

42TM Rules

*for Your New
Leadership Role*

PAM FOX ROLLIN
FOREWORD BY JOHN A. BYRNE



42 Rules for Your New Leadership Role

The Manual They Didn't Hand You
When You Made VP, Director, or
Manager

Book Excerpt

By Pam Fox Rollin

Foreword by John A. Byrne
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BOOK EXCERPT Table of Contents (included here)

- Foreword by John A. Byrne
- Intro
- Rule 1: Rules Are Meant to Be Broken
- Rule 7: Map What Matters to People with Power
- Rule 17: Pick Smart Quick Wins
- Rule 24: Make Your Own Metrics
- Rule 37: Make Your Job Doable
- Appendix A: For Job Seekers
- About the Author
- Getting “42 Rules for Your New Leadership Role”

Contents

NOTE: This is the Table of Contents (TOC) from the book for your reference. The eBook TOC (below) differs in page count from the tradebook TOC.

Foreword	Foreword by John A. Byrne	1
Intro	3
Part I	Set Yourself Up For Success.	7
Rule 1	Rules Are Meant to Be Broken	8
Rule 2	Begin Ready	10
Rule 3	Fire Up Your Task Management System	12
Rule 4	Draft Your Strategic One-Pager	14
Rule 5	Take Charge of Your Start.	16
Part II	Map the Terrain	19
Rule 6	Leverage the Honeymoon	20
Rule 7	Map What Matters to People with Power	22
Rule 8	Uncover Precisely How Your Group Creates Value	24
Rule 9	Figure Out What to Prove by When	26
Rule 10	Set Your Milestones.	28

Part III	Show Up Wisely	31
Rule 11	Apply Your Strengths— and Beware.	32
Rule 12	Deal with Your Weak Spots	34
Rule 13	(Re)Introduce Yourself Internally & Externally	36
Rule 14	Don't Blame the Last Guy.	38
Rule 15	Show People How to Work with You	40
Rule 16	Get Over Yourself	42
Part IV	Start Your Wins	45
Rule 17	Pick Smart Quick Wins	46
Rule 18	Plant Seeds for Future Wins.	48
Rule 19	Tune Up Your Team.	50
Rule 20	Communicate Early and Often.	52
Rule 21	Tell a Good Story.	54
Rule 22	Bring Value to Any Room	56
Rule 23	Balance Curiosity, Advice, and Silence . . .	58
Part V	Create Your Management System	61
Rule 24	Make Your Own Metrics	62
Rule 25	Catalog Risks and Start Mitigating	64
Rule 26	Run Unmissable Meetings	66
Rule 27	Adjust Your Approach	68
Rule 28	Launch 1:1s that Actually Drive Performance.	70

Rule 29	Make the Most of Screwups	72
Rule 30	Grow More Leaders	74
Rule 31	Call in the Experts	76
Part VI	Stay Smart	79
Rule 32	Strengthen Your Strategic Point of View . .	80
Rule 33	Stay Current and Capable	82
Rule 34	Model Healthy Paranoia	84
Rule 35	Ferret Out Feedback	86
Rule 36	Build Your Industry Presence	88
Part VII	Set You and Your Team To Thrive	91
Rule 37	Make Your Job Doable	92
Rule 38	Stoke the Energy of Your Group	94
Rule 39	Mind Your Mood	96
Rule 40	Now, Lead with Your Life in Mind	98
Rule 41	Use Your Power for Good	100
Rule 42	These Are My Rules. What Are Yours? . .	102
Appendix A	For Job Seekers	104
Appendix B	Hiring? How to Use this Book	106
Appendix C	For Executive Coaches	108
Appendix D	Myers-Briggs® and More	110
Appendix E	Online Resources	112

Author	About the Author	114
Your Rules	Write Your Own Rules	116
Books	Other Happy About Books	118

Foreword by John A. Byrne

Recently, I reviewed on Poets&Quants the first 100 days of Kellogg business school's new dean. An alum, Sally Blount came back after 22 years...with a minimal internal network and no mandate for change. What she does have is huge energy, a track record of exceeding fundraising and academic metrics, the smarts to learn from others, and understanding how essential that is in Kellogg's collaborative culture.

In those important first months, she traveled and met near-constantly with hundreds of alums, faculty, and students, asked the big questions, and listened intently. She also knocked out 18 blog posts to reduce the mystery of what she was up to, demonstrate she was hearing stakeholders, and point attention toward significant aspects of Kellogg's brand and potential as she lay the groundwork for creating more specific strategic initiatives. Her goals were to become known rapidly to the Kellogg community and to build support for tackling together Kellogg's toughest issues. By all accounts, she hit those goals. This gives her even more credibility and momentum for the hard work ahead.

How will your first 100 days stack up to hers?

Drawing on the vast literature of leadership, Pam Fox Rollin has given us a superb primer on starting successfully. She tees up tactics and mindsets for executives and managers who have just assumed a new leadership role—how to leverage your inevitable honeymoon period (they rarely last long), how to engage your team members (some of whom wanted your job), and how to spread responsibility instead of blame. She tells us how to pick smart quick wins (yes, first impressions still count heavily) and how to set realistic milestones.

You'll find the essentials—"what" and "how"—are skillfully captured in this book. Use it to guide your start, and you'll have the advantage of Pam's expe-

rience as confidential coach to senior executives and top MBAs. What you have to bring is the "why," something that no author can offer. It's up to you to bring an honest heart, intense commitment, empathy for your team, and ambition for the organization, as well as yourself.

Lately, I've been spending time with a champion leader, someone who built a \$4 billion dollar company from scratch. In the process, he became a billionaire. So did his two brothers. And more than 50 members of the team that helped to make this possible became millionaires. This was no sexy dot-com. It was a company that started as an auto parts distributor in Cleveland.

For all of his life, he thought climbing the mountain meant success in business and in the philanthropic world where he has long been heavily involved. His search for meaning, instead, ends with a mirror. When he looks into it every morning, he likes who he sees. He is proud of the person he sees. He respects himself. At the end of the day, I believe this is the essence of leadership.

Take the excellent guidance in this book. And, search your heart and soul for the integrity and commitment that will inspire you and your organization. Choose to be a leader of consequence. Only you can do that.

John A. Byrne
Editor-in-Chief, Poets&Quants
Former Executive Editor, *BusinessWeek* and *Fast Company*

Intro

My first day of my first post-college job, as an Associate Consultant at Bain & Company, a guy a year ahead of me responded to my first voicemail as follows: "Pam, I didn't listen to your whole message, and neither will anyone else here. If you want people to listen, start this way: 'I'm calling for two pieces of data and to ask you to introduce me to Joe. The data I need are X and Y. I want you to introduce me to Joe this week so I can talk with him about Z.' Try it again." Felt like a punch in the gut at the time, but soon I realized the favor he did me. I tightened up my communication and became more effective.

When you started an entry-level job, you probably got lots of feedback and suggestions for how to do better. Front-line managers and experienced colleagues are generally willing to tell "the new kid" what works around here and what doesn't.

Now that you're stepping up to a new leadership role, you're far less likely to receive useful guidance. This holds true whether you are in your first manager role or an experienced leader joining top executive ranks. I find this problem is especially acute for new Directors and VPs. You've been hired at these levels for your track record, so people assume you know what to do.

However, just because you were successful in your last role doing or managing marketing, accounting, engineering, or whatever you did, doesn't mean you know how to make a strong start at your next job. You could use some guidance—or reminders, at least—on how to make those critical first weeks successful.

I wrote *42 Rules for Your New Leadership Role* to fill that gap.

What you'll find in this book

Based on two decades of coaching senior leaders, helping executive teams craft strategy, and guiding Stanford MBAs, I describe a proven set of

approaches to teach you what you've yet to learn, remind you of what you already know, and inspire you to become the best leader you can be in this job...and your next...and your next.

You can also use these rules to coach your team members to their highest performance. Often, it's hard for people who do something well (such as leading) to reflect on what they do and break it down so they can teach it to others. Let this book help you grow the leadership strength of your team and earn your reputation as a great boss and mentor.

To make this book even more useful for you, I've created an ever-expanding set of downloadable worksheets, free to readers of this book (<http://ideashape.com/leadstartbook/resources>).

You will find frameworks and tips to support your leadership success.

Let's get started...

1

Rules Are Meant to Be Broken

"Welcome to your new leadership role: You have a bigger job in a tough climate with very little support!"

That's why you want to lead, right? You want to forge your own path and make your own rules! You're on fire to wow your customers, astonish the market, and create wins for you and your team.

You've probably noticed that some ways of leading tend to work better than others. Take sole credit for a team win? Bad. Engage your team in figuring out how you'll make the numbers? Good.

Leaders at all levels succeed or fail for a surprisingly common set of reasons: meeting business objectives, succeeding in interpersonal relationships, building a great team, and adapting to change.¹

These reasons hold true across industries, time, and market conditions.

One-quarter of senior executives promoted from within fail in the first 18 months; one-third of outside hires fail.² Many flame-outs can be traced to missteps during their first quarter. More importantly, for the 60–75 percent of leaders who survive into the second year, their effectiveness and trajectory are powerfully affected by choices made as they start.

1. Ellen Van Velsor and Jean Brittain, "Why Executives Derail," *Academy of Management Executive* 9, no. 4 (1995): 62–72.

2. L. Kelly-Radford, "The Revolving Door of Talent," *CEO Magazine*, August/September, 2001, 86–89.

Why is this so hard?

If you're like the technology leaders, marketing executives, and top teams I coach, you might notice how easy it is to become so caught up in fighting fires that you forget to shut off the gas. Or, you suspect you're lousy at certain aspects of leadership, so you ignore them and hope they won't bite you.

Or, maybe you never learned the rules in the first place! Leadership is an apprenticeship craft. One by-product of the dot-com boom and mid-2000s boom is that many of today's leaders are people who were rapidly promoted during boom years—and many of them were moving too fast with too little adult supervision to learn how to lead well.

With the trend toward more "flat" organizations, your boss may be stretched so thin that he/she can barely advocate for your team, let alone mentor you. Welcome to your new leadership role—you have a bigger job, in a tough climate, with very little support!

Learn the rules, then bend or break them

As you read this book, take what I say as a starting point for your own good thinking. Adjust what you find here to serve your team's needs, the market conditions, the cultural context, your goals, and your personal leadership approach.

The intense learning curve and unfamiliar environments of a new job make it difficult for your brain to consider options and make decisions as well as you usually do. When brains are overloaded, people tend to rely on what they've done before, even when that didn't work very well or is out of place in the new context. Ironically, this tunnel vision and rigidity is especially true of leaders who have experienced success—people like you who have been promoted or recruited for a new role.

So use this book to prompt what you might want to do at each phase of your start. Ask yourself what from this material will be useful to you in the week ahead. Then, ask yourself what's missing, what you want to do differently, and which rules you'll break entirely. See what results you're getting, and come back to this process at the end of the week.

Consider the rules, make up your own mind, act, observe, and reflect. Repeat. Succeed.

7

Map What Matters to People with Power

"How could you help them get what they want?"

If you're going to deliver for someone, make it your priority to deliver up. That gives you breathing room to deliver for everyone else.

Figure out who holds power

You know where to start: your boss, plus your boss's boss and/or board of directors.

To determine the rest of your list, ask

- Who above you in the organization will freak if you fail to deliver on commitments? This probably includes some of your boss' peers.
- Who, if they slacked off for a month, could destroy your ability to deliver? This includes most, perhaps all, of your directs.
- Who else must continue to cooperate for you to meet your significant commitments? Consider key customers, firms running important and hard-to-replace outsourced operations, and suppliers of critical components.

I call these people "powerholders"—the subset of your stakeholders who can make a real difference in your ability to deliver and reap rewards.

Map what you want from each other

Create a "Power Map." Make a spreadsheet, with a row for each powerholder or group of similar powerholders. Add these columns to your spreadsheet and drop in some bullet points. Or, if you're comfortable with mind-mapping or organization chart software, make an org chart and annotate it with this information:

- On what bases are they formally rewarded: Sales? Variance from budget? Share price? How often: Quarterly? Annually? On what sets of data: Accounting data? CRM monthly reports? An industry report?
- What informal rewards are important to them: Industry visibility? Support for their "brand"—running a tight ship, being a great mentor, pulling off the impossible?
- What do they want from you/your role: No surprises? Achieving the quarterly sales target? New products to market faster than their peers' divisions?
- What do you want from them?

Catalog what you can do for (and to) each other

How could they help you get what you want? How could you help them get what they want?

Make sure to consider this question both from the capabilities you have today and from possibilities for the future. For example, your head of R&D wants external visibility as a leader in green materials. Later this year you'll be starting work on next generation, eco-savvy products. You could offer her the opportunity to become the public face of this initiative. In *Influence Without Authority*, Cohen and Bradford catalog ways you can build your power by helping others get what they want.³ Make a habit of noting what's important to the people you meet and identifying early and appropriate opportunities to use your resources to be of service.

If you're in a tough environment, you'd be wise also to keep an eye for the rough stuff. What could they do to you (especially below the radar) if they want to turn up the pressure on your group? Refrain from labeling people as "friendly" or "unfriendly" to you and your team; instead identify the current and potential flows of information, money, and support between your group and theirs.

Now, identify other stakeholders and their interests

When you can take a few more minutes, add the other groups of people who are interested in what you do and could help or hinder, but don't meet the power criteria above. Often these include

- People who were passed over for your job
- Junior players who want to hitch to your star
- Diversity groups across the firm
- Customers (if your own customers are internal)
- Consultants who have worked with your group
- Who else is relevant for you?

Update your map as power shifts

Calendar a meeting with yourself at least quarterly to update your map. Consider the relationships between your powerholders and other stakeholders—who listens to whom. Determine your next actions to delight, satisfy, or minimize damage for your powerholders.

3. Allen R. Cohen and David L. Bradford, *Influence Without Authority*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005).

17

Pick Smart Quick Wins

"Choose your target well."

You want to prove you're the hotshot they're hoping they hired. So, you're going to kick your group into high gear and start racking up wins.

Not so fast, grasshopper. Bruce McNamer of TechnoServe: "As a first-time CEO, I put pressure on myself to do something dramatic. I wish I had given myself a little more time to learn." Monique Connor, highly-respected PricewaterhouseCoopers partner, put it this way: "Quick wins? Does your organization actually need quick wins?"

How could anything be wrong with a quick win? Well, new leaders often lack perspective and pick the wrong target, they gun for wins instead of helping the department transition to new leadership, and they often damage people and process.

Pick your target carefully

I know, you're still absolutely convinced you need at least one quick win. Fine. Choose your target well.

When Steven Aldrich became CEO of Posit Science, he saw right away from customer and employee feedback that the supply chain was broken. He considered having an external group come in and fix it. He then considered having a supply chain consultant instead coach his team on how to do it. That would take just a little longer, but it would leave the team more capable of solving problems in the future and able to take full credit for the win. Smart choice.

Look for a project that hits as many of these criteria as possible:

- Makes a real impact on the P&L
- Seen as a win by people with power (See Rule #7)
- Relieves a significant pain for your team

- Can be replicated, rolled out, or scaled up
- Engages a cross-section of people on your team
- Generates learning that makes your team more capable of future wins

From a recent promote to VP Engineering at a global software company: "Because I was promoted from within, I knew which issues were causing pain. With my team, I prioritized the top five problems, and I solved two of them right away. That meant dealing with some unpleasant organizational politics, which was risky. Taking that risk earned a lot of respect from the team."

Make the process a win

"My most disastrous hires," said Rob Hurlbut, CEO of Attune Foods and former CEO of Niman Ranch, "thought they had a clear mandate. Instead of building buy-in, they chose to drive it themselves."

How you achieve that win is at least as important as which win you select.⁴ Are you going to seize on your first idea, cram it down their throats, ride herd, and take credit? Of course not. (Though many do.)

You are going to identify the project collectively with many on your team, invite participation, coach or even work shoulder to shoulder, and give the team the win. You are going to go for the win in a way that leaves your team more capable of delivering future wins.

Include your skeptics, as long as they're willing to do the work. Give them time to become believers. Invite, rather than coerce.

Stay focused on what matters

The quick wins you choose will signal to others what matters to you. A CMO I coached chose to implement a long-discussed marketing dashboard as her first win. Her team got the message: this ship now runs on data.

Finally, it's no win to let the core business stumble while you chase fast glory. Figure out what portion of your time must be spent to keep the widgets rolling, and keep your priorities straight.

4. Mark E. Van Buren and Todd Safferstone, "The Quick Wins Paradox," *Harvard Business Review*, January 2009, 54–61.

24

Make Your Own Metrics

"Becoming the person with good numbers is a handy addition to any personal brand."

If your car's speedometer displayed temperature rather than speed, combined your speed with those of nearby cars, or gave you just your average speed for the preceding month, you'd get it fixed, right?

Or, would you just "go with your gut"? Then say, "But Officer, it felt about right, and besides my broken speedometer said I was doing fine!"

You can't drive well with a lousy dashboard, and you can't lead well with lousy numbers, either.

Do it yourself

Rather than relying on or complaining about your company's insufficient reports, make your own dashboard.

Identify three to five business imperatives for your group. Typically, your imperatives will include something about...

- Delivering tremendous value to your customers
- Creating outputs
- Partnering in and out of the organization in ways that create even more value
- Developing your team to be ever more capable of doing all of this

For each imperative, come up with several smart measures that indicate your group's degree of progress and success. Having created top-level dashboards for multi-billion dollar companies and tiny nonprofits, I've learned to start with the right questions, rather than reach for whatever data is handy. The key questions are always, "What will give us early warning as to how we're doing?" and "What will show us the key factors driving performance up or down?"

Here's what to look for in choosing measures:

- Select leading rather than lagging indicators, as much as possible (How many customers clicked on the service contract page and the percentage that bought a contract, rather than service contract revenue)
- Pull from data you can find or reasonably estimate monthly
- Make sure you can learn the precise origins of the data and understand their weaknesses
- Look to a variety of sources, incorporating market as well as company data
- Create new data streams when needed. Tally something at the front lines. Negotiate with an upstream unit for earlier data. Make an index from public financials
- Ask for lots of input on potential metrics, especially about data quality, ease of pulling data, interpretations, and credibility
- Choose at least some of the metrics to be especially credible to your team, executives, other functions, and even customers

Put together a monthly dashboard

At the simplest: Make a spreadsheet, one page for each month, with your measures as rows, organized by imperative. Columns may include this month's data, last month's data or three-month rolling average, and this time last year, whatever you consider relevant. Include a column to color green, yellow, or red and one for any critical notes on reasons or data.

If you're new to thinking about measures, there's plenty of material online about balanced scorecards, executive dashboards, etc. See the resources section (<http://ideashape.com/leadstartbook/resources>) for this book. Make a good start, commit to doing it, and improve as you go.

Think about implications

Block two hours each month to consider what this means and what more you need to know to interpret and make use of the data. Gather with team members and consult your best peers. Ask:

- What's in flux and what's stable? Why?
- What are we doing that creates these results?
- What's really going on?
- What happens if we keep doing what we've been doing?
- What are the highest-value changes we could make? And, what are the implications for risk?
- What metrics would be even more revealing than current ones?

Communicate!

You've got the goods now. Becoming the person with good numbers is a handy addition to any personal brand. More important, you'll use your deeper understanding of the metrics to focus your team on what matters. In addition, as you become a devoted student of the sometimes unobvious relationships between cause and effect, you become a more valuable strategic thought-partner to your leadership and your customers.

37

Make Your Job Doable

"You can only really care about three things at a time, maybe five."

Very few people thoughtfully manage the scope of their job. I suggest you do.

Reframe the criteria for success

There's no shortage of ways to view your job. At a minimum, there's what you think you're supposed to be doing, what your boss thinks, what your team thinks, and your by-now-buried job description. Chances are, these four views of your job are all different. Even worse, none of them may be doable.

You want to be evaluated on a short, relevant set of metrics. Refine your criteria to the critical three to five priorities, and then align expectations for what you will deliver.

While you'll find more flexibility in small and mid-sized companies, mid-level leaders in larger companies can sometimes alter formal company metrics. In any case, you can definitely use metrics to drive the off-P&L understanding of your function.

Organize your priorities

Let's start by considering what leaders do:

- Set direction (strategizing, planning)
- Engage and mobilize people (developing, communicating)
- Enable execution (hiring, budgeting, coordinating)
- Other stuff only you do

I offer the first three buckets with thanks to Sharon Richmond, now Director of Cisco's Change Leadership Center of Excellence, and my co-author on leadership research. Sharon developed this simple yet powerful model of what leaders do.⁵ The fourth bucket reflects the reality that many leaders have an "individual contributor" component to their job.

For each of these buckets, note the priority responsibilities of this job. Said an executive I interviewed: "You can only really care about three things at a time, maybe five." Note what you think you should be doing (how many hours per month you'd allocate to each, to maximize business results). Finally, leave yourself some time to participate, lead, or initiate cross-functional efforts that drive value to a broader P&L.

Then note other initiatives that take significant time, but either don't fall into these buckets or aren't priorities for you. "When you find an individual opportunity, hand it down with your mentoring," says Pat Arensdorf, CEO of Critical Diagnostics. "You can't do many of those yourself. Turn most over to your team."

Laying out your priorities in an organized way prepares you to have a conversation with your boss, coach, and others who can help you redesign your job and re-set expectations to line up with value for the business.

Deflect early requests to go off-mission

Especially in small companies or recession-decimated larger ones there tend to be too few bodies, which leads to many requests to take on extraneous tasks. While some of these "yanks" are non-negotiable, saying yes will derail you from bigger goals. Again from Pat Arensdorf: "You can be a hero by clearing the plate a bit but beware: you might be successful and this might become expected, and you may never get to what you were hired to do."

Another challenge arises for new leaders from underrepresented populations. "Finally! A Latina on a divisional exec team! Let's get her in the mentoring program." "Finally! Someone in product design with a materials engineering background. Let's pull him onto the green team." Etc. Totally understandable. And, if this is you, you're in for some tough but valuable conversations about when would be the right time for you to add which of these activities.

5. Sharon L. Richmond. *Introduction to Type & Leadership: Develop more effective leaders of every type*, (Mountain View, CA: CPP, 2008).

A

For Job Seekers

"Succeed before you start."

Make an even stronger start by taking advantage of these rules before you say "yes" to the job.

How to use this book now:

- **Rock your interviews**
Draft your strategic point of view before you interview—see Rule #4. Use Rules #6 through #10 to ask better questions about how this team creates business value, what's at stake, what the team is expected to and could accomplish, and metrics the company is using and could use for this team. Let Rules #11 through #13 guide how you describe your strengths and weaknesses and how you position your experience.
- **Decide which job offer presents more opportunity**
To accelerate your career growth, you want to lead groups that have the potential to deliver extraordinary value. See Rules #6 through #10 to sharpen your analysis of which job you want to take.
- **Negotiate your start**
Read Rules #4, #5, and #6 to figure out what you want to have in place before Day 1. Then come back to Rule #2 and time your start.
- **Take best advantage of time between hire and start**
Whether you're being promoted or hired in from outside the company, the time between receiving an offer and starting your role is gold. See Rules #2 and #6 to use that time well.

- **Succeed from Day 1**

You've reached for this book because you see that the difference between a mediocre start and a strong start is HUGE. There's no better time than now to initiate critical relationships, define who you are, set goals, decide where to invest your time, and start creating wins. This book gives you powerful areas to focus on when creating your own plan for success right from the start.

- **Make future roles come to you**

As you apply the guidance in this book, along with your own wisdom and hard work, you'll build a record of success. You'll also build a network of engaged team members, impressed peers, and valued executive relationships. Your track record and network can bring the next opportunities right to you.

All my best for your job search! Keep in touch and let me know how you made your smart start.

About the Author



Photo credit: Lifestyles Imaging

Pam Fox Rollin coaches executives to succeed in broader roles and guides senior teams to make the most of new talent. Pam is known as a dynamic speaker and valuable thought-partner to leaders navigating themselves and their organizations through complex change. Pam's company, IdeaShape Coaching & Consulting, also facilitates strategy sessions, Myers-Briggs® team-building, and leadership offsites. Clients include Genentech/Roche, Accenture, Autodesk and other top companies in biotech, consulting, and technology. Her MBA is from Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, where she later served as a Guest Fellow and Master Coach.

Getting “42 Rules for Your New Leadership Role”

(<http://www.happyabout.com/42rules/yournewleadershiprole.php>)

“42 Rules for Your New Leadership Role” can be purchased as an eBook for \$14.95 or tradebook for \$19.95 at:

<http://www.happyabout.com/42rules/yournewleadershiprole.php> or at other online and physical book stores.

Please contact us for quantity discounts sales@happyabout.info or to be informed about upcoming titles bookupdate@happyabout.info or phone (408-257-3000).

"I wish I had this book early in my career! By now, I've seen hundreds of people start leadership roles--from senior executives to customer-facing team leads--some starting brilliantly, some struggling unnecessarily. This book points you to the actions that make all the difference in those critical early months."

Peter Aceto, CEO, ING DIRECT, Canada

"Pam and I met 10 years ago when we started our coaching company. Since inception Pam has been one of our most effective and loved coaches. Her clients love her because of how she helps them reach the heights they were capable of. 42 Rules for Your Leadership Role represents the best of what she has learned over the years. Buy this book, and expect it to change your life!"

Scott Blanchard, Executive Vice President, The Ken Blanchard Companies

"When I mentor leaders who want to advance, I offer the guidance you'll find in this book: be bold in seeing opportunities and tackling tough issues, build your visibility strategically, and take responsibility for your own development. I've heard Pam speak on this, and she gives you the real scoop."

Genevieve Haldeman, Vice President, Corporate Communications, Symantec



Pam Fox Rollin coaches executives to succeed in broader roles and guides senior teams to make the most of new talent. Pam is known as a dynamic speaker and valuable thought-partner to leaders navigating themselves and their organizations through complex change. Pam's company, IdeaShape Coaching & Consulting, also facilitates strategy sessions, Myers-Briggs® team-building, and leadership offsites. Clients include Genentech/Roche, Accenture, Autodesk and other top companies in biotech, consulting, and technology. Her MBA is from Stanford University's Graduate School of Business, where she later served as a Guest Fellow and Master Coach.

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