

[Book Journeys](#) Author Interview - May 16, 2013

Dr. Angela Lauria with Abby Kohut, human resources recruiter and author of *Absolutely Abby's 101 Job Search Secrets*

"It feels great, and everyone should go get their book done, for sure." ~Abby Kohut

Angela:

Well, hello everybody and welcome to Book Journeys Radio. I am your host, Angela Lauria and the founder of The Author Incubator and creator of The Difference Process for writing a book that matters. And I am really excited. In today's show, we're talking to somebody who is on a mission to make a difference in the lives of, uhm, at least one million job seekers and hopefully even more. Her name is Abby Kohut, and Abby is the author of *Absolutely Abby's 101 Job Search Secrets*. Uhm, Abby, welcome to the show.

Abby:

Thank you. Thanks for having me.

Angela:

It is great to have you here. Obviously, job search is an important, you know, people are... we have unemployment challenges, and our economy hasn't been doing so great, so job search secrets are, well, a need and I would just love to hear more about how, uhm, you know, how you came to write this book and also about, I guess, the mission that you find yourself on.

Abby:

Sure. Well, it all started when I was a human resources professional, and I had been doing that for approximately eighteen years now, and I've recruited about 10,000 people in my career and...

Angela:

Wow.

Abby:

Yeah, and what happened was if you recruit 10,000 people on... hire 10,000 people, you end up rejecting a lot of people and what used to bother me is that I really wanted to tell the person across the desk, why they weren't getting the job. So I would think it and know it but I couldn't tell anybody. So I decided to set up my website which is now called Absolutely Abby Dotcom, and on there I just... the absolute truth and stuff that normal recruiters just won't tell them. And so...

Angela:

Enlighten me. Why won't normal recruiters tell them? Why can't you tell people?

Abby:

Well, it's not the recruiters job to counsel and coach somebody on how to better on their interview. It's really just our job to recruit and if you don't do the job, then we have to go find somebody that does, so... that's one of the reasons, but there are many reasons, and so... that's the biggest, though. It's really just not our... It's not even... Like honestly if it's my opinion that you didn't answer the question right, it's really just my opinion. Recruiting is all about opinions and so that's what makes it so difficult to make a match between a person and a job. But ultimately that's what goes on and so recruiters... we just... we're just not supposed to tell people the reason. Like we're not supposed to say, "When we asked you this question, you said this, and you should've said that." So, anyway, I started...

Angela:

Right.

Abby:

Yeah. So I started speaking all around New York, New Jersey, Connecticut while I was a full time recruiter and I found out I wasn't able to meet enough people, so I created a mission to help a million job seekers and started driving around the country in an RV and... I'm talking to you today from Dallas...ah, we made it halfway across the country. We left in September and were planning to stay out on the road 'til at least December, and on a mission to educate one million jobseekers.

Angela:

That is quite a mission and how are you finding people? How do you find these million people?

Abby:

Well, most of the tie jobseekers get together in networking groups, and so they get together at churches, at YMCAs, at temples, at army bases, those types of things, so... libraries too... So we call all these venues and we ask them if they would like to have a speaker come so I go in and speak for them. And that's how I find them.

Angela:

That is fantastic. And now... how and why a book? How did you decide to turn that idea into a reality?

Abby:

Well, what happened was... it was back in 2009, I started my website and... May of 2009, and I was speaking a little here, a little there, and then all of a sudden it was, approximately... September, I think, and I realized that I've had all of these speaking gigs booked in January, so it was like four, five or six, or something, booked in January, already, and it was early and it was only September. So I thought to myself, *Well wouldn't it be good if I had a book to bring*

into the speaking event so I could offer it to people there and they could gain even more knowledge? And so that was the ammunition I needed and that's how I got it done very quickly.

Angela:

And from the time that you had the idea 'til you'd finished it, how long did it take to write it and then how long to have it in your hand?

Abby:

It took me about... I wanna say three months to write it and edit it, and then it took me another month or so to have it in my hand.

Angela:

Wow! That is the fastest turnaround... I've interviewed over a hundred people [and I'm] pretty sure I've never heard anyone turnaround that fast.

Abby:

Yeah. I know. I'm very lucky 'cause I've lived with a person who does... [with] regards to the book cover for me, and he did the editing... He was also published, and, you know, I'll tell you the reason, 'cause people ask me this all the time, "Why did you self-publish? And the reason is I heard early on that in order to get a publisher to take your book, you have to have a fairly large following, and at that time, I really didn't have a very large following. So, I decided that... My mission was to helping job seekers now and not to wait three years 'til I had a large following,

Angela:

Yeah. Yeah.

Abby:

I don't have a lot of time and I'm sure a publisher would be interested, but I would have wasted time in those three years worth of job seekers wouldn't have been able to find jobs, essentially, so that's why I decided...

Angela:

I think that's great, and it's a... I have found that having a book is a great way to grow your platform and grow your list. Is that something that you've experienced?

Abby:

Well, it's a certainly great way to get attention from speaking venues, so that when I call them, and say I'd like to come and speak for you, and say I'm an author, they always say, "Oh, okay." You know, they think that that's a really big deal and so that has really helped me tremendously. It's also helped with radio and how you found me today. It's helped with radio

and I've done TV and radio and tons of online sites and yeah, it's helped a tremendous amount.

Angela:

That's fantastic. So, before you wrote your book, what are the things you wished you knew? Like, what would you change about the process of writing your book or how your book turned out based on what you've learned since it was published, what, two years ago?

Abby:

Yeah, I would say that I probably would have paid for a professional editor. Now I ended up having four people edit the book, two of them being me, so I edited it twice. I probably edited it more like five times, when you really think about it. But then I had two other people edit it and... it just... it still had mistakes in it. So, I think that's what I would have done. It's I would have spent the money on a professional editor.

Angela:

Okay, and what... and what has been the result of not having a professional editor? What... eh, you know, is it you just found typos or is it that you spent so much time on it, or..?

Abby:

No, it's really just the typos. It's that when I found the typos, it was just, you know, you just want to bang your head against the wall, like, ooh. I wish that I had caught that one, you know!

Angela:

Right. It's amazing. It's like... here overnight.

Abby:

Yeah, No, but it's just, it's sort of embarrassing when people find your typos, and uhm, it's just uh... I wish I would have spent the time also to republish the book, but at this point, I'm just, it's... there's so much going on in my work, speaking and touring, and this and that, so I haven't had the time to republish it, so the errors are still there, but it's still a really good book despite the few errors.

Angela:

Right, and you know there's many, uh, you know, published books by big New York authors that I've found typos in, so...

Abby:

Really?

Angela:
You're not the only one. .

Abby:
Well that...

Angela:
Yeah.

Abby:
That really surprises me actually. (chuckles)

Angela:
Happens all the time. It's just... I don't know... Sometimes they just sneak in there. So when you started the process of writing your book, did you..? Did you... anything to envision it completed? Did you imagine holding your book in your hand? Did you imagine sending to speaking venue? Did you know what you wanted to do with it?

Abby:
Not really. I just knew that... I imagined having a table at the speaking venue and promoting the book, but that's really just what it was. I didn't imagine sending it to anybody. I didn't imagine the media attention. I just imagined having a book, because I had been to so many seminars where other people had books at the back of the room and I always bought everything that they have, so I just figured I could be one of those people. I could have great information to provide to my job seekers and help them get jobs.

Angela:
And why is it important to you to help job seekers? Why do you think that's... 'cause clearly I'm hearing your personal "why," the reason you're doing all this.

Abby:
Yeah.

Angela:
Why do you think you're so passionate about it?

Abby:
Well, it's because of the fact that all these years, I've had to reject all these people and the thing is that the people out there, they're making these teeny-tiny little mistakes and if I could just give them a tip that will make them not make one of these teeny-tiny little mistakes and making it a job. So, I still (a little bit), feel personally responsible...

Angela:

So, can you give me...

Abby:

Yeah?

Angela:

Can you give me some examples of the types of mistakes that people make?

Abby:

Of course. I have plenty of them. I'll give... I mean this is a little simple... something simple, right? So, I had a job seekers come into and interview, one day, and they plugged their cell phone into my wall and the thing is, if you need to plug your cell phone in to charge it, it's totally fine. All you had to do is ask my permission, "Can I borrow your wall to plug in your, my, cell phone?" Right?

Angela:

Right.

Abby:

It's just not about asking permission. It's about, uhm, you know, it's my office, it's not your house, so that... says something. It says that this person doesn't respect authority or something. It's just... It was just weird, and...

Angela:

And what that it? So as a recruiter, he does that one thing and you don't even need to finish the interview, you like, no, this isn't gonna be the guy?

Abby:

No. You know what, that's one of the things that, it just makes you... sort of like a little strike, like a little check and a flag that makes you think that, you know, keep that in mind when you're evaluating for qualifications. 'Cause you're not just evaluating their skills, you're evaluating [if] their fit for your company, and you're evaluating their personality for your company, and so... it's really about that, so, "Is that person, is that type of personality gonna fit well in my culture?" So, I wouldn't really object to that. I had another guy who called in the middle of an interview, and, what I found out later (I know this is ridiculous) but what I found out later was that his father was in the hospital and he was taking a call from his father, [who was] in the hospital, and so. ..

Angela:

Oh, well that's kind of a good reason.

Abby:

Of course, it's a good reason.

Angela:

He probably articulated that upfront?

Abby:

Yeah, he should have said to me, "If my phone rings, and it's an unknown number, I'm gonna take it 'cause it's my father in the hospital," and I would've said, "By all means," it's like, "Of course you should take that," you know what I mean?

Angela:

Wow.

Abby:

It's these little things, so...

Angela:

Do you find the... uh, do you find that the tips you have target younger job seekers or older job seekers? Do you have to narrow down your target market in some way or do the tips apply across the board?

Abby:

They really apply across the board but certain age groups tend to do certain things more than other so that the younger job seekers are more like the ones to start texting in the middle of an interview whereas somebody who is 60 years old is probably not gonna do that; they know that they shouldn't do that. But the people who are sixty years old have different issues, so things that they might say during an interview. So they might say something like, "Yeah, I'm gonna work for another five years, and then I'm gonna retire, you know, and that's not a good thing to tell me either, so, it's just... so now..."

Angela:

I will tell you my... my favorite job seeker...

Abby:

Please do.

Angela:

And this is has happened to me so often, was I would say, "Why are you interested in this job?" and what is the wrong answer? Do you know the wrong answer to that?

Abby:

Uhm, there's a lot of wrong answers, actually.

Angela:

Because I need the money.

Abby:

Right. Well that's... obviously the wrong answer and very few people tell me that. Do you know what they tell me?

Angela:

What?

Abby:

They start going through their whole background. So my question is, "Why do you want this job?" and the answer is, "Because I love your product or... It's a simple answer, it's like a one-liner, right? Yeah...."

Angela:

Yeah... and were gonna get to that...

Abby:

Right, and then they'd start saying, "Well..." They'd start walking me through their whole resume and that's not what I wanted to know. I just wanted to find out why you're interested in this position. So that's usually what people tell me.

Angela:

Right.

Abby:

Or they just don't really have a very good reason. But, yeah, when people say... when people say that they're desperate or act desperate, that's just a big no-no for us.

Angela:

It's so funny. This all sounds so much like dating.

Abby:

Uhm... It does. It does. It is much like dating and that's probably another book that I should be writing, clearly. Clearly, I should be writing that book.

Angela:

And so, for you... uhm... What something, that having a book... What's come out of having a book that's surprised you or maybe even different than you expected?

Abby:

Uhm, probably... the thing that's different... I guess it's probably how much people... how much credibility people think that you have because you have a book.

Angela:

Uh hmm...

Abby:

And the fact is... I may be smart and I need to really... at what I do as a speaker, and I certainly have great information, but... I guess, what they do, is they figure because you have a book, you're that much better... and I'm the same person.

Angela:

Right.

Abby:

But because I have the book and I went through all the trouble to put the words into these beautiful, too nicely glossy pages, you know, then I must be even better.

Angela:

Right.... Yeah it is fascinating.

Abby:

So that's what surprised me, and I knew that, yeah, people told me that's gonna happen but I really didn't believe it and it's so incredibly true.

Angela:

You wrote the book so quickly, I have to assume you... you didn't run into writer's block.

Abby:

No, but it all.. the...

Angela:

So it all worked out. Okay, yeah. Clearly. 'Cause that is... but why don't you talk to us about your process during those three months. Did you have a number of pages you wanted to write everyday or did you get up early and write, or... How did that writing process go for you?

Abby:

Well, it was actually... what I did is, I did it... in a chapter-a-day, kind of. That's really what it was. So, I did one chapter and, uhm... So I knew I had a little bit of writer's block on a particular day, but it wasn't like something that lasted for a very long time. But I was like one chapter a day and then I would keep writing them and I didn't know which order they were gonna end up, and... until I started editing. So that was really important. Because my focus... uhm, a 101 job search secrets... So each one is very separate; so it's not like a novel where it's continuous. You know what I mean?

Angela:

Yeah. So I think that's a great... Let's stop there for a minute because I think that's a great tip. Did you come up with the name for the book before you even started writing?

Abby:

I did. Uhm...

Angela:

What I love about this is that anybody is stuck on a topic, whatever they're, you know, whatever they're thinking about writing; they're thinking about, you know, parenting, or relationships, or, any... any topic you can focus on... you can turn it into a hundred and one tips about it. I'm gonna guess... I haven't actually... I haven't read your book, but I'm gonna guess that each tip took a page or two.

Abby:

That's it. That's how I did it. It's really two hundred... This all started when I went to hear Mark Victor Hansen talk and Mark Victor Hansen is a co-author of Chicken Soup for the Soul... with Jack Canfield... and I heard Mark Victor... Mark Victor Hansen was teaching people about books and said that your book title... the easiest way to write a book title is to put a number on it, like a hundred and one something, or ninety seven something, or twenty something and, uhm, and then each, and when he... [as] soon as he said that... well that's easy. I could write a hundred tips in like 10 minutes, because I've been living this stuff for my whole life. So that's how it happened.

Angela:

Wow. And so, what... what were some other things that you went into the book knowing that you think had helped you, 'cause obviously that was a huge one.

Abby:

Yeah, well, I think something else I'd learned from another speaker is... it was uh... Fail, Forward, Fast. So, yes, Fail, Forward, Fast. And what they said was, "Just write it," like. "Don't worry if it's great - just write it and get it out there and worry about it later," which is great. And that's really what I did. I just filed through it and said, "I need this thing by January; it had to be done," and it got done. So that was another really good tip. *Do not wait.*

Angela:

I love that, The one that my... when I was doing my Ph.D. dissertation, [what] my advisor, he said to me was, ““A good dissertation is a finished dissertation.”

Abby:

Yeah. I... that. Yeah that's really good. There was another person that inspired me, which was Barbara De Angelis. She wrote a lot of relationship books, and uhm, she has this saying, which is, *The world is waiting for your words...* and essentially, these inspired me to get it done... just get it done. It was at the same seminar that I met Mark Victor Hansen... that.

Angela:

Wow.

Abby:

Yeah, it was a powerful week.

Angela:

So what other... So...so you... at least by [joining] seminars on writing a book before you did it, what other things did you do to support your transformation into becoming an author?

Abby:

Uh, well, I got on social media, and that, to say the least, has been incredibly helpful. I finally [was] alive twenty years ago writing a book... well I was alive twenty years ago, but I mean, if twenty years ago, I wrote a book, or thirty years ago, I can't even imagine how this'll all would work; I can't even imagine how I'd be promoting my tour without social media. So the world is so much better with the fact that we can all communicate online. So...

Angela:

And a lot of authors say, like, they want to write, they want... they want their, you know, their words to get out there but they're overwhelmed by the commitment required by social media. How did you.. Did you take a class, or... How did you get over that? Was that...

Abby:

I had... Well, I had someone teach me how to use Twitter and someone teach me how to use LinkedIn and I had Facebook... I just kind of went on and figured it out. And I just enjoyed it so much that I found it fun and I didn't find it too much time consuming, uh, so I just did a little bit everyday, and I found a way to... to do it in such a way that it wasn't intruding on everything else that I was doing.

Angela:

Mmm. So you actually didn't... you didn't stop your other works? You didn't stop your... when you're writing stuff?

Abby:

Uh, no, and that's something I would probably... oh, I would definitely recommend, uhm, because, so... I had a full time job as a recruiter while I was writing that and I know a lot of people that think that a book is gonna make them rich, and one of the things that... Mark Victor Hansen taught me that... your book is really a business card, and it's not gonna make you rich unless you market it hands on, and then it might but... You might get lucky; you might write a book that's a bestseller and that's fabulous and that everyone wants to read. That's definitely possible but, I mean, in the chance that it might not be, you have to come up with other ways to generate revenue, like becoming a speaker or affiliate relationships, or having a business. So I still had my recruiting work that I was doing on the side while I was writing. So I was writing in my spare time, essentially.

Angela:

Fantastic. So...

Abby:

But it was only two pages a day. So, it wasn't that hard, you know?

Angela:

Right. I think that's... I think that's one of the big keys, and did you ever, uhm... Was that a hard commitment to keep, or was that something that was small enough that it wasn't hard..?

Abby:

It was small enough, but at the same time, there were days that I didn't feel like sitting down and writing [and] I just felt like, you now watching tv or having dinner with my friends, or something. So, uh, you know...

Angela:

And what did you do? Wha... what's your advice if that happens to people? They make a commitment... I have one, uh, author who have made a commitment of fifteen minutes, three days a week. That was all she was willing to work on her book. But I've had lots of other people that want to do an hour a day or two hours a day - the kind of commitment that you're saying and... everytime they go to sit down there, they are moved to write. So what do you recommend?

Abby:

Well, I think if you just have your sights set on of... and why you want the book, maybe it would be good to have a reason, like a really good reason. It should be... Like maybe it's New Year's Eve... Maybe you're going to have a party... and maybe you should schedule the party before you can write the book, so you can have the goal to write the book. So, it's to set a deadline that really means something to you. Maybe you have your college reunion coming up and you want to bring the book to your college reunion. I... then you have to get it done...

Angela:

[I use that] as my dieting strategy... one of my friends is getting married, if somebody's having a birthday, like... those are my best diets.

Abby:

Yeah. That's it. Of course, it is, and so if you have a reason, like a particular reason for your goal, it's much easier to accomplish.

Angela:

And for you, obviously a big part of that reason was helping people, helping the very people that you had said no to and broken.

Abby:

Yeah.

Angela:

...apart...

Abby:

I know. It's true.

Angela:

But what about from a business perspective? Has this had a financial impact? Have you been able to... I know that you're not, making tons of money and retiring on a yacht because of book sales...

Abby:

Not yet. (laughs)

Angela:

But are there other ways that you had been able to incorporate revenue streams in having a book?

Abby:

Yes. Well, it's all about speaking and speaking fees and uhm, people finding me online... and I've had very major organizations find me online and pay to having me be their spokesperson; by having someone who's interested in sponsoring me... So it's major organizations that are coming forth because of my presence on the web, I've...

Angela:

And they're finding you?

Abby:
They're finding me. Yeah.

Angela:
That must be nice!

Abby:
It is nice. It's taken a lot of time to get here. It's taken about three years, or so to get to this place...

Angela:
So if somebody would like... If there's somebody, who is listening to our show, and they would... they would like someone to call them and offer them money - a sponsorship or a speaking opportunity... What are some tips you can give them to make their...?

Abby:
Tips that your website... Get the SEO going on your website. Get on Facebook. Get on Twitter. Get a lot of followers. Get on LinkedIn. I've got twelve... almost 12,000 on Twitter and I've 6,500 on LinkedIn and I have about 4-5 thousand on Facebook... and my website is going well, and I also have...

Angela:
And you know what, you said your website... that having it is tricky, so I want everyone to check this out. It's absolutelyabby and abby is spelled A, B as in boy, B as in boy, Y as in yellow. So, absolutelyabby.com and Abby's in some interesting things up there. The first thing is this whole absolutelyabby idea is almost like... instead of just having your name... and you've turned it into a brand. How did you decide to do that?

Abby:
Oh, my goodness. Let me tell you how I decided to do that. So I... My husband wanted us to have the website be abbykohut.com (which is very bland) and I wanted to have it be abbyunplugged.com and we're kinda arguing back and forth, back and forth, and so we said, you know what, let's ask our friends. So we sent our names out to all of our friends... well not all, [it's] like we gave it to twenty friends and family members, and we gave them 24 hours, and we said, "We're gonna have a job search site. We're going to give tips to job seekers. Which name would you like? And we went and looked for domains that were available with my name in it, and absolutelyabby was one of them, and it was actually the fifth choice on the list. "Cause I didn't think it was all that good. And so we sent it out..."

Angela:
Hmmm. I like the alliteration.

Abby:

I know and when we sent it out, more people liked absolutelyabby... like no one liked abbykohut; a few people liked abbyunplugged, but it was like the overwhelming majority, so we picked on it, that's why... and it's totally... it's totally become...

Angela:

That's fantastic.

Abby:

Yeah, totally become absolutelyabby... totally...

Angela:

Yeah. I am really... [and] it's fantastic.

Abby:

Thank you.

Angela:

But that's a great step for, for people that are listening and seeing if there's a way to make something special and memorable about your name, but not so special that it's... tricky? So, absolutelyabby is, you know, nice and easy to remember and it's nothing too complicated, but it just makes "abby" kinda stand out a little bit. And you'll also see on this website, Abby wants to, uhm, she said that her main revenue stream sponsorship and speaking engagements, and if you look at her website, you'll see that, upfront and center, she mentions that she speaks and there's a part of the website where you can find out, uh, about her speaking engagements. So, she looks very busy and she includes a phone number and I think you even have a video here talking about, I guess, what you do when you speak, right?

Abby:

Yes, Uhm hmm.

Angela:

So, here's the thing (and we only have a minute left)... but here... The thing is, if you are writing your book right now, and you... even if you're stuck... even if you have writer's block right now, you can start working on a website like Abby's (look at Abby's website); you can put up your speaking event page, even if you don't have speaking engagements yet. You can start moving in this direction while your book is still coming together. And there's also other... other content she has up here... You can turn to blog posts and really start getting, uhm, that content on the web at the same time. So I think, you know, your website is fantastic and it's a really great model for people to use... that want... to use [the Web] to get speaking opportunities.

Abby:

Thank you. Yeah. Well this website is designed for speaking opportunities, and I have another website that's called meetabby.com that's for job seekers to get a couple of free teleseminars that I did, so I, uhm, usually get that one out, if I have job seekers on the line... I have another site for my tour, which is abbyacrossamerica.com, so everyone can go look at those three and see what I'd done on all of them.

Angela:

That is awesome. Well, it has been so great to talk to you today and, uhm, I think you have so many good tips and such a great approach to making a book a part of a whole portfolio of helping people, which is ultimately what this is all about and what feels good. So...

Abby:

Yeah, it does. It feels great, and everyone should go get their book done, for sure.

Angela:

Yeah. You're awesome. Abby Kohut, who is the author of *Absolutely Abby's 101 Job Search Secrets*. You can find it on absolutelyabby.com (that's abby with a "y") and we will be back next week with another author talking about their book journey and until then as you continue on your book journey, just remember that together, we are changing the world one book at a time.