Who’s Got Your Back
The Breakthrough Program to Build Deep, Trusting Relationships that Create Success – And Won’t Let You Fail
Keith Ferrazzi

The Big Idea
Disregard the myth of the lone professional superman and the rest of our culture’s go-it-alone mentality. The real path to success in your work and in your life is through creating an inner circle of “lifeline relationships” – deep, close relationships with a few key trusted individuals who will offer the encouragement, feedback, and generous mutual support that each of us needs to reach our full potential.

Whether your dream is to lead a company, be a top producer in your field, overcome the self-destructive habits that hold you back, lose weight, or make a difference in the larger world, Who’s Got Your Back will give you the road map you’ve been looking for to achieve the success you deserve.

Keith Ferrazzi, the internationally renowned thought leader, consultant, and bestselling author of Never Eat Alone, shows us that becoming a winner in any field of endeavor requires a trusted team of advisers who can offer guidance and help to hold us accountable to achieving our goals. It is the reason Ph.D. candidates have adviser teams, top executives have boards, world-class athletes have fitness coaches, and presidents have cabinets.

None of us can do it alone. We need the perspective and advice of a trusted team. And in Who’s Got Your Back Keith Ferrazzi shows us how to put our own dream team together.

Why You Need This Book

This book will show you how to create your very own Dream Team to help you bust through your own personal glass ceiling and start achieving the success and fulfillment we all were meant to enjoy.

WHY DO WE NEED LIFELINES?

Each one of us is a salesperson, leader, and entrepreneur, seeking answers. We’re all entrepreneurs of our own ideas, whether we own our own companies or work for someone else. We’re all leaders in our own lives – with our colleagues, with our employees, with our kids, and in our communities. Each one of us is a salesperson of ourselves and our opinions, if not of business products and services. And 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.
Here are eight things that should be as clear as day to you:

Life coaching, with its hazy self-helpish title, comes in for more than its fair share of ribbing in the media and elsewhere. As a society, we’re crying out for more community, more help, more advice and support. As individuals, we’re looking for lifeline relationships anywhere we can get them, even if we have to buy them.

Most organizations remain entrenched in the status quo. The status quo is often a hierarchical structure where communication is downward, linear, and one-way, from management on down. A seismic shift is now under way as passionate individuals, empowered by technology, come together to form ad hoc “tribes” capable of tackling all manner of projects. The Internet has provided the tools for sharing and cooperating on a global scale.

The Internet is an important tool, but it’s not the answer. There’s an explosion of new sites available to help connect people.

Considering the vacuum of skilled, effective frontline management in companies today, executives, managers, and employees who are proactive in finding a team of advisors to help give them feedback and coaching, accountability, and support are the ones who will flourish in today’s challenging environment.

Most people want more out of work these days than just a paycheck. Heck, most of us want more out of life. Like no other time in history, people are taking the search for meaning in their work more seriously.

For business, an initiative is not common sense unless it makes dollars and cents.

FOUR WAYS LIFELINE RELATIONSHIPS WILL HELP YOU

How will these relationships benefit you? Here are four ways lifeline relationships are critical:

To help us identify what success truly means for us, including our long-term career plans.
To help us figure out the most robust plan possible to get there, through short-term goals and strategies that would tie us into knots if we tried to go it alone.
To help us identify what we need to stop doing to move forward in our lives – referring to the things we all do that hold us back from achieving the success we deserve.
To have people around us committed to ensuring we don’t fail – so we can transform our lives from good to great.

GETTING TRIBAL: THE FOUR MIND-SETS TO BUILDING LIFELINE RELATIONSHIPS

There are four core mind-sets – which can be learned and practiced – that form the behavioral foundation for creating the kind of lifeline relationships:

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. Generosity signals the end of isolation by cracking open a door to a trusting emotional environment, a “safe space” – the kind of environment that’s necessary for creating relationships in which the other mind-sets can flourish.

Vulnerability. This means letting your guard down so mutual understanding can occur. Here you cross the threshold into a safe space after intimacy and trust have pushed the door wide open. The relationship engendered by generosity then moves toward a place of fearless friendship where risks are taken and invitations are offered to others.

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.

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.
The real key to establishing close relationships with people you consider your trusted advisors in your career and in your personal life is how these Four Mind-sets work together.

**THE EIGHT STEPS TO TRUST AND INTIMACY**

These eight steps can be put into practice when meeting someone new or when you’d like to transform a relationship you already have into something bigger and better – a lifeline.

1. **Create an Authentic Environment Around You**. Have you ever walked into a room completely intimidated in advance, having psyched yourself out before you got in the door? The first step is to get grounded. Take a deep breath. Relax. Let the other person see who you are and what you have to offer – your concern, your interest, your passion, your intelligence, your skill. Listen to that authentic inner voice. Meditate for several minutes or just take a few deep breaths. For me, exercising helps me to empty my mind and find that inner voice.

2. **Suspend your prejudices**. Prejudice is simply part of being human. This is the way our minds are designed! Think about it this way: Every day we are inundated with information. Stereotyping is a shortcut that allows the brain to operate day to day in a world overflowing with information.

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. Sharing these initiates a chain reaction that opens everyone up.

5. **Talk about your goals and dreams**. The next level involves sharing your goals and dreams. Everybody has them – goals for themselves, their businesses, their families. Too often these dreams stay locked up inside our heads. But 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.

6. **Revisit your past**. Why zero in on stuff from our lives that’s already happened? Well, most people find it easier to talk about past struggles because they’re behind us and we came through them. In fact, talking about past struggles might even be considered focusing on our strengths, because we wouldn’t be here today if we hadn’t overcome the things we did years ago.

7. **What’s Keeping You Up At Night?** Once you’ve established a safe place to talk about then, it’s time to focus in on the now. It’s not that you should dive into a close level of disclosure with someone you just met, but this is a necessary level of sharing for both partners in a lifeline relationship.

8. **Future Fears**. The final step toward intimacy and trust is being open and sharing your fears and concerns about the future.

**TAKING CANDOR TO THE NEXT LEVEL**

To make getting and giving candor a bigger part of your life, here’s a list of things to keep in mind:

- **Find people you respect**. We can’t be candid with everybody – nor would we want to be. This is why we need to hand-pick the people around us whose opinions we value. When you think about it, we respect people for their kindness, their friendliness, their intelligence, their wisdom, their drive. It’s important to find someone we respect before even attempting to engage candidly with them.

- **Create the opportunity**. To open up a dialogue with another person and ask for his candid feedback, you might need to tee things up in advance of a meeting with an email, so your friend has time to ponder what he might say beforehand.

- **Make it clear any feedback you get is a gift**. Express your gratitude when you receive feedback. What you’re asking for is a gift – of time, honestly, and thoughtful feedback.

- **Acknowledge your faults**. Don’t try to pretend to be something you’re not. Most of us know, deep inside, what’s holding us back. By acknowledging that you have things to work on, you make it much easier for others to be honest with you.
Tell the Other Person What You Plan to Do with the Advice. You’re not asking for advice to put the other person on the spot, or to “test” her. You’re certainly not going to get angry or defensive. You’re simply gathering information.

Don’t tell them what you want to hear. Be sure you don’t start by leading the witness – by identifying your faults and asking the other person to confirm them. You’re after candor here, not an echo effect. Let yourself be surprised.

Ask specific questions. Once the other person has given feedback, it’s okay to bring up specific examples about yourself that you want to get reactions to.

Take it or leave it – but deliver on safety. Remember that asking for criticism doesn’t mean you have to act on it. Criticism is what it is: candid feedback from someone you respect and whose opinion matters to you.

Paying them back. The pinnacle of generosity is allowing other people to help us – particularly when they care about us.

BUILDING YOUR DREAM TEAM

Here are nine steps to creating the lifeline relationships that will help you get the advice and support you need to achieve your goals:

Step 1: Articulate a 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.

Step 2: Find the people who can be lifeline relationships in your life. It is important that you know where to look for potential advisors, as well as the criteria to use to evaluate people to ensure that they’re the right person.

Step 3: Practice the art of the long slow dinner. How to turn those potential advisors into friendships and, hopefully, lifeline relationships that you can depend on.

Step 4: Get genius about goals. You need to identify not just your ultimate objectives but the new skills and knowledge you’ll need to grow and achieve them. This means setting two kinds of goals, learning goals and performance goals.

Step 5: Create a personal success wheel. This is the overall game plan behind your life strategy.

Step 6: Learn to fight! This is the necessary ingredient to spur the kind of conversation and give-and-take that reveal new truth and create new value.

Step 7: Diagnose your weaknesses. Understanding your weaknesses can end up being the source of your greatest strength. Those who understand what’s holding them back are already moving forward.

Step 8: Commit to improvement. Commit to acting on the understanding you’ve gained – by keeping your word.

Step 9: Fake it until you make it. Escape the self-fulfilling prophecy that you can’t or won’t. Pretend that you can, and you will.

ONE FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Have fun! The ultimate key to the sustainability of your group will be first and foremost the professional value the group provides. But a close second is how much fun you have together. It’s fine to infuse the meetings with a little humor sometimes. Don’t be afraid if the occasional meeting becomes more about kibitzing than work.
Let people get close to one another around subjects other than the serious business of growth and change. Now go ahead – get started!