

real LIFE

HOW THEY DO IT

MAKING THE NEWS FUN

WHEN THEY WEREN'T working long hours as producers at NBC News, Carly Zakin and Danielle Weisberg were constantly filling in family and friends on the week's big headlines. "They would call us up before a date, a meeting or a dinner and say, 'I've got five minutes. Tell me what's going on,'" Danielle explains. "Everyone's busy, but no one wants to be caught uninformed." →



Carly Zakin, *left*, and Danielle Weisberg at their office in NYC's Flatiron District

Hair and makeup by Birgitte for Laura Mercier

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM HEREFORD

"DANIELLE SENT ME A 2 A.M. TEXT MESSAGE THAT SAID, *THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY HERE.*"

→ Convinced they were on to something, the friends, who met studying abroad in Rome in 2006, got to talking. "Danielle sent me a 2 A.M. text message that said, *There's an opportunity here,*" Carly recalls. "After that, it clicked." In July 2012, they quit their jobs and launched TheSkimm, a daily newsletter directed at time-strapped millennials that delivers a smart, sassy digest of the day's top stories straight to your e-mail inbox. With more than half a million subscribers and a legion of famous fans (Lena Dunham, Chelsea Handler, Hoda Kotb), the pals-turned-business-partners — who live together in Manhattan's West Village — are building a bona fide media empire. *GH* visited their cute digs to talk shop. —*Rachel Bowie*



FIVE THINGS THEY CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Marc by Marc Jacobs Computer Case

They both have one. "I bought it for Danielle — and then bought one for myself, too!" says Carly.

Hershey's Chocolate

"I need something sweet when I write," says Carly, who nukes s'mores in the office microwave.

Instagram

"It's one of the first things we check when we wake up," says Danielle.

iPhone 5c

Carly says, "We're always on our phones, multitasking."

Sauvignon Blanc

White wine gets the Skimm gals through long writing sessions.

COUCH LAUNCH "We sent the first newsletter from our living room in our tiny apartment," says Danielle. "Then we e-mailed 5,200 people pulled from Facebook, Gmail — basically anyone we'd ever met — announcing the launch. It was terrifying," Carly adds. "We each wrote a draft when we were developing the product, then compared. The voice was the same — conversational. We want it to sound just like how we speak to our friends."

CELEBRITY SHOUT-OUT Four days post-launch, "we were at NBC for meetings," says Carly. "Later that day, I went to check e-mail, but my phone kept crashing. It turned out [*Today* show cohort] Hoda Kotb had called us one of her favorite things on-air."

FIRST SPLURGE The duo dipped into personal savings to get TheSkimm off the ground. Then, in October 2013, they received \$1.3 million from a group of investors, including a venture capital firm. "We celebrated by getting fancy haircuts!" Danielle says. "We hadn't been able to afford nice ones." Adds Carly, "We also took a snapshot of our bank account to remember what a million dollars in it looks like!"

ALWAYS ON CALL "Our editorial meetings start at 4 P.M.," says Danielle. "We write in shifts, with meetings throughout the evening; then we're up before [the e-mail] goes out at 6 A.M. Carly and I always have the final look. We've even barged into each other's rooms in the middle of the night to address breaking news, like with the Boston Marathon attacks."

FRIENDS FIRST "People ask if we get annoyed with each other," says Carly. "When you're spending that much time with anyone, obviously there are challenges." Adds Danielle, "We've learned to take a step back when we're near the edge. I listen when Carly tells me to take a walk."

NEXT STOP TheSkimm is humming along: "We're huge with college students and moms," Carly says, "and 30% of our followers are male." But building a lifestyle brand is their ultimate goal. Says Danielle, "The newsletter is just our launchpad."



CARLY ZAKIN & DANIELLE WEISBERG

Age: 28 (both)

Current home: New York City

Hometown: New York City (Carly) and Chicago (Danielle)

Education: Tufts (Danielle) and the University of Pennsylvania (Carly)

A.M. pick-me-up: Mint tea (Carly); coffee with soy milk (Danielle)

Currently reading: *You Should Have Known* (Carly); *Americanah* (Danielle)