



## Who's Got Your Back

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**Author's Bio:** Keith Ferrazzi, CEO of Ferrazzi Greenlight, has counseled the world's top enterprises on how to dramatically accelerate the development of business relationships to drive sales, spark innovation, and create team cohesion. As a thought leader and advocate for corporate citizenship, he has rallied executives around initiatives to improve health care and education nationwide. Ferrazzi has been published in the Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business Review, and other national TV shows. His previous book, *Never Eat Alone*, is a national bestseller.

**Author's big thought:** Becoming a winner in any field of endeavor requires a trusted team of advisors who can offer guidance and help to hold us accountable to achieving our goals.

### **Section One: Who's got your back**

How lifeline relationships can change your life

- Exceptional achievement in work and life is a peer-to-peer collaborative process.
- Behind every great leader, at the base of every great tale of success, you will find an indispensable circle of trusted advisors, mentors, and colleagues.
- These groups come in all forms and sizes and can be found at every level and in nearly all spheres of professional and personal life, but what they all have in common is a unique kind of connection with each other that the author calls *lifeline relationships*.
- This book is a practical guide to building an inner circle of lifeline relationships.
- Success is the ability to create the results in life we truly seek and not, say, just the amount of money you make. People who have a clear picture of what makes them tick, who know their true inner motivations and priorities, simply don't get in their own way. They can focus with energetic intention on their goals. It's what allows ordinary people to live extraordinary lives.
- Acquiring that knowledge is a journey with no single destination—and yet somehow we all still get lost at times. When we do, we need the external perspective of a lifeline.

- The work at FG evolved into the blueprint to overcome it—to allow individuals to use the power of peer-to-peer support from a few close, trusted advisors—to do more, faster, and with more fun, and to become more successful at what they did as a result.
- Ferrazzi needed a few key people in his life who had his back, whom he could talk to about anything and who would encourage and support him, give him feedback and perspective, tell him the truth even when it was a truth he might not want to hear. People who would hold him accountable every step of the way.
- Most of us come up against personal and professional problems that are just too big to solve alone. If we want to be as successful as we know we can be, we need the help of others.
- We need the advice and feedback of people we trust. We can proactively create these transformative relationships and the positive life changes they lead to in our everyday lives and in the workplace.

### **Four Ways Lifeline Relationships Will Help You**

- There's a good chance that you've already experienced the power and potential of lifeline relationships at some point in your life.
- If you've ever had an important person or group of people in your life who've shepherded you in the right direction—even if you've had just a taste of it—you know what the author means. And you can have more of that in your life—right now!
- Here are four ways lifeline relationships are critical:
  1. To help us identify what success truly means for us, including our long-term career plans.
  2. To help us figure out the most robust plan possible to get there, tough short-term goals and strategies that would tie us into knots if we tried to go it alone.
  3. To help us identify what we need to stop doing to move forward in lives - the things we all do that hold us back from achieving the success we deserve.
  4. To have people around us committed to ensuring that we sustain change so that we can transform our lives from good to great.
- There is an important distinction between *mentors* and lifeline relationships. The mentored relationship is one, in essence, between master and apprentice. The mentor generously shares knowledge, contacts, and the full wisdom of his experience with an eager and deserving student, but the balance of authority is heavily weighted toward the mentor.
- A lifeline relationship is one between equals, between individuals who can be intellectual sparring partners and confidants.
- The concept of reaching out to others for support isn't about changing who you are. It's about enlisting the help and advice of others to help you become who you can be. This kind of peer-to-peer support and feedback is the often unacknowledged key behind the achievements of so many of the high-performing people.

### **Section Two: The four mind-sets**

- We all respond to others who are candid, open, and genuine.

- Intimacy with others can be created in moments, and it can also be brought into pre-existing relationships through the power of generosity, vulnerability, and candor.
- We have forgotten that when we bring ourselves together around a common purpose, “connected to one another, to a leader, and to an idea” as Seth Godin puts it in *Tribes*, we each become capable of accomplishing more than we can alone. That’s not just because we have an infrastructure of support, but because every tribe creates lifeline relationships, and it is through those relationships that we become aware of what is unique in us. Such awareness comes from the mutual feedback we give each other—a process that forms the bedrock of lifeline relationships.
- While we all know and understand the basics of such personal responses and feedback, most of us aren’t aware of the astoundingly powerful role they can play in our lives.
- It’s time for those of us in the West to tap back into our community DNA. Our cultural values have shifted too far toward isolation and have, in many cases, overridden our natural tendency as social beings.
- In today’s culture, we’ve overemphasized the individual at the expense of teamwork and collaboration.
- We’re wary of opening ourselves up even to our closest friends, never mind our colleagues in the office. We view vulnerability, and occasionally even outright kindness, as a badge of weakness. We keep our opinions, our secrets, and our fears to ourselves.
- At the same time, as a culture, we complain of a lack of balance in our lives—that we spend all our time working, thinking about work, winding down from work, or getting ready for work.
- If we’re all working the same number of hours as before, or even less, why does it feel as though we’re toiling away at our career responsibilities more while getting a whole lot less out of our efforts? The real villain is the lack of richer, deeper relationships in both the workplace and our personal lives.
- A lot of our relationships have become more focused on accomplishing specific tasks or projects, rather than on developing and nurturing intimate connections.
- The result, in the workplace, has been a major loyalty drain among customers, employers, and employees; we’re not achieving our full potential in our careers because we’re so afraid of soliciting the advice, feedback, and support of others. The result in our personal lives has been a nagging feeling that there’s got to be more to life than this.
- There are four core mind-sets—which can be learned and practiced— that form the behavioral foundation for creating lifeline relationships.
  1. *Generosity*. This is the base from which all the other behaviors arise. This is the commitment to mutual support that begins with the willingness to show up and creatively share our deepest insights and ideas with the world. It’s the promise to help others succeed by whatever means you can muster.

2. *Vulnerability*. This means letting your guard down so mutual understanding can occur. The relationship engendered by generosity then moves toward a place of fearless friendship where risks are taken and invitations are offered to others.
  3. *Candor*. This is the freedom to be totally honest with those you confide in. Vulnerability clears the pathways of feedback so that you are able to share your hopes and fears. Candor allows us to begin to constructively interpret, respond to, and grapple with that information.
  4. *Accountability*. Accountability refers to the action of following through on the promises you make to others. It's about giving and receiving the feet-to-the-fire tough love through which real change is sustained.
- Within the trusted circle of advisors that is created and the mutual support they offer, they are peers. Each member functions as a highly respected equal, offering up creative ideas, candid feedback and criticism voiced with authentic concern for the others' interests, and rigorous attention to accountability around goals, goal setting, follow-through, and of course results.
  - The key to unlocking your highest personal and professional potential lies in creating an adult version of that safe place, where we get and give back intimate, honest support when both big and small issues loom.
  - To create a close circle of relationships with a few key people in your professional (and personal) life—remember, all you need is three people - you need to establish a safe place for others that gives them permission to take risks and be candid without fear of undermining your relationship together.
  - A safe place is an emotional environment—not a physical one—where two or more individuals can feel completely free to take risks.
  - Each of us is responsible for creating the safe place around us. It is a conscious choice that we make to create the environment that invites others in. It means putting the other person's safety first and making your intentions clear.

### **Mind -Set #1: Generosity**

- Lots of people want to be generous in their lives but aren't quite sure what they have to offer.
- All of us have a currency of one form or another that we can share with others. There are many kinds of specialized currency, but two that are broadly applicable and among the most powerful are universal currency and personal currency.
- *Universal currency* refers to our innate human ability to connect to others, no matter who they are or who we are. We can all embrace intimacy with another human being by listening, empathizing, or caring.
- Universal currency also includes encouragement, absolutely essential in creating lifeline relationships to achieve your full potential.
- It's essential in establishing a safe space as well, where we can fearlessly listen to and offer honest critique.

- To discover your *personal currency*, look outward. Personal currency requires finding out what others need to be happy in every dimension of their lives, and then figuring out what you can do to get them there. It could be your professional expertise, your ability to problem-solve, your network of relationships, or simply your unfaltering optimism.
- The secret to optimizing personal currency is to establish a close enough relationship with other people that they're willing to share their dreams and aspirations with you as well as the issues that are holding them back.
- Generosity gives you permission to be more open and intimate in all your relationships. Generosity and intimacy reinforce each other. Both help us to be more open and candid.
- In a business setting, where people are usually distracted and in a hurry, leading with generosity is a great way to get someone's attention. The more generous you are to other people in offering first your humanity, and then your knowledge, advice, and talents, the more they will be willing to share their concerns—and the more you'll be able to help them meet them.
- At some point, your relationship will grow strong enough that you'll find you can begin to take even greater risks with each other. You'll be able to tell them what you think they need!
- The hardest part of generosity is receiving it. Receiving can make us feel awkward, even vaguely undeserving.
- Who says we live in a world with a finite pie? To those who view life through the lens of abundance, success (however we want to define it) is unlimited, infinite, and available to anyone who asks.
- By accepting help, you're actually giving to others by allowing them to feel needed, too. Permitting those who care about us to have the opportunity to help us—what could be more compassionate and generous?
- One of the surest ways to create a deeper relationship with a few people whose insights and trust you value is to let them in by allowing them to help you.
- Put yourself in the shoes of the giver.
- If you want help from others, you need to ask.
- The power of generosity is that it creates goodwill in both directions.
- It's the surest way to break the ice in a relationship and allow it to grow into something deeper and more meaningful.

### **Mind - Set #2: Vulnerability**

- Being vulnerable takes incredible courage. It is a crucial mind-set to master if you hope to build a circle of trusted advisors in your life. Moreover, it's the partner and predecessor necessary for candor—the courage to voice the truth about yourself and others, and to receive the truth in return.
- Vulnerability is the courage to reveal your inner thoughts, to another person.
- Vulnerability is admitting that you have doubts and fears—and that you need the support and encouragement of others to overcome what holds you back, and achieve your goals.

- When you share your deepest fears and most embarrassing moments or failures with another person whose counsel and friendship you admire and respect, you'll find that several things occur.
  1. By letting another person know about your fears and concerns you've opened an emotional pressure valve, allowing the tension you've been holding inside to escape.
  2. The person you confide in will likely become closer to you.
  3. You'll find that the more you're willing to talk openly about what you need, the more people will come up to you and offer their help.
  4. The cumulative result of all these things is that you'll master the ability to create and sustain a safe space experience with more and more people in your life. By trusting in others, you'll become trustworthy. People will seek you out as a counselor and a confidant.
- Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable with another person can quickly turn formal work relationships into real friendships—and form the basis for a deeper level of commitment, trust, and even joy in day-to-day life.
- The most important element of any relationship is trust. But trust doesn't happen simply by asking others to trust you. It has to be earned. In reality, developing trust is a process that results from your willingness to be vulnerable.

### **The Eight Steps to Instant Intimacy**

#### *1. Create an Authentic Environment around You*

It starts with authenticity—the art of getting real.

#### *2. Suspend Your Prejudices*

We all make fast and furious prejudgments of others. Prejudice is simply part of being human.

- Stereotyping is a shortcut that allows the brain to operate day to day in a world overflowing with information. If it is a result, we're all both victims and perpetrators of prejudice.
- On a larger scale, business organizations, too, have cultural prejudices that get in the way of productivity—sales is dismissive of marketing, marketing is disrespectful of the folks in research, finance seems to hate everyone, and everyone hates the human resources department. And the company as a whole is too often suspicious of customers and their unreasonable demands.
- The best people skill to practice upon meeting new people is to walk into every situation with as few assumptions as possible.

#### *3. Project the Positive.*

- Next, be proactive and positive. Once you've found your inner voice and know you're speaking authentically, from there it's a simple step to projecting positive feelings onto other people—the kinds of feelings that will help to bridge the gap between you and establish a welcoming, safe environment for the other person.

#### 4. *Share Your Passions.*

- Nothing truly worthwhile can happen in a relationship without sharing. And the easiest things to start with are your interests and passions.
- Good stories can dissolve emotional boundaries.

#### 5. *Talk About Your Goals and Dreams.*

- Talking about our dreams with others makes them more concrete—and that much closer to becoming a reality. It's very likely that other people will relate to your dreams, share them, and even help you attain yours. You can't know any of this until you open up and share those dreams.

#### 6. *Revisit Your Past*

- The next step is designed to take us a bit more out of our comfort zone by sharing our past struggles.
- So much hostility and tension evaporates when we talk about how past experiences contribute to our behavior today.
- It just creates some basic empathy.

#### 7. *What's Keeping You Up at Night?*

- Focus in on the now.

#### 8. *Future Fears*

- This is the tough stuff. The past we've gotten through.
- This is where our al insecurities and weaknesses come into play.
- Most of us live in a way that involves selling an image of who we think people want us to be (as well as trying to buy it ourselves). But the power of allowing ourselves to be vulnerable to others and talk about our insecurities and fears is the one thing that can help us to break out of those old habits and ways of thinking.

### **Mind - Set #3: Candor**

- Candor is the ability to engage in healthy, caring, purposeful criticism—as candor is the greatest gift you can give if it comes from a place of caring about the other person enough to want her to get better.
- It's a two-way street, too—we need to be able to tell others the truth, and receive it in return. Lack of candor breeds resentment and passive-aggressive behavior.
- Being able to hear the truth about what others think of us, our actions, and our behaviors is essential to reaching out to others to form a close council of advisors.
  - First, it's vital that we know the score, so that we have the opportunity to change our behavior if we're acting in an inappropriate or less-than-optimal way.

- Second, in the end, the truth isn't going anyplace. Problems get worse when they are kept under wraps.
- Third, avoiding candor is deadly to our long-term success. Studies conducted since the 1970s make it clear that people who avoid conflict undermine both their relationships and their success.
- Avoiding transparency can undermine every aspect of our life, from the workplace to your home.
- Those who engage in transparency:
  - Facilitate an overall understanding of everyone's perspectives,
  - Are more capable of developing high-quality solutions.
  - Are more likely to build and maintain stronger relationships.
  - Are more competent and more respected.
- The key is to truly want to be a better employee—which starts from a personal desire to always be at the top of your game. Request feedback from the top, and make it easy for your boss to respond.
- Make sure the boss clearly describes the ultimate results he'll be measuring you on, and consistently report your progress toward those results in an e-mail (and verbally as well). Also, find out if your current trajectory is appropriate and if for any reason the workplace expectations have changed—because things do change, as everyone knows, and making assumptions is dangerous.
- If we want to offer and receive candor with another person, it's up to us to make it happen. Our friends don't want to say something that might damage their relationship with us. Most of the time they don't want to risk saying something that would hurt or make them feel uncomfortable. They're scared. And that's ultimately our problem—and responsibility.
- You want your friends to understand that candor is a trait you appreciate and value—and that it's safe for them to give you some.
- To make getting and giving candor a bigger part of your life, here's a list of things to keep in mind.
  1. *Find People You Respect* -Pick the people around us whose opinions we value. Make sure you're asking the right people the right questions—but in all cases, you'll need that backbone of mutual respect.
  2. *Create the Opportunity* -If you're after someone's honest feedback, let him know you're looking for real, objective criticism
  3. *Make It Clear Any Feedback You Get Is a Gift*
  4. *Acknowledge Your Faults* -By acknowledging that you have things to work on, you make it much easier for others to be honest with you.
  5. *Tell the Other Person What You plan to Do with the Advice*
  6. *Don't Tell Them What You Want to Hear* -A pause is a very effective way to encourage others to respond—most people will do anything to avoid an awkward or embarrassing silence.
  7. *Ask Specific Questions*

8. *Take It or Leave It—but Deliver on Safety* -You decide how or whether you use or act on that feedback.
9. *Paying Them Back* -Candor should be mutual

- Sometimes just giving people feedback on how you experience them can be a startling revelation, but it can also be an enormously effective way to cement a relationship.
- When we avoid candor—the issues don't go away. Instead, they build up until we explode.
- Being candid with another person sometimes doesn't come out the way it was intended. Here are some things to be on guard about:
  - *Rebound Candor* - Candor that's really more tit-for-tat than from the heart.
  - *Bracing for the "But"* – In a sincere attempt to soften bad news, people will couch their criticism in a preliminary flood of compliments: Why not just cut to the chase and resolve the issue?
  - *Seeing Is Believing* - another point about candor to keep in mind is that another person's perceived faults may not necessarily be faults at all. You might just be seeing his actions that way due to a normal human behavior known as self-serving bias.
  - *You Just Say You Don't Want to Hurt Them* -If you sidestep being candid in order to protect other people's feelings, then, bottom line, you're being a coward. You are protecting yourself more than anyone else.
  - *For Shame*-When we're insecure and angry, it's easy to take it out on someone else by shaming him. It cuts to the core of a person, often in a nasty, unpleasant way
  - *Can We Trust Others to Be Accurate?* People project their own issues onto others all the time—meaning they accuse us of things they dislike or do themselves.
- Candor, or caring criticism, always ends up being greater than the sum of its parts.
- Candor gives us the ability to take risks, preparing us to solve problems collaboratively—both at work and in our personal lives—with better results than we would ever have achieved alone.

#### **Mind - Set #4: Accountability**

- The greatest growth among professionals was in companies where there was an invested and talented manager or executive involved in directly coaching an individual on an ongoing basis.
- Widespread efforts to “train” coaching skills into their leadership ranks seemed to meet with some success, but again, the economics made this solution a challenge.
- The more research the FG team did, the more excited they got. Even though accountability within a group can't be maintained without each of the other mind-sets, ultimately it's the most important one in achieving and sustaining long-lasting success.
- Having a mentor, a few friends, or a group of advisors helping to hold us accountable for our promises, goals, and actions involves more than just butt kicking. It also had to do with offering positive emotional support and encouragement.
- Accountability involves setting goals. It's about acknowledging failure when things get tough, and collaborating to find solutions or alternative approaches we can use to get ourselves back on track.
- Accountability also encourages people to set higher goals for themselves.

- Peer-to-peer support is crucial for accountability, and in particular for sustaining the behavioral changes we need to help us achieve our goals.
- *Whom* we ask is important. In the short term, we can get sense of what such accountability is like with almost anyone we're willing to ask. But to tackle long-term goals, hand-picking the right people is essential.
- It's important to understand the difference between a buddy and an accountability buddy. Whether you're dieting or trying to reenergize your career, sometimes your friends and family are too close to you to hold your feet to the fire, to hold you truly accountable for our goals.
- Others, knowing your history, can be shaming and judgmental. It's easy to resent their intrusion, as so much history and baggage keep getting in the way.
- Often it takes a jump-start from a trusted advisor who's more removed from your day-to-day-life than a spouse or best friend.
- There's nothing wrong with paying a professional advisor for his or her input and support in making you accountable for your goals. Paid advisors often get it—because they've seen so many similar situations.
- Once you've found success with that person, chances are you'll be more willing to open yourself up to others—friends and eventually your lifeline relationships.
- Regardless of whether your buddy is a friend or on the payroll, having someone hold you accountable for your goals is a powerful enforcing mechanism.
- The people you find need to feel obligated. The best way to foster accountability is to make it a two-way street.
- Another model of accountability is to weave it into your daily practices, so it becomes a checklist you can't avoid.
- Writing down commitments is a great way to record and formalize accountability.
- Another way to handle things is just by picking up the phone regularly.
- The key is to formalize the accountability relationship and give it structure and a regular schedule.
- Ultimately, of course, all of us are accountable to ourselves. But without a formal structure to hold ourselves accountable through peer pressure—without that kick in the butt when we need it—it's too easy to settle into a comfortable routine and never improve. The expertise, knowledge, and feedback that lifeline relationships provide are essential to mutual support. But only accountability converts them into results.

### **Section Three: building your dream team**

- The most successful businesses are those that are building something with an exit strategy in mind. It's a way both of ensuring they keep on top of their game and of maintaining their scalability, meaning that the business doesn't depend too much on one person, which might someday deter future suitors.
- For those who reach out to and practice mutual support, the whole becomes far greater than the sum of its parts. That's what happens when you make the leap from *me* to *we*.

#### **Step One: Articulate Your Vision**

- As with anything in life, you need to choose a direction. You'll need to identify some broad, forward-thinking goals that describe your aspirations.
- If you don't know what you're striving to achieve, or the ways you want to grow and improve, you're less likely to find those who can help you on your journey.

## Step Two: Find Your Lifeline Relationships

- In the hundreds of interviews the author's team did for this book, more than half the people they spoke to said they didn't have anyone who really, truly had their back—friends, family members, partners or spouses.
- We all worry about letting other people in; for fear that we will let them down.
- One problem that can arise with your immediate friends and family is that they have their own perceptions of you.
- Consider adding someone impartial to your team who can give you the jolt of confidence you need to get started.
- The fact that your lifeline relationships contain some risk can be a good thing.
- All partners should aspire to support each other completely.
- Family members and close friends are less likely hold us accountable
- Within the context of mutual support, such care needs to include honesty (even when it hurts), candor, feedback, and criticism.
- Earlier in the book, Keith talked about the necessity of creating a safe place for others. Be careful not to confuse safe with easy and familiar. They're two different things.
- In a relationship, easy and familiar refer to those people you have a history with and feel comfortable around—which can often lead to them looking the other way when it comes to feedback and accountability, coddling you, or letting bad habits slide.
- Ideally, you should look for people who share the same values regarding your dreams and goals. You'll know when you've found someone whose goals for personal growth are aligned with your own.
- If you really want to leap ahead in your professional and personal development, you probably need to widen your circle. Your friends, colleagues, and family members may love you unconditionally, but they may lack the knowledge or experience to help you at work or in your personal life. Your ultimate goal in finding lose three people who can help you change your life is to bring people on board with whom you can build trusted, respected lifeline relationships.
- The *office* is a logical place to meet new people who are potential support partners. We can trust people more than we believe we can. Strangely enough, when we approach someone we've been leery of, their commitment to us grows.
- Don't forget past colleagues. Consider old friends, teachers, bosses, and mentors.
- *School* is another great place to meet potential long-term partners. Even if you graduated long ago, school connections still count for something. All you have to do to reconnect is reach out, by phone or e-mail.
- Hang around at *events and seminars*, seeking out connections with business owners.

- It's never been easier to get to know people outside your immediate circle, thanks to the widespread use of *online* social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Another online approach is to seek out people in smaller online communities organized around your specific industry or interest. Technology has made it much easier to stay connected with far-flung support partners.
- Don't forget about reaching out to strangers.
- All of us are at different places in our careers and lives. It may be that you're not ready at this juncture to open up and be vulnerable with people from your personal or professional life. Hire a *career coach* or a therapist, who'll help give you the candid feedback and accountability you need.
- Now that you know where to look for lifeline relationships, what specific qualities should you be looking for? Start with the Four Mind-Sets. Go down the list of the Four Mind-Sets with the person you have in mind.
- The support you are looking for from your advisors requires more practical considerations as well, or what Keith refers to as the 4 C's:
  1. *Commitment* - You need people who'll be generous with the time it takes to work through complicated issues. Your commitment to each other should be so strong that your respective issues are always in the back of each other's minds.
  2. *Comprehension* (aka Know-How) - Your trusted advisors don't have to be experts in your field—it helps if they have practical knowledge that will help you accomplish your goals. It's important that you respect their opinions enough to want to follow their advice in the first place.
  3. *Chemistry* - Chemistry can be innate or it can be built, step-by-step, but a sense of connection is key.
  4. *Curiosity* - curiosity is a great quality to have in your support partners
  5. *Diversity* (and it doesn't start with "C") - Young or old, never be afraid to find people with insight, whatever their age or background. Advisors are most effective when they don't resemble you.
- As time passes, some of your support team may fall away or become less involved. Think of it as "graduating" a team member, not losing one. Don't be afraid to reach out to someone new.
- Lifeline relationships evolve over time, just as relationships with mentors do. Cast a wide net, and don't assume your job of recruiting new team members ever ends.
- Sometimes we need to distance ourselves from people who are holding us back, even if we love them. Sometimes, of course, we may find ourselves giving more than we receive in a relationship. But when a relationship is consistently one-sided or toxic—avoid it.

### Step Three: Practice the Art of the Long Slow Dinner

- Even people who are totally open to the concept of deep mutual support need to be eased into the actual process.

- One of the best tools for deepening a relationship is the “long slow dinner” - getting people out of their daily environment and away from distractions is crucial to establishing a closer relationship based on genuine understanding.
- The long slow dinner is really about getting to know someone in the right environment. Your main purpose is to get people out from behind their defenses, (those desks, cubicles, office doors etc. ) that close off people at work and at home.
- Inviting people into your home is one of the best ways to court support. This simple gesture alone is often enough to bring a new level of candor and openness to a relationship.
- The long slow dinner, in short, can take place anywhere the two of you both feel safe.
- The best way to figure out if another person might be a good candidate for your inner circle is to dive right in and act as if he or she really is! See how the other person responds.
- You may need to go through this process quite a few times to find the right three (or more) people. Be prepared to cast your net wide.
- Do whatever you can to make these important relationships happen. Don't leave them to chance.
- If the other person already knows you, ask him, “I'd love to hear if you think there is anything that would benefit me to know that holds me back?” Invite him to take a risk with you.
- Toward the end of a long slow dinner, if it's going well, you might ask the other person to hold you accountable for something you want to achieve. See if you can return the favor.
- It's important that you make it clear exactly what you want from the other person.
- Don't leave a long slow dinner without setting up another time to touch base or get together.

#### **Step Four: Broaden Your Goal-Setting Strategy**

- With goal setting, as with everything else, two or more heads are better than one.
- So many successful, high-functioning people need help creating a road map, including yearly, quarterly, monthly, and weekly goals, to achieve any given objective.
- Once you've got your action plan, you need support partners to help you stay focused on primary goals, particularly in a world of constant distraction.
- Set not just one but two types of goals: *performance goals* and *learning goals*. And your team can help you with both.
- Performance goals are what most of us probably think of right now as goals. They're all about achieving a highly specific outcome. Learning goals, on the other hand, emphasize acquiring new skills and knowledge to push and expand your skills and career forward.
- Performance goals can be motivating. The flip side is that, set inappropriately, they can be intimidating and sometimes even debilitating when we fall short.
- People who are narrowly focused on performance goals tend to withdraw and perform worse during setbacks. On the other hand, those who set learning goals, are better able to cope, remain motivated, and achieve more when faced with the setbacks that inevitably occur.
- Your support partners can help you stretch your idea of what's achievable. Once you switch your attention to learning goals, then you are constantly learning from everything you do, and failure ceases to be an option.

- Creating our own personal learning goals to support the performance goals we've been given can empower us. They become tools in our own self-development.
- When juggling your personal and professional lives, work on blending the two, not striking a balance! Find ways to blend the demands of your "day job" with your long-term goals by "drafting"—recasting current work goals to make them serve longer-term personal interests. Drafting allows you to bring 100 percent of your passion and interests to work; it will also significantly increase your energy for the job you have today.
- Just the process of communicating your goals to your support partners, or really anyone else, can help you to achieve them:
  - Sharing your goals with others forces you to clarify your vision.
  - Your support partners will be able to spot flaws in your plan that you may have missed.
  - Communicating your goals isn't just about telling others what you're going to achieve—it's about telling yourself over and over again, until you believe it.

### **Step Five: Create Your Personal Success Wheel**

- The author's goal setting starts out broadly. First, he establishes a combination of learning and performance goals that he wants to achieve across seven sectors of his life: personal, professional, financial, wellness, intellectual, spiritual, and giving back.
- Visually, he represents this with what he calls a Personal Success Wheel, which you can download and learn more about at [www.KeithFerrazzi.com](http://www.KeithFerrazzi.com). He uses it as his personal commitment road map.
- He ends up modifying the size of the individual elements to approximate the percentage that matches his areas of focus in the upcoming year. The elements you see in the Personal Success Wheel should, and will, overlap!
- This is how to use the Personal Success Wheel: First, assign big-picture goals in each category. Then get more specific. For example, break down professional goals into further subcategories such as: team development, book publishing, training and coaching, and so on. The next step is to create time frames. Ask what you need to do in three years to get closer to your life goals, and then what you need to do in one year, and finally what you need to accomplish over the next sixty days. Now get even more specific and assign each goal a percentage of your time so that your support team can help ensure that you allocate the right amount of days to each category.
- Your goals simply become a part of your schedule.
- That's all the "what" and "when," which is where plans usually stop. Next, come up with a list of people who are integral to helping achieve your goals.
- Who are the one thousand most important people involved in the achievement of your strategic plan?
- For each key one-year goal, create a list of the specific (or at least the kinds of) people you need to get to know to achieve your goal. This is called a Relationship Action Plan. This should be an essential part of anyone's or any company's strategic planning. It's also an area where support partners can be especially helpful—in brainstorming that list, and even in connecting you to some of the folks you need to meet.

- Finally, develop success metrics and budgets for both time and money.
- In every stage of creating that strategic calendar, involve your support buddies.
- If you don't have an assistant, have a support buddy periodically review your daily calendar (and you his or hers) to watchdog whether or not your time management aligns with your goals.
- Ask yourself why you want to achieve this goal. Imagine what your life would look like with this goal accomplished. A clear understanding of what you expect success to look like can help you better understand your motivations.
- Keep asking yourself those questions, and then at the end, ask, *Are there other ways I can do that?*
- Balance extrinsic and intrinsic motivations when setting goals. Intrinsic motivations take place in the external world; extrinsic motivations are those that come from inside you.
- If your short- and long-term goals aren't aligned, your goals will end up in the toilet. If something in the short term isn't serving your long-term interest, your buddies should be helping you evaluate whether to drop it.
- Here are some common goal-setting pitfalls and suggestions for how your partners can help you avoid them.
  - *Problem:* You're losing focus, spending too much time on pursuits that don't advance your long-term goals. *Solution:* You and your team review your strategic calendar and discuss your goals and the motivations behind them as a way to recommit.
  - *Problem:* Failure to believe you'll accomplish what you want is leading to a failure to act. *Solution:* Share your goals with your partners to help you refine your vision; if you say it enough times, you'll believe it!
  - *Problem:* Your goals require skills that you lack, and this is delaying or making it hard for you to develop your road map. *Solution:* Your team can help you recognize and fill the gaps, via other resources or through additional education.
  - *Problem:* Your motivation is flagging. *Solution:* Your buddies can offer you encouragement, support, and enthusiasm. They can remind you why you are working so hard toward your goal, and help you to recommit. Or maybe they help you take a timed break-say a week off-to rejuvenate.

### **Step Six: Learn to Fight!**

- When trusted partners get together to refine and debate goals, the author calls it *sparring*.
- Given that we've already established the importance of including others in goal setting and other stages of self-development, it is important to give some sort of structure to how your trusted advisors can provide feedback in a safe, educational way.
- Sparring is a vitally important exercise, one that's much more intense (and productive in achieving a specific goal) than a conversational long slow dinner.
- When done properly, sparring, like the Four Mind-Sets, ends up being a two-way street. In effective sparring, both parties come away with new insights and feedback.
- The Four Mind-Sets come together in sparring. Partners will tell you things you don't want to hear (candor); you may get initially defensive but accept that you need help (vulnerability);

others will challenge you to fulfill goals (accountability); and you'll come to understand that they genuinely want to serve you (generosity). Sparring can actually help deepen your relationships with others.

- Sometimes people say that sparring sounds extremely risky. Sparring can also inject a note of urgency into your efforts to grow and improve.
- A big part of the role of our sparring partner or partners is to get us to act now. If you don't find yourself sparring with your trusted advisors, you should question their commitment, or yours. The goal in sparring is to get to a better place. Ideally, one of you will change your perspective in such an interaction, because you will have learned or been exposed to something that you could not have thought of yourself.
- Sparring can be dangerous as it pushes people's buttons. It's important to establish ground rules. The author's consist of:
  - *Safety First* - The goal is for each of you to arrive at a better place and make progress, not win an argument.
  - *Owning the Process* - the person presenting his or her goals is in charge.
  - *The Socratic Method 101* - through rigorous questioning, the people involved seek to eliminate contradictions in an argument and sharpen their thinking.
  - *The Receiver Owns the Process and the Inputs* - the receiver then gratefully thanks the person who gave it to her, but it's up to her to analyze and make the final decision.
  - *Have Ample Time for Thoughtful Listening* - Active listening involves not just listening but repeating back what the person across from you has just said, in an attempt to clarify any confusion as well as to confirm that you actually heard.
  - Active listening seeks to minimize the confusion and turmoil that comes as a result of simple communication. Much of successful sparring is really about listening.
- There are countless ways to make the sparring process more formal. Here are a few methods the author likes to use:
  - *Clarify the Issue* - The person in need of advice describes what the goal or the desired behavior is, as she understands it.
  - *Ask for a Reality Check*
  - *Evaluate the Issue* - Your partner needs to apply her analysis and expertise and her perspective. Questions should first start big and get at why you are doing this. Once you've been pushed and prodded and have gotten the feedback the other person has to offer, ask yourself whether or not you agree. If you disagree, reexamine the problem. The goal is to reach a collaborative agreement, not a compromise. You don't have to accept another person's advice. You control the process and the outcome.
  - *Review, Restate, and Refine the Goal* -After a sparring session, thank everyone for their input, their support, and their time.

### **Step Seven: Diagnose Your Weaknesses**

- We all have self-defeating behaviors that get in the way of our success. We also tend to fall back on them at the worst possible high-stress times, even though we know those behaviors or habits are bad for us.

- Humans can learn to recognize and control behaviors that serve us poorly. We need support. Along with helping us to identify and sustain goals, one of the core missions of mutual support is to help us cope with what's holding us back.
- Often, the behaviors that typically hold us back stem from an unconscious need to stay where we are, which creates a glass ceiling we just can't manage to push beyond.
- To improve how we deal with other people, we have to start with ourselves.
- Focusing on your natural talents doesn't mean accepting behaviors that prevent your success. We all have some basic strengths that we need to dial up and some elements of our personalities we'd be well advised to dial down. Until we recognize both, we won't break through to the success we deserve.
- The same traits that make us successful at the start of our careers can ultimately hold us back further along the line.
- The first step to fixing or changing behaviors that don't serve us is to acknowledge them. Over time, we'll likely find the courage and ability to face and deal with it. But refusing to acknowledge a problem allows it to fester inside—and allows it to continue to control us.
- Leaders have to find a way to diagnose their own leadership failures and weaknesses and then convey them to their executive team, so that they can be addressed or compensated for.
- What's really needed is a culture that celebrates honesty and individual growth.
- If you have more than one behavioral issue at a time to work on, pick one. It really doesn't matter what you choose; the point is that when you go through this once and see the benefits, you'll have great new tool at your disposal, and you'll pick another, then another, and on and on endlessly.
- Start by choosing something that's both easy to identify and something you're excited about overcoming.
- Picking an issue in your life you want to work on comes down to taking the initiative and wading in. The goal is to begin making a positive change today, enjoy the results when you do, and get a taste for tackling more. Eventually you'll get around to the issues in your life that you most need to take on. But the most important thing is your commitment to an entirely new process.
- You don't have to be perfect—you just have to start, and be sincere in your desire to improve.
- Rigorous self-analysis— thinking hard about your strengths and your weaknesses, and the ways you hold yourself back—is a very worthwhile exercise.
- Here are three effective ways to lean into those sharp points and pick your first issue:
  1. *Turn the mirror on yourself.* Think back on an interaction you had with others in the last week or so that really irritated you. Try to think of how you might have contributed to that irritation. What could you have done differently that might have prevented the situation?
  2. *Try to learn lessons from your role models.*
  3. *Ask other people.* This is one of the most effective ways to decide what behavior you want to tackle first.
- What better way to implement the Four Mind-Sets than by analyzing what you do that holds you back, and tackling your issues with the help of peer-to-peer support (from the diagnosis all the way to sustaining change)? By asking for feedback, you're exercising candor; by asking

people to hold you to the changes you hope to make, you're requesting accountability; by sharing your struggles with others, you're opening yourself up and making yourself vulnerable to others; and in the end, you'll find that others will view your request for their help and support as an act of generosity, one that they're more than honored to help you with.

- Social scientists have found that we all tend to think we're a lot better at various activities than we actually are.
- We humans tend to underestimate our knowledge in certain areas. People tend to either overrate or underrate their ability to perform a variety of tasks. The bottom line is that we're terrible at judging what we know, what we don't know, what we can do, and what we cannot. This is where having a team of objective, trusted advisors can be so crucial. The team can help us clearly see our strengths, our weaknesses, and the level of progress we're making.
- Another natural human tendency that can skew or sway our judgment is that we tend to seek out and accept information that confirms what we already believe, while we inadvertently avoid or discount information that contradicts our beliefs.
- If we want to be more effective leaders and managers and employees, we need to work hard to ensure that we receive candid and objective feedback from others whose opinions we value.
- At times, we need our team members to encourage us as well as challenge us.
- Humans are poor at guessing how future events will make us feel. We tend to assume the worst when considering whether or not we can commit to a goal. We slip into negativity. And as ever, an outside perspective can help keep us on track.
- There are inevitably uncomfortable moments in this journey to success and self-improvement. It's not easy to admit our mistakes in front of others. But it is so incredibly liberating.
- People who try to achieve their dreams are much happier with their lives than those who haven't. Figure out your true calling and go for it, whether your dream is small or colossal. In the end, it doesn't matter if you ever realize your dreams. The important question is: *Did I give it a fighting shot?*

### **Step Eight: Commit to Improvement**

- "Commitment" is a scary word to us, with good reason. Over time the word has amassed a lot of negative meanings.
- The voluntary meaning of commitment—that is, committing ourselves by our own free will to some course of action or belief—is fairly modern. But the lingering sense of commitment as something that's involuntarily thrust upon us helps explain why the word still triggers a lot of negative emotion.
- Commitments are very different from obligations. First, they're not imposed upon us—they're promises we make for ourselves, to ourselves. Nor are they rigid and inflexible.
- In the context of our careers, commitments, if expressed aloud to a close advisor or a circle of trusted friends, serve to engage us more fully with others. Seen that way, a commitment is a way of reaching out to a broader community. It's a promise you make to others—an enduring promise, with a timeline, to overcome certain challenges and to stick to it, even in the face of expected and unexpected obstacles.

- Before making a commitment to others, we need to first make a commitment to ourselves. The more we can sense, taste, feel, and imagine what the change will bring us, the more likely it will be to happen.
- The upside of making a commitment is as follows:
  - First, it is enormously liberating.
  - Once you make a public commitment, there's no turning back.
  - Making a public commitment is one of the fastest ways to build intimacy with others.
- Formalizing a commitment is a two-way street. First, express what you want to do. Then allow your team the space and time for feedback to ensure you're committing to the right things at the right time. Put on paper any commitments you're making as it makes them more real.
- Staying committed to a course of action can be difficult, even for the most highly disciplined among us. That's why you need your inner circle behind you to kick your butt now and again.
- Beyond support, we need our teams to hold us accountable. Just as we all sometimes slip in our commitments, our advisors will occasionally slip in their commitments to keep us on track.
- The way to maintain your commitment and keep it strong is by holding a special check-in once a month with your trusted advisors. This can be a part of a regularly scheduled meeting, or it can be a simple ten-minute huddle. In a pinch, it can even be done by e-mail. Restate your commitment. Give everyone a progress report. Stress that you're counting on them to hold you accountable. Some people might have advice or feedback right off the bat, so budget a little more time than you think you need.
- To maintain safety, give them the time they need to give you the feedback they feel is important.

### **Step Nine: Fake It Till You Make It—Then Make It Stick**

- Once you've got your team in place—whether you have two close support partners or an entire backfield—and mapped out your work, the hard stuff begins.
- The key to sustainability is contained right there in that word “daily.” Focusing on taking those small steps every day is a guiding principle of many self-help organizations and religions.
- Focusing on what you can do right now is one of the most effective ways you and your trusted advisors can sustain change.
- Fear of failure is a major reason we stop our efforts to change. People are afraid they won't be able to live up to the expectations set by their support partners. They subconsciously feel safer doing nothing.
- The way we avoid giving up is by daily engagement with peers. That might mean faking it at first—acting more confident than we feel, just to fight through our fears.
- Try changing your behavior with the support of others when if you aren't ready to change your beliefs.
- Just as you can create a negative “self-fulfilling prophecy” you can also create positive self-fulfilling prophecies. A shy person can pretend to be outgoing, experience how that feels, and as a result, over time, become a friendlier, more outgoing person. You can apply a “fake it till you make it” strategy to any aspect of your life.

- Here's a simple format for practicing "fake it till you make it" in a group:
  1. *Commit to a small step.* Pick a behavior you can get behind today.
  2. *Take action.* See what behavioral change or the beginnings of success in achieving your goal feels like.
  3. *Discuss* how experiencing that success felt with your mutual support partners.
  4. *Do it again.*
  5. Once you've acquired the habit for such behavior, *commit to another step.* Once you taste some success thanks to mutual support, you will *believe* in its power and effectiveness. It's important to make sustainability a part of your support practice.
  
- Here are some of the guidelines to sustain change through meetings and conversations with members of your team:
  1. Schedule regular meetings with your support team or individual members of your team.
  2. At every meeting, ask for a status check on the changes you and others have made.
  3. Encourage each other on the things that have gone well.
  4. If applicable, question one another on why other things did not go as planned.
  5. Recommit to your advisors—and recommit to taking action.
  6. Be mindful of long-term issues that can cause enthusiasm to wane.
  7. Get into the habit of getting daily mutual support from key advisors on your team during periods of stress.
  
- Sooner or later you're likely to encounter difficulties in handling the advice and input from one or more of your advisors.
- You may need a new advisor or two to help guide you through the next phase of your career.
- It's important to realize that not all of your advisors serve the same purpose. Some of your advisors are better at keeping you on track for some tasks than others.
- Customizing your support team is all part of refining and aligning your goals.
- If someone decides he no longer has the time or energy that being such a partner requires, don't take it personally. His own needs could have changed.
- When faced with the need to find new team members, remember generosity: People really do want to help.
- If you've become too close to be effective, members may no longer challenge one another. Mutual support simply doesn't work if people are wary of offering constructive criticism.
- If you expect mutual support to be a perfect process, or one that will make you perfect, you'll get discouraged and give up. Expect things to go wrong from time to time. Mutual support is a constant work in progress.
- One way to bring renewed energy to your support team is to add new members.
- Another way to climb out of a rut is to change where, how, and how often you meet.

### **Troubleshooting the Four Mind-Sets**

- *Problem:* Loss of accountability—when people don't keep their commitments. *Solution:* Reassess your goals or behaviors, and refine them sufficiently to make them doable. Consider meeting more often, or adding on phone and e-mail follow-ups.
- *Problem:* Loss of candor among your trusted advisors. *Solution:* You should reinforce the need for constant self-improvement. This process is a journey. At times you may need an outsider, perhaps a professional coach, to stir things up a bit.
- *Problem:* Loss of vulnerability. This results when people become wary of coming across as imperfect. *Solution:* Reinforce intimacy and openness by sharing stories of struggles.
- *Problem:* Loss of generosity. This comes about when people get too busy to help, or feel they need to move on. *Solution:* Never forget: It's okay for people to leave. If someone needs to move on, let her. And thank her for her input and feedback over the past months or years.
- Collaboration; suggests that by working together, partners can develop a solution that doesn't require either partner to sacrifice or give something up. Both partners have helped create, and thus both own the solution.
- There are likely times in the peer-to-peer accountability process where partners may have to negotiate or agree upon the meaning of what both parties committed to. Rather than approach the discussion from the perspective of compromise, it is a better idea to address any issues as collaborators.

#### **Section Four: make it your life**

The tactics, strategies, and structures – from formal organizations to do-it-yourself peer groups – that help you stay the course.

- This final section of Who's Got Your Back Ferrazzi refers to several peer groups such as YPO and Vistage. He further offers recommendations on the following:
  - How to create your own groups
  - How to conduct a meeting
  - Forming a Greenlight group
  - Recruiting members (including Dos and Don'ts)
  - Initiation rites
  - Group promises
  - Principles
  - The Rules of Engagement
  - Holding each member of the group accountable
  - The buddy system
  - Celebrating conflict
- He also offers suggestions on how to promote transformation in the workplace using these ideas
- Finally, there is a section for salespeople on Never Sell Alone.

**Recommendation:** This book is a roadmap for creating deep and meaningful relations to support you through your work and home life. It will help you to strengthen relationships you already have and

offer a new perspective on how to succeed in reciprocal relationships with people you already know and people you choose to seek.

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**About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD**

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

To schedule a free *Break From the Pack to Success* consultation email

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