



The 7 Question Interview with Amy Burkhardt

Kimberley Cameron & Associates

Tiburon, CA 94920

Website: <http://www.kimberleycameron.com>

Please let us know who you are, your company, and some of your clients:

I am an associate agent with Kimberley Cameron & Associates, and I work in our San Francisco office. (We also have offices in Paris and New York.) I began working at the agency in 2007 and started taking on my own clients in 2009. Our agency has a long list of clients who write for the adult fiction and nonfiction markets, and a full list can be found on the Who We Represent section of our website (<http://www.kimberleycameron.com/who-we-represent.php>). As a relatively new agent, my clients have not had their books hit the shelves quite yet. I look forward to Dr. Heli Perrett's **The Safe Food Handbook** coming out this Spring 2010.

So our readers may fully understand the role of an agent, please tell us how you make contact with an editor at a major house once you have a manuscript you are interested in.

When I find a project that I am interested in, I first work with my client to polish the manuscript or proposal. As we work together, I create a list of editors that I believe might be interested in the project based on my personal knowledge of the editor, his or her recent acquisitions, and what I know of his or her "wish list" for new projects. Once all of the materials are ready to go, I pitch the project to my target editors via email, phone, and one-on-one meetings. I follow up regularly with each editor until I receive a decision. If the editors at larger houses pass on the project, I go to mid-sized houses and even small, independent presses. My colleagues and I believe strongly that we owe it to our clients to pursue publication of their books, no matter the size of the house.

When reviewing a submission, what do you look for:

This is one of the most frequently asked questions and one of the hardest to answer. First and foremost, I look for great writing. No matter what else a writer can offer, this is the one component that influences my decision (to offer representation) more than anything else. In the fiction and nonfiction categories that I represent, I look for accomplished writing, compelling characters, fresh voices, and timely themes. I also take into account the writer's platform. In fiction, I look for writers who have a publishing track record in journals or



literary magazines, but I welcome unpublished writers as well. In nonfiction, I look for writers who are "experts" in their field and/or who are connected to their book's target audience in a number of ways. This is absolutely necessary in our competitive publishing market!

On the nitty gritty level, I look for submissions that are professionally compiled and that follow the submission guidelines stated on our website. I know it's a tedious and time-consuming process for writers to submit to agents with widely varying guidelines, but it's important to me that a potential client is professional and demonstrates knowledge of my work and/or our agency. Following our guidelines is an easy way to accomplish that.

Please see my page on the Kimberley Cameron & Associates website for details on what types of books I represent (<http://www.kimberleycameron.com/amy-burkhardt.php>).

Any suggestions or comments on how a writer can break into the publishing industry:

Hard work and perseverance. The best thing a writer can do is work on his or her writing. Always strive to improve! The best way to do this is to read, constantly and attentively. The next best thing a writer can do is keep trying. Don't take the rejections -- and there will be many -- personally. Everyone in publishing loves books, but whether we like it or not, publishing is a business. Agents and editors must evaluate manuscripts accordingly. Just keep writing and putting your most polished work out there.

Oh yes...and starting blogging, tweeting, and building a website. That always helps!

Aside from excellent writing skills, what are the literary factors that make an author successful?

The author's ability to connect with his or her audience is paramount. In the literary sense, this means writing in a fresh voice about innovative ideas/stories with the passion that you feel for what you're writing. Compelling writing is more than just beautifully crafted language. Too often, a gifted writer is unsuccessful because he or she forgets there is a reader to consider. You must actively engage your reader in whatever you are writing using your voice, ideas, and passion. These are what grab a reader and stay with him or her long after the book is done.

In the literal sense, connecting with your audience means promoting your book. You may be a wonderful writer, but no one will know it if they don't read (buy) your book. Many writers look on self-promotion with disdain and a great deal of discomfort; however, I am a firm believer that it can be approached as an opportunity to engage your creativity. In what ways can you incite readers to read your book? Obviously, the internet is a great place to do this. We've all heard about blogging, tweeting, and social networking (see my last answer), but don't limit yourself. The most effective ways to catch attention are those that are new,



and there are writers that have come up with unconventional, but effective, ways to promote their books.

What are your feelings concerning traditional publishing houses versus smaller vanity press houses or self-publishing?

Of course, I strongly prefer traditional publishing houses and continue to recommend the traditional publishing route to writers. In broad terms, the benefits of going the traditional route are the editorial support, marketing, and distribution that traditional houses offer. Of course, there is also the issue of money -- the author is usually paid an advance, and there is no cost to the writer even if the book doesn't sell well. Finally, I grew up reading and loving literature, and there is a certain cache (for me personally) about being published by a traditional house.

At the same time, I think there is a place -- and a need -- for vanity press and self-publishing (and POD and ebooks too). It all goes back to the writer and the writer's goals for his or her book: Who is the target audience? How much time and effort is the writer willing to put into the process? What is the most important end goal? For some writers who envision a distinct niche audience and can handle distribution personally, these alternative routes are ideal. They are faster, and the writer maintains more control over his or her work. For writers who don't want to devote the excess of time and effort to finding an agent and then an editor or for writers who've tried this route with no success, it can be a satisfactory alternative. Some self-publishers and vanity presses produce books that look as professional and attractive as traditional publishers. If the writer's end goal is simply seeing his or her writing in print or passing it on to family and friends, these routes make sense.

Although these are my thoughts now, I keep an open mind about how these routes may evolve in future.

Are there any upcoming releases associated with your agency that you would like to tell our readers about?

How do I choose? Please check out the News & New Titles Page on our website for information about upcoming releases, readings, and the titles we've recently sold (<http://www.kimberleycameron.com/news.php>), and read our Agency Blog for helpful information about navigating the publishing industry (<http://www.kimberleycameron.blogspot.com>).

WritingRaw.com would like to thank Amy Burkhardt for taking the time out of her busy schedule for this interview.