

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is standing on a wide, paved city sidewalk. She is wearing a light-colored, double-breasted trench coat with a matching belt tied around her waist. Underneath, she wears a dark top and a dark skirt. She is also wearing black tights and black lace-up shoes. The background shows a city street with buildings, trees, and a few parked cars, slightly out of focus.

INTERVIEW BY OLA MAZZUCA
PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAYNNA MEYLER

AMANDA

LANG SHARES GOOD IDEAS WITH
GOOD INTENTIONS IN HER NEW BOOK,
THE POWER OF WHY

Dressed in a classic Ann Taylor suit, Donald J. Pliner booties, her lips tinted with light pink lipstick, Amanda Lang means business.

The journalist and co-host of CBC's the Lang and O'Leary Exchange is a passionate Canadian concerned about her country's level of productivity. Lang's first book, *The Power of Why*, examines this issue with personal rapport. Inspired by curiosity, she compiled stories of her own and fellow professionals that prove "anyone can innovate" with the strength of a good idea.

"Governments know about it, businesses know about it and academics have done all kinds of research," she says of this national problem. "It is our single biggest economic issue and we have to do more with the resources we have."

The entrepreneurs within the book have overcome "real adversity" but live in a "realm of ideas," ultimately making them happier and more engaged. Notable interview subjects include Roger Martin, the Dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto to Chip Wilson, the founder of Lululemon, their histories "energizing" her to write the book.

"These aren't kids who were born on third base and thought they had a triple," she says. "These are people who spent years of hard work improving their product."

The journalist can relate to these stories, as her career began with a similar journey. The 42-year-old was born in Manitoba and attended the University of Winnipeg to study architecture, an ambitious career she chose at the ripe age of nine. After graduation, she took a year off to deal with the loss of her older sister. She considers her way into journalism "dumb luck" after being placed by a headhunter at the *Globe and Mail* after moving to Toronto.

"Learning how to write and do basic journalism felt good," Lang says of the comfort she found, after realizing that she had no desire for design. "A light bulb went off and it felt like something in my grasp, something I could improve."

Lang reflects on improvement by pursuing numerous charitable endeavours. One includes getting back to cycling, a sport she hadn't done since age twelve for Ride to Conquer Cancer, an experience spanning 200 kilometres. She is also the Vice Chair of the Writer's

Guild of Canada, the organization known for its prestigious Giller Prize and Roger's Fiction awards.

These commitments give Lang a voice to help others, be it cancer patients or writers in progress, yet she doesn't believe women lack theirs as a whole in society.

"We don't need to fight for that anymore, because we see strong women everywhere," she says. "I think women can be a little too nice, a little too conciliatory, but what I do with Kevin is a reflection that women do have a voice. If you have a daughter, it is important to impress upon her that she can do anything with confidence."

For Lang, working with O'Leary is not as challenging as it seems on television. She describes the logistics of her colleague as "tough," working around schedules and establishing daily topics, but insists he is very "warm and engaging."

Lang takes pride in holding her own as a conduit of the CBC, a significant institution within national landscape. She acknowledges the direct line between "responsibility and authority," it has granted her, one of the main examples in the *Power of Why*.

"There is a lot of trust that is given to you when you get to do what I do," Lang says of her position. "I'm not reading off of a prompter, I'm speaking off the cuff at all times, sharing views on developing stories."

The business journalist doesn't insist that the *Power of Why* has an underlying message, but a main goal of acting as a guide to help Canada make the most of its potential. Whether inciting curiosity through literature with her son, Julian, or researching extensively before entering the studio, Lang lives life to the fullest. Despite being a parent of seven years, she makes a disparate analogy of the gratification from publishing her first book.

"Some people say it's like having a baby, but the truth is it's more like giving birth to a teenager or a young adult," Lang says. "I'm no longer responsible for it, so I see how people respond. It's sort of like watching your grown-up child start to make their way and have an impact on the world."