



# Don't Let the Sidewalk End HOW TO Create a Revolution Patrick J. Howie

# This manifesto is about creating revolutions.

Not big political revolutions, although it could help there too, but revolutions of any size, in any field or industry. It is also about innovating—how to be better at it and how innovations, properly nourished, are the catalysts of revolutions.

To start with, we should all recognize that innovation is a process, not an event. When the process results in dramatic change, it is called a revolution. At any one time there are numerous revolutions underway that will affect our life. We have a choice—we can be a part of the revolution or we can deal with it when it comes. In our modern world, I really don't think the latter option is a viable choice.

This manifesto was written to help you become a revolutionary in your field—just try not to hurt anyone else with it. In it you will find nine rules that will guide you on your path to world domination... or whatever else you want to achieve (and if it is world dominance, then stop reading right now!). These rules are inspired by the ideas presented in my book *The Evolution of Revolutions*, which holds the keys to world domination and eternal life\* (\* these statements have not been approved by the FDA).

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When the process results in dramatic change, it is called a revolution.

## Revolution Rule #1: Never bet the house on green at the roulette wheel.

I am not a gambler, but I know that out of 38 possible “pockets” for the ball to land on a roulette wheel, there are only two that are green. Needless to say, the odds of that ball landing on green aren’t good. Which is why good gamblers never bet all of their money on green—the risk is just too high. Similarly, successful revolutionaries understand that they face risks, but they are not risk takers. They would never bet it all on green, and you shouldn’t either.

Being successful isn’t about taking unnecessary risks; it is about taking calculated risks—which is what we all do anyway. Successful revolutionaries do not just jump into the fray (don’t go quit your job just yet), they figure out the lay of the land, what it takes to succeed, and most importantly what their backup plans are. Yes, plans—not plan. Revolutionaries realize that their plan will not work out as designed. In fact, they recognize that it could fail disastrously and they already know what they will do if that happens!

Go ahead, create that big bold plan—and all of the other just-in-case backup and contingency plans—then go for it!

## Revolution Rule #2: Hold someone else’s hand.

We like to think of our revolutionaries as singular and solitary figures that were able to change the world through their own intelligence and determination. We like to think that, but it has nothing to do with reality. Revolutionaries do not do it alone, never have and never will. But we like to personalize the story and give the credit to one person. The most successful didn’t do it alone, and you shouldn’t try to.

So, if you want to create a revolution, then please find some like-minded comrades first. Otherwise, your revolution will be short lived. The solitary revolutionary is like the King without a kingdom.

The importance of creating a revolution goes beyond just having others in on your plot; you need them at every step along the way to make sure you are on the right path. You want to increase the speed and quality of innovation—then you need a team. You want to build an effective organization—then you need a team. You want to get the word out—then you need a team.

Find someone else that has a similar vision but with different skills and ask them to hold your hand as you leap into the future, otherwise your leap will just be one big fall.

### Revolution Rule #3: Bring a horseshoe.

For some people, a horseshoe is considered a lucky charm. While being lucky is nice, and can sure be helpful in your endeavors, I wouldn't assume that your luck is going to be any better than average. But the concept of a horseshoe is very important for revolutionaries-to-be.

First of all, when recruiting your comrades, you should make sure to strike the right balance between your similarities and your differences. If you all have the same opinions, backgrounds, and experience, then you will not have the breadth within the group necessary to see, understand, and explore the full range of possible solutions. On the contrary, if you are too different, then you will not be able to communicate effectively and efficiently and will fail to bring your disparate opinions, backgrounds, and experiences together to find a common ground to work from.

You dramatically increase the odds that you will successfully solve those inevitable problems that you and your comrades will face when you make sure that you have a group that isn't too similar or dissimilar. The horseshoe can bring luck, if you understand how to keep away from the ends—embrace diversity... up to a point.

## Revolution Rule #4: Listen to the noise.

There is a reason that the most famous revolutionaries tend to be relatively young—they listen to the noise. As we gain experience, we get better and better and quickly ignoring the “noise” and identifying the “signal.” This makes us increasingly efficient... but also makes us increasingly less likely to be a revolutionary.

Sometimes the “noise” is actually the signal that we are looking for. Those with less experience discard less information. While this frequently leads them to be less efficient, since most noise is just noise, it also makes them much more likely to find the signal hidden in the noise.

Most innovations and revolutions start out as just noise. If you want to be a revolutionary, then you need to lower your noise filter and get re-used to the discordance.

Listen to the noise—there is harmony in there; you just need to listen for it.

## Revolution Rule #5: Look for the top of mountain, not the top of the hill.

When trying to create your revolution you will inevitably stumble across numerous problems, some of which are going to be severe and potentially fatal to the cause. Your search for a solution to these problems is often like trying to find the mountain in the middle of a really big field covered in fog. As you search you will find an incline and start moving up—progress! As you continue to climb you feel like you are getting closer and closer to your goal. But when you get to the top you realize that it is just a hill!

When trying to solve a problem, there are a lot of hills but only one mountain. You will frequently climb a hill just to have to go back down again and start from the bottom. This is okay. But finding the mountain can take a while, and you need to be ready for that.

Be prepared to go back to the beginning and try again as soon as you find out that the path you are on, though going up, will never end at the top of the mountain.

We have a choice—we can be a part of the revolution or we can deal with it when it comes.

### Revolution Rule #6: Look for the faces in the vase.

For most problems, revolutionaries have all of the information they need to find the solution—they just need to look at that information differently. Both revolutionaries and reactionaries are looking at the same information; they just come to different conclusions.

There is a classic visual paradox where there is a picture of a vase that, when looked at slightly differently, all of a sudden looks like two faces talking to each other. We all know numerous other examples, like the old woman-young woman picture or the ballerina that turns to her left or to her right. The revolutionary sees both pictures while the reactionary only sees one.

Step back and look at your information from different angles. You will see that there are numerous pictures in there, including the one that you are looking for.

## Revolution Rule #7: Help someone else see the faces in the vase.

Congratulations, you have found a new way to look at something—you can see the faces in the vase! Too bad everyone else just sees the vase. If you want to actually create a revolution, you need to help everyone else see the faces also.

And if you have ever tried to help someone else see both images, you know how hard it can be. You need to remember that just because you see it, not everyone else can. It isn't always easy to see—have patience, but keep trying.

You have to turn your reactionaries into revolutionaries.

Step back and look at your information from different angles. You will see that there are numerous pictures in there, including the one that you are looking for.

## Revolution Rule #8: Pray for enemies.

As you try to convert reactionaries into revolutionaries, I implore you to listen to them—they are the key to your success. As much as you don't want to believe it, the idea behind your revolution is not as good as you think. In fact, it is probably barely better than the status quo!

This is why you need resistance. Resistance is natural and healthy—it will help you to improve your idea and figure out what the true value is. You should embrace all of the challenges you face as opportunities to make things better.

But enemies are important for another reason—they validate that what you are working on matters. We all know that the worst reaction you can have is indifference, not resistance. If your idea (or product or service) is received with indifference, then quickly re-evaluate what is wrong. Why don't they care as much as you?

A revolution requires passion—you must have it and you must inspire it.

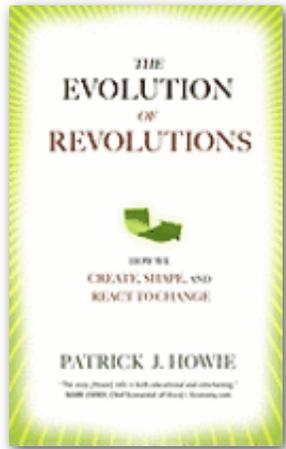
## Revolution Rule #9: Don't let the sidewalk end.

A revolution is a process, not an event. It is not the result of a single great leap forward but the result of a lot of little inspirations that lead to successive improvements and refinements.

If you ever get to a point where you feel that the revolution is mature and has little room to evolve, then get out of the way and let others take over—for a true revolution never ends.

**Don't let the revolution be a passing fad. 🚫**

# info



## BUY THE BOOK

Get more details or buy a copy of Patrick J.

Howe's [The Evolution of Revolution](#).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrick J. Howie (Maple Glen, PA) has spent two decades studying the social process of innovation as an economist, head of product development for a venture capital-backed start-up, and as creator of the social prediction website [ABetterGuess.com](#). His work has been cited and published in numerous publications including *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Patrick holds a patent for A Unique Method and System of Analyzing the Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies.

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