

A stylized, hand-drawn illustration of a leather jacket, likely a motorcycle jacket, is shown in a light gray tone. The jacket is positioned around the central text, with its collar, lapels, and straps visible. The drawing uses cross-hatching and stippling for shading, giving it a textured, artistic appearance. The jacket's design includes a high collar, a front zipper closure, and straps with buckles on the cuffs and waist.

# SECRETS OF ROCK STAR CFOs

JACK  
McCULLOUGH

# SECRETS OF ROCKSTAR CFOs

Jack McCullough

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To the next generation  
of Rockstar CFOs

## INTRODUCTION AND A HISTORY LESSON

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**Secrets of Rockstar CFOs** is based upon conversations I have had with dozens of elite CFOs, from Silicon Valley startups to Fortune 500 multinationals. These are some of the best CFOs in the country, and you are sure to find their insights very compelling.

My background gives me a unique perspective on financial leadership. I started my career at the global CPA firm, KPMG, and subsequently worked for several years as a financial executive. Ultimately, I served as a CFO for 26 different companies, often in a part-time or interim role, working with about 35 CEOs; several geniuses, a handful of lunatics, and two or three who were both. But I learned from each person and became a more effective leader.

While serving as a CFO, I founded the CFO Leadership Council (CFOLC). Our mission is to empower CFOs. We do this through a combination of cutting-edge professional development programs and unmatched peer networking. I have also chaired the MIT Sloan CFO Summit, which is perhaps the world's most influential conference for CFOs. The speakers at the Summit comprise a Who's Who of elite finance chiefs, and many were generous in sharing their best practices. I soon recognized that, although each CFO's path was unique, Rockstar CFOs shared many traits, which became the basis for this book.

## **The History of the CFO**

For context, let's get into a little history of the role of the CFO. If CFOs had a patron saint, it would probably be Harold Geneen of ITT, a company many consider the first conglomerate. In the 1960s, Geneen was a great innovator who grew ITT to the Fortune 10 using leveraged buyouts and other financial instruments, something previously unheard of. That said, Geneen was no saint. He was a ruthless businessperson, perhaps best illustrated in his role in the 1964 military coup of the Brazilian government. The democratically-elected president, Joao Goulart, nationalized the telecommunications industry, a certain disaster for ITT. So, Geneen did what any responsible executive would: he financed a coup d'état that installed a military dictatorship sympathetic to his cause.

Geneen's ruthlessness aside, he was a visionary who recognized the potential of strategic finance. Before Geneen, finance was the lesser sibling to sales and manufacturing, but he elevated it to become their equal. In many ways, Geneen created the modern CFO position, but he was about 50 years ahead of his time. Despite ITT's success through strategic finance, the "old school" skills of financial reporting, compliance, and expense management were still the standard practice in most companies throughout the '60s and '70s. But it was a start.

In the '80s and '90s, deal-making expertise and global vision became paramount for CFOs, although the definition of global vision at the time was limited, as it was focused more on global tax strategies. Then in the

late '90s with the dot-com era, it became critical CFOs knew how to raise capital. They became very adept at it.

Financial scandals such as Enron, not to mention the dot-com crash, changed the role of the CFO in contradictory ways. Due to the financial scandal, Congress, in its infinite wisdom, passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX). SOX reversed some of the progress CFOs had made, as the “old school” skills were suddenly in vogue again. At the same time, CFOs were talking about things upfront in a very candid manner. Before the crash, it was CFOs who asked the tough questions, often alone and at their own peril. But after the crash, CFOs emerged with a better reputation than they had had before.

SOX required public company audit committees to interview and vet CFO candidates. This enhanced exposure to investors and other senior decision-makers gave CFOs increased respect, due to their forthrightness and business acumen. Their newly enhanced reputations generated momentum toward the modern CFO role.

In 2008, we experienced a financial crisis. You might think CFOs reputations suffered because the crisis was financial, but in fact it only improved because, again, they were straight shooters who, at the time, would “tell it like it is.” Wall Street analysts, media, and others within the business community suddenly wanted to hear from CFOs even more than from CEOs. CFOs were recognized as seasoned professionals who said what they meant and meant what they said. The reputation of the CFO continued to grow, even during a financial crisis.

Internal developments also have changed the CFO's role. At one time, almost all Fortune 500 companies had Chief Operating Officers. Today most of those responsibilities are assumed by CFOs. There's a saying you may have heard, that "controllers are the new CFOs," and there's a lot of truth in that. Many of the original CFO skills are being done today by controllers. They've successfully taken on increased responsibility, allowing CFOs to be leaders in finance, strategy, and operations. That is a Rockstar CFO!

It is important to share the evolution of the role of the CFO for context, but I know you're waiting to hear the Secrets of Rockstar CFOs so, in no particular order, they are:

- Think Strategically
- Provide Ethical Leadership
- Master Deal-Making
- Build Elite Teams
- Learn Continuously
- Develop Board Relationships
- Perform Cross-Functionally
- Maintain Financial Expertise
- Achieve Work/Life Balance

Now then, let's *really* delve into the Secrets of Rockstar CFOs.

## CHAPTER ONE

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# THINK STRATEGICALLY

Rockstar CFOs are strategic partners to CEOs. In 2018 the management consulting firm, Accenture, analyzed leadership dynamics and concluded the single most important relationship within an organization was between the CEO and the CFO. In other words, it's a critical relationship. If they have a dysfunctional relationship, the company suffers. So, what can CFOs do to enhance their relationship with the CEO? Be a strategic partner. Be a sounding board. Challenge the CEO when it's appropriate.

In my conversations, CFOs emphasized the need to balance the short-term needs with the long-term strategy. Both are important. Have a bad quarter, and you will lose goodwill with the investment community. However, the long-term cannot be sacrificed for the needs of the next quarter. CFOs believe they, uniquely among the management team, have the best ability to balance the needs of long-term and short-term.

Rockstar CFOs understand the missions, goals, and objectives of the organizations they lead, and are often charged with articulating this

vision to investors and others. As CFO, you now have the opportunity to make things happen, not just record what happened after the fact. I always tell aspiring CFOs to think CF-GO, not CF-NO.

A CF-GO makes things happen and a CF-NO prevents things from happening.

My first accounting job was an internship I completed as an undergrad. The CFO wasn't a bad guy, but he said "No" to everything. Re-evaluate an accounting position? Make a necessary process improvement? Casual Friday? The answer was always a resounding no. And I started to make fun of him, calling him the CF-NO. When he found out about it, he called me into his office and said he was aware of my nickname for him. He was flattered, which I found baffling. I eventually realized that he was spelling it K-N-O-W. He thought I was complimenting him and his unparalleled knowledge.

Elite CFOs take an active approach to their roles. Always remember that you alone on the executive team possess the aptitude to blend financial expertise and strategic thinking. That's invaluable! It's your greatest contribution to your company and 'your responsibility to make sure your voice is heard and understood.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# PROVIDE ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

There are two ways Rockstar CFOs provide ethical leadership. The obvious one is to simply adhere to personal ethics every day. Talk the talk and walk the walk. The other is to create a culture where ethics are paramount, always. You can't do the latter if you don't do the former. Integrity is an important personal virtue we should all aspire to, but it's also an organizational strength. Several studies show a positive correlation between ethical behavior and organizational performance. Stockholders don't invest in unethical companies, and employees don't want to work for them, either.

It's not in the DNA of a CFO to lie, but ethical leadership requires more. The commitment to ethics goes above and beyond not lying. CFOs must fully and accurately disclose all financial and other issues to all relevant parties. And you must evaluate the needs of all the constituencies: stockholders, investors, clients, employees, and anyone

else your organization affects. CFOs create and lead a culture of ethics employees live every day of their lives.

As CFO, you are the most ethical person in your organization. For that reason, you must always adhere to a very strict standard of ethics, even when it's inconvenient. I might even say, especially when it's inconvenient. If you're seen as a CFO who will compromise when convenient, this approach will cause colleagues to consider all the talk about ethics to be lip service. They will believe ethics is a buzzword, not a commitment. You need to feed an ethical culture all the time – live it and breathe it every day in every way. You need to demonstrate unquestioned ethics no matter the circumstances. It's hard to live up to but is arguably your most important contribution to your firm.

CFOs lead the ethical behavior largely through the transparency of their communications. So be transparent, always. When there's bad news, share it quickly, completely, and accurately. Communication needs to be timely, clear, brief, and above all truthful. No selling – leave that to the sales and marketing executives or the company president.

I recently asked CFO Leadership Council members to describe some of the ethical challenges they have faced in their careers. Some of their stories are below:

- A credible sexual harassment claim was made immediately before the completion of an acquisition that was months in the works. Does the CFO have a duty to disclose?
- A ruthless sales director who outperformed all other sales directors combined, using boondoggles, prostitutes (in Nevada, where it is legal), and other questionable acts. Does the CFO kill the Golden Goose?
- A wealthy individual bribed his way into a clinical study, ensuring his daughter would be part of the test and not receive a placebo. The scientific integrity of such studies is based upon anonymity. This happened before the CFO joined the company. What are the disclosure requirements?
- The president of a family-owned business was having an affair with her executive assistant, who received a \$50,000 year-end bonus, by far the largest in the company that year. The president's family owned the entire company and approved the payment at the board level. The CFO suspected blackmail since the president was married, well-known in the community, and news of the affair would be scandalous. Blackmail is, of course, illegal. Did the CFO have a duty to report an obvious crime when the victim wanted to remain anonymous?
- The CEO put his son on the payroll and paid him \$50,000 per year for a no-show job while cutting his own pay by the same amount.

The son had special needs and was incapable of working. The job made him eligible for Social Security benefits, which the CFO assumed was the reason the faux position was created. Lawyers said it was in a legal gray area. Did the CFO have any obligations, legal or ethical, in managing this situation?

These situations represent some of the ethical challenges you may face along the way. Do you feel ready to dissect these issues and make sure your company stays ethically strong? Ethical leadership, after all, is revealed during challenging times.

## CHAPTER THREE

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# MASTER DEAL-MAKING

Rockstar CFOs are master deal-makers. CFOs are involved in every major transaction from womb to tomb. Whether it's an IPO, acquisition, strategic partnership, or capital raise, nothing of significance happens in any well-run company without the approval and understanding of the CFO. CFOs understand both the financial and strategic objectives, and they articulate that to the rest of the management team and the board. Until recently the CFO's role was to identify risks and negotiate final terms. Today they're identifying both the risks and the opportunities. They proactively seek ways to execute on the deal rather than just explain the reasons not to.

I spoke to one CFO who described her deal-making evolution. Like many finance and accounting professionals, she started her career reporting what happened after the fact. Eventually, she became part of the deal team, but only to identify obstacles. In other words, she was looking for reasons NOT to do a transaction. Eventually, she changed her approach to identify the problems and offer a solution.

Her great epiphany came later, when she realized she could be the value creator. She could proactively identify opportunities to help her organization grow. She adjusted the very way she approached transactions, which was a game changer for her.

It's worth repeating you should be a CF-GO, not a CF-NO. However, sometimes the best deal is the one you don't make. While it's great to be a CF-GO, sometimes CFOs need to be the adult in the room. While something might seem awesome on the surface, it's best to put on the brakes and make sure that it's the right opportunity. Don't just go along.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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# BUILD ELITE TEAMS

CFOs and other executives tell me the greatest challenge companies face these days is the struggle to attract and retain employees. The “war for talent” is real and Rockstar CFOs help their side win!

Why is it so tough?

Well, small organizations are complex from the word “go.” Startups are born with global aspirations. Additionally, there is a multigenerational workforce to deal with now. The first wave of Generation Z started graduating from college in 2019. Add in Gen X, Millennials, and Baby Boomers not retiring “on time” and you have four generations in the workforce at once. This is unprecedented. The times, they are a-changin’. Ask a Boomer.

The strongest job market since the 1950s has created unprecedented opportunities for the highly-coveted young professionals who are being constantly wooed by your competition and other companies. Recruiting and retaining them is very, very difficult. As CFO, you are uniquely positioned to do this.

I spoke to a CFO with a now-iconic Silicon Valley company who was there at the start. They were trying to land a handful of critical engineers and they just couldn't do it. He said, "OK, let me do it. I'm going to take five of these candidates out to lunch for a few hours." And by the end of those lunches, these unrecruitable engineers had joined the team. Why was the CFO successful? It was flattering to the candidates that the CFO would offer so much time and be transparent about the company. They felt important because the CFO was taking them to lunch and empowered to make the right decision due to the insights he shared.

And again, CFOs simply have a reputation for being credible, honest, and trustworthy. That makes you a very powerful weapon in recruiting. It is incumbent you become involved in the growth of your team. You'd be surprised at how easy it is to make a difference. Rockstar CFOs are magicians at building elite teams, not only in the world of finance and accounting but throughout their organizations. It does not end at recruiting. As CFO, you are able to motivate, lead, empower, and retain talent. It's an exciting way to create value!

The advice I heard repeatedly was to build the team for where you're going, not for what you need today. When building your team, consider where your company will be in three years. The company is likely to be very different in three years than it is today.

Even if you're hiring people who don't have the skill today to do that job, look for people with the aptitude, passion, work ethic, and intellectual curiosity to get you there. You are building a world-class organization – pick the best players.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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# LEARN CONTINUOUSLY

It shouldn't be a surprise that elite CFOs are intellectually curious. They're always acquiring knowledge, and that serves them well. So, how do such busy executives stay on the cutting edge?

Education has both formal and informal aspects to it. As far as the formal side, it is easier than ever to earn an MBA, which remains a coveted credential for CFOs. Indeed, according to the executive search firm Spencer Stuart, for the first time in history, more Fortune 5,000 CFOs hold MBAs than CPA certificates. If your role does not require an MBA, there are a lot of live and online courses tailored to your industry that would be helpful in your career. Elite CFOs use these programs to understand trends and remain at the forefront of their profession.

Additionally, peer networking is paramount. As great as formal educational programs are, elite executives learn from each other. Seek commonalities among other CFOs. You don't necessarily have to work in the same industry, but you should connect with CFOs you can build a

relationship with, like, and trust. Learn from each other. Enjoy the wisdom of their experiences and allow them to enjoy yours.

The CFO Leadership Council has a group called CFO Connect, an online group of roughly 1,200 CFOs who share challenges with each other. Whatever challenge you're facing as a CFO, there's somebody who has been through it before and can help. Members tell us that this is their favorite part of the membership. Networking with your peers is critical.

Consider finding a mentor. A lot of people don't want to find a mentor because they view it as an admission of weakness. Nonsense! A venture capitalist once reminded me Tom Brady has a quarterback's coach. Tom Brady! So, even if you are the GOAT (Greatest of All Time) of CFOs, you will still benefit from a mentor.

Your mentor could be anyone. A CFO I spoke to was formerly a divisional controller. She told me the first mentor she had was the VP of Sales. I thought that was odd and I asked why she didn't look for a CFO. She said she knew the finance and accounting part of being a CFO better than most but was thinking more broadly. She believed a customer-centric approach to the CFO role would be a key differentiator when an opportunity arose. Who better to learn from than a great sales executive? Your mentor may not be obvious but should be a

professional who is vested in your career growth and who has the expertise that you seek.

Your greatest educational challenge will be keeping up with technology innovations because they are ever-changing. If you think you don't need to understand blockchain, artificial intelligence, or whatever innovations are relevant at the time you are reading this, you are wrong. Rockstar CFOs commit to remaining ahead of the curve on technology. It's exciting to follow these innovations, and you don't want to be outdated in your prime.

It's impossible to remain on the cutting edge of your profession or industry if you're in a cocoon. You need to challenge yourself continuously to improve your toolbox.

## CHAPTER SIX

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# DEVELOP BOARD RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between boards of directors and CFOs has never been closer. Public company boards are required to vet CFOs, and it is considered a best practice for private companies and nonprofits.

One of the reasons for the more visible relationship between CFOs and boards is the fiduciary duties of the boards of directors have increased. It used to be the board of directors was kind of a “boys’ club,” with many members being picked based on relationships with other members. It no longer works this way. The responsibilities of board members are far more challenging than ever before, and consequences for the board in not fulfilling these responsibilities can be severe. The days of two-hour board meetings followed by 18 holes of golf are a relic of a bygone era.

Let’s talk about audit committees. They need to understand the financial implications of every major transaction, which isn’t always practical. I

once negotiated a transaction that was roughly the size of “War and Peace.” There was no way an audit committee member was going to read every single page and digest it. Even the audit partners themselves struggled to do so. Your audit committee is reliant upon you to disclose everything that is relevant. And bluntly, they’re relying on you to keep them out of jail, or at least keep them from getting sued. You need to understand the transaction. You need to articulate that understanding and inspire confidence in your board.

Another great piece of advice – don’t meet with board members only at meetings. Meet with them one-on-one throughout the year. Board meetings are not really the time to reveal new information. Instead, use the time to cover information board members already know. The CEO may object to you meeting them privately, but you have to ask yourself why that would be. Just have coffee with them, meet them for breakfast, play a round of golf with them, whatever it might take. Of course, this isn’t always easy. If you’ve got board members overseas, you can’t justify making that trip simply to have a one-hour meeting. But we have technology now allowing you to connect and get to know them a little bit. More importantly, those tactics help you develop mutual trust and respect and understand each other’s needs. It’s great for everyone involved.

Bonus: According to some sources, the typical CFO tenure is less than three years. It’s wise to have board members who like you and respect

your work. Most directors serve on multiple boards and have phenomenal networks. If the relationship is strong, they can help position you in your next opportunity.

Let me reiterate the CFO is the most trusted person within the organization. The board is dependent upon your integrity and your competence. Without that, they've got some serious issues. Build upon those relationships.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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# PERFORM CROSS-FUNCTIONALLY

With the exception of the CEO, the CFO is the most cross-functional executive in the company. You're no longer cloistered in the world of finance and accounting. It used to be the CFO did finance, accounting, and evaluated transactions after they happened. This approach no longer works. Plus, it's boring as heck!

Sometime in the 1980s, CFOs began to lead many functions, including human resources, information technology, investor relations, and legal. Today CFOs are involved in sales, marketing, operations, and strategy. There are truly very few areas a CFO in today's world is not involved. Rockstar CFOs can be a formidable weapon! I spoke earlier of their recruiting talents, but they're also often better than salespeople at closing. Often the CFO can participate in the sales call with an indecisive prospect and help them to decide. A CFO can credibly say, "Yes, this is our company. These are our values. This is what we can deliver, and this is what we can't deliver, and I am personally

committed to making this an effective partnership for you.” The identical words have more credibility coming from the CFO than from anybody else.

One CFO I spoke with knows all the CFOs of her 10 biggest customers, and she speaks to them regularly. She doesn’t use a sales pitch at all. She just connects in the name of relationship building. Do that. Get to know your customers. Build meaningful relationships. It will pay dividends for you and your companies.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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# MAINTAINING FINANCIAL EXPERTISE

The Prime Directive of the CFO is to provide accurate and timely financial information. (I threw in that reference for you, Trekkies!) If you're screwing up the financial statements, it doesn't matter that you excel in other areas. One CFO told me he inherited an accounting nightmare (several years' worth of restatements) that had been created before he joined the company. The predecessor CFO explained it by saying "I am a strategic CFO," as if that absolved him of the responsibility to create accurate financial statements. Good grief!

CFOs probably can't be experts in Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) like they were 20 years ago, due to their wide-ranging responsibilities. This does not absolve them of the responsibility of preparing accurate financial statements. Elite CFOs rely on their controllers, chief accounting officers (a relatively recent position), and the rest of their team for GAAP financials. And they maintain expertise themselves.

I once had a boss who said, “GAAP is crap.” A real poet, that one. But he was not wrong. GAAP has some problems and limitations. And bluntly, people who are outside of the world of finance and accounting have little patience for it. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are certainly more meaningful to non-financial types. You are encouraged to use those as supplemental data to GAAP. And in fact, depending upon the audience, you might use them instead of GAAP. So even if you are not a CPA or accounting expert, you can convey important financial information to your audience.

Never forget, F is for financial, and that’s good enough for me. That’s a Cookie Monster reference. I bet you weren’t expecting Star Trek and Cookie Monster references in a chapter about financial expertise. Does anyone else smell a Pulitzer?

## CHAPTER NINE

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# MAINTAINING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The final Rockstar CFO secret, and perhaps the most surprising, is to maintain a healthy work-life balance. There is a large body of academic research showing workaholics are not the best long-term performers. We all have our moments where we need to work ungodly hours due to a disaster or an unforeseen deadline, but as a lifestyle, this is a big mistake.

There's a strong correlation between physical exercise and executive success. The benefits of even modest exercise are remarkable. You don't have to train for a triathlon to benefit from exercise. If you can exercise for 30-45 minutes a day, you'll have increased energy and all the mental benefits exercise brings. Thus, you will find yourself more effective in your job.

And, don't skip the vacation! Even the presidents of the United States take vacations and find time to exercise. We have so many iconic

images of presidential vacations, from Jack Kennedy sailing in Cape Cod to Ronald Reagan chopping wood at his California ranch. These are the busiest people in the world, and they find time to vacation. Imagine how busy President Trump is, yet every day he makes time for his real passion: tweeting. He doesn't spell-check though, so that probably saves some time.

Also, CFOs read quite a bit, which didn't surprise me. However, I assumed they read mostly business books. While it is true they do read a lot of business books, they are also very well-read outside the business world. They read a lot of fiction, biographies, history, and more. Make some time to read. A great book will help clear your mind of clutter.

Make time for family, friends, hobbies, community service, and anything else that makes you happy. As a responsible business leader, it is important to get involved with community service. As executives, we're very fortunate, and if we can give back to society in a meaningful way, that's fantastic!

It can be challenging in the short term but it's imperative in the long term to find room for non-work-related activities. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

## CONCLUSION

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# ACHIEVING ROCKSTAR STATUS

As I was conducting the research that formed this book, I was struck by the pragmatism of the CFOs to whom I spoke. Their approach to their craft is highly intuitive and passes the commonsense test. Some of these practices are things you are likely already doing. But no book, even one as brilliantly written as this one, can make anyone an elite performer in their chosen craft. Serena Williams did not become the greatest tennis player ever by reading books on tennis. She practiced. A lot.

I have shared many insights that will help you along your path to becoming a Rockstar CFO. Most of them will take time to develop. If you are not a strategic thinker, for example, you can become one, but it will take a real commitment in your approach to your role. But there are a few things you can do TODAY that will start you on a path. In no particular order:

- **Walk the Floor.** Step out from behind your desk and understand what your business does and its position in the marketplace. Talk to customers and strategic partners. The more you know about your company, the more value you will bring.
- **Join a Peer Group.** I am a huge believer in this because so many CFO Leadership Council members have told me how career altering their involvement with the group has been. Many have found a new job or solved an unsolvable problem at work just because of a skill they learned or a connection they made. So, join a peer group that suits you.
- **Establish a Code of Ethics.** Ethical leadership was the only topic mentioned by every CFO I spoke to. Never lose sight of your opportunity to create and nurture an ethical culture within your company. Ethical finance chiefs are abundant. Be the one who changes the culture and the way your organization evaluates its ethical responsibilities.

I hope you have found the wisdom of these world-class executives to be worthwhile. While the challenges you will face are sure to be different from theirs, the tools to resolve them are the same. Use your judgment as you apply their experiences to your personal situations. Rockstar status is within your reach!

## ABOUT JACK McCULLOUGH

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If you had to use one word to describe Jack McCullough's professional path it would be "versatility." Like an executive Swiss Army knife, he brings lots of tools to the job. He has run finance organizations, led business development initiatives, and served as an entrepreneur and CEO. His expertise encompasses strategy, operations, finance, human resources, sales, and marketing.

When he began his career with a global CPA firm Jack enjoyed his work but knew he wanted to enhance his leadership skills. That goal inspired him to enroll in the MBA program at MIT's Sloan School of Management, which he credits with opening up many new opportunities for him.

As a CFO Jack became more involved in strategy and leadership. It was the beginning of the dot-com era, and he quickly learned the importance of building relationships with venture capitalists and other investors. They would often turn to him for input, and he became known as a voice of reason and a trustworthy resource. Sadly, this era is remembered as much for its financial scandals as its technological achievements, and Jack learned a lot about holding fast to an ethical compass, an issue that remains important today.

After his sons were born, Jack discovered he enjoyed taking on outsourced CFO roles. He found he was a natural relationship builder, which helped him to build a highly successful CFO consulting practice. He worked a series of part-time CFO roles for several years with successful (and occasionally not-so-successful) companies and benefited greatly from the experiences.

When the idea of creating the CFO Leadership Council took root, Jack was a member of the Boston Alumni Club at MIT Sloan. He co-founded the MIT Sloan CFO Summit, a one-day conference featuring MIT faculty and some of the best CFOs and thought leaders in the world. He recognized the tremendous value of bringing CFOs together regularly to discuss the changing professional landscape. Many CFOs were still wrestling with challenges in the wake of the financial crash. He created the CFO Leadership Council to build a stronger community, foster professional relationships, and share resources. Today the CFO Leadership Council has approximately 2,000 members and 27 chapters, and it's still growing.

As a recognized thought leader, Jack is often called by members of the media, who appreciate his insights, candor and wit. He has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Bloomberg, CNBC, and CFO Magazine, among others. Reporters have sought his expertise on a range of topics from artificial intelligence, capital markets, team building, and strategic finance.

Of all his professional accomplishments the role of mentor is the one most dear to his heart. Over the years he has successfully guided and empowered dozens of up and coming CFOs on their path, and it is what he loves most about his work. Whether he is offering career advice, talking through challenges, or making an impactful introduction, encouraging others along their path is his all-time favorite professional activity.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Jack McCullough brings the same enthusiasm to his leisure time as he does his professional life. Outside of work he is devoted to spending time with his wife and two sons. He is a native New Englander, a Patriots fan, and is currently on a mission with his wife to find the ultimate lobster roll (the frontrunner is located in Kennebunk, Maine).

Jack is a rock and roll fan who describes himself as a “bit of a headbanger.” While he acknowledges the greatness of The Beatles, you’ll often find him listening to AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, The Who, Guns N’ Roses, and Metallica. You won’t be surprised to hear his boys complain he turns the music up too loud in the car.

Staying active is a priority and he indulges his competitive streak as an extreme fitness enthusiast and enjoys pushing himself to achieve new goals.

Jack is also a passionate advocate for autism awareness and offers his time and energy to several autism-related charities.

## LET'S CONNECT

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I founded the CFO Leadership Council to empower CFOs. I'm committed to developing the next generation of Rockstar CFOs. If any of these opportunities are of interest to you, let's connect!

### **RockstarCFOs.com/connect**

- Join the global community of financial leaders at the CFO Leadership Council
- Invite me to speak about strategic financial leadership at an upcoming live event or webinar
- Interview me for an article on trends in strategic financial leadership or related topics

Wishing you well on your journey to becoming a Rockstar CFO!



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# SECRETS OF **ROCK STAR** CFOs

Based on conversations with elite CFOs, from Silicon Valley startups to Fortune 500 multinationals, in this book Jack McCullough describes their key common traits, regardless of their individual paths and journeys. You'll learn the practices that make world-class CFOs, and how these people have become leaders in finance, strategy, and operations.

**Jack McCullough** is a recognized thought leader in the world of financial leadership with a career that has included CFO positions at 26 companies. He founded the CFO



Leadership Council, a global organization dedicated to empowering senior financial executives through innovative professional development programs and peer networking. His other accomplishments include chairing the MIT Sloan CFO Summit, and creating the vision behind CFO Week, a one-of-a-kind learning experience jointly executed by the CFO Leadership Council and MIT Sloan Executive Education.

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