

Book Journeys Author Interview - Janeen Latini

Dr. Angela Lauria with Janeen Latini, author of *Love to Lead. Lead to Love.: The Overworked Leader's Guide to Career Growth & Personal Happiness*

"Be willing, be brave, be vulnerable, be real." ~Janeen Latini

Angela:

Well, hey everybody! We are back for another episode of Book Journeys Radio and I am so excited to share this journey with you. Janeen Latini is the author of *Love to Lead. Lead to Love.: The Overworked Leader's Guide to Career Growth & Personal Happiness*. I know this book is gonna resonate with so many of you and before I introduce Janeen, I just wanna say that it is, uh, almost 20 years to the date since I met Janeen. We actually went to college together and, uhm, our lives have crossed paths again with this book and, uhm, it has been so fun being a part of this journey. So, Janeen, I'm especially thrilled to have you on the show today.

Janeen:

Well, thanks, Angela. I am as thrilled to be here as well. I'm so happy we reconnected.

Angela:

Yeah! It's awesome. Well, let's just start by telling people about, uh, about *Love to Lead. Lead to Love*. What's the book about and who did you write it for?

Janeen:

Sure. So, this book is really, it's a leadership book and I wrote this book primarily for people who view themselves as middle managers. And I'd like to say that, honestly, we're all middle managers because we all spend time in the middle. And the book is really segmented in two parts: the first part is a series of vignettes about common pitfalls and things that happen to leaders in their life, in their work life, in their home life. And then the second part is developed around a series of five totems, which is sort of a synthesis of everything I've learned as well as my own personal practices and what I bring clients to really give five touchstones and ways to move through the leadership journey and develop your own potential.

Angela:

Love it. And so for you, what do you wish that you knew before you wrote this book? What are some of the things that you have learned in the six months or so, uhm, since your book has been out?

Janeen:

Uh, so good. Uh, what do I wish I knew before? I wish I knew that it would be as easy and as joyful as it was to actually write the book. And that writing...

Angela:
Hmm.

Janeen:
Yeah. Hahaha! And that writing the book itself was its own part of the journey in my own development. You know, I think people think about writing a book, and I know, I'll put it this way: I thought about writing a book as, *It's such a cool thing. I should do it. I like to write and I have things to say but I don't know.* And there's always kind of doubt about *I don't know how to write.* But once you start, once you really like allow yourself to really get into your voice and say the things you wanna say, it's really so much fun.

Angela:
Hmm. I love that. So, what do think, 'cause you have you been thinking about writing a book for some amount of time, how long have you been thinking about writing a book before you wrote this one and what do you think it was that held you back?

Janeen:
Oh. That's a great question too. So, I think I, uhm, I sort of always joked around *I wanna write a book.* All right. So, probably since college I'd say, *I should write a book.* But really, I didn't have a book in me at that point. A play, I wrote a play or two, but not a book. Uhm, the book really came from doing the, doing work, like doing the work I was doing in my profession as a consultant and as a coach. And about two years ago, I think it was two years ago, maybe three now at this point, uhm, you had publicized an event, a program, and I was like, *You know what? I need to do this. I need to just sit down and do it.* And I wrote to you and I signed up for it and you said, "Yeah, totally! You're in!" And I was very excited and I signed up and I paid you and I did nothing. Haha!

Angela:
Aaah!

Janeen:
Haha! *What? What do you mean you did nothing?* Yeah! I got busy, like my life was going through a really busy time which happens to lots of people, and I felt like, *I can't focus right now. It's not the right moment.* So, I didn't. I just waited. It was kind of a self-directed thing and I waited, and then I realized I missed a lot of events, uhh, and I lamented. And I reached back out to you and you said, "Don't worry. there's a way, there'll still be a way." Uhm, but then, when you announced the 3 Days to Done, I said, *Nah now, now she's got me.* Haha! Now, we need to talk because that's my kind of process.

Angela:
And so, for you, so you actually wrote the first draft of your book in three days in San Diego, actually my first 3 Days to Done to that. And, uhm, do you think that made the difference, the focus time, do you think that was the difference between talking about it and actually doing it?

Janeen:

Yeah, completely. So, for me, I know that, uhm, just like anything else, for me to be productive in something, the time has to be right. I believe in that, right? You know, there's a debate whether procrastination is divine intervention or just a, haha, way to put off what you might be dealing as the inevitable, but I do think something like writing, which is an art and is a sharing and is about getting into your own voice and spirit, has to happen when the time is right. And for me, which I don't think is unique, I have other responsibilities in my life. I have a daughter and a full-time job and a lot going on and I needed the space and the time to be able to clear my head and know that all the other important things to me were being taken care of, so I could literally devote myself and be present to myself and jump into this. Uhm, and so, when I was able to do that, wait to focus and be present and have nothing else on the agenda but this, the magic happened.

Angela:

Hmm. So, how about the idea for your book? Did you show up at 3 Days to Done knowing what you were gonna write about? I've had a lot of people talk about how their idea changed, uhm, during the process. So, how did you pick, how did you pick the topic and did it change during the process for you?

Janeen:

Sure. Uhm, I showed up to 3 Days to Done and you know this, with uh, nothing prepared. Haha! You said, "So, do you know what your title's gonna be?" *No*. "Do you know which book you're writing?" *Nope*. And you just giggled, haha, uh, because you and I have chatted about the fact that there's probably 4 books there and I still, and I feel that way.

Angela:

For sure.

Janeen:

There's 4 books that need to be written, one is done and I didn't know where I wanted to start. I just didn't know and that is when your magic happened and where, you know, the job and the role that you had to play with us as coach and really came into full force and you did a meditation exercise. I'll just leave it at that 'cause I don't want to give it all away.

Angela:

Hmm!

Janeen:

But you did a meditation exercise with us at the beginning and it was through that time of quiet and stillness and visualization that it became very, very clear. I was like, *Oh, this is where I have to go this time. This is what's bubbling up, this is where I am, this is the information I want to put out, this is the story I wanna tell*. And it suddenly became really, really clear and that was super exciting in itself 'cause I have been, you know, going back and forth, going back and forth, and there it was.

Angela:

Yeah. So, exciting when that happens. So, how about writer's block? Did, were there periods of time where you felt disconnected from your work or procrastinating or had trouble putting thoughts together, and if so, what did you do about that?

Janeen:

Uh, yes totally. So, it happened for me, I would say, in two primarily different ways. One was the way of, *Oh, has someone else said this thought better? I wonder if I should go research that and reference somebody else's work on, you know because, on X or Y.* Because there's lots of super smart people out there, right? There's tons of fantastic leadership development books and theories and practices, and we kind of get caught in that spiral of *Do I need to go look? Do I need to compare? Am I, and I thought to myself, Hold on. This is your book. This is your story and you only have three days. So, you're wasting time on something else.* And so, it was kinda coming back together and getting back into the zone of what is it that I wanna say and realizing that I could go back later and identify if, you know, some sources should be credited or I wanted to give, you know, credit to somebody else's work. But when I get back to the notion of: What is it that I'm trying to say? What is it that makes the work I do with my clients special? What is it about my journey that was special that I was able to more through that block? The second time blocks...

Angela:

Hmm.

Janeen:

Yeah, yeah, the second time blocks came up, I would say is when I found myself really feeling that there were other things more important to do that day. So not during the 3 days process, you know, doing the editing process later, whether it was something I felt like I needed to do for work, for business, or for my family, or something else, and really what I think now, what I believe that to be is that I wasn't ready. I couldn't get into the zone or clear the space and in order to really tell your truth, you've got to get quiet with yourself and I wasn't able to get there. So, I had to wait, I had to wait for the right moment.

Angela:

So, let's talk about being seen, because for so many people, they think that the obstacle is getting their books written. But really, by not finishing their book, it's a way to stay safe and to not be seen and to not go out on a limb and so, I think, for a lot of people, it's like, "Oh, I just have to get my butt on the chair." But really, by not getting your butt on the chair, there is, uh, there's something you're getting out of it. So, was it hard for you to kind of step into the role of expert or authority and be seen? Were those, did you have challenges around that?

Janeen:

Yes. Completely. Hahaha! I think, I think we talked about that a few times. Uhm, I think I actually sent you a text that said, "Oh my God, this might be worse than being naked on the Beltway!" Hahaha!

Angela:

Haha! I love that.

Janeen:

Right? Haha! And you said, "Oh, yeah!" And for anybody who's not familiar with the Beltway, the major highway around Washington D.C., because it's this idea that I'm now putting out there something that is really me and that represents me and guess what? People get to tell you what they think about it, and they get to write that on Amazon, haha, and they get to send you email, and they get to talk to others about it, and you might overhear it or they might come right to your face and say, "That is a bunch of crap." And that's tough, right? 'Cause then you realize like, how am I gonna...? I'm now out there for the world to have an opinion about, and that's a really...

Angela:

Hmm.

Janeen:

Yeah, I mean that's a really interesting feeling, you know, to be on the other side of that, to know that, well now it's out there. It can be discussed. Uhm, and I think some people might say, "That's ... Why would you feel that way?" But I did. I just thought, *Ooh, this is...* and I guess that taps into a really, you know, a challenge if you're something that, I come up against every so often in my life, which is that feeling of, *Am I good enough? Is this enough?* And I do talk about that in the book, right? Uhm, yes, it is enough. Yes, you are good enough. Everyone is. And how do you get to that place and how do you overcome that fear and realize that by being honest and authentic in yourself and talking about what it is that's really you? That will resonate with someone else as well because then, they have a safe space to talk about what's real for them. Uhm, yeah and I thought, anyway, I found that to be really powerful and I've still found that to be powerful because some of the feedback I received has been really enlightening like, "You know what? That's so right." Haha!

Angela:

Can you remember what, uhm, what some of the things are that you were most afraid of? And just being just totally honest, like did any of them happen?

Janeen:

Huh, that's a good question. What was I most afraid of?

Angela:

I think we make it so abstract, right? Like something terrible is gonna happen. But were you afraid of bad reviews and if so, did you get it any? Or were you afraid of, you know, somebody saying, "This isn't very good." And did they, and how did this happen for you?

Janeen:

Yeah so, hahaha, uhm, was I afraid of bad reviews? Sure. But I think it was also, this is funny, the fear comes to is, one, *I'm afraid nobody is gonna read this*. Haha! Nobody is gonna even care enough to go out there and look at it. Uhm, no, that did not happen. A lot of people in fact did read it, so then it brings to the second fear of, *Wow, what if people think it's just lame and what if they tell you that, like how is that gonna feel?* Haha! Yikes. So, what happened is really the overwhelming majority of feedback that I got was, "Hey, this part really meant something to me" or "I was right there with you for that." Uhm, there was, it wasn't a lot of, "This wasn't good" or "That wasn't good." I did get some great questions about, "Could you tell me some more about this or some more about that 'cause I was left hanging a little bit." And you know that kind of feedback wasn't scary at all and it wasn't hard to get, even though I was afraid I don't know what people might say, it was actually really exciting and empowering. And that feedback has now actually fueled me and, uhm, and as you know, I'm working right now on editing, on updating the book to be published as a paperback book very soon and so...

Angela:

Love it!

Janeen:

Yeah! So, that kind of feedback was actually really awesome because I'm like, *Ok! Sure. There's some more to say about that. You're right. I probably could round that out and offer some other tips on this or some other information*. And it's really now giving me an advanced platform to take this book itself to the next level. And so that's really thrilling and not scary at all.

Angela:

Okay, and have you thought, so those were some of the things you were worried about. Have you thought about things that you were excited about, uhm, things that you thought might happen if you had a book and did any of those happen? What are some of the, like awesome things to come out of your book?

Janeen:

Sure! So, I was really hoping that, uhm, I would be able to be doing some more speaking, to be presenting on these concepts, to be sharing what I have worked on with folks at conferences and other, in other platforms and guess what? That has happened. People have come and said, "Hey, can you sub-"

Angela:

Yey!

Janeen:

Yeah! "Can you submit an abstract to this conference? We think you'd be a great fit" or "Could you come and talk to this board I have because some of what you're working really would resonate with them" or "They're interested in learning from you" and, hey, that's pretty exciting, you know, so now it's out there. And I've had some individuals reach out and say, "Hey, can you talk to me about this coaching thing? What is it that you do and how does that work and could you be my coach?", which is, just, you know, uhm, that's delightful, right? It's really flattering to hear. And that's kinda what you're, that's what you're hoping for, right? You're hoping to build your work. I was hoping to build the work that I do and have more opportunity to do the things that I really love, which is empower leaders to be the their best selves.

Angela:

Love it. So are there any specific opportunities that have come to you that you think would not have happened if you didn't have a book?

Janeen:

Yeah. I think the, uhm, like the speaking, like being part of the panel, uhm, and presenting to industry groups because there wouldn't have necessarily been a way to know me, right? I mean I, sure I could have gone through other ways of becoming a speaker, being a, you know, in a speaker bureau or something but that's its own, that's its own, uh, piece of work, haha, that's its own journey.

Angela:

Right.

Janeen:

But by, right, I mean that doesn't just magically happen by itself. But I think that being invited to other forums, that's happening because there's, my work is already out there. It's out there, people can reference it, they can see it, they can read it, they can say, "Yup, this is something, this is someone. Yup, let's tap into her." And I think that really, quite frankly, the book is a platform, right? It's a platform to say, *Here's what I believe and here's the kind of work I do and I'd love to engage in conversations with you about it.* And then people take you up on that.

Angela:

That's awesome. So, what are the things that might, for you, be different about being an author than you had imagined? I think people have this vision of what it would be like to have a book written and published. And what's different than you thought it would be, either in good ways or in bad ways?

Janeen:

So I don't feel satisfied, like, *Oh, my work is done here.* Haha! I said ... you think I'm gonna write a book and then I've written a book, and how awesome is that! Check, it's off the bucket list.

Angela:
Check! Yup!

Janeen:
Hahaha! No! This is definitely not a “check and one and done” scenario. It’s really, uhm, much more than that. It kind of inspires you to do other things. It’s like the beginning of a new creative process. Uh, and I don’t mean that in terms of, *Oh, now you get stuck into a cycle of always wanting to build something new*, you know, re-edit the book. No, this book will, it already exists and, you know, I mentioned that I’m going to do the paperback version and so, once that is done and out, it’s done and out. But because it is out there and because I continue to work, new things develop. And it’s inspiring to say, *Ok, now let’s delve into another topic or subtopic or something else*. And so, I would also say, you know it’s inspired me to build a blog, which is something I always, you know, *Oh, I should write a blog*. I never really got beyond a Facebook post or a tweet so, that was really kind of a, “I should do, I’d like to do but I never did.” But now I am. I’m doing it and it’s a really kind of exciting process to say, “Be in the creative mode,” right? Be in the mode to create and put something out there as opposed to being in the receive mode or reactive mode. And that’s just a really different way of approaching life.

Angela:
Yeah. Is there any advice knowing that, for you, the process was so much easier than you thought it would be? Like is there any advice that you would give someone who, like you, has thought about writing a book for a long time, but hasn’t been able to pull the trigger and actually do it? Is there any advice that you would give them?

Janeen:
Uh, yes. So a couple of things. First, I would say, decide, like do you really want to have a book written or not? Is it just, is it fun to be a writer, is it fun to be writing a book and thinking about the book and having lots of conversations about wanting to write a book and participating in, I don’t know, Facebook groups or coffee clubs or writing workshop days, you know. Is it just the act of writing and wrestling with an idea what’s really making you happy? Or is the idea of really focusing yourself and putting something out there, a body of work, a piece of work, a piece of you, to be seen and to be out there in the world and to be interacting with others? What’s exciting to you? You know, and then, therefore everything that comes after that. So, that’s like a real decision and I know you talk a lot about this too, you know, because the decision to not make a decision is also a decision and people would just sit in process. That’s, that’s, you’ve made a choice, you’ve made a choice to be still and be in the churn.

Angela:
I think it’s tricky ‘cause I think it feels like you’re working on your book. You know people pull out a journal and they’ll like, write, I don’t know, outlines or notes about their book, or they’ll make a list of people they want to interview, and it feels a whole lot like they’re working on their book.

Janeen:
Yeah. But what happens to that, you know?

Angela:

And I think it's easy to be lured into the belief that you're doing something.

Janeen:

Okay. That's, to me, that's the same thing as like, you can believe that you're gonna have an organized house because you are sorting through the three piles of mail on your table. And you can spend an hour doing that, but is your house clean at the end? Or do you just have three smaller piles of mail? Haha!

Angela:

Right. I like to do that.

Janeen:

Haha! You know it's like, what's really the goal?

Angela:

Yeah.

Janeen:

And I think about that because, uhm, you know, you're right. I mean I do think you feel like you're doing work and you are. You're doing something. You are doing something. You're not doing nothing. I don't say that at all. But you're in the churn. You're, and what I guess I'm getting do is, the question is, do you want to share your experience with someone else? And do you really wanna choose to be on that journey and then get on it and know that journeys have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Right? Because writing a book has a beginning, a middle, and an end and that it has, you know, a feedback loop thereafter. And so you have to make that choice first. And I do think that it's hard and so, as you know I'm a coach. I believe in coaching. I think it's really wise to engage a coach to be coached on that topic as well as maybe any other topic that you're really grappling with and come to a decision. And if your decision is, *You know what? I wanna get this done, I want to do it. I want to not just be in the process. I wanna go into motion to complete it and have some help along the way 'cause that's the other piece.* Then, do that. Hire someone. Join, uhm, a program. Uhm, call Angela who's interviewing me here, you know. But get with a publishing team and an editor. But here's the important part, right? Get with an editor and a publishing team who are on your page, right? And who are on your team because they want, their goals are aligned with yours and they're willing to help you get where you're trying to go. And for me, that was somebody who was tough-minded and kind-hearted, right? And P.S., deadline driven, haha, because they ought to get, there ought to be a period on the end of the sentence.

Angela:

Yeah. So, a lot of people think that the best thing to come out of having written a book is, uhm, is the book itself or the readers or those emails from readers, and I know that all those things are awesome and, you know, I love them too. But, for me, the best thing that I see come out of

books for my clients is knowing that they can accomplish this goal and what that opens up for them and how it changes them. So I'm wondering, for you, like, what's the best thing to come out of this book being done and how has it changed you?

Janeen:

I love that question. I'm gonna start answering it by giving you an example. I had, you know, how we get asked to, you know, write a blurb about yourself. Write your bio. Write about what you do. Okay. And that always, has always been like the most painful task. I just, *Oh my goodness, I have to do this? Okay.* And they may sound funny, but, really, I just never liked to do it. And fine, whatever, they're done. Recently, this week, I went back to revisit some things I had written and I was like, *You know what? This is so not right. This really has to be updated. That really doesn't reflect me at all.* And I saw it. *Oh, here it is,* like I'm now really much more comfortable in my own skin, and standing in my own leadership style that I'm ready for it to be reflected in the words that are around me and the things that describe me and what people affiliate with me, uhm, and what they expect when they call me. And I have actually found that it has, I don't wanna say that it has changed my leadership style or my working style, but it has definitely allowed it to flourish and to bloom where I may have been a little bit more, uhm, keeping the hedges trimmed and, you know, the boxwoods cut, haha, to be in the mold. And now, it's a little more of like a wildflower garden and that makes me really happy.

Angela:

Yeah. That's awesome. Any, uhm, any final, in our last couple minutes here, any final bits of advice that you would give to somebody, uhm, who wants to, who wants to write a book? Uhm, maybe a piece of advice that has been in your book that you've gotten the most feedback on, something you wanna leave people with today.

Janeen:

So, my book is a lot about leading with love, right? And it is about bringing your love, your joy, what's important to you to everything you do in your life, right? And if you can't love them, you can't lead them. And I believe this to be true. If you don't love yourself, you're never gonna develop into the best you. And if you don't love your clients or your staff, you're never gonna be able to lead them to their top potential. And if you don't love your family, you're never gonna have all those fun times, right, that you have when you allow yourself to really be in that love space. And so, what I would share with people is, be willing, be brave, be vulnerable, be real. When they hear me say a lot to, in different conversations, keep it real. And, for me, that really means keep it real with your heart, keep it real with your spirit, uhm, because that's what makes you uniquely you and that's gonna bring out the joy.

Angela:

I love that. Well, you can hear more advice from Janeen Latini. Her last name is spelled L-A-T-I-N-I. The book is called *Love to Lead. Lead to Love.: The Overworked Leader's Guide to Career Growth & Personal Happiness.* You can find it on Amazon and you can also learn more about Janeen at janeenlatini.com. That's J-A-N-E-E-N-L-A-T-I-N-I, janeenlatini.com. Janeen, thank

you so much for being our guest this week and, uhm, I really appreciate your time and I know our listeners do, too. Thanks for being here.

Janeen:

Thanks, Angela. It's so great to chat with you.

Angela:

So, just a quick update on ^PageUp^ podcast for our ^PageUp^ listeners. Uhm, we have concluded our first season of, uhm, of ^PageUp^ and I'm so excited to fill you guys in on what we have in store for Season 2. So, just after Labor Day, we'll be releasing the first episode of Season 2 of ^PageUp^. So I hope you'll check that out. In the meantime, if you haven't yet listened to the first 17 episodes in Season 1, you can find those at pageuppodcast.com. Thanks again to our guest today, Janeen Latini, author of *Love to Lead. Lead to Love*. We will be back next week, changing the world one book at a time.