

Summary of Never Eat Alone

Book written by Keith Ferrazzi

People who know lots of other people win. Keith Ferrazzi tells how he got to know lots of people and how they helped make him widely successful at Deloitte and then Starwood Hotels and then YaYa Media (sold to Yahoo!) and now as a marketing and sales consultant.

It's amazing to me how many best-selling books simply present what should be basic common sense. As the old saying goes, maybe common sense ain't so common.

Never Eat Alone is a mixture of how-to and basic life philosophy. You could have thought of it yourself. The difference between you/me and Keith is, Keith actually took the time to put the words on paper.

The BIG IDEA:

Make it a habit to purposefully connect with other people all the time. Connecting is “a constant process of giving and receiving—of asking for and offering help. By putting people in contact with one another, by giving your time and expertise and sharing them freely, the pie gets bigger for everyone” (15). [If you've read Love is the Killer App you're familiar with this concept. For detailed strategies for connecting in a variety of ways see Thomas J. Stanley's Selling to the Affluent. Dr. Stanley is the one who wrote The Millionaire Next Store.]

Ferrazzi's strategy for connecting:

1. Know what it is you want. The more specific you are about what you want in life, the more profitable your networking endeavors will be. Ferrazzi makes a big deal out of generosity and concern for the other people. [Throughout the book Ferrazzi struggles to hold two opposing concepts: 1) a pure altruistic motive and 2) a self-advancing motive. Someday, I think I'll propose a solution to relieve the tension of these conflicting motives.]
2. Build your network before you need it. Networking is not a short-term, quick fix activity. Rather, it's a lifetime commitment of helping other people be successful. The best time to begin building your network is right now, right where you are. Ferrazzi paints a great mental picture: “Imagine, for a moment, that all your family and friends and associates are a part of a garden. Take a stroll through that garden. What do you see?” (45).
3. Be audacious. You can't build an effective network to help you accomplish your goals by playing it safe. You can't spend all of your time with only the people you already know. “Creating an enriching circle of trusted relationships requires one to be out there, in the mix, all the time” (50).

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When I took on the responsibility of raising money for a school for children with disabilities, I met with a friend who is a successful politician. She said the best thing I could do to help the school was to “be visible.” She said to join Rotary, get active in politics, and make sure I hung out with others who were engaged in improving our community. I attribute at least 20% of the nearly \$2,500,000 we raised since then to her advice.

Need help being audacious? Ferrazzi says to find a role model, learn to speak, get therapy, or just do it (52-53). In the “just do it” category, determine right now how many meetings with new contacts you’re going to have each week and go out there and meet them.

4. While you’re building your network, be sure you don’t become a “networking jerk.”
 - Don’t schmooze. Be genuine.
 - Don’t gossip.
 - Don’t be stingy. Have something of value to give away.
 - Be transparent. You want to meet new people. Tell them you want to meet them.
 - Don’t be too efficient. Networking is not a numbers game. It’s about real connections.

5. Do your homework. Ferrazzi goes overboard researching people he intends to meet. While I agree it’s helpful to know something about your prospective new friend in advance so you’ll have something meaningful to discuss, you’ll have a great opportunity for discovery when you get together.

6. Take names. Now that you know where you want to go, “the next step is to identify the people who can help you get there” (73). My warning: be careful when you start thinking of people because of what they can do for you. No one wants to be “used” as a raw resource in someone else’s plan.

What Ferrazzi means by taking names is simply making a detailed list of all the people you already know, all the organizations you’re a member of, and those in your social and professional circles.

7. Don’t ever make a cold call. Warm up those unknown contacts first by connecting with them by way of someone they already know to build your own credibility. While you’re on the phone with your unknown contact, mention your referral source and then quickly state the value you offer to your contact. Don’t say too much though. You want to say only enough to whet the listener’s appetite and get them to agree to a meeting.

While I agree you should know what you want to accomplish whenever you do call someone, I’m not convinced I need a referral to gain the credibility Ferrazzi says I need. Then again, I’m not a big fan of using the phone to interrupt people I don’t know. I’d

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much rather find a way I'm naturally connected to that person (Rotary, politics, memberships, or associations, for instance) and make my first contact without interrupting my prospective new friend.

8. Managing the Gatekeeper artfully. Ferrazzi offers the traditional strategy of befriending the gatekeeper. I suggest you adopt **a general attitude of honoring and respecting everyone, regardless of their ability to help you**, and you'll generally enjoy your journey. The idea of "managing" something that isn't mine makes me shudder. You already know you should be cordial to "gatekeepers" and they already know they're there to protect their "boss's" time. Instead of managing them, get concerned about what they are concerned about. When you do, you'll be amazed at their response to you. After all, don't you think the "gatekeeper" is quite interested in both his or her success and the boss's? Get on their side of table but do not at all ever think for a moment that you can do anything even close to "managing" them!

9. Never eat alone. This is the nugget that makes the book worthwhile: "In building a network, remember: Above all, never, ever disappear" (94). Take every opportunity to do things with other people. Ferrazzi expands this concept in #10.

10. Share your passions. Though he's an avid networker, **Ferrazzi has never gone to an official networking event**. Instead he networks (gets to know people) wherever he goes, from the first class section of an airplane to baseball games. He suggests you make a list of everything you're passionate about doing, and then make sure you include people from your network when you do those things. The most creative event he suggests is entertaining at home. He started at home events in college. The dinners weren't formal then—just pizza. Now his dinners are considerably more extravagant. What he enjoys most, though, is simply having a bowl of homemade chili with a group of eight or so people at home. Since I have six children, I have never really considered my home to be a venue for building a network. After reading Ferrazzi's book, though, I've started having "events" at my home. For now, I'm including people I've already befriended in other venues and I'm careful to invite folks I think would enjoy meeting each other. Maybe someday I'll expand to people I don't know that well. We'll see.

11. Follow up or fail. Okay. We've all heard this approximately 1.3 million times. Problem is, we don't do it. I'm not sure why most people don't follow up with people they've met. Guilty here. I've met over 1,300 new people, face-to-face, over the past seven years. I wonder how many would remember me if we encountered each other at my favorite coffee shop. Ferrazzi asks a painfully penetrating question: "Why go to all the trouble of meeting new people if you're not going to work on making them a part of your life?"

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Oh, Oh, Oh! I just got it! I think we don't follow up with people because we don't LISTEN to them when we're with them. Because we don't, we don't have a good reason to make a second contact. The solution to that problem is simple: when you're with your new contact, ask lots of questions to discover what intrigues him or her. As soon as you are by yourself again, make an immediate note capturing specific reasons, based upon what your new friend cares about, for making another contact. Make that contact right away.

12. Be a conference commando. Many people go to conferences to hear speakers, visit booths, and get free goodies. Ferrazzi ignores those things and makes sure he connects with a few key people he has identified as prospective friends before he even goes to the conference. While he's at a conference, he works hard to build relationships with people and to create reasons for reconnecting with them sometime after the conference is over. The important thing is to use the conferences to jump start relationships and not to make sales. If you really want to get the most out of conferences, be the keynote speaker or at least a workshop leader.

[Scared to speak in public? In 1997, I was too. Now I'm a member of the National Speakers Association, a professional organization for professional speakers. It was a long a painful journey from pathetic, scared-to-death, boring speaker to at least a confident and somewhat entertaining speaker. I actually enjoy getting in front of a group and sharing with them something meaningful in a way that gets their attention and then improves their lives.

13. Connect with the connectors. Seems like some mysterious force compels sales and marketing writers to say something about the famous six degrees of separation phenomenon, yet no one seems to present the essence of the original study. Most likely YOU are NOT six people separated from every other person in the United States. However, you probably do know someone who is. The big point of the original study was not that we all are equally separated from everyone else, but that there are some people that are significantly more connected than others. Find those people and get connected to them.

You'll find those people

- owning a restaurant
- searching for and placing executives
- lobbying politicians
- raising money for non-profit organizations
- working in public relations
- getting elected to public office, and
- writing about your community's people and events.

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Get connected with these people and then get connected with others who are nothing at all like you or interested in the things you're interested in. The significantly more connected people are friends with people from all walks of life. When you're more connected with a diverse group of people, you'll just be more connected with everyone AND you'll have a lot more fun.

14. Master the art of small talk but talk about something meaningful. Ferrazzi says, "The message here is that we can go through life, particularly conferences and other professional gatherings, making shallow, run-of-the-mill conversations with strangers that remain strangers. Or we can put a little of ourselves, our real selves, on the line, give people a glimpse of our humanity, and create the opportunity for a deeper connection" (149). The best way to do this is to (1) be yourself, and (2) be genuinely interested in other people. When your small talk is coming to an end, don't leave the conversation without a clear invitation to continue the conversation and the relationship.

15. Come up with creative ways to help make those in your network successful. Connect others in your network with each other. Ferrazzi says you must become indispensable to your network. You can do that by "being a switchboard, parceling out as much information, contacts, and goodwill to as many people...as possible" (174). Sounds a lot like Tim Sanders' advice in *Love is the Killer App*.

16. Stay in touch. Web search engines "ping" web pages systematically and on a regular basis. You'll need to develop a way to be pinging your network on a regular basis too. Keller-Williams has developed a great model to help you develop your own "pinging" plan. See Gary Keller's book *The Millionaire Real Estate Agent*.

17. Find an anchor tenant and feed them. Remember Ferrazzi's at home connecting? You can take it a step further by finding one new friend and then asking them to host a small dinner at their home. Politicians and fund raising professionals do it. You can too. You don't have to be fancy. Just get a group together for something simple, like chili, and have fun.

18. Be interesting. Here's how Ferrazzi stayed interesting: "I'd latch on to the latest, most cutting-edge idea in the business world. I'd immerse myself in it, getting to know all the thought leaders pushing the idea and all the literature available. I'd then distill that into a message about the idea's broader impact to others and how it could be applied in the industry I worked in" (213).

19. Build your own brand. Just like the six degrees of separation concept, everyone writing about sales and marketing today just has to say something about branding. Ferrazzi's take on it, though, is worth considering. Discover and define exactly what it is

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you do that adds something of value for someone else and then craft a story that lets other people know about it.

20. Find mentors, mentees, and repeat. “No process in history has done more to facilitate the exchange of information, skills, wisdom, and contacts than mentoring” (274). While I believe he’s got a point, I baffled that we don’t do this in our schools. Ferrazzi says to find someone to help you and then find someone you can help.

Never Eat Alone is easy to read, offers specific action-oriented ideas based upon common sense, and would be profitable for salespeople and especially for college seniors who will shortly be facing a competitive job market.

Publisher information:

Ferrazzi, K. (2005). Never eat alone and other secrets to success, one relationship at a time. New York: A Currency Book published by Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc.