MINDSET & SUCCESS

Never Eat Alone

by Keith Ferrazzi

Careers run on generous relationships; this is the playbook for building a real network before you need it.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **Don't keep score. Give help first and give it freely — generosity, not greed, is the currency of a real network.**

Ferrazzi's core rule (Ch. 2): it is never only about getting what you want; it is about making sure the people who matter to you get what they want, too.

02 **Build your network before you need it.**

Start when you have nothing to ask for (Ch. 4). Reaching out only in a crisis is not networking, it is job-hunting — people gladly help those they already know and like.

03 **Start from a mission, not from small talk.**

His Relationship Action Plan (Ch. 3) works backward from your 'blue flame' — where passion meets talent: write the goal, list who can help, note what you can offer each person, and let a small board of advisors review the plan.

04 **Do your homework before you meet anyone.**

Research their priorities, passions, and problems first (Ch. 7). Knowing what someone cares about turns awkward small talk into a real conversation.

05 **Never make a cold call. Warm it up first.**

His four rules (Ch. 9): borrow credibility from a shared contact, state the value you offer, fit their schedule completely, and leave with a definite next step instead of a vague 'let's meet sometime.'

06 **Follow up within 12 to 24 hours, or the meeting didn't happen.**

Ferrazzi calls follow-up the hammer and nails of networking (Ch. 13) — and lead with what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.

07 **Work conferences like a commando, not a tourist.**

Pick your target people before you go, make contact early, help run the show if you can (speaking beats attending), and build in reasons to reconnect afterward (Ch. 14).

08 **Get close to super-connectors.**

A small class of people — think star maitre d's, headhunters, journalists — seem to know everyone in several worlds (Ch. 15). Knowing a few multiplies your reach faster than years of ordinary mingling.

09 **Help people with their health, their wealth, and their children.**

Those are the three things people care about most (Ch. 18). Help someone there and you don't make a contact — you earn loyalty for life.

10 **Introduce your people to each other.**

Ferrazzi calls it social arbitrage (Ch. 19): connecting two people who should meet costs you almost nothing, creates value for both, and makes you the person nobody wants to lose touch with.

11 **Ping constantly — staying in touch is 80 percent of the game.**

Ferrazzi's own estimate (Ch. 20). Sort your contacts and keep every relationship warm with short, useful touches — an article, a congratulations, an idea — long before you need anything.

12 **Never eat alone — and make your dinners do double duty.**

Meals happen every day anyway; spend them on relationships, because invisibility is worse than failure (Ch. 11). Host small dinners built around one 'anchor tenant' — a magnetic guest who draws great people — and a single dinner starts new bonds and renews old ones at once (Ch. 21).

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Keith Ferrazzi grew up poor in Pennsylvania steel country, the son of a steelworker and a cleaning lady. Caddying at the local country club, he watched the members — people no smarter or harder-working than his parents — constantly finding each other jobs, funding each other's ideas, and opening doors for each other's kids. His conclusion became the book's thesis: poverty is not just a lack of money; it is isolation from the kind of people who can help you make more of yourself. You can't get there alone, and connecting is a learnable skill, not a birthright.

The first section is mindset. Real networking is generosity without a ledger: don't keep score, give before you receive, and treat your network like a muscle that grows the more you work it — not a pie that shrinks as you share it. Start from your 'blue flame,' where your passion and talent meet, and build a Relationship Action Plan: goals on paper (ten years, three years, one year, sixty days), the people attached to each goal, what you can offer them, and a small board of advisors to review your progress. Build all of it before you need it, be audacious about reaching for people who seem out of your league — and never become the 'networking jerk,' the glad-hander scanning the room for a bigger fish.

The second section is craft. Do your homework on everyone before you meet them, and keep a living list of names — including an aspirational file of people you want to know one day. Never cold-

call: warm every approach with a shared contact, a clear offer of value, total flexibility about timing, and a definite next step, and make gatekeepers your allies instead of obstacles. Share your passions so people meet the real you, follow up within 12 to 24 hours of every meeting, and work conferences like a commando — targets chosen in advance, contact made early, follow-up built in.

The third section turns connections into compatriots. Depth beats breadth: the bonds that last are built by helping people with the three things they care about most — their health, their wealth, and their children. Practice social arbitrage by introducing people who should know each other; generosity with introductions makes you indispensable. Then maintain the whole web with a system of 'pinging' — Ferrazzi reckons 80 percent of building and maintaining relationships is simply staying in touch — plus rituals like the shared meal and the small dinner party built around a magnetic 'anchor tenant' guest.

The final section is trading up and giving back. Become interesting: develop a genuine point of view and content worth sharing, build a personal brand around it, and broadcast it. Create your own gatherings and clubs the way Benjamin Franklin built his Junto. Find mentors, find mentees, and repeat the cycle for your whole career. And forget the myth of balance — Ferrazzi calls it B.S.; the goal is to blend work, friendship, and generosity into one connected life, run from first page to last by the same rule: give more than you get.

DO THIS WEEK

This week, run the Ferrazzi starter play. First, write down your single biggest goal and, under it, the names of five people who could help with it — that is the start of your Relationship Action Plan. Second, ping three dormant contacts with something genuinely useful and no ask attached. Third, turn two meals you would have eaten alone into shared ones, and make at least one of them with someone a level above your usual circle.

Keith Ferrazzi, with Tahl Raz, first published 2005 and expanded in 2014. For anyone whose work depends on relationships, which Ferrazzi would say is everyone.