

# Integral Leadership Review

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## Integral for the Masses

### Populating the Canon of Integral Literature

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So, the moment has arrived. Since the first moment that you discovered Integral Theory it has permeated every aspect of your life. You have consumed a library of information and attended conferences by the brochure load. You have established your own personal Integral Life Practice and have gathered around you a sangha of like minded individuals to practice together. You actively participate in all the major on-line communities and are highly regarded for your insight and comments. You have established a blog which is becoming more noticed in the blogosphere. Finally, you have applied the theory in your particular field of expertise with great effect and impact.

So, you are probably asking, what moment has arrived? The moment I am talking about is when you decide that it is time to write your book! Your chosen time to add a more permanent contribution to the canon of Integrally Informed wisdom for sharing with those who will follow in your footsteps. You are responding to the evolutionary impulse that demands that Integrally Informed books are the norm, rather than the exception.

My response to that moment is to say, “Bravo! Your voice is most definitely needed.” Now I have a slightly vested interest in saying this, having helped establish Integral Publishers a little over two years ago as a vehicle to bring integrally informed works to a wider audience. I hope that you might consider us as a channel for your forthcoming masterpiece. The truth is that the mainstream publishing houses are still not quite ready for Integrally Informed books at the present, claiming that there is insufficient demand. The catch-22 truth is that there is low demand because there is little supply to create a virtuous circle. Our mission is to help break the logjam.

That said, having had the privilege of reading and reviewing a number of manuscripts from the next generation of Integral Authors, there are a number of potential pitfalls that can easily be avoided, so long as you are aware of what they are. So, I thought that it might be beneficial to share some of the lessons that we have learned being on the receiving end of the these potential works of art.

Firstly, what is glaringly obvious is the fact that “just because you have read a lot of books, doesn’t mean that you can necessarily write a book!” Now, I am sure that at some place in your deeper shadow, there is a visceral reaction that may lead to your deciding that you have no desire to continue reading further, and

that of course is your prerogative. But I would ask you to think about it. If you truly believe in the tenets of Integral Theory, why do you think your writing line of development has evolved at the same rate as those others at which you excel?

This is not necessarily a problem, unless you habituate a space of denial. The old African proverb, made popular by Hilary Clinton is, “it takes a village to raise a child,” is just as apposite with respect to producing a book. You may be one of those rare, unique individuals who can create a masterpiece in total isolation from the rest of the world. It may even be your karma for this life’s journey. But for the vast majority of us, we need to have a support system in place. To increase your chances of success, check with those who are close to you that they are prepared to be part of the village raising your book. The potential to alienate dear friends and relatives by automatically voting them into your support network is enormous. Do not be surprised, if the community that ends up supporting you only has very little overlap with the communities where you currently spend most of your life. As publishers, part of our purpose in life is to be an integral part of your village.

I am sure that you have heard the old joke, “How do I get to Carnegie Hall? ... Practice! Practice! Practice!” I believe that there is a corollary for writing a book, which goes, “How do I get to the top of the New York Times best seller list? ... Edit! Edit! Edit!” You really cannot have enough people to look critically at the manuscript that you are preparing. Of course, it is great to pick up the typos that just pass by your weary eyes as you read the same paragraph for the one hundred and fiftieth time. Also, while you may believe that you are producing prose that even the bard may have been proud to ascribe his name, when fresh eyes have a chance to review it, they will be able to point out what makes sense and what comes across as gibberish.

There are other benefits that come from comprehensive and continuous editing. What has become clear to us is that any book has a number of clear developmental stages of it’s own. Initially, your book is an extension of your ego, an expression of what it is you feel others need to know. It is almost a “me Einstein, you schmuck” scenario. This is not a bad thing, as the first thing that you need to get out are all of the nuggets of wisdom and understanding that you have been developing over the course of your own personal development. Being selfish at this stage is no bad thing, however, if you stick at this stage you will not sell very many books.

Stage one books are all about “what’s in this for me?” As a consequence, very few readers and reviewers of the book are going to be enamored with your work to want to recommend it to others, and word of mouth marketing is critical to its future success. The next level of editing has to be focused on taking the book to the next stage, which is “what’s in it for the reader.” Books at this level are all about not just readability, but also the substantiation of the points you are attempting to make. Just because you make a claim, even if it is true, doesn’t necessarily mean that the reader will accept it.

What they need is the ammunition to be able to take your insights and use them effectively in their own lives. Sure, it is not unusual in the Integral environment to allow lack of facts to spoil a good argument. But if you want to get your work accepted, it is essential that you can structure your words so that the reader can see himself or herself in the story that you are weaving. Rarely, can the original writer do this level of editing. Fresh, beginner’s eyes are absolutely necessary. But be ready to wrestle with your editors and remember they really do have your best interests at heart, even though you might not believe it at the time.

Stage 2 books have a much greater chance of selling, but it is the books that make it to the third stage that tend to be the real best sellers. Stage 3 books answer the question “So What?” Stage 3 books are more than an accumulation of your wisdom and reader acceptability of your points of view. They form the basis for a plan of action to “change the world.” Well maybe that is a little grandiose, but from small acorns...

This requires another level of editing, one that identifies opportunities to introduce action points and sets directions and opportunities for consideration by the reader to take on as part of their lifestyle. One of the critical points about Stage 3 books is that the book is not just a standalone entity, but is part of a much larger ecosystem, which brings me to my final point for all of you aspiring integral authors. For some reason that I still have not managed to fathom, when asked how the author is proposing to promote this work that they have slaved over for months if not years, the average response is just a shrug of the shoulders.

There is a complete belief that all the author has to do is deliver the manuscript to the publisher and it will be a success. Authors seem to inhabit a Field of Dreams world where, “write it and the readers will come!” is the mantra that everybody chants. Nothing can be further from the truth. In today’s economic environment, most publishers are far more discriminating with their promotional dollars than ever. A very extreme of the Pareto law seems to apply where 95% of the money is spent on the 5% of books that they believe are going to make the best seller lists. Writing a book without giving thought as to how you intend to promote it, is a bit like participating in the conception of a child and then expecting it to evolve into a fully functional adult with no further input from the parents! It just isn’t going to happen.

Now for many potential authors it is a scary thought that it requires commitment, often beyond your ability to deliver. As a consequence, you either put off writing your book or you set yourself up for failure from the outset. Again, this brings us back to the village or support system that you have in place for the book. Your publisher is part of this village, an important part I hasten to add, but to abdicate your responsibilities in a hope to be successful is not a strategy for success.

Like most things in life, on the surface, writing a book seems an easy thing to do; in truth the devil is in the detail. I strongly urge you to write your opus magnum. It is clearly needed. But I caution that you enter the process consciously. Do not revert to your own mythical/magical stages and just assume that all the book requires is to spend a few days or weeks in front of your computer screen. May your muse be with you, but don’t rely on her to do all the work for you.

#### **About the Author**

**Keith Bellamy** is a member of the Management Review Board of Integral Leadership Review, COO of Integral Publishers and an international consultant. This column is a regular feature of Integral Leadership Review.

### **Integral Leadership Review**

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