

Commander Mary Kelly, PhD

Leadership Economist | Keynote Speaker |
Best-Selling Author | Former U.S. Navy Commander

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Mary C. Kelly is a Hall of Fame **leadership speaker, PhD economist, retired Navy Commander, and author of 22 books**, including *Leadership is Tough: What Great Leaders Do Differently*. She helps leaders cut through complexity, make smarter decisions, and lead with confidence, especially when the rules keep changing. Known for being **fun, funny, and content-rich**, Mary combines economics, leadership strategy, productivity tactics, and real-world experience to help organizations focus on what matters most and get results that last.

With more than **30 years of leadership experience**, Mary has worked with executives, managers, boards, associations, and organizations across the country, helping them navigate economic uncertainty, workforce challenges, productivity pressures, and leadership transitions. Her work is grounded in research, shaped by experience, and delivered with humor, clarity, and practical application.

Before launching *Productive Leaders*, Mary served **25 years on active duty as a U.S. Navy commander**, leading people in high-stakes, complex environments where clarity, accountability, and decision-making mattered every day. That experience deeply informs her leadership philosophy: leadership isn't theoretical, it's lived, practiced, and tested under pressure.

Today, Mary is a **Hall of Fame Speaker**, a **Colorado Author Hall of Fame inductee**, a **Mensa** member, and the **author of more than 20 books** on leadership, productivity, career development, and succession planning. Her work includes best-selling titles such as *Who Comes Next? Leadership Succession Planning Made Easy*, *Master Your World*, *You Next: A Step-by-Step Guide to Taking Charge of Your Career*, and *Stop Procrastinating Tomorrow*. Her upcoming work, *Leadership Is Tough*, reflects the honest, practical approach she brings to everything she does.

Mary is frequently selected as an **opening or closing keynote speaker** because she sets the strategic tone for events, helping audiences understand what's happening in the economy, how it affects their

organization and people, and what leaders must do next. Her programs are designed to be insightful without being overwhelming, engaging without being fluffy, and practical without being simplistic.

As a Leadership Economist, Mary specializes in translating **economic trends, workforce data, and organizational behavior** into actionable leadership strategies. She helps leaders:

- Prioritize for impact
- Simplify work and decision-making
- Improve communication and teamwork
- Build bench strength and prepare future leaders
- Use technology and AI responsibly to improve productivity

Mary is also the creator of several proprietary tools used by organizations nationwide, including the **Leader's Resource Vault**, the **Leader's Blind Spot Assessment**, and the **AI Readiness & Productivity Assessment**. These tools ensure that learning continues long after a keynote or training session ends, turning insight into sustained action.

What sets Mary apart is her ability to **respect leaders' intelligence and time**. She doesn't lecture. She doesn't sugarcoat. And she doesn't believe leadership should be overly complicated just to sound impressive. Instead, she delivers clear frameworks, relatable stories, and practical tools leaders can use immediately.

Clients consistently describe Mary as:

- Engaging and relatable
- Strategic and practical
- Insightful and humorous
- Easy to work with
- Focused on outcomes, not just inspiration

Through Productive Leaders, Mary partners with organizations that want more than motivation—they want content, clarity, capability, and results. Whether she is delivering a keynote, facilitating a leadership program, or guiding strategic conversations, Mary's goal is always the same: to help leaders accomplish their personal and professional goals while leading **with purpose, confidence, and impact**.