

11. Author Interview

If you would like to be interviewed for a future issue of Write-On! and have a book that has already been released, please send an email to michelleailenettrue@... with your name, book title and genre.

This month's guest author is Lillian Bjorseth (Business Networking/Communication)

Q: Hi Lillian. Please list your book(s) and a description or synopsis.

A:

Breakthrough Networking: Building Relationships That Last. (book – two editions)

No matter what industry you are in or what level you have reached in your business or career, you can profit from building additional high-value relationships. Networking is your vehicle ... whether you want to start a new business, increase your sales, get a new job or promotion or merge or acquire an existing business. Part I provides an introduction to the relationship-building process and helps you discover your networking behavioral style. Part II discusses the importance of non-gender imaging skills and how to create and manage the impression you make on others through your appearance and behavior. Part III provides relationship-building techniques to turn a chance meeting or a planned encounter into a mutually beneficial business connection. Part IV provides you with proven icebreakers you can use to get attendees mingling before and during your meetings and conferences.

52 Ways to Break the Ice & Target Your Market. (Interactive Learning System)

Starting a conversation ranks right up there with the fear of flying for some people. In fact, some of you enjoy the anonymity on the airplane more than arriving at the opening session of the conference! Also, it is easier to build a better mousetrap than to let the world know you have built one. So what do you do? This product assists you on both counts! It helps you start conversations with ease to become more memorable and hone your marketing and business strategies. It is based on two decks of 26 cards that can make the difference in your success. Nothing else like it on the market! Also contains a handy how-to manual.

Nothing Happens Until We Communicate (CD/workbook series)

Success starts with good communication skills. This series helps you, your employees, co-workers and your family communicate better through appearance, body language, gender differences, listening, presentation, self-esteem and writing skills. The CDs are for audio learners. The workbooks are great for visual learners.

Marketing Boot Camp (DVD/workbook) This jam-packed 3-hour DVD/workbook set contains:

- Practical, real-world tactics
- Steps to create attention-grabbing marketing
- Proven formula to create your Verbal Business Card and top-of-the-mind positioning statement
- Sound personal/business branding tips
- Strategic networking advice
- Guidance on how to create media releases that stand out
- Leverage-creating online and offline marketing tactics

Masters of Networking (book)- Contributing author to this compilation of successful networking techniques.

Q: What gave you the idea for your first book?

A: I write what my audience requests. I started with a series of communication skills audiotapes because my workshop participants wanted to “take me home with them.” When I started speaking about networking and my participants again asked, I wrote the book. My others products followed suit.

Q: Are you devoted to your genre or do you see yourself writing in another genre at some point in the future?

A: I definitely enjoy providing practical and insightful tips to help people build social capital. It’s so rewarding to know I help people enhance their businesses and careers. Down the road, I want to write a book that helps people increase their confidence based on my life story of being reared in the outskirts of a town of 83 people in rural Missouri by a loving father, who, however, quit school in third grade and didn’t believe in education for girls and a mother who was not allowed to continue school after eighth grade. The story won’t be about me ... rather about how people can share my path and benefit from how I made it from a one-room schoolhouse to Chicago ... and the world ... with my head held high.

Q: Is it important to write based on trends or do you write from the heart?

A: Both are important in my business.

Q: How do you, as a writer, find your way into the story? Do you use an outline or let the story unfold naturally?

A: While this question is more geared to fiction, I do include my personal stories in my business books as well and certainly when I speak. I'm not an "outline kind of person." In school, I wrote the theme first and then the outline since we had to turn in both. My outlines are indeed sketchy! You need to do what works best for you. I know some people who would never start a book without a detailed outline.

Q: Where do you get your ideas? How do you know you have a good tale to tell worthy of becoming a novel?

A: I get my ideas from my work as a professional speaker, trainer and coach. It helps me understand what people need and want to learn.

Q: How many hours a week do you devote to writing, including research?

A: Since I am not a structured person, I don't keep track of things like that. I write when the spirit moves me, whether in my office, on a train, in a hotel room and I never keep track of the time. I definitely could never devote 5 to 6 am or 7 to 8 pm daily like some of my colleagues. I'd rebel at the order of all that.

Q: What do you find to be the most difficult part of writing? For instance, character development, scene setting, plot etc. How do you overcome that difficulty?

A: For me, it is finding the time. I loved English and writing from grade one on (no, we didn't have a kindergarten in rural Missouri) and my journalism degree from the University of Missouri helped me hone my skills. With a busy schedule of speaking nationwide, I have to devote time to that as well.

Q: What tips do you have for finding an agent and publisher?

A: I don't as I voluntarily choose to self-publish all my works.

Q: What is the market like for your genre?

A: Entrepreneurs, small businesses, corporations, associations, educational institutions, etc.

Q: What's the most important lesson you've learned in your writing career?

A: To do it! It's particularly important if you want to become a professional speaker. You are often measured by "what you have between the covers."

Q: What do you consider success as a writer?

A: First of all, completing a project. Then selling the heck out of it.

Q: What methods of marketing and promotion work best for you?

A: Speaking and back-of the room sales, corporate seminars with books included, an e-zine, proliferation of articles on the web, amazon.com, universities and colleges, media interviews in print, on TV and the Internet. I am in the process of setting up affiliate sites with colleagues who will receive a commission on my products.

Q: What literary organizations or writers groups would you recommend to writers in your genre?

A: I don't belong to any other than the Authors Marketing Group in the Chicago area.

Q: How do you keep a balance between family, work and writing?

A: My children are grown. My husband and I easily work it out. He is retired and can travel with me to speaking engagements. He is excellent at arranging and running the product table! My grandsons are enthralled that I am an author and that I dedicated the second edition of my book to them.

Q: What are your current projects?

A: I have begun a new venture: creating online courses. My first one, "What You Say Before You Speak" is already up and running and can be reached through my website. I have also committed to a series of five courses on the art of building social capital (networking). The first one is waiting to be uploaded and the others, well, that's what I am doing in my spare time!

Q: For what one accomplishment in regard to your writing would you most like to be remembered?

A: Making a positive difference in people's lives.

Q: What does it mean, for you, to journey through life as a writer?

A: It is simply I recording the knowledge and expertise I have acquired through living.

Q: What is your website URL so our readers can learn more about your books and other literary activities?

A: www.duoforce.com

Q: What do you think of self-publishing?

A: It's a great way to go if you are an unknown when you start. I chose to self-publish and will continue to do so because I can't imagine anyone changing my copy or the title of my works. Let me express it in the words of the AT&T vice president I worked closely with during the days of the company's short foray into the commercial computer marketplace. I asked him once why with a staff of 800 people, he chose to write his own speeches (actually, I thought it would be nice not to have to stay up all night working on them with him!) and he said, "I need to share my thoughts in my words, not someone else's." Me, too!

Q: If you could have dinner with one author, who would it be?

A: The people who wrote the Bible.

Thank you, Lillian!