

An **Ambeck Enterprise** White Paper  
2009 ©



PO Box 19577  
RPO Manulife Centre  
Toronto, ON M4W 3T9  
<http://www.ambeck.com>

## **Building Intellectual Power One Book at a Time** By Avil Beckford, President

“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention” says Francis Bacon, author, philosopher and the father of inductive reasoning.

Professionals who aspire to become leaders in their field must develop intellectual power. To do that requires chewing, digesting and savouring the *right* books one book at a time.

But which books?

**About The Author**

Avil Beckford is an accomplished writer, researcher, and analyst with over 15 years experience. Her strong service orientation, dedication to learning and exploring new ways of improving her own life as well as the many she touches, has underpinned her success to date.

A published author, her new book, *Tales of People Who Get It* is a culmination of her life experience. It has often been said of Avil that her life informs her work. She has also created a companion workbook *Journey to Getting It*.

Avil’s many readers look forward to Ambeck Edge, her company’s regular e-Newsletter that is a rich resource for those interested in self-improvement, as well as those professionals who struggle with life issues.

In the *New York Times* article *C.E.O. Libraries Reveal Keys to Success*, journalist Harriet Rubin reveals that “Serious leaders who are serious readers build personal libraries dedicated to how to think, not how to compete.”

Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren in their groundbreaking book *How To Read A Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*, say people read for: entertainment, information or understanding. The authors also state that, “Enlightenment is achieved only when, in addition to knowing what an author says, you know what he means and why he says it.” This suggests that when you read, you have to interact with the words on the page, have to think about what the authors are saying, and why they are saying what they are saying.

The authors describe four levels of reading - Elementary, Inspectional, Analytical and Syntopical Reading. Elementary reading is the level of reading

that is learned in elementary school. With inspectional reading, the emphasis is on time - getting the most out of a book within a short time frame. There are two types of inspectional reading, systematic skimming or pre-reading and superficial reading. Analytical reading deals with classifying the book, coming to terms with it, determining the book’s message, and criticizing both the book and the author. Analytical reading is a very active type of reading. And finally, syntopical or comparative reading, the most complex form of reading, is the reading of multiple books on the same subject and placing them in relation to each other.

Comparing Adler and Van Doren to Francis Bacon's quotation, elementary reading is similar to tasting, inspectional to swallowing and analytical to chewing and digesting.

The CEOs mentioned in the *New York Times* article seldom read business books. To gain wisdom and insights they chew and digest biographies, literary works and poetry, many of which have been around for decades and sometimes centuries. They too interact with the words on the pages to stretch and expand their minds.

In the research for my book *Tales of People Who Get It*, I asked 34 highly accomplished people from Canada, the United States, Switzerland, Sweden, Jamaica and South Africa "Which book did you read that made a major difference in your life?" And more recently, I have been asking interviewees "If you were stranded on a deserted island, what are five books that you would like to have with you?" Reviewing the information collected, business books seldom have a profound impact on people's lives, nor feature as *desert island* books.

Using categories used by booksellers to group books, self-help, spiritual, fictional and cultural studies books ranked higher than business books. Only four business books made it on the list in *Tales of People Who Get It: Beyond Certainty: The Changing Worlds of Organizations, The Entrepreneurial Journey In Jamaica: When Policies Derail, Winning With People and Your Roadmap for Success*. Several books fell into more than one group.

Two years later, with a little more insight, my distillation of interviewee reflections and summaries, is that impactful books allow the diligent reader to:

- Gain insights
- Discover guidelines to live by
- Secure formulas and intellectual frameworks to use
- Gain a deeper understanding and heightened awareness
- Discover new ways of thinking
- Gain an understanding of cultures, civilization and the world
- Awake/Ignite something within
- Get words of comfort and hope during difficult times

These role models interact with the words on the pages and take full ownership of the contents of the books they read, and in the end become more enlightened. They are also masters at adapting and applying what they have learned from the books. Here are some of their thoughts on why the books they chose are influential and impact their lives:

- “*Divine Comedy*, a book about a man who takes his midlife crisis very seriously is an incredibly inspiring book to give place and room in my life for longings that I’ve had, but pushed away, but now, I have given much more prominence in my life
- *Key to Yourself* helped me to reconnect with my authentic self. I read this book when I was going through a turbulent period in my life...
- History is the broad area that I find both fascinating and instructive. If I had to choose one book, it would be *South from Granada*. It is not so much what is in the book, but why I remember it. I met my wife in the south of Spain, a country and culture I knew little about at the time. We did not share a common language, but *South from Granada* dealt with life in a region near where she lived and reading it gave me important insights...
- *Alexander Hamilton: The Year That Rocked The World* is a biography of an incredible person whom I admire very much... Hamilton created the first financial structure for the United States, and understood the financial structures of the United Kingdom and France
- In *The Way to Love* you see that love is really about what it gives, what it’s like given to you and to the other person
- *The Holy Bible* is the one book that has had the biggest impact on me. It is filled with history, poetry and excellent love stories. It gives key advice to follow
- *The Women’s Room*, *The Female Eunuch*, and *Outrageous Acts And Everyday Rebellions* all dealt with the issue of feminism, and gave me an intellectual framework to understand the role of women in society, and then from there, to begin to socially advocate for an increasing role for women in society
- I read *The Prophet* when I was 17 years old and it has always served as a source of inspiration and wisdom, especially in times (and years) when life was really challenging
- *Beyond Certainty: The Changing Worlds of Organizations* had a profound impact on me. It explains that when you get to your mid 50s you shouldn’t have a job, but a “portfolio life,” which is a portfolio of things to do
- *Power vs. Force* maps out the skill of consciousness journey of where each of us are, and directs us to what the next step will lead us to. The book calibrates how we continue to live and grow as a human being. It’s the most powerful book that I have ever come across in my life...
- *The Grapes of Wrath* is not only a beautifully, profoundly written book, but it is also a book about social justice. It’s a book about people, about

the “haves” and the “have nots”, and I have been an underdog all my life...” (*Tales of People Who Get It*)

## So, how many books are necessary to develop a well-fed mind?

Research by Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI) reported that Korean CEOs read an average of two or three books per month, which was slightly lower than what their counterparts at western companies who read on average 1,000 pages per month.<sup>1</sup> This equates to approximately four to five books each month assuming each book is 200 - 250 pages in length.

5

To emulate the successful CEOs featured in the *New York Times* article, as well as the accomplished individuals profiled in *Tales of People Who Get It*, what books should aspiring leaders read, and how can they keep track of what they have read?

The “menu” of books should include a selection of not just bestsellers, but also books that are off the beaten tracks. In fact, the great thinkers who have transformed the world did not read bestsellers.

As an aspiring leader, or someone who wants to be on the fast track, if you focus only on what others are focusing on, how can you stretch and expand your thinking to develop the intellectual power required to respond with agility to opportunities and challenges in the workplace? Books featured on bestsellers’ lists are unlikely to give your mind an intellectual workout.

How can you generate creative ideas? And how can you stand apart from the crowd, or be the trailblazer that you yearn to be?

To have a well-fed mind, a good place to start is with the books listed in Table 1. Also ask mentors, colleagues, friends and family which books had a profound impact on their lives? If they were stranded on a deserted island, what are five books that they would like to have with them. Offer to compile a list of the results and email to them.

But remember that one-size seldom fits all. The list in Table 1 is only a guide. What topics are you interested in? What are you passionate about? People are more likely to read about subjects that interest them. What knowledge is required for you to succeed at work? And, are you willing to devote the necessary time to stretch and expand your mind? It takes time to build intellectual capacity - one book at a time.

---

<sup>1</sup> Korea Economic Trends, NO.333, August 7, 2004

In a 24/7 world that is ever changing, one where people are constantly bombarded with information, busy professionals have to be intentional about reading, carving out time for learning in an already tightly scheduled day. To achieve a reading goal a reading plan is required.

To develop a Reading Plan, answer the questions and use the resources list on the following pages. With a Reading Plan in hand, any busy executive can build intellectual power just one book at a time. If executives read only one book each week, at the end of 12 months they would have read 52 books and in the process developed their intellectual capacity. As English novelist and essayist E. M. Forster says, “The only books that influence us are those for which we are ready, and which have gone a little farther down our particular path than we have yet got ourselves.”

## Starting Point: Where You Are Now

1.	How many books have you read in the past six months?	
2.	Of the books that you read, how many were for entertainment, information and understanding?	
	Entertainment	
	Information	
	Understanding	
3.	Did you recommend any of books you read in the past six months to anyone? Why? Why not?	
4.	What are you now able to do that you were not able to do six months ago, that is a direct result of reading a book?	
5a.	In what subject area would you like to build intellectual capacity and power in?	
5b.	What has prevented you so far from building intellectual capacity and power in areas that you need to?	
5c.	What are some strategies that you can develop to minimize the barriers that prevent you from building your intellectual capacity?	
6.	Are you committed to developing a reading plan? If yes, when?	

## Reading Plan Process

1. Invest in a good speed-reading course
2. Read *How to Read A Book*, *Book-Lover*, *The Reading of Books*, *How to Read and Why*, and *The Art of Thought* to get tips on how to get the most out of your reading
3. Set a daily reading goal and schedule it into your day. Try to read about 40 to 50 pages a day, which will allow you to read about a book each week. Get up earlier and/or stay up later if necessary
4. Take an inventory of all the unread books that are on your bookshelf
5. Each month you could read two of the books on the list of books that influenced people profiled in *Tales of People Who Get It* and the CEOs featured in the New York Times article (See Table 1 for the list). For the other two books, rotate among books related to your work, biographies, books on history, and other books that you want to read. Have a combination of fiction and non-fiction and every now and again read a children's book "just because"
6. If you cannot think of 24 books that you would like to read, find out what your CEO or other senior managers are reading. Ask your friends or people whom you respect for recommendations. You could also join a Book-of-the-Month Club. Two suggestions are Book of the Month Club <http://www.bomc.com> and Quality Paperback Book Club <http://www.qpb.com>
7. Subscribe to business book summaries. Two good ones are Audio-Tech Business Book Summaries <http://store.audiotech.com> & Soundview Executive Book Summaries <http://www.summary.com>. Use the summaries as a guide to decide which books are worth reading
8. If you have a long commute to work, invest in unabridged books on CDs and tapes to listen to during the commute. And invest in audio programs that your family can listen to during family time or on road trips
9. Create a form to record information on the books that you have read, for easy reference
10. For articles to read, <http://www.magportal.com> and <http://www.magatopia.com> are two very good websites to read magazine articles. Each week read some alternative articles on subjects that you would not usually read
11. For electronic book downloads Project Gutenberg <http://www.gutenberg.org>, World Public Library <http://worldlibrary.net>, BookYards <http://www.bookyards.com>, The

- Great Book <http://www.anova.org>, Great Books for Free  
<http://www.greatbooksforfree.com>
12. Join the **Centre for the Study of Great Ideas**  
<http://www.thegreatideas.org>, the **Great Books Foundation**  
<http://www.greatbooks.org> and the **School of Thinking**  
<http://www.schoolofthinking.org>
13. Subscribe to blogs dedicated to books DearReader.com  
<http://www.dearreader.com>, Open Culture  
[http://www.oculture.com/2007/05/20\\_great\\_book\\_l.html](http://www.oculture.com/2007/05/20_great_book_l.html), Readers  
Read <http://www.readersread.com>
14. Note: **Book Lover's Kit: A Tool for the Discerning Reader** is available  
for download for a small fee of \$7.77 (**Book Summary** template: a handy  
summary of what you have been reading, **Books Read Tracker** template:  
to keep track of what you have been reading, **Monthly Summary of Key  
Points** template: quick reference to what you have read during the  
month, and much more)

**Table1: Desert Island & Influential Books**

Category		Title	Author
<b>BUSINESS</b>			
	Organizational Behaviour	Beyond Certainty: The Changing Worlds of Organizations	Charles Handy
	Finance	The Entrepreneurial Journey In Jamaica: When Policies Derail	Paul L. Chen-Young
	Management/Leadership	Winning With People	John C. Maxwell
	Management	Your Roadmap for Success	John C. Maxwell
	Personal Finance	Think & Grow Rich	Napoleon Hill
	Personal Finance	The Richest Man in Babylon	George Clason
	Business Leadership	The Source of Success: Five Enduring Principles at the Heart of Real Leadership	Peter Georgescu
	Business Leadership	Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't	Jim Collins
	Business General	The Girls' Guide to Building a Million-Dollar Business	Susan Wilson Solovic
	Marketing & Advertising	Influence: Science and Practice	Robert Cialdini
	Selling	How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling	Frank Bettger
<b>SELF-HELP/WELL-BEING</b>			
	Self-help General	How to Win Friends and Influence People	Dale Carnegie
	Self-help General	Key To Yourself	Venice Bloodworth
	Self-help General	Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior	David Hawkins
	Self-help General	The Magic of Thinking Big	David J. Schwartz
	Self-help General	The New Psycho-Cybernetics	Maxwell Maltz
	Self-help General	The Power of Positive Thinking	Norman Vincent Peale
	Self-help General	The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People	Stephen Covey
	Self-help General	The Path of Least Resistance	Robert Fritz
	Self-help General	The Science of Getting Rich	Wallace Wattles
	Self-help General	Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money Even If You're Starting With Nothing	Helen Gurley Brown
	Self-help General	Self Help	Samuels Smiles
	Self-help General	I Dare You!	William H. Danforth
	Self-help Relationship	The Ability to Love	Allam Fromme
	Self-help General	The Magic of Believing	Claude M. Bristol
	Self-help General	Your Greatest Power	J. Martin Kohe
	Self-help General	Pushing to the Front	Orison Swett Madsen
	Self-help General	Magic Power of Emotional Appeal	Roy Garn
<b>BIOGRAPHY/MEMOIRS</b>			
	Autobiography	Still Me	Christopher Reeve
	Autobiography	All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes	Maya Angelou
	Autobiography	I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	Maya Angelou
	Biography	Alexander Hamilton: The Year That Rocked The World	Ron Chernow
	Biography	Seven Pillars of Wisdom	Thomas Edward Lawrence
	Biography	Seminary Boy	John Cornwell
	Biography	The Fire Next Time	James Baldwin

	Autobiography	The Autobiography of Malcolm X	Malcolm X
	Biography	Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln	Doris Kearns Goodwin
	Biography	The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, Visions of Glory	William Manchester
	Autobiography	Swimming Across: A Memoir	Andy Grove
<b>RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY</b>			
	Hinduism	Autobiography of a Yogi	Paramhansa Yogananda
	Zen Buddhism	That Which You Are Seeking Is Causing You to Seek	Cheri Huber
	Bible Studies	The Holy Bible	
	Bible Stories	The Little Soul and the Sun	Neale Donald Walsh
	Bible Studies	The New Testament	
	Other East Religions	The Prophet	Kahlil Gibran
	General Religion	The Way to Love	Anthony de Mello
	Eastern Religion	Rubáiyá	Omar Khayya
	Faith-based Living	The Greatest Secret in the World	Og Mandino
	General	As a Man Thinketh	James Allen
	Bible Studies	The Book of Mormon Another Testament of Jesus Christ	
<b>COMMUNITY/CULTURAL STUDIES</b>			
	Women's Studies	Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions	Gloria Steinem
	African-American Studies	The Destruction of Black Civilization Great Issues of a Race from 4500 B.C to 2000 A.D.	Chancellor Williams
	Women's Studies	The Female Eunuch	Germaine Greer
	Social Studies	The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies	Marcel Mauss
	Women's Studies	The Women's Room	Marilyn French
<b>FAMILY/RELATIONSHIPS</b>			
	Family	The Successful Family: Everything You Need to Know to Build a Stronger Family	Creflo A Dollar and Taffi L. Dollar
<b>HISTORY &amp; POLITICAL SCIENCE</b>			
	History General	The Penguin History of the World	J. M. Roberts
	History General	Lessons of History	Will Durant
	History & Political Science	The Prince	Machiavelli
<b>TRAVEL</b>			
	Travel Literature	South from Granada	Gerald Brenan
<b>FICTION</b>			
	General Fiction	A Woman of Substance	Barbara Taylor Bradford
	Literature - Poetry	Divine Comedy	Dante Alighieri
	Science Fantasy	Lord of the Rings	J. R. R. Tolkien
	General - Fiction	Slaughterhouse-Five	Kurt Vonnegut
	Literature - General	The Celestine Prophecy	James Redfield

	Literature - General	The Grapes of Wrath	John Steinbeck
	Literature - Plays & Anthologies	Death of a Salesman	Arthur Miller
	General - Fiction	The Stranger	Albert Camus
	General - Fiction	The City of God	E. L. Doctorow
	General - Fiction	The Wife: A Novel	Meg Wolitzer
	Literature - Plays & Anthologies	Faust	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
	General - Fiction	Carter Beats the Devil	Glen David Gold
	General - Fiction	Memoirs of a Geisha	Arthur Golden
	General - Fiction	My Son's Story	Nadine Gordimer
	General - Fiction	To Kill a Mockingbird	Harper Lee
	General - Fiction	1984	George Orwell
	General - Fiction	Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	Mark Twain
	<b>OTHER</b>		
	Philosophy	Six Great Ideas	Mortimer Adler
	Psychology	The Sky's the Limit	Dr. Wayne Dyer

For more ideas, and if you love stories, read the responses of the 34 people profiled in *Tales of People Who Get It* <http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=670937>.

The workbook *Journey to Getting It* helps you to implement a continuous learning program <http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=670937>

Be sure to check out Avil Beckford's website at <http://www.ambeck.com>

Check out Ambeck Edge newsletter archive at <http://www.ambeck.com/resources.html>