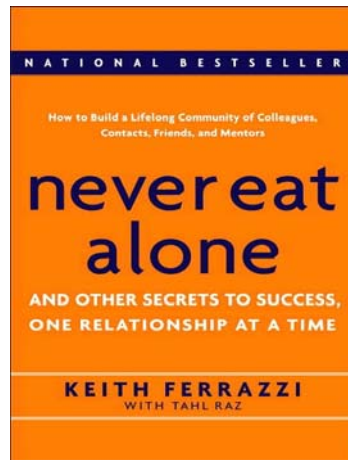


Never Eat Alone

And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time



Author/s: Keith Ferrazzi with Tahl Raz
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■ The Big Idea

In *Never Eat Alone*, Keith Ferrazzi asserts that people and relationships are central to success in both business and in life. If people treat others with respect, candor, and generosity, they will build a network of loyal and trusted business connections. Interdependence and interconnectedness will be the two major socioeconomic forces of the 21st century.

Among the skills and habits he advocates are:

- Do one's homework before meeting with new people
- Create a database of names of people one wants to know
- Warm the cold call
- Become an ally of gatekeepers
- Follow up encounters immediately via phone, note, or email
- Use conventions to expand one's network
- Hold mixed interest dinner parties
- Develop the skill of small talk
- "Ping," or casually communicate, all the time

Features of the Book

Reading Time: 5 to 6 hours; 298 pages

Never Eat Alone is a quick read, written in a relaxed, conversational style, and is filled with specific, easily adapted techniques and strategies about how to foster and develop effective networking skills. Many of the author's key points are made in list form, and he includes "Connectors' Hall of Fame" sections which cite historical as well as contemporary figures to demonstrate the timelessness and wide applicability of the practices he advocates. An index is included.

Although chapters may be read randomly, a straight-through reading gives better insight into the author's character and the depth of his convictions, and will clarify and validate his methods.

INTRODUCTION

Author Keith Ferrazzi believes that people and relationships are central to success in business and in life, and his own personal story provides a compelling testament to the power of networking. However, the networking which he advocates in *Never Eat Alone* is not one of back-slapping and glad-handing; instead, he encourages fostering a mindset of personal loyalty, respect, honesty, and generosity, and asserts that it will be repaid with business success. People who are "Super-Connectors" share a skill rather than a gift, and this is a skill that can be mastered. The book demonstrates how.

THE MIND-SET

Ferrazzi asserts that “self-help is a misnomer,” and says that his success has been rooted in willingness to seek both guidance and help from the most successful people. He begins by telling his own success story. The son of a factory worker and a housecleaner, he graduated from Yale and then from Harvard Business School, going on to become the youngest partner in history at Deloitte & Touche Consulting. Next, he became the youngest chief marketing officer in the Fortune 500 during his tenure at Starwood Hotels and Resorts. Having earned a place on Crain’s “40 Under 40” list, and been named one of the Davos World Economic Forum’s Global Leaders of Tomorrow, he now runs Ferrazzi Greenlight, his own successful marketing and sales consulting firm, and advises CEOs worldwide.

Americans have inherited a frontier ethic which suggests that ‘real men’ go it alone, never show weakness, keep their cards close to the chest, and generally cultivate a tough-as-nails demeanor, as well as a kind of social Darwinism in which fierce competition rewards the fittest with survival. While this mind-set led to business success for many in the 19th and 20th centuries, it is a model which may have outlived its usefulness.

Ferrazzi’s own ability to attend the best private schools near his small hometown within the coal mining area of Pennsylvania resulted from his father’s willingness to ask a company’s CEO for help. This is an example of the “genius of audacity,” and demonstrates that asking for help need not be a sign of weakness. While growing up, his job caddying at a prestigious country club provided frequent opportunities to observe members of the local elite. He learned that no one succeeds alone, and watched these community leaders sharing time, effort, and compassion with each other. They were not manipulative; they kept no tally of who owed whom how many favors. Instead, they understood that everyone has something to give as well as something they need, and that by helping each other they helped themselves as well.

Ferrazzi credits this mind-set far more than his Harvard MBA for his business success. He suggests that a sense of mission is fundamental to this mind-set, and emphasizes the need to discover one’s passion. He calls the place where one’s passions and capabilities intersect the “blue flame,” and says that this, the hottest part of the fire, is where one can influence and

improve the world most effectively. Discovering one's mission requires self-assessment of one's goals and dreams. It may be helpful to ask family, friends, associates, and mentors their opinions about one's strengths and weaknesses. Therapists can also be helpful at this stage because they are trained to listen and to help people verbalize their thoughts.

Building a network involves a process, or a system, and so the next step is to put the dream into writing and begin to plan. A useful tool is the Relationship Action Plan, or RAP, which involves three parts: 1) develop goals to fulfill one's mission, 2) connect these goals to the people, places, and things that can make them become a reality, and 3) determine how to reach out to the people who will help accomplish these goals.

RAP requires developing and listing in writing specific, detailed, and realistic goals of what one wants to accomplish within the next three years, and then to work backward and establish intermediate quarterly goals. Next, the people, places, and things necessary to realize these short-term goals should be listed beside them. Finally, it is important to identify individuals who will become a "Personal Board of Advisors" to help maintain focus and accountability while working to achieve these goals.

To build a network, start with a list of family, friends, and neighbors, and list their places of work, their hobbies, and their affiliations. Each person provides an introduction to an entirely new circle, and networks grow exponentially. Expand networks by joining clubs, based on shared hobbies or shared causes; taking a class; or offering to teach a class at the local community college; volunteering; finding and joining local alumni clubs; and even starting one's own club.

This process can be intimidating, and Ferrazzi himself acknowledges fear of failure in networking. However, he suggests, the choice is between taking risks to pursue one's dream, or risking nothing and ensuring mediocrity. Coping strategies include observing and learning from people who seem to mingle effortlessly (super-connectors, such as Bill Clinton); overcoming fear of public speaking through the training offered by Toastmasters International; and simply forcing oneself to meet one new person each week until it becomes routine.

However, it is not necessary to become “the networking jerk,” or the person who communicates little besides ruthless ambition and blatant insincerity. Thanks to answering machines and spam blockers, it is easier than ever to avoid these people. Helpful tips are:

- Don't schmooze. Spend meaningful time with a few people rather than working the crowd.
- Don't repeat gossip.
- Be ready and willing to share your own expertise and connections.
- Be consistently respectful of other people, regardless of status.
- Be transparent. Straight dealing engenders trust.

THE SKILL SET

Beyond fostering a mind-set of cooperation and generosity, successful networking requires developing specific skills. First among those skills is doing one's homework before meeting with new people, including researching individuals via Google, requesting company literature, or checking resources in the public library. It is useful to know the person's professional interests, and how their mission might help advance one's own.

It is helpful to develop a database of names of people one knows, as well as people one wants to know, who can help accomplish one's goals. This need not involve high-tech equipment, and may be accomplished equally well using pen and paper. List people's names, contact information, company affiliation, and areas of responsibility, as well as the names of the real decision-makers within a company. The “Top Ten” or “The Twenty-Five Best” lists in newspapers and magazines provide other names, and it is useful to maintain a wish list of people one hopes to meet someday just because they sound interesting.

Another skill to perfect is the art of the cold call. Ferrazzi recommends the following rules for what he calls ‘warm calling’:

- Draft off a reference. Get your foot in the door and establish credibility via a mutual friend or even acquaintance.

- State a value proposition. Show respect by being brief and direct, and know what you have to offer which can help solve their problem.
- Talk a little, say a lot. The objective is to get an appointment in which the proposition can be discussed in detail.
- Be prepared to offer a compromise. Secure a definite follow-up as a minimum.

Become an ally of ‘the gatekeeper,’ or the office manager, assistant, or aide who manages access to the person one is trying to reach. These gatekeepers possess a great deal of power. Moreover, anyone who has developed the appropriate mind-set treats each person with courtesy and respect and remembers to thank “the little people” once they have granted access to the chief.

Because it is impossible to network 24/7, capitalize on small opportunities to build networks, including sharing a workout, a hobby, or a special event like a concert. Meet people in one’s wider circle for coffee or a quick meal. In fact, the distinction between one’s corporate and leisure-time lives may be pointless because friendships grow around all sorts of shared interests.

However the initial meeting is arranged, follow-up is vital. Follow up within twelve to twenty-four hours of a first meeting by phone, email, or handwritten note. At a conference, follow up by email within minutes. Whatever the medium, a good follow-up will include:

- use of the person’s name and an expression of having enjoyed the encounter
- a reference to the topic discussed and/or to a shared interest
- affirmation of any plans or commitments made during the conversation
- an expression of thanks for the person’s time

The increasingly rare handwritten note is also surprisingly effective.

Because conferences are, by definition, gatherings of people who share a particular interest, they provide excellent opportunities to expand one’s circle. Ferrazzi puts his own spin on the process: sign up for a convention or conference, and then identify and contact the organizer well ahead of time with an offer of help. Being an insider offers better-than-average access to

speakers and other key figures. If one possesses or can acquire some local knowledge, it is possible to establish oneself as a useful person for everyone at the conference to know. Local knowledge may be used to organize a small dinner at a popular local restaurant, to direct people to local amenities, or even to conduct one's own mini-sightseeing tour. This enables others to expand their own networks, while positioning oneself as an enterprising leader.

Conferences also present opportunities for getting used to public speaking. Start small, by making an announcement, or by asking the first question -- a good one -- at a post-presentation Q&A session. Unfailingly, this triggers someone to request a meeting afterward. The organizer may also find a room for conducting an informal forum or making a presentation of one's own, and a small audience can provide an easy introduction to public speaking.

For Ferrazzi, the purpose of a convention is not information, but introductions. Having helped organize the event positions one to know who plans to attend and to have learned about them. He makes lists of those whom he hopes to meet and uses break times to orchestrate what he calls the "Deep Bump": an encounter that leaves the other person wanting to know more about you and your mission.

An effective strategy is to use "super-connectors," or people who are master networkers, as cornerstones to one's network. These people tend to be concentrated in certain professions, and are restaurateurs, headhunters, lobbyists, fundraisers, public relations professionals, politicians, or journalists. Further, each person in one's network provides a link with another network, and it is helpful to collaborate between networks.

Finally, develop the skill of small talk, as it is a skill which can be learned. Ferrazzi himself practices a cautious disregard for the conventional ban on discussing love, money, and politics, and instead believes that being honest, open and vulnerable provides a genuine basis for an emotional bond. He suggests that effective communicators learn to gauge and adjust to the styles of others, and refers to the Johari Window, a model of communication developed by two American psychologists about differences among people about their comfort revealing information about themselves.

Dale Carnegie is a man who “got it right,” even though some today may express amusement toward his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Carnegie realized that human nature is universal and unchanging, and research by psychologist Abraham Maslow supports Carnegie’s intuition that everyone longs to be their best self. The techniques Carnegie taught (the smile, the firm handshake, etc.) proceed from recognizing each person’s human dignity and worth, and being willing to help them accomplish their goals.

TURNING CONNECTIONS INTO COMPATRIOTS

Developing contacts provides only a beginning toward productive networking. The key to effective networking and engendering loyal relationships requires developing an understanding of the things which fundamentally matter to people. Ferrazzi quotes Michael Milken, the financial wizard, who told him that “There are three things in this world that engender deep emotional bonds between people. They are health, wealth, and children.”

Equally important to ‘turning connections into compatriots’ is helping others solve their problems rather than focusing primarily on one’s own success. In fact, Ferrazzi says that “Real power comes from being indispensable. Indispensability comes from being a switchboard, parceling out as much information, contacts, and goodwill to as many people—in as many different worlds—as possible.” This kind of knowledge brokering is “social arbitrage,” and it is a fairly easy skill to learn. It can be made into a game: when someone mentions a problem, think of a solution. If that solution is, ‘I don’t know, but So-and-So will,’ then the next step is to put the person with the problem in touch with So-and-So. The game is played by offering help before being asked; this is career karma: what you give determines what you get.

Keeping vast and disparate networks alive and well requires repetition, or ‘pinging.’ Pinging is informal, regular communication in creative ways ranging from emails, voice mails, telephone calls, or snail mail. Keeping a relationship requires a minimum of monthly contact, twice monthly contact to

develop a real friendship, and two to three pings per year to maintain a workable relationship. Use a system to list and categorize contacts; each person has to develop a system which works for them. One system is to label each contact as a 1, 2, or 3; a “1” gets contacted monthly, a “2” receives a quarterly phone call or e-mail, and a “3” is contacted once a year.

Believing strongly in the power of sharing meals together, Ferrazzi suggests identifying “anchor tenants,” people who form a bridge between two circles or whom many others would enjoy meeting, and getting those anchor tenants together at dinner parties. However, he emphasizes that these get-togethers are supposed to be fun, and warns against turning them into business dinner meetings or dinner sales pitches.

TRADING UP AND GIVING BACK

To differentiate oneself on the wider stage, develop “a unique point of view” or brand, because “The one thing no one has figured out how to outsource is the creation of ideas. You can’t replace people who day in and day out offer the kind of content or unique ways of thinking that promise their company an edge.” Ferrazzi lists ten tips toward becoming an expert with a ‘unique’ point of view:

1. Take a look at the cutting edge.
2. Ask the “stupid” questions.
3. Know yourself and your abilities.
4. Keep on learning.
5. Stay healthy.
6. Try new things.
7. Refuse to give up.
8. Know the new technology.
9. Develop a niche.
10. Follow the money.

Forget the slick presentations and learn how to tell a good story – one’s own story. Because so many white-collar jobs are being eliminated through outsourcing, technology, and entrepreneurialism, Ferrazzi agrees with Tom Peters that every worker must be “head marketer for the brand called You” and needs to “create [their own] micro-equivalent of the Nike swoosh.” This requires developing a Personal Branding Message, or PDM, which people will associate with you as well as creating a specific style which people will remember.

Donald Trump presents an example of successful self-promotion whom banks supported even after his bankruptcy because of his name recognition. Successful self-promotion involves building relationships with the media, and he recommends identifying oneself to the media as a reliable source of information in one’s industry who is always available for an interview or a comment. The first mention in the media, especially in print, will generate others, because journalists cannot survive without good stories. It is best to start out with small, local publications such as the hometown newspaper or an industry trade journal, but more articles and visibility will come to those whose ideas are important and timely.

An action plan for self-promotion begins with representing oneself to the media rather than delegating this to a public relations company, writing and sending press releases about significant developments. It is vital to educate oneself ahead of time about the specific audience of a reporter’s publication, as well as the importance of making one’s story unique, or “working the angles,” so that the story is worth covering.

In order to develop a good relationship with the media, begin with small, local publications such as neighborhood newspapers and industry digital newsletters, and make oneself available to reporters while being respectful of their deadlines. This necessitates learning to be concise both over the telephone and in writing. It also requires avoiding being too aggressive, and knowing when to back off.

Always be careful of what is said, remembering that it is all on the record and that “All press is not good press, even if they spell your name right.” Instead, focus on promoting one’s brand and one’s mission, and not merely promoting oneself.

Being respectful of reporters and appreciative of their time and effort can go a long way toward creating an effective media network. This involves human touches, such as expressing gratitude for articles in the form of thank you notes or e-mails. Connecting one's mission with famous people can also encourage media coverage.

Once an article about one's mission has been created, make sure it is circulated widely. Attach the article to a funny email and send it to one's contact list, or make it available to alumni magazines or class notes. Constantly be creative about gaining publicity through moonlighting, pro bono work, teaching a class, speaking at conferences, conducting internal workshops, and so on.

Although everyone should be willing to start small, sooner or later, every mission leads to encounters with those who have already achieved status in their field. However, wanting to meet the powerful and famous is not necessarily a bad thing, and spending time with powerful, accomplished people is acceptable and helpful to achieving one's goals. Suggested activities include spending time on boards, participating in political fundraisers, playing sports (especially golf), and filling leadership roles in professional organizations. However, be careful not to allow powerful new connections to interfere with older, established connections with a wide variety of people.

Meeting with the movers and shakers in any field leads to mentor/protégé relationships. Mentoring is one of the most effective ways to develop human potential, and an apprenticeship model is still used in many fields, including teaching and medicine. Constantly learning from others and sharing that knowledge is just plain good management practice which benefits both parties.

Somewhat surprisingly, Ferrazzi suggests that "balance is a myth," and acknowledges that there are no boundaries in his own life between the personal and the professional. As he says, "If your life is filled with people you care about and who care for you, why concern yourself with "balancing" anything at all?"

Our current era represents a break from the 'rugged individualism' of the 19th and 20th centuries, and community and alliances dominate the economy and society of the 21st century. Modern technology is further enhancing alliances and relationships, as evidenced by the growth and influence of social networking sites and software and the prospering blogosphere. Indeed, Ferrazzi says, "...love, reciprocity, and knowledge are not like bank accounts that grow smaller as you use them....more friends beget more friends, success begets even more success...giving begets giving. At no time in history has this law of abundance been more apparent than in this connected age..."

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