

[Book Journeys](#) Author Interview – April 12, 2012

Dr. Angela Lauria with Cynthia Burnham, author of *The Charisma Edge: A How-to Guide for Turning on Your Leadership Power*

“Use a book coach.” ~Cynthia Burnham

Angela:

Well, hello everybody. Welcome to BlogTalk Radio. This is Angela Lauria and we are here on Book Journeys Radio today with Cynthia Burnham. Cynthia, say hello to everybody.

Cynthia:

Good morning everyone.

Angela:

Cynthia is the author of *The Charisma Edge: A How-to Guide for Turning on Your Leadership Power*, and we are very excited to have her with us today. So thank you for making the time to talk to us.

Cynthia:

Thank you. I am excited to be here as well.

Angela:

Excellent. Well we are on Book Journeys Radio. We are focused on helping new writers who are looking to write their first book and they haven't quite gotten to the finish line with like you did in *The Charisma Edge*. So what I'm trying to do as a publisher and as a book coach is to help find just a little nugget to help people get from “I have ideas for a book” to “I'm holding my book in my hand.” So I like to start by asking authors like yourself: What do you wish that you knew before you wrote your book?

Cynthia:

Ah, well there is a fairly long list but I would say the most important thing for me was that I wish I had done more extensive research around the other available books in the marketplace. Because if I am in a non-fiction area, business area and it would have given me more information about how to position what I was looking at, and how to make choices about the cover art and all of that sort of thing and who my potential competition would have been. I also wish that I had worked a line of testimonies to put on my cover---people who might raise the credibility factor for the book that I was putting out.

Angela:

So if you had to do it all over again... just to put it in a little bit of context... why don't you tell us about your book, and now... now that you... (I'm guessing that you know the market place a little bit better) how is your book different...? Like how would you position it differently now?

Cynthia:

Well my book, *The Charisma Edge*, is a guide. It's supposed to be a handbook and it contains a-hundred-and-one tips on how to become more powerful and compelling in an authentic way for people who want to develop their ability to be inspirational, to be commanding, to connect better with the people around them. And it's very...

Angela:

That's a great subtitle: *A-Hundred-and-One Tips to Be Inspirational*.

Cynthia:

Ah. Well, that's one of the subtitles that we did consider and I was recommended (to me) that I [go] with instead with a how-to guide for turning on your leadership power because I was going after the business book market in particular. And also they said that if I change my mind and wanted to add more tips then I would have to change the title. So...

Angela:

That's a good point...

Cynthia:

Yes, so the way that my book is different from other books on typical subjects out there--on the same kind of subjects out there---is that my book is not a philosophical poem-based book where you read lots and lots of stuff and it's all heavy and philosophical. Mine is: these are the things that you actually need do; this is the way you stand; this is the way you talk; this is the way you gesture, and it is based on what I saw through, oh, now more on thirty years of experience in the corporate world and also as an independent consultant. And the way that I have realized now is I didn't look carefully at the way that this book in my niche will be marketed and so my book looks different and is set-up a little bit differently and is marketed differently than some of the other books and I'm not certain that's it's to its advantage.

Angela:

Mmm, okay. That could be good.

Cynthia:

It could be good but I really think of that... when I see the books that are selling and that are on the bestseller lists and I go through and I look at what are the Amazon top one hundred business books, for example, which is a nice way to research that I do ahead of time indefinitely.

Angela:

Okay.

Cynthia:

And how did they look? How did the top hundred books look? And my book doesn't look like that. And I think that...

Angela:

Now that's such a great, practical... like, easy and kind of fits with the way that you started your book... that it's just a really tangible [and] doable task for new authors and one of the things that I have found with the authors that I work with is... like right now, you are so confidently saying that you would be looking in... either making business or business leadership... when you were looking at an Amazon category, but a lot of authors that I talk to feel like their book is different. They don't want to pick a category, those that cross a lot of categories that will help lots of people. There's leadership for parents, there's leadership for business people and there's also leadership for volunteers, and leadership for teens and charisma---all important to everyone.

Cynthia:

Yes.

Angela:

And do you think that's true?

Cynthia:

Yes. Maybe true.

Angela:

And so how... when you went in to your project, did you know---this is the business book that I am interested in reaching business people and you recommend that kind of clarity or was that a process for you?

Cynthia:

Well, when I went into... (the answer is yes or no). When I went into it, I knew that it was going to be a business book because I do business coaching and I knew that I had to have a book for business coaching. So I knew that I was into that narrow a focus myself. Do I think that it applies to everyone? Yes I do. I didn't know how to write it for everyone and I absolutely recommend myself---a certain amount of clarity---and I don't think I narrowed my niche enough.

Angela:

Wow!

Cynthia:

Yeah, because... I can say to you, yes, everything that I teach applies to everyone. I know it does and I am positive that it does. However, people don't look for books that way. They look for books that apply to them, I think. And so they look for... "I'm a corporate leadership person

and so I'm going to look for that." I was... it was recommend to me that I narrow it down and consider taking a look, for example, at "charisma for women," for various reasons that have to do with who I am and [sort of what the market buying this sort of thing is]. But I refused because I didn't center on my niche and I don't know yet whether that's the best decision.

Angela:

Well I think it's something that's scary and I think books feel... I don't know... permanent or somehow they're like, "I'm your permanent record," and it's like, well, you don't want to write. Like I've had people tell me, "What? I don't want to write a book just for artists. I don't want to write a book just..." You know, like, "It feels small for me. I want to write a book that feels bigger." And so I think one of the things (that I tell my clients anyway) that will help is having a goal for your book. So I'm wondering, when you started, did you have a specific goal of what success would look like?

Cynthia:

(Pauses) That is a very interesting question and I would say that my goal had to do with whether... It had to do with a... more of an internal goal than external goal. Is that helpful? It wasn't "I need to sell this many books." It wasn't "I need to do this." It was, "Can I put this book out there and know that what I've written will work for the market that I've chosen. Can I feel that in my bones?" And, when I hand it to a person, can I hand it to the person without being embarrassed or making excuses, but saying, "This will help you," and feel confident in that. Now that said, I have my own personal goals around that I would like to have it drive a certain amount of business to my website---have a certain amount of business coming to my workshops and the one-on-one coaching that I do. But those are not as specific as...

Angela:

They probably should be. Well I think that even knowing that it was a book that was connected to your business, is it always... That's not even... that obvious. I think it was for you. Did you have a role model? Like, how did you make that connection? "Oh, I should write a book that helps me get business."

Cynthia:

Ah. Well, I can tell you I had a negative role model.

Angela:

Okay.

Cynthia:

Which was, that I had been going along thinking that I could continue to develop my own business and what I cared about based on my credentials and I have, you know, very good credentials---business credentials. And I went to a talk and I saw this woman get up with credentials far weaker than mine who had written a book that wasn't that good (because I had looked at it ahead of time and I was interested in the topic) and I saw people swarming

around and talking to her and signing up to work with her, and I thought, “Oh, my gosh! It’s because she’s written this book. She’s the author of---.

Angela:

It’s so powerful isn’t it?

Cynthia:

My Gosh! And I will say to anyone out there who is considering writing a book for credentialing purposes (because my goals were around, *this is going to serve as a credential*, *this is an extensive brochure*, and *it’s my curriculum*. Those are my three goals. And when I did that, I said that it would probably raise my credibility. The difference in my credibility is not measurable. It’s huge!

Angela:

Whoow!

Cynthia:

On a huge end. I have really good credentials but the way that I am treated now, with a published book versus how I was treated as the same person without a published book, I can’t even express to you how great that difference is.

Angela:

Wow!

Cynthia:

If you’re thinking about... anyone out there... If you are thinking about writing a book that’s connected to something that you do, that’s going to provide credibility for whatever that you do, whether it’s creative writing and on the fictional side or whether it’s on the non-fiction side like mine is, people still honor the published author over the author-wannabee.

Angela:

Wow.

Cynthia:

It’s a huge difference.

Angela:

That’s fascinating. So, for you... even if you didn’t... A lot of people that I talk to go into writing a book with, you know, it’s sometimes it’s the classic New York Times bestseller. I remember one client I worked with, said, “You know, I want to sell ten thousand books.” She had a very specific number and so for you... even if you... you know, didn’t sell that many books... Even if you just sold... I don’t know... a hundred books to your friends and family. Just having that

credit on having written a book and being able to hold it... You think that alone has added credibility and maybe clients or... the financial upside, even beyond the book sales?

Cynthia:

Oh absolutely. There are two financial... there are two upsides for me. The first is that I am getting royalties. I have not yet made back my costs but I've put significant amounts into marketing and I am okay with that. The other thing that is driving people to me, driving people to my website, driving people to my business... the other insight that I had when I was watching this person that I said is my negative role model, I said the people that are buying her books (and are buying them not for the books, which is a nice financial piece because you make money out of the book) are buying them as souvenirs.

Angela:

Uh huh. Its merchandise, and they want to go home and say, "I saw this woman speak today."

Cynthia:

Exactly, so...

Angela:

Yeah. I heard some shocking stat that something like 75% of books that are purchased go unread. Which, because I am such a book reader, I'm like, "What? How do people not read them?"

Cynthia:

Well, I'm the same way because I am a reader myself. I also heard that on business books, even of those 75%... [rather] of the 25% that read the book, only like 30% read past the first three chapters.

Angela:

Oh, wow.

Cynthia:

So the number is smaller. So it's really a souvenir. However, it provides money, it has gotten me significantly higher numbers of speaking engagements. So it very much had driven my speaking business because people who want to hear speakers want to hear published authors as speakers.

Angela:

And what was your publishing route? How did you publish your book?

Cynthia:

I made a personal decision to become independently published in CreateSpace.

Angela:
Ok.

Cynthia:
And I made that decision and by the way, I WILL also highly recommend anyone out there to use a book coach. I myself used a book coach, so...

Angela:
We appreciate the endorsement. To the book coaches of the world, thank you for that.

Cynthia:
I could not have done it without my book coach, who did not write for me, however kept me on track with deliverables so that I had to perform and, you know, come up with the chapters. So what I did, I decided that I wanted something that I had complete control over. I wanted something where I could get a higher percentage of the royalties, and wanted something that would be done more quickly. And I didn't want to do the trade-off where you get the benefit of the name and the marketing of a large publisher or a traditional publishing house. And that was also in part because I have had friends who had had published with traditional publishers and they lost control...

Angela:
And they probably hated their publishers.

Cynthia:
Yes. Well they didn't hate them but they said all those things that you were talking about you have to do on your own, the marketing and [all] that. They said, "I had to do that. Yeah, I made a little bit more money, but they didn't do... I'd lost money on the other side with the... not getting into the high royalty rates. Well on one hand, I got a small advance---under \$5000 advance---and they didn't do anything for me and they took and... all the royalties." So I thought, "Well, I'm not going to go that way."

Angela:
And has that been an impediment, like have you ever tried to book a speaking engagement, and somebody asked your publisher and it had a negative consequence for you?

Cynthia:
The only people so far who have responded, with even noticing who published the book were people who publish books or who were involved in book publishing.

Angela:
Ok.

Cynthia:

Or other writers, or other people who'd written books. I have never, yet, had one person come up to me and say, "Oh. Humph. I see that you are published independently. I'm not going to buy your book." Because they're not buying it for that reason, they're buying it coz it's my credential.

Angela:

And they're buying it as a souvenir, so nobody's asking where you got your t-shirt printed at a rock concert.

Cynthia:

Exactly.

Angela:

The rock concert shirt... Now the one thing about self-published books that I have noticed is sometimes you can tell if they're self-published---maybe the design or the quality o the paper---things like that. Was that something you were worried about, and if so, how did you address that?

Cynthia:

Well I was worried about it and so I went around to people I knew and got copies to see what their books look like, to see if they are within my, kind of my quality range. I also... I was very (how do I call this?) limited in my expectations about what they might do, and so made the decision that I would be extremely careful about who I hire to do my cover design; I would have back up proofreaders (I bought the proofreading services that are available, but I had back up proofreaders as well). I didn't assume that they would do everything up to the quality of a major publisher and that proved to be true. So the one caveat, the downside of... the self-publishing route, is that you do have to take more personal control if you want to have a product that's gonna be up to your standard. You do have to be thoughtful about how the design goes or what you're giving to them but I didn't have... In terms of paper quality or the quality of the printing or the general overall work that was done for me, I was very happy with it. I would go that route again.

Angela:

And how would you... it sounds like you did recommendations, as well as the CreateSpace vendors... it was a combination of people that you have found through friends or through your book coach.

Cynthia:

Correct.

Angela:

And then the people provided by CreateSpace.

Cynthia:
Yes, yes.

Angela:
People ask me this all the time and I don't know if it's something that you'll be comfortable sharing, but I know it's a big question a lot of new authors have, which is: If you're going the self-publishing route, how much should I budget and how many different people should hire? Should go to a one-stop-shop, like an author house or something where they'll do everything, or should I break it up, and how do I know if I'm, you know, spending too much?

Cynthia:
Well for the specific number, It depends, sort of, on what you count. And if you count my book coach, for example, which was a fairly significant number that I wouldn't really be comfortable sharing, but the publishing itself...

Angela:
Right, like here is the question that I get all the time. It's: Do I use the same designer for the interior as I do for the cover?

Cynthia:
I did not.

Angela:
You know, do I have an illustrator that does illustrations on the inside? How much should I pay for an editor? Do I use a standard copy editor? Or do I use more of... like a developmental editor or both?

Cynthia:
Ok so... I made the decision that I wanted to be able to work directly with the designer of the book cover. So I don't know what the CreateSpace people would have done for me on that because I wanted to have that control. I knew somebody who did that so as far as the copy editing versus... or the developmental editing versus straight copy and text editing, I wish I had bought more services on that, frankly.

Angela:
Really.

Cynthia:
Because... I wish I'd bought a higher level of services because that is so critical, and for a person who's a reader... somebody who's going to read your book and base their opinion of your credibility on your book, is not going to accept typos; is not going to accept grammatical

errors. So, I would say to anyone out there, "Don't trust yourself to do that. Those are services I would say are critical as a reader. As far as the illustrations are concerned, I had that done by the same person that did my cover design. However, subsequently I can tell you that there are services online that a friend of mine is doing a business table, with cartoon-type characters and he did a search through one of the services out there, some sort of a Google search...

Angela:
Like an Elancer?

Cynthia:
Yeah. I think it may have probably been Elance. And he found fabulous people who were willing to do illustrations, at like between \$25 and \$50 an illustration.

Angela:
Wow.

Cynthia:
Really Cheap.

Angela:
Yeah.

Cynthia:
But I would say that anyone who wants a quality product should expect to spend at least a couple of thousand dollars (not counting the services of a coaching person). That would be my guess.

Angela:
Right. Okay. And I love you use this in place of an expensive marketing brochure.

Cynthia:
Exactly.

Angela:
Do you... One of the things... that I think of is: I will... You know a lot of times... these brochures, I might pay a couple of dollars; two [or] three dollars to have my brochures printed and then I might give them out at a trade show or something like that. Do you also buy your own books and give them out or send them out? Or...

Cynthia:
Yes I do.

Angela:
You do?

Cynthia:
Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I both...

Angela:
And how did you make that decision? In that investment? Is that something you actually you budget for? Or...

Cynthia:
Well I have an ongoing tracking, so I will buy my books from the publisher so that I always have fifty or a hundred books on hand. And then, I will make decisions based on... My decision is usually based on: "Do I think this person is going to either become an advocate for my book or they're someone who can personally bring me business?" So, I will give them books. I give away a lot of books. I track how many books I give away and I track how many books I sell. Because I also... when I give talks, I sell from the back of the room, I sell my books. My books are also available through Amazon.com, and through Kindle and through Barnes & Noble, although not Nook, unfortunately. And I get regular reports of book sales from them based on the royalties that they pass along to me. So I have an ongoing tracking sheet of books that I sold and books that I've given away and sometimes with even with specific names if I'm trying to make sure to follow-up with somebody and say, "Hey did you had a chance to read my book yet?"

Angela:
So you bought it... I mean, that's how I run a marketing program, you're running it like I'm doing a marketing program.

Cynthia:
Yes. Because I made a decision that it was a marketing brochure, yes.

Angela:
Right. Well, so... the last question that I want to ask today is really... one that I think surprises a lot of people is just: What was different than you expected? People go to the book process with one idea on how long it'll or what they'll get out of it and a lot of times what they end up getting is different. So, can you tell me what was different or were there any surprises for you?

Cynthia:
Oh, my God! Yes, when I started... I got almost forty thousand words into writing the book and had an unavoidable revelation that it was the wrong book.

Angela:

Oh, my God! And for the people who are listening who don't live by word count, forty thousand is probably more than halfway through your book, I would guess. Most books are sixty to seventy thousand words, something like that.

Cynthia:

Yeah. It was well on its way and what happened is that I had... the thing that I didn't know that was going to happen was that I learned about my topic. The more I wrote about my topic, the more I learned about my topic and the more I had different opinions about my topic than when I had started. And I was writing... I did this writing from about April to right at Thanksgiving time and at Thanksgiving time I thought, *this is the wrong book, this is not set-up the way that I wanted*. And I called up my book coach and said, "I have an idea that I should be writing a tips-based book instead of a philosophical poem, which was what I had been writing. And he said, "Well, how many tips have you got?" and I said, "I bet I can sit down tomorrow and write seventy of them," (list of seventy topic titles). He said, "Let's see what you got!" And I did that and then from there, it was like it blasted open and then it took me almost no time to complete the book that I wanted to create. It took me about another month and a half, and I am working [through it all].

Angela:

Wow! It's not full time month-and-a-half, forty hours a week or anything?

Cynthia:

No, I wasn't writing forty hours. No, I wasn't. And so, what I will tell everybody is don't be afraid. There are two things: First, don't be afraid if you make a decision to change what you'd written because... You're probably going to change it because it's better. On the other hand, the standard saying is: Do not let PERFECT get in the way of DONE. And I am sure you see that.

Angela:

Oh, actually when I was doing my PhD, I remember my adviser would always say to me, "A good dissertation is a done dissertation."

Cynthia:

Exactly.

Angela:

So, we live by that, but I also like what you said about just being proud to hold it in your hand and stand behind it. And it's not something that goes away as quickly as an e-mail or a, you know, a tweet, or something, so you want to make sure you're proud of it.

Cynthia:

Yeah, absolutely.

Angela:

Well Cynthia, I really appreciate the generosity with which you're sharing these tips, coz I think there are things that we all have to learn on our own but getting a heads up will really help a lot of people. If people want to find more about your book or learn more about you can you tell them where to go?

Cynthia:

Ah, yes. You can either look on... You can just search *The Charisma Edge* by Cynthia Burnham or you can go to my website which is Cynthia Burnham dotcom, which is C-Y-N-T-H-I-A B-U-R-N-H-A-M (like Burnham) dotcom (www.cynthiaburnham.com) and any one of those ways will direct you to various ways of getting my book. And I will tell you, I love my book and I hope that people out there will also find it useful.

Angela:

Excellent. Well, I hope they do to and I really appreciate your time, and thank you again!

Cynthia:

You're welcome, and I will say, use a book coach.

Angela:

Use a book coach. Famous words. I appreciate that, and for all of the Book Journeys, I hope your book journey is a good one and have a good day. Bye bye!