

Jana Kemp on: Landing a Publishing House, Launching a Career

Boise Non-fiction Writers: August 6, 2008

Rediscovered Bookshop 6:30 pm

Notes by Susan Stacy, QC by Jana Kemp

Jana Kemp is an authority on management and meetings. She runs her own consulting and writing business. She has published five books (listed below), written a column for two Idaho newspapers, and is a conference speaker. She represented District 16 in the Idaho Legislature from 2004 to 2006.

After asking audience members to introduce themselves – as both a literal and symbolic tribute to the power of writers talking with one another – and say what it is they hope to publish, Jana began her story.

1. Book No. 1: *Moving Meetings*. She was 28 and wanted to attract work with managerial people in business. How to build credibility with such (older) people? Write a book. This was the purpose of getting published. Demonstrate your expertise convincingly.

She had an idea about how the book should look. She scanned book-store shelves for books that looked like her idea and selected two publishers, noting that in today's world, writers can send their query letters to many publishers at once, not be bound by the old practice of querying one at a time and waiting on each publisher in turn.

Her publisher used her original book manuscript material as an appendix in the book. Jana persuaded the publisher to forgo a cover promoting the white-male stereotype of a manager. The book was translated into Italian, an unexpected surprise.

Learn by experience: While she succeeded in her purpose – to establish credibility in her field – she also felt she was lucky. Today, her query letters differentiate her proposals from whatever else is on the market. She is smarter about genres. She knows what section of the bookstore will suit her book. Now she knows more about contracts and about who gets what rights (such as for translations). She makes better use of sources such as *Writers Market* and Google.

2. Book No. 2: *No!* While looking for an “agent” for this idea, her sister in Minnesota happened to meet someone who worked with a “book broker.” Publishers employ these people to find the kinds of books they wish to publish. Unlike “agents,” authors do not pay these people. So “Stan” found Jana’s publisher. Their conversation has been via email only. Translated to five languages including Chinese, which is giving her some marketing ideas.

Learn by experience: Contracts between publishers/authors provide for an advance against royalties, describe who owns the many rights to a property, and define the royalty amount. They specify how many pages the completed manuscript must have. Editors can insist that some of the proposed material be removed from the manuscript for conceptual or structural reasons. Royalties begin at around 7 percent of the wholesale price minus whatever other costs go into the book. (Stephen King may get more.)

She noted that Boise is home to at least two attorneys who specialize in the law of intellectual property rights, and she suggests them for the process of sorting out what rights are being given to the publisher or reserved for the author.

Publishers don't sell to all bookstores on the same terms. Nor do they all market your book or select the “correct” genre when they do. Expect to market your book.

3. Getting a “broker.” Because she had published once already, she had proven that she could complete a manuscript and see it through to publication. Credibility like this will attract a broker.

But she also had to develop a convincing proposal for the book – a business plan, in effect. This requires articulating the following:

- The purpose of the book
- How it’s different than/similar to what’s already on the market
- What tone/voice you will take
- Who the expected readers are, and how many (thousands!) there are
- Table of Contents being proposed
- Purpose and summary of each chapter, detailed outline for one chapter
- How the author’s credibility and activities will help promote and sell the book

4. When to seek a publisher (contrasted to self-publishing):

- If you don’t have notoriety or credibility sufficient to sell books on your own
- If you don’t have ready-made selling opportunities (as in lecture circuits)
- If you don’t need or want editorial services of publishers (editing, book design and illustration, securing and selling translations, distribution, book storage)
- If you don’t care how many you sell
- If you absolutely want every detail your own way, self-publish.
- If you only wish to sell a limited number and are confident that you can, self publish.

Jana likes the benefits of publishing houses: In her profession, self-publishing offers no credibility with potential clients. The editorial process has made her a better writer – with better organization of ideas, better clarity in thought, better conceptualization. She prefers to sell the book (to a publisher) before she actually writes it.

5. Questions and Answers.

- * Indexes: authors or their hirees do them
- * Collaboration: Increase credibility and sales if co-author is known in the field
- * Manuscript review: Yes! Especially by people interviewed and quoted in the book
- * Academic presses: Usually academic readers, higher price points, limited distribution
- * Spine of book: Make them very readable. Need at least 190 or so pages
- * Getting rich: A possible future, but keep clear on your purpose in writing/publishing

6. NIMs Island: A book and film about two writers. A useful tutorial about what makes for a visual presentation. Examples of purpose, personality, voice, and identifying audiences.

7. Jana Kemp titles:

Moving Meetings, by Jana M. Kemp. McGraw-Hill Companies. Aug 1994.

ISBN13: 978-0-7863-0333-5

No!: How One Simple Word Can Transform Your Life, by Jana Kemp. Amacom. Jan 2005.

ISBN 13: 978-0-8144-7230-9

Building Community in Buildings: The Design and Culture of Dynamic Workplaces, by Jana M. Kemp. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. Nov 2006. ISBN 13: 978-0-275-99220-0

Moving Out of the Box: Tools for Team Decision Making, by Jana M. Kemp. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. Nov 2007. ISBN 13: 978-0-275-99706-9

Prepared Not Paranoid: Lessons from Law Enforcement for Living Every Day Safely, by Jana M. Kemp and Doug Graves. Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. Apr 2008. ISBN 13: 978-0-313-34719-1