

Book Journeys Author Interview - June 11, 2015

Dr. Angela Lauria with Danielle Miller, author of *Smartyants Branding: The Ultimate Guide for Women Entrepreneurs to Getting Recognized, Being Remembered, and Making More Money in Business*

When you know it's getting in your way and you're willing to commit to removing those things, that's what's gonna help you get that book written. ~Danielle Miller

Angela:

Hey, everybody! We are back here at Book Journeys Radio and we have a great show for you today. Thanks to everyone for tuning in. In this episode, we are going to talk to a branding expert. So you are gonna get a double shot of advice about how to write a book from somebody who has done it and a little bit of advice on your brand. I'm super-happy to welcome the author of *Smartyants Branding: The Ultimate Guide to Getting Recognized, Being Remembered, and Making More Money in Business for Women Entrepreneurs*. And for you non-women, you will also love Danielle Miller. Thanks for being with us, Danielle!

Danielle:

Hey, Angela. Thanks so much for having me. I'm so delighted to be here.

Angela:

Awesome. Well, I love the name Smartyants Branding. It always makes me smile. Uhm, but why don't you tell people what the book is about and who it's for.

Danielle:

Ok, so the book is really about getting clear on your brand. It's all about how you show off and stand out on a consistent basis and it's about figuring out that blend between a personal brand and a business brand for, specifically for women entrepreneurs because we are inundated with information and trying to figure out where we start and our brand begins, or where we end and our brand begins, and figuring out what your signature blend is around all that.

Angela:

So, let me ask you this question to start off with. I know for me being a book coach and a publisher, writing my book was, I know everybody's book, their process is scary and they're always afraid how they're gonna be received, but I felt like additional pressure 'cause I'm the book girl, so I have to get it right. And I wonder for you, what did you have to know about your branding before you could even, uhm, consider this project and did that come up for you? Were you afraid that you wouldn't have your brand right before you wrote your book?

Danielle:

Yeah, I think there's always that, that fear in the back of your mind, that, you know, particularly when you are going to be writing about a topic, then you're showing your expertise and your credibility and, you know, I think especially in the brand and branding realm, you know, you have to get it right because people are now looking to you as the go-to person as an authority

on that particular subject. So, I think for me, it was really just making sure that I was absolutely, positively clear on all the elements that I talk about in the book for myself.

Angela:

And I think one of the things you've done so well is that your brand and your personality came through in the book and I think people will see that exact same personality. It's there on your website, which is daniellemiller.com, they can go there, and it's like it's the same person. We meet you in the book, we meet you on the website, uhm, it feels like we're, it feels very consistent, I think, because, because it's you, right?

Danielle:

Right. Yup, exactly and I think that's one of the things that I really wanted to have come across in the book is that, you know, you don't have to create a persona or be something that you're not or fulfill somebody else's expectations about how you want to have your business represent who you are because at the end of the day, really, it all starts with you as an entrepreneur. So, I really wanted to drive that point home, that you know, it's totally okay and more than, you know, okay to be who you are and show up that way and let people see you and see your vulnerability and see, you know, the real you behind the brand and the business.

Angela:

So, let's talk about, uhm, deciding to write your book. What do you think it was that kind of pushed you over the edge and said, "I'm gonna do my book now?"

Danielle:

Ahh, it was probably a combination of factors. I think probably the biggest one, the tipping point for me was I was just getting so tired of seeing other people in my field, uhm, you know, have a level of visibility that I did not have. You know, my business was going along fine, I had clients, I was, you know, doing things the way that I wanted to be doing my business, but I just still had this, you know, this thing in the back of my mind that, you know, I can show more of who I am, I can be more visible. I can, uhm, embrace the idea of being a recognized expert or authority in the field. So, that was really I think the tipping point for me. I'd had enough. Haha!

Angela:

I love that. Uhm, and did you actually envision your book completed before you started?

Danielle:

I did. Yeah, I did envision it completed, uhm, you know, when I had started, I had tried to start a couple different times over the last few years and didn't, you know, just kind of put it aside or couldn't figure out how I wanted to tell the information in a way that made sense and was coherent and really, uhm, told the methodology that I, I stand behind and that I'm very proud of, so, uhm, I think that it, you know, I had the end goal in mind but I didn't have the pieces in place.

Angela:

So, what do you think made this time different? You've started before and you hadn't finished. What was different with this time around?

Danielle:

Well, I think I, and I've often said this many times, I think it was Angela Lauria kicking my ass, uhm, haha!

Angela:

That's me! Ass kicker!

Danielle:

And in such a loving and wonderful way, uhm, but I think, you know, and I think you've talked about this many times as well is that, you know, you make that investment, not only that monetary investment but that energy investment and that, uhm, intellectual investment and there's just no turning back. You just, you have to, you have to do it. There's just no other option.

Angela:

So, why do you think you didn't finish before? Do you think you didn't really want to or you weren't really ready?

Danielle:

I think that's probably part of it. I think there was still an element of me hiding, uhm, and still, you know, really listening to that inner critic that I wasn't good enough or didn't have enough expertise or, ... worked with, you know, hundreds and hundreds of clients. Uhm, you know, I think there was absolutely that level of still wanting to not be seen because that's accountability and responsibility.

Angela:

So, let's talk a little bit, let's talk a little bit about how that ties into branding itself because I think that feeling is what a lot of people, uhm, end up with very, kind of, bland branding because they either, I don't know, they don't wanna commit or they're afraid to be seen. And so what are some tips you give your clients or some ways that you, uhm, that you address that when it comes to branding?

Danielle:

Yeah and I think that really, at the end of the day, underneath all of that, all of these components of branding, that's the real crux of it, is this permission to give yourself, uhm, in order to be seen, in order to show up, in order to draw that line in the sand around who you are and what you believe. And I don't know if there's a specific tip or strategy, uhm, but when I work with clients, we keep uncovering layers. Uhm, so we focus a lot on tapping into their natural gifts and strengths and what do people say about them and how do they want their clients to feel after an experience with them and when we start really honing in on those things and clarifying

them, there comes a level of confidence around that. That *Oh yeah, okay, you know this is how I want people to heal and these are the emotions I want them to have after an experience with me and if I can deliver on that consistently, that's gonna go a huge way to me showing up and doing the work.*

Angela:

Hmm. So, are there things that you wish you knew before you wrote your book that you've learned since your, your book came out in March?

Danielle:

Yup, March. Yup, March 11.

Angela:

Yes. So, in the three months or so since your book has come out, uhm, what, what are some of the things you wish you knew before your book came out?

Danielle:

Uhm, I wish I would have known that I really could do it. Uhm, I think I had this...

Angela:

I knew you could do it. Haha!

Danielle:

I know you would.

Angela:

I wouldn't have let you in my program if I didn't think you could it. Haha!

Danielle:

I know it, I know it. But I, I think I would have saved myself a lot of, you know, agony and, ah, self-doubt if I had believed in myself earlier on, uhm, in my ability to believe that I had a voice worth listening to and a story worth telling, uhm, and I think that, uhm, knowing that I had a support system, uhm, in place with your program, I mean I adored my editor and in every step of the journey, I felt that I had support and encouragement and accountability, and had I known that that was available to me before, I would have done it much sooner.

Angela:

Wow. So, tell us some before and after stories. How have things changed for you since your book has come out? Are there opportunities you've had or conversations you've had or just a way that you may be walking through a room differently now that you're a best-selling author?

Danielle:

Yeah, I think there's a huge confident piece around that. You know I really am much more comfortable, uhm, with what I have to say around, ah, the methodology that I use, around the

concepts of brand, the branding, what I believe about it. Uhm, and I've had, you know, amazing conversations. I actually remember right before a launch, uhm, I sent a galley copy to Arianna Huffington, and something that I probably would never have done a few years ago and you know, received an email back from her that she really enjoyed reading the book and she hooked me off with one of her editors at the Huffington Post and, uhm, I think there's just all, you know, all around that level of confidence that you get, uhm, in letting your voice be heard and, uhm, not, it's not that you don't care what other people think or say, but it's knowing that your particular message is gonna resonate with the people that you really want it to resonate with.

Angela:

I've noticed a big shift in your, in your presence. I feel like there's not just, like first, I think your messaging is sassier, uhm, like, there is a confidence that's coming through in your blog posts and things that you share in a way that it wasn't before. But I'm also noticing it feels like you're, you're taking a whole lot more action and so, like, I'm wondering was there a, I don't know, I'll say a side effect to writing the book of knowing if you could get that project done, there were other goals you had for your business that you could also do?.

Danielle:

Oh, hell ... yes. Haha! You know, it's like ...

Angela:

All right. Tell us about that because that's the juicy stuff.

Danielle:

Uhm, you know, it was really, that idea that, you know, I completed something that I had always dreamed of doing but never really had the confidence in believing that I could finish it, I could complete it. And once I did that, it was just like, you know, and I hate to use some of these buzzwords that we hear in the coaching/consulting realm of, around stepping into, you know, your brilliance or whatever, gag. I wanna gag when I hear something like that. But it was more stepping into a truer version of myself, uhm, an amplification of being able to do things and knowing that I'm bringing all the best that I can to the table. So, that was really a big, a big part of it for me and, uhm, you know, and being okay with the fact that, you know, what I have to say is not gonna fly with everybody, it's not gonna resonate with everybody and that's totally fine. Totally fine.

Angela:

And so, yeah. So, talk about some ways that your business is different now than it was before the book came out. And I know it's not just the book that it changed it but what are some, some things that you're doing differently now?

Danielle:

Ah, I think probably the biggest piece of it is just that being comfortable with being more visible with really having that ownership around my message and my platform, uhm, and being comfortable talking with people about the value that I bring to the table and how I can help them

in their brand work and really giving them a platform to build upon as well. You know, I'm totally, you know, in alignment with that, uhm, it feels really good, uhm, I feel much more confident in positioning myself as a leader, uhm, around personal branding for entrepreneurs. Uhm, I think there's just this, there's just some sort of like this domino effect that has happened for me. Uhm, I get, you know, really literally on an almost daily basis, you know, emails from women who, you know, have read the book and they're just like, "Oh my gosh, Danielle, this made, this makes sense to me, uhm, you're so approachable and friendly and I felt like I was having an actual conversation with you," which was exactly what I was going for.

Angela:

Mhm!

Danielle:

That's awesome.

Angela:

Yeah! So awesome, I love it. So, just in case you missed, in case you missed the title. It's *Smartypants Branding*. Danielle Miller is the author and you can find that on Amazon or you can head over to daniellemiller.com and get lots of goodies from Danielle.

Danielle:

Mhm.

Angela:

So let's talk a little bit about your, uhm, your experience writing. Were there times that you, uhm, ran into writer's block? A lot of people have the problem that they start writing, and maybe you've had this in the past or on this project, but they write, maybe they write 20 pages and then they kind of get stuck and don't know what to say next. And I wonder if that happened to you and if so, what advice do you have for people who maybe have started their book but are just stuck?

Danielle:

Yeah, oh my gosh, yeah. Hahaha! I think it's why I never, you know, up until this point, hadn't finished it. You know, I just didn't know how to articulate what I wanted to say, uhm, in a way that made sense because I tend to, you know, see all the shades of gray. I think they're not black and white for me typically, so I really wrestled and wrangled with trying to get some of these brand and branding concepts on to the paper in a way that made sense, not necessarily as this, you know. I have this real resistance around words like blueprint and formula and system. Uhm, and so, I encountered a real block around trying to write so that it wasn't, it didn't feel that way. Uhm, it was a framework that you could kind of come into at any point in where you were in your journey, in your process, uhm, and make it work, making it, have the information work for you. Uhm, so I really have struggled with that quite a bit and there's one section of the book that's really outlined, you know, the process that I use with clients and, uhm, I can remember skyping with Sarah and be like, "I can't. I can't do this. I cannot. I can't make

this make sense, and she was like, “Yes, yes, you can. Just write it. Just write some things down and leave it alone for a little bit and come back to it.” So, you know, having that support and having somebody who is there that believes in what I have to say, uhm, and had confidence that I could do it, I could move past the blocks, was really invaluable for me.

Angela:

Mmm. Yeah. Yeah, I think that, you know, it seems like it’s just writing, like we write emails, we wrote papers for school, like, we’ve done so much writing just as adults, humans on our own that you think, “Why would I need, why would I need help? I just need to make myself sit in the chair.” Uhm, but when it really comes down to it, a book project is more than writing. There’s a whole lot more that goes on and having that support through the whole process, is, is, you know, maybe some people don’t need it but gosh, there’s a much higher success rate if you commit to it in that way.

Danielle:

Right, and I mean that’s the same, I think it’s the same thing with anything whether you are, you know, wanting to get healthy and lose weight or whether you are looking for help in a relationship. I mean sure, you can get the information, you can find out how to do all those things, but to have that support and accountability, uhm, and people looking at it with a different lens, a different filter, a different perspective, it makes all the difference in the world.

Angela:

Mmm. Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so what was different about the experience of writing and publishing a book than you expected? What surprised you?

Danielle:

Ahh, I think how smoothly it went. Haha! I really didn’t expect it to just kinda flow along the way that it did. Uhm, you know, I kinda expected more bumps in the road and more time spent on certain things and really, it was just kind of this smooth process from beginning to end. And uhm, that I think was very surprising to me. Uhm, and it was surprising to me that really all that I had to think about was the writing part of it. You know that, that was another thing ‘cause I, before, you know I was thinking about, well, you know how am I gonna design a cover and how am I gonna, or how am I gonna, you know, if I wanna do a different type of publishing and write a book proposal and get an edit-, you know, an agent, and all those kinds of things, and this process, all I had to do is write. That was my only job that I needed to do. Yup. So I wrote my butt off. Haha! That was really great just to have, just to know that that’s really all that I had to do.

Angela:

And uhm, and for you, what is the best thing to come out of having your own book?

Danielle:

Mmm. It’s really an intrinsic thing for me. I think that, like I said, I’m at this point in my life where I’m just, I’m really interested in having experiences and not so much “bang,” uhm, so the

experience of being able to say that I'm a published best-selling author, uhm, and knowing that that is something that will live on no matter what happens to me, uhm, it's a part of my legacy. That's been really profound for me and so, there are times when I think, *Oh, I can't, I can't do this* or, you know, I'm putting together a group coaching program right now and there's all these pieces that I'm filling around with and there are days where I'm like, *I can't do this* and I'm like, *You know what? You wrote a damned book, girl!* You know, and you kind of put that in perspective. You know, you put something out there in the world that you don't know on any given day who that touches and who reads that and it makes a difference for them. And that's pretty amazing to me.

Angela:

And what does it feel like when you get, uhm, when you get emails from people who have read your book?

Danielle:

I, I'm still very humbled by it. You know, I had, I had a woman who had contacted me about a month ago and we've since, you know, kinda, I've gotten on Skype with her. And just the other day, we were on Skype together and she was like, "I just, I can't believe I'm talking to you. Like I'm a total fan girl." I was just like, "What?" You know, you still kind of like, "Really? I'm just me, you know, I'm just me." I'm still doing my thing and so that's really, it's kinda surreal in some ways.

Angela:

But people see you differently when you're an author. You don't necessarily know more than you did before you wrote the book. You might but it's not really about that. I think it's how people perceive an author. They're like, "Oh, well she's an expert on this. I wonder if she'll have time to talk to me" like...

Danielle:

Right, right. Exactly. I mean that's it exactly. And I really get squirmy around the word "expert" you know, I just, it's not a title that I ever aspired to. Uhm, I want to, ah, be seen as somebody who knows what she's talking about but I always, you know, get kind of squirmy around that but, uhm, you know, it's something that, since I've written a book, uhm, I'm more comfortable with that. I don't call myself an expert but I'm okay if other people, you know, choose that when they talk about me. So, I've gotten more comfortable around some of those words that are bandied about.

Angela:

Yeah, it's a huge shift.

Danielle:

Mhmm.

Angela:

So, my last question for you is really about what advice that you would have, uhm, that you would have for people who want to write a book, maybe like you, they've started and haven't finished or they've tried and they haven't been able to complete it. What advice do you have for them? And I want you to kinda take this in two parts. One, of course, I wanna hear any writing advice, publishing advice, anything you would say about finding the right people to work with. But also, as a branding expert, what do you think people need to know about their brand and what work do they need to have done on their brand in order to know that they're ready to start a project like that?

Danielle:

Okay, so, I think in terms of your brand, you've got to have clarity around a few things. You've really got to be clear on what your core values are. You know, there's top three to five things that are just non-negotiable for you. You have to be clear on your brand voice, how you wanna come across. What's, what are the, what's the vibe that you want to have? That was something I gave some thought to, uhm, when I wrote the book. I mean I knew what my brand voice internal or before that but I wanted to make sure that that consistently shown, you know, was able to shine through in the book and I wanted to, you know, have it be relatable and approachable and make sense, uhm, to whoever read it. So that was a bit, I mean I, yes Sarah can tell you I agonized over that kind of stuff, right? That was a huge thing for me in writing the book. So, you know, really having clarity around your brand voice is very important, uhm, how, how you wanna say what you wanna say, uhm, and then, you know the other piece of that. The first question, repeat the first question for me again.

Angela:

Ah, what, yeah, what advice would you have for somebody who wants to write about how to get it done? If they've been trying to get it done but they haven't, what advice would you give them?

Danielle:

I think if you need to, yeah, I think you need to figure out what your blocks are around that. Where is that resistance coming from?

Angela:

Oh, well, where were yours? That's great piece of advice. I want more on this. Give me the dirt!

Danielle:

Haha! Oh, I said something that perked Angela's ears up. Uhm, I think for me, I knew that I needed to have that extra accountability in place. If I really wanted to get serious, start getting the damned book done, and getting it out there in the world, I needed to have that support in place for myself. Uhm, could have I done it all on my own? Maybe, eventually, I don't know. Maybe, I would have gotten so tired of, you know, fooling around with it that I would have, but I know my personality and I know what motivates me and that I think when you know those types of things, when you know it's getting in your way and you're willing to commit to removing those things, you know, that's what's gonna help you get that book written. So, if you feel like you

don't have, you know, enough expertise in your field or if you feel like you can't, you know, articulate what you wanna say, you know, why, why is that? And start digging down deep into those things and figuring out what is going to help you remove those obstacles and blocks and get it.

Angela:

Ah, love that. That is fantastic advice. Uhm, Danielle Miller has a whole lot more fantastic advice in her book, *Smartypants Branding: The Ultimate Guide to Getting Recognized, Being Remembered, and Making More Money in Business for Women Entrepreneurs*. You can find out more about Danielle at www.danielmmiller.com. Danielle, thanks for being with us today.

Danielle:

Thank you so much for having me, Angela. It was so fun to catch up with you. We kinda talked on facebook a little bit but it was, yeah, it was really great to, you know, give your audience a little bit of insight into, you know, what finally propelled me to finish my book, so that was fun.

Angela:

Yeah, yeah. I love it. So, if you are thinking about writing your book, you can get how-to's and helpful tips and advice in our other podcast, which is ^PageUp^. That is advice specifically from me. In this week's episode, we are talking about whether or not you should write your book in three days. So, in this episode, I talk about bursters and plodders and the really, the different options for writing your book, not one being better than the other, but also learning how to borrow some of the positive things from people who can get their book done quickly. If you are somebody who is a plodder and learning how to borrow some of the awesome things from people who can take your book in bite size pieces and break it down and write it maybe a little bit more smoothly. So, that episode is called "Write Your Book in 3 Days or Don't" and you will find that over on iTunes, so check out PageUp. Make sure that you subscribe to PageUp and Book Journeys over at iTunes and, uh, do me a favor and give us a review. We love reviews and comments, so go ahead and do that. And we will be back next week. New episodes of Page Up come out on Tuesdays and new episodes of Book Journeys come out on Thursdays. So, thanks for being here, everyone! We'll be back next week, changing the world, one book at a time.