

For Immediate Release

October 26, 2009



**FROM WELFARE TO CEO**  
**PERSONAL TURNAROUND EXPERT AUTHORS BOOK on**  
**STARTING OVER**

**PITTSBURGH, PA** (O’Hara Township) – Personal turnaround and leadership expert Mary Lee Gannon is living proof that anyone can turn his or her life around quickly with simple focused strategies. Her book “Starting Over – 25 Rules When You’ve Bottomed Out,” just released on November 2, 2009 by New Horizon Press, offers specific hands-on strategies that helped her develop leadership skills, make ultimate use of her time, uncover hidden career opportunities, be a problem solver, be more persuasive all while keeping a healthy life balance. This is not just theory – it holds practical steps that took her from welfare to CEO. Listen to an interview with Mary Lee on her Web site [www.StartingOverNow.com](http://www.StartingOverNow.com). The book can be found in local bookstores as well as on Amazon.com and other online bookstores.

At the age of 35 Mary Lee was a stay-at-home mother with four children under seven-years-old living in an unpalatable marriage behind the facade of a country club life. She filed for divorce as a leap of faith and a few months later she realized an overwhelming avalanche of litigation and anger that resulted in her and the children going from Fox Chapel, the most lovely residential suburb of Pittsburgh, to being homeless, carless, hungry and on welfare. She understood then that she was going to be the one to provide for her and her four children and had to figure out a way to do that. She only had a two-year degree in an allied health profession. Public assistance was not the way she wanted to live her life. She

had done the big cry and a lot of asking, “Why me?” but that got her nothing but more paralyzed with fear.

Mary Lee decided to wipe “guilt” and “worry” out of the way with new behaviors. She shed the habits of “blame” and “complain” like they were yesterday’s newspaper. Then she proactively defined her transferable skills, developed her sphere of influence, trained in new skills she had determined would pay off quickly and within a few short years rose to become a president and CEO of a hospital foundation.

“At this point in my career I feel a need to give back,” said Mary Lee, 49, who presents on productivity and cultural turnarounds to businesses, the community, and employment development organizations. “I am very blessed to have achieved the success that I have but I know that it came as no accident. I want to help others meet their dreams by using the shortcuts that I used to work smart, build networks, acquire new skills and develop transferable skills.”

Unemployment rates are higher than they have been in decades and many people are suffering because they don’t know how to find work or where to begin. Whether you are an empty nester who is re-entering the workforce, an entrepreneur who is looking for a way to network, someone who has been recently laid-off, a person seeking their first job, starting a business, going through a divorce, looking for career opportunities, seeking career advice and education, or simply someone who is setting new life. This book and the free worksheets and articles at [www.StartingOverNow.com](http://www.StartingOverNow.com) will help you get to a destination faster while also balancing other life priorities, family and relationships.

The book holds specific critical suggestions and tactics that are laid out for those who have met despair and need to create a new strategy with specific tactics including:

In this easy-to-read and informative book, twenty-five critical suggestions and tactics are laid out when you have lost everything and need to create a new life, including:

- Finding a job or mentor in an offbeat place.
- Surround Yourself with People Whose Strengths are Your Weaknesses and Give Away the Glory
- Creating a simple but eye-catching portfolio.

- It's Not Who You Know, It's Who knows You
- Offering practical solutions to problems of finding and obtaining the right new position.
- Producing a business card which serves as a resume at a glance.
- Begin with a "Success Sketch" and Hang It Where You Will See It Everyday
- It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It and What You Don't Say.
- On the Interview Ask More Questions Than They Ask You and Tell a Story
- Offer Solutions to Problems – Name the Company's Pain
- Dressing for the job above the one you want.
- Your Favorite Place is Not the Coffee Shop or the Couch; It is Now the Bookstore.

Gannon tells you which rules to break and how to apply non-traditional methods to achieve your desired goal.

**STARTING OVER: 25 Rules When You've Bottomed Out** is an essential guide for anyone who needs to start their career over again and for those just beginning. The indispensable information provided will give you vital guidance on how to reinvent your professional self and access the ladder of success in these difficult times.

Some of the organizations for which Mary Lee has presented include: Dress for Success, New Choices/ New Options Career Development Service, Leadership Pittsburgh, Workquest, One Vision One Life, Pennsylvania Professional Employment Network, Urban League of Pittsburgh, Fox Chapel Adult Education, Pennsylvania Employment and Training Center. She has been interviewed by msn.com, Forbes.com, eFinancialCareers.com. Her WnB Radio interview on Mind Your BIZness may be heard on her web site at [www.StartingOverNow.com](http://www.StartingOverNow.com).

View this release online at: [http://www.startingovernow.com/Press\\_Kit.html](http://www.startingovernow.com/Press_Kit.html)

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## Questions and Answers:

Mary Lee Gannon – Overcoming adversity and personal turnaround expert, author of *Starting Over - 25 Rules When You've Bottomed Out* and president of StartingOverNow.com

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**Possible Show Title or Headline:** Starting Over - From Welfare to CEO

**Introduction:** The economy has affected everyone's pocket, lifestyle and activities. Don't let it affect your future. Mary Lee Gannon's strategies for personal turnaround and life planning are hands on methods that take you from theory and concepts to action and results. Get worry and fear out of the way to set goals that allow you to lead your life instead of being an actor in your own drama.

**Bio (short):** Mary Lee Gannon is a personal turnaround and leadership expert who went from being a stay-at-home mother with four children and a successful husband living a country club life to the reality of a difficult marriage, divorce, homelessness, and welfare. As a national guest speaker she demonstrates turn-around strategies that took her from an earning capacity of \$27,000 to the president and CEO of a hospital foundation. Her book "Starting Over – 25 Rules When You've Bottomed Out" offer hands-on strategies to reroute your life. Visit her Web site for free tips at [www.StartingOverNow.com](http://www.StartingOverNow.com).

**Bio (long):** Mary Lee Gannon is a productivity and leadership advice expert who is living proof that anyone can turn his or her life around quickly with some simple focused strategies. Her book "Starting Over – 25 Rules When You've Bottomed Out," her presentations and her Web site at [www.StartingOverNow.com](http://www.StartingOverNow.com) are full of specific hands-on strategies that help people develop leadership skills, make ultimate use of their time, uncover hidden career opportunities, be a problem solver, be more persuasive and share compassion all while keeping a healthy life balance.

At the age of 35 Mary Lee was a stay-at-home mother with four children under seven-years-old living in an unpalatable marriage behind the facade of a country club life. She filed for divorce as a leap of faith and a few months later she realized an overwhelming avalanche of litigation and anger that resulted in her and the children going from a lovely residential suburb to being homeless, carless, hungry and on welfare.

She understood then that she was going to be the one to provide for her and her four children and had to figure out a way to do that. Public assistance was not the way she wanted to live her life. She had done the big cry and a lot of asking, "Why me?" but that got her nothing but more paralyzed with fear. She had an allied health degree at which she was making \$27,000 a year when she left the workforce to raise her children and knew that would not be enough for them to live on so she created a life plan around the things she loved and in which she excelled.

While her children were young, she had written for a number of organizations as a volunteer and decided to send clips of her writing to the local metropolitan newspaper. The newspaper hired her as a freelance reporter and she went on to write for a number of other magazines, news and professional publications.

She developed her sales skills and became the executive director of a trade association where she also pursued and earned the designation of Certified Association Executive. From there she went on to be a self employed public relations consultant and business writer, all work she did from home while her children were young. When she needed adequate benefits for herself and the children after the divorce, she decided to enter the corporate world. She taught herself how to network, write grants and negotiate and ultimately went on to be the President and CEO of a large hospital foundation – a far cry from welfare.

Book: Released November 2, 2009

## **STARTING OVER**

### **25 Rules When You've Bottomed Out**

By Mary Lee Gannon

New Horizon Press

November 2009

Personal Growth/Career

\$14.95, Paperback

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#### **1. Why did you start a website and write a book on the topic of starting over?**

I did it as a guide for people who are going through a life transition so that they may have concrete steps to lead them to success and a balanced life. Often during a time of transition you are so mired in oppression and guilt that you don't have the ability or knowledge to move forward. You become like a ship on a new sea without a map in the middle of a storm. You have a lot of energy but you are not sure what to do with it so that energy translates to worry – a totally worthless emotion. Many people who have lost their jobs, or are returning to the workforce after a long hiatus, or are getting divorced have told me the same thing that I remember feeling - that they feel desperate, fearful and alone. During a time of despair it is very difficult to change behavior. These strategies are a compass in the squall.

#### **2. What experiences did you have that qualifies you as an expert in personal turnarounds?**

At the age of 35 I was a stay at home mother with four children under seven-years-old and a self employed husband living the country club life. I had an allied health degree at which I was making \$27,000 a year when I left the workforce to raise my children full time. I was in an unpalatable marriage and filed for divorce as a leap of faith. A few months later an overwhelming avalanche of litigation and anger led to the children and me becoming homeless, carless, and hungry.

Public assistance was not the way I wanted to live my life. I had done the big cry and a lot of asking, "Why me?" but that got me nothing but more paralyzed with fear. So I taught myself how to network, learned new skills, developed transferable skills and mentored under others. Now at 48 I have been the President and CEO of a large hospital foundation for seven years after only having worked full time for roughly nine years – a far cry from having lost a home in Sheriff's Sale, welfare, food stamps, and medical assistance.

#### **3. What can someone do in the turmoil of the current economic downturn to elevate themselves to success?**

Rule #1 in the book is “Begin With a ‘Success Sketch’ and Hang It Where You Will See It Everyday.” Stick people are acceptable!

If you are changing jobs, don’t blindly answer classified ads and send out resumes. Take a blanket, go out to the yard and look at the clouds or brew your favorite coffee and sit quietly and think. Where do you ultimately want to be not tomorrow but in two years, five years and ten years? Think back to your childhood to what made you happiest. Begin by making sure you want to stay in the same profession. Do you want to live in the city or suburbs, work with a lot of people or in a small office, manage multiple projects and people or work on task specific projects. Sketch yourself in your new role, smiling, being happy in your new office, house or with customers.

If you are looking for a new home, don’t start by determining the price you can afford and scanning the newspaper for that price range. Start with defining what will ultimately make you happy – 1) proximity to work, 2) school district, 3) proximity to shopping, 4) number of bedrooms, 5) family room on first floor, etc. Draw that house on a diagram with your office and schools and post it where you will see it every day.

I have an index card with my “Success Sketch” on an it posted above my desk in my bedroom. I know I wouldn’t be a published author today if I hadn’t envisioned myself being one.

#### **4. What advice would you give someone who finds it too difficult to start over?**

Rule #12 is “Help Yourself by Helping Others First.” Early on I could barely support my children, was not sure if we’d have a place to live or medical care, and couldn’t see light at the end of the tunnel. At that time I was a Girl Scout leader of two troops and I thought I was doing enough to guide my children and give back. Then one Sunday at church there was a call in the bulletin for people to help put meals together for the homeless after mass. The children and I did so which got the focus off of us and onto those who needed it more. That was enough to get me back on track with my goals. Help others.

#### **5. Can volunteering help people discover new career interests?**

Yes. Volunteering becomes doubly important if you are not sure what career path to take. When I was in my mid 30s and trying to re-enter the work force one of my public relations clients asked me if I’d help her obtain a grant for a summer program for special education students. I didn’t know how to do that but I told her I would learn.

I went to the Foundation Center of the local library and signed up for every class they had on grant writing. I taught myself how to write a grant proposal and research funders. Eventually we were able to secure that \$68,000 grant and another \$450,000 grant for the athletic field. I never got paid for acquiring these grants. And I never asked to be paid. I should have paid them. I earned way more than a monetary reward. I learned how to do something of value that people need. I learned how to raise money. I wouldn’t be where I am today if I hadn’t had the opportunity to learn a new skill while volunteering in a meaningful way.

#### **6. What techniques and methods can best help someone land a job?**

Rule #6 is “Offer Solutions to Problems – Name the Company’s Pain.” When was the last time you read in the newspaper that a Fortune 500 company had a number of employees with outstanding degrees and skills on their resumes? Probably never. When was the last time you read that a Fortune 500 company had exceeded its sales from the previous year, merged with another company to offer better services, or was expanding to better meet the needs of its customers? Probably this morning.

Often job seekers and entrepreneurs concentrate on their skills. I say concentrate on your accomplishments. You are not a person who can answer the phone or keep a spreadsheet. You have

managed all aspects of an office so that the professionals can focus on their patients or customers without distractions. You are not able to use Word, Frontpage, Pagemaker and Photoshop. You have a track record of providing all the communication services necessary for a business to increase sales.

Employers want to know two things: 1) That you can solve their pain and 2) That there is not risk in hiring you. Your job is to convince them of both of these things and you do so not by focusing on your skills but how you measurably solved pain in another position. And by leaving them certain that you will do whatever it takes to get the job done right and with results in hand.

### **7. What if you want to change fields. How do you make that transition?**

Rule #7 is “Your Resume is Your Showcase of Results and Transferable Skills.” Transferable skills fall into three areas: Communications, Organizing Information, and Operating and Fixing Equipment. If you were in marketing for a telecommunications company the healthcare industry needs marketing professionals too. If you understood how to manage people in the food service industry you can manage people in a staffing agency.

Keep your specific job and technical skills at the end of the resume and precede them with a quantifiable list of achievements. You may have been responsible for book keeping, entering data or running an event. But your achievements are that you created new strategies that enabled the organization to save \$10,000 in expenses, created a database that allowed the company to process customer information twice as fast, and created an event that raised \$47,500.

### **8. What is the most important thing a person can do on a job interview?**

Rule # 18 is “On an Interview Tell a Story and Ask More Questions Than They Ask You.” Prospective employers only care about how you will solve problems for them. Anecdotal examples of how you have already dealt with great challenge will erase the potential risk they might have in hiring you. Don’t tell them you are a hard worker, tenacious and dedicated. Convey that in your story.

If interviewers ask me to fill in the blanks of what is not on my resume, the first thing I generally say is, “I am a single parent of four children, who when my children were all under the age of seven found that I had to recreate my life.” At this point the silence in the room is deafening.

### **9. What questions should you ask on the interview?**

You want to ask questions that scream, “I get the big picture!” such as 1) How long does the average employee stay with your company? 2) Where do you see the company in five years. 3) In my research I have learned that your company values are ..... What is the company’s management style? 4) What is the biggest challenge your company has right now? 5) What’s the most important thing I can do to help within my first 90 days? And the most important question you will ask is the one at the end of the interview: 6) What concerns do you have that keep me from being the top candidate for this position? This is where you will hear what risks they see in hiring you and you can address them right there.

### **10. Having interviewed a number of people who have started their lives over and having done it yourself, what advice would you give someone who has just begun the process?**

Take time to create a plan of where you ultimately want to be, find mentors who have traveled similar journeys, take measurable steps on course and celebrate your successes along the way. Hope is not a strategy. Define specific and concrete goals of what you need to learn to get you to where you want to be. People who have overcome adversity to achieve success have two common denominators: 1) They are fearless, not recklessness and 2) They figure things out or ask for help.