



Never Eat Alone

And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time

by Keith Ferrazzi with Tahl Raz

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Take-Aways

- Build your career on your ability to make a personal connection with other people.
- To make powerful connections, be generous with your time and your existing social connections.
- "Super-connectors" are people who link different social networks.
- Business alliances are more important in flat organizational structures.
- Do not be afraid to use your goodwill with a client. It is a renewable resource.
- In college and throughout his political career, Bill Clinton kept a record of the people he met and what they talked about with him. He knew the value of goodwill.
- Networking is a constant process; the worst time to start is when you need something.
- Instead of "cold calls," make credible and valuable "warm calls."
- When you meet people, establish rapport and common interests, and then follow up.
- To start a conversation with someone new, heed the person's individual style, watch for telling body language, focus attention on the other person and be interesting.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall

9

Applicability

9

Innovation

6

Style

9

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Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) Why personal communication is the basis for accelerated career development; 2) How to enlarge your network; and 3) How to talk to people so that they become your social friends and business contacts.

Recommendation

Author Keith Ferrazzi is a master networker who claims that his Palm Pilot holds the names of 5,000 people who will take his phone calls. That's a powerful claim. Starting as a self-made man of humble origins, Ferrazzi developed his social network by helping people and by developing and mastering the techniques for networking. Here, he shares his methods. His light, engaging and entertaining story will motivate those who want to enhance their social and business friendships. The author advocates generosity as the key to success. That's a radical business concept, but he claims it works. It's certainly worth a try. *getAbstract.com* recommends this book to people who want to be more social, make friends and expand their business connections. It should also prove invaluable for those who are sick of sitting at home on Saturday nights.

Abstract

Social Connections

Though some business leaders still pride themselves on rugged individualism, most successful executives learn to build wide social networks. In many ways, cultivating and developing relationships transcends individual skills. If you have the ability to connect personally with other people, you can build your career on that asset alone.

Successful networking means both meeting people and, in turn, helping them attain their goals. Networking – a commonly misunderstood term – requires being generous with your time and connections in a process of continuous giving and taking. People who are in the process of developing social networks should assist each other as they continue to include new members in their circle. When you help someone, you benefit from a geometric expansion, producing more opportunities for more people. This creates an ever-expanding association – the more people, the better. The Internet is based on the same principle: being open to all. The more people who contribute, the greater the Web becomes.

Social networking is increasingly important as business organizations become flatter and less hierarchical. In a flat structure, business alliances are crucial. The “zero-gain” environment in a hierarchical organization increases the chances that everyone in a transaction will suffer. Building relationships to counteract that environment benefits everyone, increases profits and sets the stage for positive collaborations.

This approach contrasts sharply with business morés in the 1950s, when workers provided loyalty in exchange for long-term employment. Under this model, corporations offered job security and became each employee's focal point. Today, workers are independent agents. They have transferred their loyalty from the corporation to their interpersonal relationships. If anything, rugged individualism will curtail your career in today's companies. To boost your career, develop relationship-building skills that strengthen teams and encourage leadership.

“Whom you meet, how you meet them, and what they think of you afterward should not be left to chance.”

“The law of probability ensures that the more new people you know, the more opportunities will come your way and the more help you'll get at critical junctures in your career.”

"Poverty, I realized wasn't only a lack of financial resources; it was isolation from the kind of people that could help you make more of yourself."

"Before my eyes, I saw proof that success breeds success and, indeed, the rich do get richer."

"Success in any field, but especially in business, is about working with people, not against them."

"A network functions precisely because there's recognition of mutual need."

Identify the people you want to meet. Seek knowledgeable mentors who have social or leadership skills you want to emulate or find people who can connect you to areas of professional growth. Beware of a few pitfalls. A consultant who wanted to branch out into the entertainment industry called a classmate in Los Angeles. That contact patched him through to a friend who was putting together deals for Hollywood studios. But when the consultant asked for an introduction to a key entertainment executive, the dealmaker refused, unwilling to exhaust social capital to help a stranger. The wheeler-dealer suffered from a common misconception about relationships. Goodwill can be replenished. It is not in limited supply.

Former President Bill Clinton recognized the value of goodwill early in his career. In college, he began collecting the names of individuals he met. When asked why, he said that he hoped one day to be the governor of Arkansas. At networking events many years later, Clinton warmly greeted people he had met years before and recalled their interests. He showed the power of focused goals and real connections with people. This is not effortless. Winston Churchill's contemporaries saw him as a fantastic conversationalist and dinner guest, yet he prepared for gatherings for hours, rehearsing the comments and jokes he would share with specific people.

Building Relationships Today

Many people make the mistake of starting to network when they need something, but the worst time to network is when you are desperate. The best time is when you don't need anything. To enlarge your circle, try the following:

- Begin a new project that will teach you new skills and allow you to meet new people.
- Run for leadership positions in local organizations that interest you.
- Join your alumni or professional group to meet people or find a new position.
- Take classes on subjects that pertain to your job.

Gaining new talents can make you a more inspirational leader. This matters in a competitive environment – where high-caliber but unhappy employees can find new work easily – because people like to work for those who inspire them. With today's improved communications, the grapevine quickly spreads the word about good or bad managers. People hear about poor management practices, bad products or mistreated employees almost instantly. At the opposite extreme, the public also widely recognizes quality management. The late Katherine Graham, publisher of the *Washington Post*, ran the newspaper corporation with personal integrity. When her husband died and she became publisher, many observers thought she was too shy and reserved. Yet she managed with sincerity and compassion, enabling her to build honest relationships, even with people who were at political odds with the newspaper.

Warm Up Exercises

If you have an appointment, prepare. Have a plan. Don't leave anything to chance. Use the Internet, the library, annual reports and public relations materials to learn as much as possible about the company you are visiting and the person you are meeting. Study the firm's recent financial results and new products. During the meeting, try to discover the executive's personal motivation and interests. Find out if he or she has a business problem you can solve.

Meeting new people is challenging, but never make a cold call. Instead make a "warm call," starting with an introduction from a common contact. In a warm call:

“In the information age, openness – whether it concerns your intentions, the information you provide, or even your admiration – has become a valuable and much sought-after attribute.”

“But the fact is that small talk – the kind that happens between two people who don’t know each other – is the most important talk we do.”

“In building a network, remember: Above all, never, ever disappear.”

“You have to view getting to know new people as a challenge and an opportunity.”

- Establish your credibility by mentioning your contact or your relevant previous work.
- Clearly explain why your call is valuable to the person you are contacting.
- State your willingness to meet with the other person at his or her convenience.
- If you cannot set a specific meeting, formalize the next step in your business.

This sounds easier than it is, especially when you are dealing with a large corporation. To find the right person, be creative. Review your contacts and see if anyone knows someone at the target company. In one instance, Sony’s advertising agency introduced the company to an entrepreneur who was offering a new technology. By serving as a facilitator and conduit, the agency demonstrated its helpfulness to Sony and assisted a potential future client.

This approach is also essential in networking. For a network to be viable, it must be visible. As the centerpiece of your network, be accessible and noticeable. Maintain a purposeful social calendar. Just look at the professionals. One CEO keeps in contact with his company and his industry by speaking with some 50 people daily. In a more expanded example, note Hillary Clinton’s activities during a political trip to the West Coast. Each day, she awoke at 5 a.m. to phone her office on the East Coast, made four or five speeches, attended evening cocktail parties, met people at various homes and then reviewed her activities with her staff before confirming the next day’s schedule. She met an estimated 2,000 people in a single day.

Networking on a large scale (even if not quite that large) requires special social skills and determination. When you have several people to meet and not much time, invite them to have dinner together. If you need private time with some of the guests, invite one to arrive before dinner and another to stay after dessert. When you arrange such meetings, be sensitive to the chemistry among different people. Invite people of varied personalities and backgrounds to make the meeting interesting.

Properly used, conferences also can be valuable places to meet people, network and conduct business. To get the most from a conference, help organize it. This gives you excellent access to the attendees, speakers and social events. For a more aggressive approach, arrange your own meeting during the conference. Invite a select group to a special location or event.

Stay in Touch

When you meet new people, establish a rapport, discuss interesting things and try to demonstrate that you have a common interest. A meeting without a follow-up produces nothing, so send an e-mail or letter within 12 to 24 hours after your initial contact. Follow-ups solidify personal connections. Convey how much you enjoyed your meeting and try to arrange another session. Offer to help your new acquaintance, instead of recalling what he or she offered to do for you. Don’t forget to thank the person who made the introduction in the first place.

Your network can be invaluable. A 1974 sociological study found that 56% of the men in Newton, Massachusetts, found their jobs through friends, as opposed to recruiters, ads or employer interviews. Of those who got their jobs through a friend, only 55% saw that person regularly. Surprisingly, 28% said they rarely spent time with the person who connected them to their jobs. Clearly, even weak relationships have power.

A group of casual acquaintances can be a window into an entirely new network of fresh ideas, personalities and friendships. While social networks can include hundreds of

“Even when there is disagreement, I’ve found people will respect you more for putting your cards on the table.”

“When you’ve figured out what your content is, tell an inspiring story that will propel your friends and associates into action with spirit and fearlessness, motivated and mobilized by your simple and profound storytelling.”

individuals, usually just a few people serve as the conduits to most of the others. These “super-connectors” also serve as the main hub to other networks. Psychologist Stanley Milgram studied this interpersonal super-connectivity. In 1967, he asked some people in Nebraska to each mail a package to a stranger, a Boston stockbroker, by sending it to other people until it reached someone who knew the broker and could pass it along. To begin, they had to send the package to someone they knew on a first-name basis who knew more about stockbrokers than they did. One-third of the letters reached the Boston broker after an average of six mailings. Milgram found that many of his participants forwarded their packages to the same three people in Nebraska. These three “super-connectors” linked the Nebraska group to those who reached the Boston stockbroker. Milgram derived the concept of “six degrees of separation” from this experiment.

Aside from “super-connectors,” you can arrange serious networking through headhunters, lobbyists, fundraisers, politicians, public relations people and journalists. This has an impact on your business. After all, salespeople used to spend most of their time arranging meetings; today, salespeople spend the bulk of their time building relationships.

Why Small Talk Is Big

The ability to make effective small talk will help you establish rapport and make a positive impression. A Stanford University Business School researcher found that being a fluid talker was the most important factor in the success of the school’s graduates. This means having the ability to conduct a conversation with different types of people at various intellectual levels. It does not mean being noncontroversial. Being distinctive is a way to get noticed while showing that you have strong beliefs.

Dale Carnegie, who wrote *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, discovered the power of great conversation. While he was looking for work, Carnegie offered to teach a debating class at the YMCA in New York. His first classes had fewer than 10 students. After a few classes, Carnegie asked his students to talk about their experiences. He noticed that as they spoke more frequently, they became more confident. Over time, his class became so popular that he had to train additional instructors. His homespun approach taught people to be good listeners, be sincere, let others do most of the talking, smile and be honest – ideas that still work.

To start an interesting conversation with a stranger:

- Be alert to body language – Smiling makes you more approachable. Maintain eye contact as you speak. Relax your arms. Move your head to indicate you are listening. Don’t be afraid to touch the other person if it is appropriate.
- Make the other person feel like the center of attention – Don’t look around.
- Discuss something interesting and topical – Be talkative, but let others speak, too.
- Be aware of peoples’ different styles – Recognize communication differences. Adjust your speaking and presentation style to the other person.

About The Author

Keith Ferrazzi is founder of Ferrazzi Greenlight, a marketing and sales consulting firm. He has contributed to *Inc.*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Harvard Business Review*. Tahl Raz is an editor at *Fortune Small Business*. He has written for *Inc.*, *The Jerusalem Post* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*.