

# BREAK

How to Change the Patterns of Thinking

# YOUR

That Block Women's Paths to Power

# OWN

JILL FLYNN | KATHRYN HEATH | MARY DAVIS HOLT

PARTNERS, FLYNN HEATH HOLT LEADERSHIP

# RULES

FOREWORD BY SHARON ALLEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, DELOITTE LLP


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# BREAK YOUR OWN RULES

How to Change the Patterns of Thinking  
That Block Women's Paths to Power

Jill Flynn | Kathryn Heath | Mary Davis Holt

*Foreword by Sharon Allen*

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## Praise for *Break Your Own Rules*

“Upheavals abound that challenge organizations deeply every day. The interplay of shifting demographics, new technologies, and economic forces is non-stop—and powerful. What does this mean to women who want to change the face of leadership and share power at the top? You need smart, fast help from trusted leadership experts who understand the path from the inside out. You’ll get just that in *Break Your Own Rules* by authors Flynn, Heath, and Holt. Its fresh stories, in-depth research, and resonant advice will help you navigate today’s real hurdles and drive your career to the highest levels. I look forward to the day when the senior ranks reflect a full 50% of the talent pool, thanks in part to this immensely practical new book.”

—Tammy Erickson, award-winning advisor on engaged organizations; bestselling author of *Workforce Crisis* and *What’s Next, Gen X?*

“In the game of business, you’ve got to know the rules to get ahead. But if you’re a woman, there’s more: you need to recognize the patterns that continue to hold us back, then you must start practicing ‘the new rules of leadership.’ Flynn, Heath, and Holt deliver it all in *Break Your Own Rules*. The book is packed with untold stories from the authors’ own lives as senior executives, from their current work as leadership coaches to women in Fortune 1000 companies, and from women CEOs across industries. It includes the six road-tested ‘new rules’ that get women to the top. If your goal is to achieve your highest potential, you’ll need this book. It comes with my highest recommendation.”

—Gail Evans, executive VP at CNN (retired); bestselling author of *Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman*

“Great leadership is by definition uncommon and unconventional. If it were not, most every leader would be great. *Break Your Own Rules* is a provocative yet pragmatic blueprint for ways to reconstruct the models, myths, and molds that restrict leader greatness. It will open your eyes, renovate your mind, and unleash your talent.”

—Chip R. Bell, author of *Wired and Dangerous*

“In our world of unprecedented change, how do organizations become more effective, decisive, and profitable? By having the very best leaders at the top. It’s time for women everywhere to break their own rules and start joining the senior ranks in greater numbers. Here’s how: buy a copy of this breakthrough book for yourself, and one for a colleague.”

—Charlene Li, founder of Altimeter Group; author of the bestselling *Open Leadership*

“Vast numbers of women move business forward every day—yet astonishingly few hold top leadership positions. *Break your Own Rules* addresses this age-old problem in a powerful new way through six specific practices. This book is for every woman, in any industry, who is ready to start engineering her own ‘path to power.’”

—Douglas R. Conant, CEO of Campbell Soup Company; coauthor of the bestselling *TouchPoints: Creating Powerful Leadership Connections in the Smallest of Moments*

“*Break Your Own Rules* is an unusually fresh, engaging, and tactical book for women who want to fulfill their leadership potential. It’s also perfect for men who want the very best people in power. Get your copy today.”

—Mary Matalin, political consultant, commentator, and author

“Over the years and across a few generations, I have had the privilege of participating in American public life in so many ways—as a daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother. As a government servant at the highest levels. As a business executive with a seat on high-profile corporate boards. And as a bestselling author and arbiter of manners. I was often the only woman in the room; this didn’t change much as my achievements grew, as our education levels increased, and as the years passed. Even now, women aren’t well represented in top positions. Thank goodness for *Break Your Own Rules*. This is the first book that lets us reimagine leadership—and I mean *really* reimagine leadership—by showing exactly how smart, skilled, and ambitious women can navigate the hurdles and reach their full potential. Don’t wait to read this important book. You’ll see leadership, and yourself, in a new and limitless way.”

—Letitia Baldrige, business leader, philanthropist, former chief of staff for Jacqueline Kennedy, and proud octogenarian

“*Break Your Own Rules* reflects the experience of many women—nearly 2,000 Fortune 1000 executives and 5,000 professional women. But mostly, it addresses the pivotal question, ‘What does it really take for women to lead today?’ Authors Flynn, Heath, and Holt, having held executive positions themselves in addition to their time spent advising women and organizations on how to advance women’s careers, provide some new and helpful insights and answers to this unfortunately persistent question. Get their help to move yourself forward faster. Their advice can make a difference.”

—Crandall Close Bowles, chairman and CEO,  
Springs Global (retired)



“Leadership is about winning and reaping big rewards. But getting to and staying at the top isn’t easy. In fact, the hard truth is that for women, it remains highly improbable—unless you have a concrete strategy and learn how to lead in ways you can’t imagine when you start. As one of the very few women who advises Fortune 500 CEOs and their teams every day, I know what it takes. So do *Break Your Own Rules* authors Flynn, Heath, and Holt. This is a hands-on guide that gets it right. Every woman who cares about her impact and leadership needs to get a copy of this game-changing book today.”

—Saj-nicole Joni, confidential CEO advisor; bestselling author of *The Right Fight: How Great Leaders Use Healthy Conflict to Drive Performance, Innovation, and Value*

“I confess that I’m not sympathetic when I hear women say things like, ‘I don’t have a real shot at the top because relationships are formed on the golf course and I’m not a golfer.’ Or, ‘So-and-so is plotting and scheming for the position I want and I just won’t play those games.’ Or, ‘People don’t listen to me because I’m a woman.’ I hear this last one from women a lot, and I think the reason nobody listens to them is because they say things like that! I’m not suggesting that barriers don’t exist. The glass ceiling is still very real in many industries, and sadly, gender discrimination in the workplace still exists. But it’s time for women to stop denying any accountability for the struggles they face, and instead, adopt the powerful, road-tested practices outlined in *Break Your Own Rules*, guaranteed to help women everywhere achieve their greatest potential. I love this book. It is fierce, a must-read!”

—Susan Scott, founder of the global training company Fierce Inc.; bestselling author of *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work & in Life—One Conversation at a Time* and *Fierce Leadership: A Bold Alternative to the Worst “Best” Practices of Business Today*

“Now is the time for women to claim their seats at the table. Whether in the board room or at the executive level, when women are represented, they consistently demonstrate their power to increase the bottom line and drive innovation. What I have seen in my work with women leaders around the world is that when passion, talent, and commitment are matched with a strategy to succeed, there’s no limit in our ability to transform companies, communities, and even our world. That’s exactly what you’ll get from leadership experts Flynn, Heath, and Holt in *Break Your Own Rules*. The book delivers the very best of their experiences as executives and coaches, plus the latest research and untold stories from a number of women who have made it to the top and are making a significant impact. I urge you to pick up your copy today.”

—Alyse Nelson, president/CEO, Vital Voices Global Partnership;  
social entrepreneur

“After four decades of women entering every segment of the American workforce, the percentage of women in senior leadership positions is barely a low double digit. When it comes to reaching the elite top ranks, solutions have been elusive—until now. In *Break Your Own Rules*, authors Flynn, Heath, and Holt build on their deep experience to offer real-life advice that really works. Women and men must read this compelling book. Now.”

—Ruth Shaw, CEO and president of Duke Power (retired)



*To our amazing husbands,  
Smitty, Tom, and David, who are our best friends  
and our biggest fans*

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By Smitty, Tom, and David

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# FOREWORD

In business and in life, rules are everywhere.

Consider my own profession, in which there are well-documented rules to help accountants achieve consistency in everything from recognizing revenue to conducting an audit. Rules make financial reporting more uniform and enable investors to better compare the financial performance of various organizations.

But in life, and particularly in the business lives of women, there are ways of thinking that can begin to *feel like rules that must be consistently obeyed*. They encompass a wide range of behaviors, from being modest and playing it safe to focusing on others and seeking approval. Following such preconceived notions with blind obedience can inhibit, if not derail, a woman's ability to advance to senior leadership.

What makes traps like these so difficult for high-potential women to avoid, however, is that they are often *self-imposed*. Over time, patterns of thought driven by cultural norms or business tradition can harden into "rules" that often share a common thread—the misguided notion that a woman's work, talent, and ability to lead will stand out through her ability to blend in.

I know. One experience I had during an early assignment with Deloitte kept me from proceeding as quickly as I could to my next assignment. My “rule” was that it was inappropriate to let others—especially my superiors—know about my accomplishments. I thought that doing so was just like boasting and constituted unacceptable behavior. Furthermore, I reasoned that my boss had to be aware of all of my “good work.” After all, he saw it every day—or so I thought. [You can read more on pages 73–74 of this book.]

This experience and others made me think—and, eventually, I realized that I needed to challenge in my own mind various rules that I had long accepted without question.

Ultimately, this process would lead me to break another rule of conventional business wisdom. When I became a Deloitte audit partner at my home office in Boise, Idaho, it was widely accepted that to “get ahead,” you had to relocate to a larger office where you could display your talents on a bigger stage. But, for me, there was just one hitch. My husband, Rich, had his own business that was based in Boise. We were a classic two-career family—and moving just wasn’t going to work for us. At least not then.

So I didn’t move—for more than twenty years!

You might think that this would have kept me from taking on bold new challenges that could accelerate my growth as a leader.

But, in reality, I *had* grown immensely during my time in Boise—and on *my* terms. The time I spent there allowed me to learn every facet of our business inside and out, from recruiting to business development to managing the P&L, in addition to serving clients. During that time I also became involved in a number of national activities and initiatives. Such broad experience enabled me to perceive the bigger picture, which would prove invaluable

as I moved forward to positions of increased responsibility and leadership.

When the time was right, I did move on. Rich had sold his business, and I eventually chose to accept a more substantial leadership role with Deloitte in Portland. Two years later, I chose to move again—this time to Los Angeles to become managing partner of what was then Deloitte's second-largest region. Although my path to senior leadership was unorthodox, it was absolutely the right path for me to take. And I did make it all the way to chairman! What I discovered along the way was another self-imposed rule, but this one I will always follow: if I am to lead others effectively, I must first practice the self-leadership of being true to myself.

*Break Your Own Rules* is a book about women being true to themselves at every stage of their journey—by understanding the thinking that can entangle us in webs of our own making. This book identifies the self-defeating patterns of thought that burden so many women today, and articulates new approaches that can help women break free to pursue the exciting opportunities of tomorrow.

The research conducted by its authors reveals thought-provoking findings born from years of experience. Before establishing the successful leadership consulting firm that bears their names, Jill Flynn, Kathryn Heath, and Mary Davis Holt navigated their own paths to the C suites and board rooms of leading corporations—and once they arrived there, they excelled. For many years, Deloitte has asked Flynn Heath Holt Leadership to share with our aspiring women leaders what its founders have learned from their experiences. The feedback from that training—as well as the results—have been impressive.

I am confident that the thinking to be found in the pages that follow will enable many more women to take their rightful place as senior leaders. Like glass ceilings, Old Rules that limit women were made to be broken.

This book will show you how—with thoughtfulness, insight, and resolve.

*May 2011*

Sharon Allen  
Chairman of the Board  
Deloitte LLP

# BREAK YOUR OWN RULES



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS' FIRM

## Flynn Heath Holt Leadership

*Helping Women and Organizations Move Forward, Faster*

Flynn Heath Holt is a leadership development and executive coaching firm that specializes in women.

The firm's story likely resonates with your own. Jill Flynn, Kathryn Heath, and Mary Davis Holt excelled in their careers but found that the rules were different at the top. They found themselves asking the hard questions again and again: Why aren't more women in top jobs by now? What's the ROI for retaining women—versus losing them? What does it take for companies to create a pipeline for women who are ready? How can we start having that conversation in our company?

Over time, Jill, Kathryn, and Mary not only found the answers, they achieved senior executive status and made significant contributions to their companies' bottom lines.



**Jill Flynn** became senior vice president at the nation's fourth largest bank. During her tenure, the bank experienced exponential growth through over 100 mergers—and she established award-winning leadership, diversity, organizational consulting, and employee satisfaction initiatives.



**Kathryn Heath** became senior vice president at the nation's fourth largest bank. During extraordinary expansion, she spearheaded leadership and management development, centralized worldwide training, and deployed multiple channels for nationwide delivery of new, measurably more effective programs. Kathryn was widely recognized for her inventive and results-focused work.



**Mary Davis Holt** was senior executive vice president and COO of Time Life, Inc. She also held executive positions at Time Warner with oversight ranging from finance to IT, marketing, and human resources—including worldwide manufacturing for Time Inc.'s magazines including *Time*, *Fortune*, *People*, and *Sports Illustrated*.

Now, as partners in their own firm, these outstanding women share a single mission: Sharing their wisdom so that the path to the top is easier for women.

### **The Authors' Work with Clients**

Jill, Kathryn, and Mary believe that leadership drives results, and they have shown their clients that developing and promoting women improves the company's bottom line. Flynn Heath Holt works with Fortune 1000 clients in four practice areas:

- Keynotes
- Interactive workshops and seminars
- Executive coaching
- Customized development programs

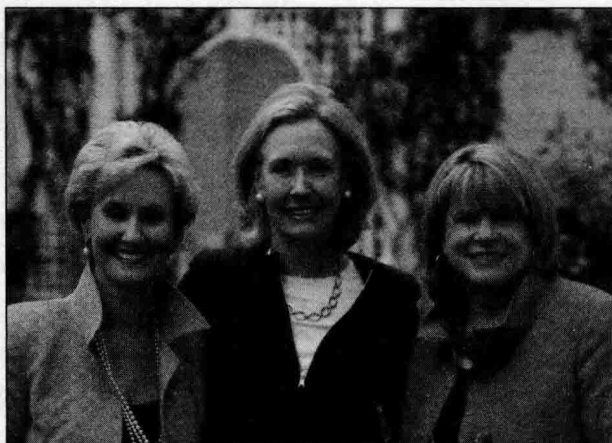
Some clients bring Flynn Heath Holt in to do a workshop. Others request the firm's expertise to create or strengthen a women's initiative for their company. And others need Flynn Heath Holt to implement a program for its high-potential women. Regardless, in every engagement, Flynn Heath Holt's focus is transforming the talent pool to benefit the company's bottom-line.

Learn more by contacting the authors directly at (704) 632-6712 or [JFlynn@FlynnHeathHolt.com](mailto:JFlynn@FlynnHeathHolt.com), [KHeath@FlynnHeathHolt.com](mailto:KHeath@FlynnHeathHolt.com), or [MDHolt@FlynnHeathHolt.com](mailto:MDHolt@FlynnHeathHolt.com).

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# **A SPECIAL OFFERING**

## **Introduce *Break Your Own Rules* to Your Organization**



**Authors Jill Flynn, Kathryn Heath,  
and Mary Davis Holt**

- Nationally recognized experts on women's leadership
- Creators of leadership development programs for the Fortune 1000
- Master coaches to executives and to senior teams
- Facilitators of experiential workshops and interactive seminars
- Sought-after keynote speakers