacks"?

Gina Trapani: Actually, the term is coined by a gentleman named Danny O'Brien, who is technology journalist, who did a presentation at the ETech Conference in 2004 and the name of his session was, "*Life Hacks: The Secrets of Overprolific Alpha Geek*," and basically he had polled like, I don't know a few dozen of his like geekiest friends and said, how do you guys get your stuff done everyday, and what came out of the interview is that, as Geek -- especially programmers right because your whole job as a programmer is to automate something, build software that's going to take the load off of a human being but a lot of programmers build their needs like kind of embarrassing little scripts, or stupid systems or shortcuts in their kind of everyday work flow, to speed things up. So, his presentation, Danny's presentation was done in 2004 and I just loved the term and I just loved the term, I just loved the term "life hack", I thought, I had those little shortcuts and scripts and Batch Scripts and things kind of setup for myself and I loved to hear about what other people did and how they ran their lives, their kind of like digital lives, so.

Carl Franklin: And this is isn't just software, we're talking about Gina, right these are any, I mean like I saw bookends made out of CD cases on your blogs, is it?

Gina Trapani: Yes, well, Danny's original intention, the original term sort of referred to mostly technical things like scripts to filter your email or run your -- to do .text file but the term kind has been broadened and we've at lifehacker.com we've kind of broadened it to include lots of different things like, making bookends out of CD cases or how to I don't know, fold your...

Scott Hanselman: One of the life hacks that, I have hacked my life with is this pocket mud, right I mean, this is just taking a piece of paper, building up pages and printing it out and making a tiny little book, I mean, I think, I did that in seventh grade but it seems so much cooler, when it's Flash Applet, you know.



Gina Trapani: Absolutely, absolutely. Oh yeah, I mean, Merlin Man, the Hipster PDA, which you talked about in your last episode...

Carl Franklin: Right, that's the one with the rubber bands, right?

Gina Trapani: Yeah, the Index cards.

Scott Hanselman: Yeah, I call it syncing to paper, I do it all the time, when life gets too overwhelming, when my gadgets aren't working, when my palm pilot and my pocket PC and my BlackBerry aren't talking to each other, I just say, get a bunch of 3x5 cards and sync to paper.

Gina Trapani: Yup, absolutely.

Scott Hanselman: The first chapter of your book is called Free Up Mental RAM and I understand that you are a "*Getting Things Done*", kind of convert as well?

Gina Trapani: Yes, I am.

Scott Hanselman: All about David Allen and his '*Getting Things Done*'. I think, we did a show on '*Getting Things Done*'.

Carl Franklin: We did.

Gina Trapani: All hail David.

Scott Hanselman: Yeah all hail, and I am just, I am flipping through some of the ones that, I liked right here, you have everything from how to setup an Apache Web Server and make your own Wiki, local Wiki to how to take great notes, I mean this all happens in one chapter and that's why they kind of give you a taste of what the book is like. One of the things, that I noticed, that I actually asked Carl about before we started the show that he had, was not familiar with and I think, not enough people are familiar with, is this notion of Bookmarklets.

Carl Franklin: Yeah I never heard of those.

Scott Hanselman: What is a Bookmarklet and why did they rock?

Gina Trapani: Bookmarklet is just, it's a basically is a link that you bookmark but the link isn't to a URL, it's a snippet of JavaScript, which -- X does something on the page, that you are looking at. So for instance if you use; -- are you familiar with like the del.icio.us bookmark, social bookmark system.

Carl Franklin: Sure.

Scott Hanselman: Totally I use the Firefox extension for del.icio.us before I use the bookmark.

Gina Trapani: Firefox extension is pretty -- but there is a del.icio.us Bookmarklet that you can, you just drag and drop to your tool bar which -- if you are looking at a webpage and you want to add the del.icio.us, you just hit lithe Bookmarklet and it pops up a window, which automatically lets you do that, so, it's just like regular bookmark but it does JavaScripty things.

Carl Franklin: Now, is there something like that for Digg2 because I noticed in Digg, most people put little icons embedded in their web pages in order for the viewers to be able to add them to Digg but you can do that externally too?

Gina Trapani: Oh, absolutely you can use the Digg Bookmarklet as well.

Carl Franklin: Cool.

Scott Hanselman: Yeah it seems with Bookmarklets you could -- like, if I wanted to write a Bookmarklet that would highlight the word Hanselman on any page, I could do that. It's basically you have full access to the DOM, because the JavaScript's running locally, it's not a cross-site scripting attack and you can just click and do whatever you want to do. So, you could be searching a place or extract, you could make a Bookmarklet to make fonts bigger.

Gina Trapani: Yeah absolutely, I wrote a Bookmarklet called The Lie Detector, LY. Since I do a lot of writing, I wanted kind of rules in writing it to enable us to use adverbs very often which are words that end in LY. I wrote a Bookmarklet that actually will highlight any words that end in LY on a page like I can "yellow", I can just use a highlighter, the kind of like...

Scott Hanselman: Oh that's awesome.

Carl Franklin: Nice.

Gina Trapani: So, you know that a page isn't written very well, the post isn't written very well, so it lights up like a Christmas tree when you hit the LY Detector Bookmarklet. So, you can do all kinds of neat things with Bookmarklets.

Carl Franklin: Gina misbehaving.net, that's an awesome blog name.

Gina Trapani: Yes it is.



Carl Franklin: I love that.

Gina Trapani: That's one of the sites that I contribute to.

Carl Franklin: And I particularly like the quote, "Well-behaved Women Seldom Make History", I have seen that on a few bumper stickers, in my town.

Gina Trapani: Yeah.

Carl Franklin: That's great.

Gina Trapani: Yeah that's a fun site that I work with, collaborate with a few other women in Tech.

Carl Franklin: Okay.

Scott Hanselman: Speaking of women and Tech a lot of our listeners and lot of techies as you all know are men, and sometimes people say, well women kind of head towards in the designer perspective, and men head towards the C++ direction, as a women in Tech, do you see any kind of -- and I presume you have been doing this for a while, we've kind of all been doing this for you know, 10 plus years, 15 years. Is there a change, is that a fair separation?

Gina Trapani: You know I haven't done any kind of official studies on this.

Scott Hanselman: Oh sure, I am just thinking ballpark, we're just chatting here...

Gina Trapani: I'm speaking totally from -- it's kind of my opinion. I think that in general, women or at least I am really focused on how a technology can be useful like the place where technology intersects with your life whereas and again speaking in very general terms here.

Scott Hanselman: Yeah, totally general.

Gina Trapani: I think, men can get to sort of really "wowed" by technology just for the sake of technology, which kind of brings it to that slogan, 'Don't live to geek; geek to live' and that's kind of my, really my focus with life hacker is like we are not just going to talk about technology just because it's cool or like do things just because you can, you do things because like the whole purposes, we are like humans and the machines are just to help us, not just kind of impress us.

Carl Franklin: Our technology keeps us warm and cozy.

Scott Hanselman: I think, Gina that you just nailed it, though and that's actually good because I have got listed down here to talk about; you have a kind of ongoing column, within your site called Geek to Live and I think you nailed it. I mean to speak in general terms, men live to geek and women geek to live, if this is isn't making my life better or the world better in some substantive way, then it's just being silly, it's just being men and it's a universal remote control, I'm never going to use.

Carl Franklin: Gina, what's the Invisibility Cloak all about?

Gina Trapani: The Invisibility Cloak is a user script that I wrote for Greasemonkey. So Greasemonkey is a Firefox extension which can run any JavaScript on any given web page, right. So, you have the Greasemonkey installed and you say, "I have this user script that I want to apply to the following Website". So, I wrote this user script, this Greasemonkey is a script called the Invisibility Cloak, which blanks out any Websites that you don't want to keep yourself from looking at, right. So, like I am a MetaFilter addict, I can spend hours, just on Ask MetaFilter or say Slashdot or say Digg. I mean I can just -- I've got an article due tomorrow and like I could spend three hours just clicking around those sites and there are times that I just need to draw myself out of the chair and keep myself away from any of those really kind of time sucking sites. So, the Invisibility Cloak, you can apply it to the sites that really take a lot of time, like Flickr or MetaFilter and when it's enabled, if you go to one of those sites, when you're supposed to be doing some work, it blanks up a site and it pops a little alert box that says, "Get back to work, you're supposed to be working on something else."

Carl Franklin: So, I mean this is typical Carl here; wouldn't it be easier just to get another computer that isn't connected to the net that only has Word on it?

Gina Trapani: It would, but at least most of my work requires that I like look things up on the Internet. So, it's like, I need to be on the Internet, I just got to stay away from those sites right now which just will like, take me a away for hours ...

Scott Hanselman: Yeah. I noticed that one of your hacks and here about life specific hacks is don't check your email in the morning.

Gina Trapani: Yes.

Scott Hanselman: Get in and take that first hour when you sit down, where you spend, you sit



down at 8:00 in the morning, you start checking your email, and next thing you know it's 10:30.

Carl Franklin: It's true.

Scott Hanselman: Rather than having that two-and-a-half hours disappear in a fugue just because you were checking your email, you have that productive sprint.

Carl Franklin: That's a great tip.

Scott Hanselman: It is. Now there is tool that you guys use on the life hacker. I understand you have some other editors who work with you on the site, it's not just you right?

Gina Trapani: Yes.

Scott Hanselman: I can't remember the name of the tools, it's like auto it or auto...

Gina Trapani: Auto Hotkey.

Scott Hanselman: Auto Hotkey, this is like a whole cult around auto Hotkey.

Gina Trapani: Yes.

Scott Hanselman: What's the scoop there?

Gina Trapani: Auto Hotkey is an Open Source Windows scripting tool. So, well that lets you, basically just automate Windows task. So you can program in, mouse clicks, keyboard presses and put, it's actually pretty robust scripting language, you can put conditionals and wireloops and all that stuff. So, and one of -- so we've written a few articles. In fact, my co-editor Adam is a big auto Hotkey fan, and so one of the things I use a Hotkey for is, I embed snippets of HTML onto each post on life hacker, like my byline, and then we have a specific markup to include a link. So I have a little auto Hotkey tech snippets that fill in automatically; like, I'll type by-, and it will automatically fill in the markup to it to show my byline on a post.

Scott Hanselman: I just downloaded his Adam Pash's Mouser. It's interesting; I had a problem with the mouse not working, I couldn't quite figure it out. So I downloaded Mouser and it basically gives you a Hotkey that let's you then plug the mouse into the keyboard. So basically the arrow keys or the certain keys on your keyboard will control the mouse and then from that I found a mouse grid hack that one of your readers had done. A mouse grid, Carl is where you say Hotkey and then the screen chops up into nine slots...

Carl Franklin: Nice.

Scott Hanselman: ...and then you hit like seven, that will be in the upper left corner and then that seven, what used to be seven, then chops into nine and then you hit seven again and that one chops up into nine. So you basically, in three or four clicks can select any point on the screen, so rather than moving the mouse, you are basically playing battleship with your screen.

Carl Franklin: That's pretty cool.

Scott Hanselman: That's all enabled with this auto Hotkey. One of the other auto Hotkey things, that just has completely changed my life is this Wikipedia AutoCorrect, do you do that?

Gina Trapani: Yeah I have it running all the time.

Scott Hanselman: Did you write that?

Gina Trapani: I didn't, actually one of our readers did. We had, -- I had written a post about you, if there are certain words, they may spell at time like my name is Gina, G-I-N-A, I always type G-I-A-N when I type my name.

Carl Franklin: Dyslexic fingers; I have that all the time.

Gina Trapani: Yeah, just like thick fingers exactly. So I made an auto Hotkey script that says any time that I type G-I-A-N, change it automatically to my name. So then one of our reader said, hey there is this list of commonly misspelled words on Wikipedia and they made the text replacement or a Hotkey script with that.

Scott Hanselman: This is a fantastic tool, Carl. I mean this is like the AutoCorrect stuff that's built into word but it works for the entire system.

Carl Franklin: We used to do this with Batch Files. We used to type DIRT instead to DIR. So, we would make a Dirt batch file that calls DIR with the parameters.

Gina Trapani: That's what it's about...

Scott Hanselman: Hacking like this has been around forever. But it's amazing how -- I think there's the solutions that we're talking about, and I think this is all significant, but one of the things that I think is important, and I think you bring up in some of your posts is that you have to do a little self analysis, little introspection, you have to know that you have a problem before you actually come out with the solutions.



Carl Franklin: Right.

Scott Hanselman: This is part of the geek to live perspective as opposed to just, hey this is neat, hey this is neat and it solved the problem. I mean I had to sit down and say, "Well, I have a problem, I consistently misspell stuff."

Carl Franklin: You know what I think why this appeals to geeks so well, especially programmers I think, is because I've noticed that as a programmer to be really good, you cannot serve your ego. You're always questioning, whether what you're doing is the right thing or whether it's the right way. Somebody like an older person who is trying to print a Word doc, who doesn't really have any experience with computers, is a lot more frail in the tech ego. You know -- "I do it this way and it's going to work just fine" kind of thing, "I do my nine keystroke print sequence because it works."

Scott Hanselman: Yeah, you have to have flexibility, you have to be able to say, "This is not a good way I am doing this, it costs me time, it costs me money, it costs me minutes."

Carl Franklin: Yeah, so life hack seemed to me to be the sort of the -- taking it to its furthest extreme, okay. So, you can look at yourself, you can see, "I am deficient in these areas, what are some hacks to help me overcome those things?"

Gina Trapani: Absolutely.

Scott Hanselman: This is a lot of hacks than looking at this book here, and this just goes on and on and on. You've got 300 pages like, 88 different tips, and I am looking at this, trying to think how many of these I might be able to apply to my day. How many do you keep in your head? This is one of the things that a lot of people ask me about my tools list that I keep, like, "Wow, this is great you've got 300 tools list, but how many do you really use?"

Carl Franklin: Yeah.

Gina Trapani: I've used every -- the book for us all is there 80 hacks, but it's certainly it's very much like a buffet. Go up, you flip through it, you figure out what your issues are, and kind of pick and choose the ones that are going to really apply to you. I mean I have two different kinds of Wiki installations in the book, for instance. You don't necessarily want to run two different Wikis, so one is much easier than the other, depending on sort of your skill level and you know, Wiki might even -- might not work for a lot of people, I

know wouldn't work, for say, my sister. So, the book is kind of like you want to pick and choose different things. I wouldn't recommend that every single person to use every single and all 88 hacks, but every single one in the book, I've used at one point or another. It really depends on what kind of projects I am working on at the time, and what are the things that are really bugging me, but I've definitely used every single one at one point or another.

Scott Hanselman: Here is a hack for you Carl, hack 15: Sentence Stuff to Death Row. Tell Carl about Death Row, and why he needs to involve that in his life.

Carl Franklin: What's that?

Gina Trapani: Death Row is when you're -- is basically you're hanging on to human stuff in your life, whether it's a task on your "To do" list or a software installed on your computer or a projects that you're thinking about doing or just like stuff, magazines flayed around the house or gadgets even.

Carl Franklin: Ah, clutter.

Gina Trapani: Clutter, yeah exactly. Any stuff that you doubt about whether or not you need, make a big box whether it's a virtual folder on your desktop or physical cardboard box in your office, and dump it in the box, and the box is Death Row.

Carl Franklin: That seems like the first step in getting things done, to me.

Gina Trapani: It really does, it really is very similar to that, but the thing is with Death Row box is you put it aside, and if you don't think that you need one of those things after a certain amount of time, six weeks say or a month, toss it, you don't need the stuff. It's basically just -- I think that we're just bombarded with so much information, we have so many tools available to us at all times, I think that we really have to be, really kind of harsh editors in our lives, and be like, what are things that I really need, and the rest like I -- if I don't need that copy of The New Yorker, like it's okay.

Scott Hanselman: Isn't that funny that that's so true though, because you look in your book, you've got like you might have one tip that will go on for ten pages, but like the Death Row tip is two paragraphs that might be the one that really affects me. My wife and I walk around the house, and we say if we haven't physically touched



something in two years, unless it's a picture or something truly like, a memento, we throw it out.

Gina Trapani: Exactly.

Scott Hanselman: Just to live simpler. It's great that you've got that old Nintendo, but if you haven't touched it in two years, toss it.

Gina Trapani: Exactly.

Scott Hanselman: It's very cathartic, I really -- I can't say enough about that, that's the kind of the essence of a life hack, I think is doing something that might make it little uncomfortable initially, but at the end you're going to say, "Wow, that was very satisfying." Things are better now on the other side.

Gina Trapani: Absolutely, and the next thing that the Death Row approach is that, you give yourself a window for a couple of months like, "Okay, I am going to give myself, a little safety net if I realize I am going to need this next week, then I come back to the box, and I like, hold onto it."

Scott Hanselman: Totally. Now, in the interest of making things better, we've talked about Bookmarklets, about life hacks, but I understand that you're also a Firefox 2.0 Extension Developer.

Gina Trapani: Yes.

Scott Hanselman: And lot of my listeners write you know ActiveX controls and stuff, but other than having a whole lot of the extensions installed, I don't even know what is inside an XPI extension?

Gina Trapani: An XPI is actually -- a Firefox extension is an XPI file, but an XPI is actually just a zip file. If you rename that XPI to .ZIP, you can unzip it with Winzip or 7-Zip, and it's just a file that's made up of other files, JavaScript, and XML. XUL, which I am actually not sure of, even that's the way you say it, I have only read it. XUL is the structure, is the specification, that Firefox uses to plug into the browser onto the Chrome. So, it really can download any Firefox extension, like I said, and unzip it to take a look at the innards of it, and really all it is, is snippets of JavaScript, and pieces of XML, which say add this button to this toolbar or add this menu to this pull down. So, it's really actually very simple, in fact when I first realized that that's all a Firefox extension was, I was kind of amazed. So, really -- I mean if you're a Bookmarklet developer or even

if you just know a little bit of JavaScript, it's not hard at all to make a Firefox extension.

Scott Hanselman: You can access pretty much on a page, but they can also access other parts, it's not just the JavaScript dome, but you can get to aspects of the user interface, right. You can talk too...

Gina Trapani: Yes, of the Firefox column, you can...

Scott Hanselman: ...how do you do that, is that what the XUL does, it lets you talk to the outside, what you call the Chrome?

Gina Trapani: Yeah, exactly you can talk to the Chrome using the XML specification you can say, you can add menu items and buttons and that kind of thing.

Scott Hanselman: So, the Chrome is the term for the outer shell of Mozilla.

Carl Franklin: I see, I was wondering what the...

Gina Trapani: Exactly, that's the Firefox menus and status bar and context line.

Scott Hanselman: The part that's not the renderer?

Gina Trapani: Right, it's not the renderer.

Scott Hanselman: That kind of, anti-climactic, isn't it? So I can just open up the del.icio.us.XPI, and go and see how they did that, and make my own like just like that.

Gina Trapani: Yeah, it's really not hard. I mean there's a certain folder structure and that kind of thing, but it's really not difficult. In fact at this point now, Firefox choose, developer tools are much, much better, I started developing extension for a Firefox .9, and it was just, oh it was a nightmare, but things have got a lot better, in fact if you're just do Google away. There are few developer tools, I mean that there's one, it's like a wizard that's like put in the name of your extension, put in -- you've kind of entered in a basic information and it creates a skeleton for you to start with.

Carl Franklin: Gina, what is To-do.txt?

Gina Trapani: To-do.txt, is the way that I keep track of all of my 'To-dos' and projects and that kind of thing, and I wrote -- it's just a simple text file, but I saw myself opening it up in an editor, and rearranging it and sorting it, and wanting that



kind of tag, -- it was keywords, and only see the lines that had certain keywords. So, I wound up writing a script, it's a shell script which I actually run in Seguin (ph) on Windows, which is a UNIX emulator. So, it's a bash script, not a back script, which manages my To-do.txt. So, if I add a task to my To-do text, which is just plain text file, which has project life hacker, draft idea for next week's feature. That would be say in one line of my To-do text, and my To-do text script can say, I can say, "Show me all of the life hacker related To-dos that I have or show me all the home improvement To-dos that I've listed."

Scott Hanselman: How big is your To-do.txt right now?

Gina Trapani: I try and keep mine actually to under 100 lines.

Scott Hanselman: Really!

Gina Trapani: So, yeah it's about 90 lines. Yeah, my To-do text isn't a dumping ground for everything. It's next action, just like David Allen would consider a next action, it's like very concrete, thought out committed to; I am definitely doing this next action.

Scott Hanselman: Yeah, I am looking at your To-do.sh, your shell script, and you just say like, T list tax return.

Gina Trapani: Exactly.

Scott Hanselman: It filters out just those things that apply to your tax return.

Gina Trapani: Exactly.

Scott Hanselman: I mean everyone's got a To-do.txt on their desktop or it has had one at some point, I do right now, and it's just -- it has no structure at all. So, you've kind of come up with a pretty simple tag structure with prefixes and suffixes to give context to that all within the next actions, kind of Gestalt.

Gina Trapani: Exactly, exactly. You can also add contacts. So, like if you know 'call Scott', is a phone call I have to make, I would say, the context there is at phone, so if I am sitting at my desk and I have got access to your phone but nothing else, I can say hey, show me all the phone calls I have to make and say, list at phone and I would get those. So, it's basically just like tagging tasks so you can kind slice and dice them some however you want at the command line.

Scott Hanselman: Look well, it's very interesting, because I just installed Office 2007 and it was like 800 megs and it takes 300 megs of RAM and I am using it to manage my next actions and you have the Text file with a 100 lines and I am jealous.

Gina Trapani: Simplicity, simplicity.

Scott Hanselman: Yeah, it is, it's funny that just like the syncing to paper that we talked about before the idea that sometimes it's comforting just to get a 3x5 card and write down what you have to do.

Gina Trapani: Exactly.

Scott Hanselman: There is comfort in a simple text file and a clean and I am sure that you can add something to that instantly right, it takes you no time at all, you don't have to launch anything, you just go T add boom and it's done.

Gina Trapani: Yeah I've got a lot of keyboard short-cuts.

Scott Hanselman: That's fantastic.

Carl Franklin: So, Gina how many blogs do you have?

Gina Trapani: How many blogs do I have personally?

Carl Franklin: Yeah, I am seeing, well, just Websites like I see Spun and Digital Journalist, and Scribbling.net, that is and then there is the other one which I mentioned before misbehaving.net, you seem to have a lot of projects going on?

Gina Trapani: I have a lot of projects going on, not all those are mine, the Digital Journalist, is a Photojournalism Magazine, which I produced for actually one of my clients. Spun is my kind of developer blog, which doesn't get updated very frequently as I'm usually life hacking, most of my time. Scribbling.net is my personal blog which also doesn't get updated very often, you can go there to check to see pictures of my cat and what I had for lunch, all that kind of fun stuff. Misbehaving is group site that I work with a bunch of other folks.

Carl Franklin: That's cool, so the life hacks are working, apparently have all this time to do all these projects.



Gina Trapani: I don't know, if you look at the last updated data on the few of those sites, you might not think so.

Scott Hanselman: So, you are professional blogger?

Gina Trapani: Yeah.

Scott Hanselman: Do you say, that's fair to say, I mean, everyone bogs not everyone, but I mean a lot of people blog, lot of people say well how can I monetize my blog, I know I have got a little AdSense and I have a little, some RSS ads and it means a couple of 100 bucks a month and I use it to basically eat, you know that's -- we are not buying cars, and flying off to Cabo with the blog money we are making blogging; but blogging pays your mortgage.

Gina Trapani: Yes, I am a professional blogger, It's a little hard for me to say that without laughing a little bit.

Carl Franklin: How do you that?

Gina Trapani: One of the difference between doing life hacker and doing my personal blog is that Gawker Media publishes life hacker. So it's more like writing for a magazine than writing my own blog. Working at -- writing life hacker is like we have a whole kind of sales department and tech department that kind of takes care of a lot of stuff behind the scenes; and I get paid, not a salary, but more as a contractor, to write the site.

Scott Hanselman: You are not paid like per word or per blog, is there just a sense of you doing a good job and they say wow, I think well this was a great week for life hacker?

Gina Trapani: Well, we get paid on a post basis, and then we also get, we get bonuses for traffic increases.

Scott Hanselman: Oh, really, so they track that kind of stuff, so Gawker media, they have a number of different blogs?

Gina Trapani: Yes they do, I think 15, right now.

Carl Franklin: You know what I like about lifehacker.com is the quality of the posts is great, it's not just like stream of consciousness, blah, blah, blah and it's a lot like Scott's blog in that way and I am just seeing it for the first time, so that's why I am comparing yours to his.

Scott Hanselman: In the geek world, we'd say, the signal-to-noise ratio is very high.

Carl Franklin: Very high, yeah, you know complete with very nice graphics that are laid out in an intelligent way and that's very nice to be able to do it. I will come back here again and again.

Gina Trapani: Thanks!

Scott Hanselman: I actually have a folder in my - I have got 1500 blogs or whatever, I have got a folder called essential and that's like, if I can't read any blogs at all today, here are the 12 that I read and life hacker is, -- well, they are under "L".

Gina Trapani: Awesome, excellent, thank you.

Scott Hanselman: Yeah, it's like sites like this, sites like Engadget, I actually frankly, I hate to say this, they don't get my geek card revoked but I haven't read Slashdot in a while. It's just the sick kind of vile, I don't like blogging bile, I like positivism, if that's a word.

Carl Franklin: I pretty much read Digg now, most of the time, and Google News.

Scott Hanselman: I'm liking these, I think of these boutique sites and I've to call, and I apologize for calling life hacker, a boutique site but it's focused on one thing and it's -- you are obviously careful not to just turn it into a link dumping site.

Gina Trapani: Yes, yeah, we are definitely complicated.

Scott Hanselman: I am sure that you are conscious about that kind of stuff. It sounds like you're really less of a blogger and more of a professional journalist. Is that a better way to put it or professional technology writer but the blog is just one of the representations of that.

Gina Trapani: Yes, yeah. Well somewhere in between a blogger and a journalist for sure.

Carl Franklin: Okay, what's your favorite life hack, all time favorite?

Gina Trapani: All time favorite, that's a tough one. We've done about 8,000 posts on the site at this point and I love them all like my children.

Scott Hanselman: What are ones that you do everyday. What's to you like, "Wow, I am so glad, I have that and I use it everyday"

Gina Trapani: I would say definitely index cards in my back pocket.



Scott Hanselman: Really?

Gina Trapani: To write things down that come up in my mind. Absolutely yeah, I have a little bit of, like most programmers little bit of ADD, things come up and I got to get them out or else I'll get hung up on them.

Scott Hanselman: Index cards though not Moleskine?

Gina Trapani: I do have a Moleskine which I really like although Moleskine is such a beautiful notebook that I feel bad about sticking in my back pocket and sitting on it and getting it dirty so...

Scott Hanselman: Yeah I am trying to get Carl onto Moleskine; this is the iPod of Personal Notebooks. We buy it just because Hemmingway had one. Yeah, I am kind of the same way and what will happen with me is I'll get about half way through it, filling it and then I'll just say, "Well I want a fresh one"

Gina Trapani: Yes, yeah.

Scott Hanselman: And I am always jealous of those people who go into their office and they've got like 15 of them and they are filled up and they are like labeled with the month that they wrote it and they can go back and I am never writing enough in these things

Carl Franklin: I pretty much do all of my work on a Samsung PDA phone, a pocket PC phone and without that I am pretty much screwed.

Scott Hanselman: It's tough, there is a certain visceral glee that I get from having a piece of paper. I mean sometimes when I am stressed out, I don't take my laptop to a coffee shop because I have to get all those Windows out of the way.

Gina Trapani: Yes.

Scott Hanselman: The way I get the Windows out of the way is with a piece of paper.

Gina Trapani: Absolutely.

Scott Hanselman: Fisher Space Pen.

Gina Trapani: Yes.

Scott Hanselman: Absolutely, well fantastic, I really appreciate you Gina taking the time to give us a call, we've had a three-way phone call, -- you're in the Bay Area?

Gina Trapani: I am in Santiago, actually.

Scott Hanselman: Santiago, we're at Brooklyn though.

Gina Trapani: South Cal.

Scott Hanselman: And you are from Brooklyn originally?

Gina Trapani: Yes, I am.

Scott Hanselman: And did you move out to the West Coast to blog?

Gina Trapani: No, actually Gawker is based in New York City, but we have editors kind of all over the country. I moved out to California just to learn how to surf, have a couple of burritos.

Scott Hanselman: That's fantastic, well we really appreciate you taking the time, and we are going to put all the links to the del.icio.us category for life hacks, to lifehacker.com, to the 'geek to live' stuff, to you have got a how too, on how to write a Firefox extension? We will post that up there, as well as information on the term life hacks, and where that came from, and then we will also post links to your book on Amazon, it's coming out in a week or two, right?

Gina Trapani: Yes, it is thank you so much, I really appreciate this, it's been great.

Carl Franklin: Gina thanks again, from myself and everybody here at PWOP Studios and we will talk to you next week, dear listener on Hanselminutes.

(Music)