

MILL CITY PRESS
Editorial Evaluation

Author: [Author Name]

Title: [Book Title]

Editorial Summary

Offering fifteen themes for reflection that will lead to greater self-awareness and empathy, [Book Title] draws the reader's focus on internal and external improvement, empowering us to strengthen the leader in us all. The chapter summaries and exercise questions increase the book's usability both for individual readers and, as you point out, small groups, teams, and organizations, and your doctoral work in leadership and spiritual formation gives you a unique platform from which to inform the reader. The core of your argument—that "one of the common reasons [behind ineffective leaders] is their failure to understand who they truly are, to accept and appreciate that, and to be able to let their lives and decisions be a reflection of that"—is a welcome variation from the "quick fixes" presented in many competing titles, which often fail to deliver solutions for lasting change.

Though not an edit, the editorial evaluation includes a sample of revision suggestions intended to maximize the commercial appeal of your book. As part of the Comprehensive Edit you have already purchased, your editor will provide developmental feedback throughout your manuscript. Please note that any revisions you might make to the manuscript as a result of the evaluation will not be reviewed prior to editing.

Making a Strong First Impression: The Front Matter

For buyers unfamiliar with you and your work, the About the Author page provides essential background information, and establishes your varied experience with leadership. However, in the last paragraph, we switch to an introduction of the book. Rather than combining the About the Author page and introduction, consider dropping this last paragraph, and incorporate this information into the preface, instead. Doing so will allow you to describe the book's goals using the first-person point of view used throughout the book; with third-person, we end up referencing leaders as "them" and "they" as opposed to directly addressing the reader.

Your endorsements are fantastic, and I applaud your efforts in securing them so early in the publishing process. To make this page of the book really pop, I'd suggest replacing the title "Endorsements" with "Praise for [Book Title]." You might also consider dropping the introductory paragraph, to allow the blurbs to stand by themselves. We should include a quote on the front cover, and a few on the back, as well.

The Book Cover Highlights page will be an excellent resource for your editor to use in crafting your final back cover copy, a service included in your publishing package. This page should be removed from the manuscript prior to uploading the manuscript for interior formatting, to prevent the cover description from appearing in the interior of the finished product.

The table of contents is an important selling tool, as this is one of the few pages a potential buyer reviews when determining whether the book is a good fit for their needs. The subject of each chapter should be highlighted in some way during the design process to prevent readers from reacting to the repetition of "Know Your"; in other words, we want to draw readers' attention to "Stage of Life," "Background," "Strengths," and so on.

Consider incorporating the content of “A Word to ‘Leaders’” into the preface, so that “Know Your Stage of Life” constitutes the first chapter; all chapters should be renumbered accordingly, with the Epilogue as a numberless table-of-contents entry, like the Preface. As a result, the number of book chapters will correspond to the fifteen key components. Moreover, in combining the preface and “A Word to ‘Leaders’” we will transition seamlessly from how your experience informs the book, and how the book will inform the reader.

Establishing the Takeaway

When establishing the takeaway, such as in the preface, we may need to add specific examples of the ways in which the reader’s transformation into “a more authentic, effective person and leader” will yield “a more rewarding, fulfilling, and effective future.” While these may seem too obvious to list in the book, such examples will allow the reader to place the value you offer into their own unique context, whether they plan to use this book to help them lead professionally or personally.

We might also need to define “leader” earlier in the preface, if not immediately; establishing in these early pages the broad applications of this term will give the potential buyer a sense of the myriad ways in which they could benefit from this information. You’ve done a great job in the “Word to ‘Leaders’” section of keeping the definition broad—as a person who moves others toward a designated outcome.

We could even take this a step further and give examples of the types of leadership roles that readers might not even have considered. In the current draft, our initial references to leaders might give the impression that we’re defining the term more narrowly; for example, with a line like “Can leaders avoid the situations which tend to destroy them?” it seems we’re referencing a more exclusive, high-stakes leadership role; readers may not associate their own leadership status as a likely cause of destruction.

Increasing Usability

In the questions for the reader, be as specific as possible to maximize the book’s usability. For example, asking the reader what they think of the author’s suggested definition of leadership may be too broad a question to cause readers to ask the right questions of themselves. Instead, you might ask the reader to consider the different ways in which they are a leader based on your definition.

To break up the text of each chapter, additional bullet points and active steps would be useful. Just as with the questions for the reader, the active steps should be broken down as much as possible. For example, if a given step requires significant action on the part of the reader—as in the case of “Seek the help of professionals or persons more capable than myself who can help me address areas of concern about my current or next stage of life”—the reader may feel overwhelmed rather than inspired, particularly if we don’t specify the type of professional or areas of concern they should consider.

Likewise, to “do further study on characteristics of my current, or next, stage of life” might not be clear enough for the average reader, who might not know how to define “further study” in this context. On page 31, the action step is “What are one or two ‘next steps’ I can take”—but this isn’t an action step so much as an invitation for the reader to formulate their own steps. Similar examples include: “What will I do to confirm my areas of strength?” and “What are ways I could test possible areas of strength?” By breaking these questions and steps into manageable pieces for the reader—and providing as many prescriptive suggestions as possible—we will most effectively accomplish the goals of the book.

Be as specific as possible in your phrasing, as well, for enhanced clarity. For example, in the follow excerpt, the bolded words should be replaced with specific details to clarify your intended meaning: “Do you know your weaknesses? Are you developing a growing awareness of **those things** that you either lack or which can be self-sabotaging if left unchecked? If you are not, believe me, **others who know you can help you** to a better understanding if you are willing to ask, and to listen with a humble spirit and an open mind.”

“Things” by its very nature lacks specificity, and we should clarify in what way others can help, as well as the best way to approach these individuals.

Style and Tone

Avoid referring to leaders as “they”; by speaking directly to the leader within each reader, you will more thoroughly engage your audience at each turn. Currently, we use both approaches—for example, on page 13 we transition from: “Can leaders experience longevity and health, and influence others in ways that mutually make lives, communities and organizations better? I believe they can” to “So how can we know ourselves?” Maintaining a “you”-based approach throughout will give us greater consistency, too.

Avoid using multiple quotations as chapter openers, as this could have a messy and uneven aesthetic in the finished product. One quotation per chapter is ideal.

A heavy use of personal anecdotes can be a risk in cases where the author is not nationally recognized. To prevent readers from assuming the book will be more biographical than instructive, we’ll want to consider revisions to ensure the reader’s transformation takes precedence over your own. Chapter 4, for example, opens with reflections on your own journey, which takes the focus away from the reader’s. Chapter 6 opens with your personal back story and childhood experiences, which the average reader may not find as valuable as the actions they can take to achieve leadership growth.

Formatting/Style Notes

As part of your edit, your editor will replace the double spaces between sentences with a single space.

Instances of straight quotation marks or apostrophes (e.g., They’d) will be replaced with curly throughout (e.g., They’d).

A few paragraphs are missing indents; examples are found on page 8, page 12, and page 67. In such cases, your editor will add the missing indent.

Editorial Package Recommendation

A two-round Comprehensive Edit has already been purchased. If you would like a proofreader to review the typeset manuscript, our three-round Publish Prep Edit is ideal.

Packaging

Though your title and subtitle are strong choices, there is already a book on the market by the same name. With this in mind, we should consider alternatives to avoid buyer confusion, since both books cover the same topic.

Soon, a New Suggested Title step will appear on your dashboard. At that time you will have the opportunity to either update our system with a new title or finalize your current choice. If you’d like to discuss alternatives via the Message Center, I’m happy to offer feedback.

A paperback format will give you the lowest price point, which will appeal to the increasing number of buyers unwilling to pay hardcover prices. When determining your retail price, comparable books should be considered; if priced too high, [Book Title] won't be seen as commercially competitive.

Once the manuscript has been typeset, you will have the opportunity to include an index. You can either create one yourself, or have us create one for you. Given the book's subject, an index is appropriate, and could be an added value for buyers.

Suggested BISAC codes

BISAC codes are classifications sent out to accounts to help determine where the work is shelved in a brick-and-mortar store or the genre(s) under which it can be searched for in an online database. Three codes are submitted from a list of codes approved by the Book Industry Study Group, and I have suggested the three below as the most relevant categories for your work.

SELO21000 SELF-HELP / Motivational & Inspirational

SELO27000 SELF-HELP / Personal Growth / Success

SELO31000 SELF-HELP / Personal Growth / General

Marketability

You've done an excellent job securing effective endorsements from a range of leadership experts. As noted earlier, we should incorporate a few of these blurbs into the back cover copy as well.

If you participate in leadership conferences or speaking engagements, these could prove useful opportunities to spread word of the book's release. You note you also lead retreats, speak in churches, and participate in special events regularly, which are all excellent opportunities to create buzz about your latest project.

The competing titles you've listed in the marketing questionnaire are strong comparisons, and you've clearly put a great deal of time deciphering the ways in which your book stands out. If we highlight these unique qualities—such as the holistic approach found in your work—in all instances of descriptive copy (e.g., your back cover, website, press release, etc.), we will make the buyer's decision to buy a copy that much easier.

I hope my feedback proves useful, and want to thank you again for the opportunity to read your work. I wish you and [Book Title] much success in the months ahead.

Best,
Kate

Kate Ankofski
Editorial Director
Hillcrest Media