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The 10 Secrets of a Master Networker

By: Tahl Raz

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Keith Ferrazzi enters your life like a circus coming to town -- the two ringing cell phones, the two PalmPilots, the multiple conversations in which he seems to be listening and talking simultaneously. The way he walks and looks, all tanned and fit, with the styled hair and custom suit and black Prada shoes. The deals that are hanging in the air, the favors being extended or secured, the sideshows, the laughter, the juggling. That irresistible balloon of energy.

We've just bolted from the Yale Club and are hustling through midtown Manhattan in a cab, heading for Rockefeller Center and a lunch we're already late for with an important television executive. A Ferrazzi friend. I'm here because Ferrazzi is said to have a gift. In addition to heading up a young Los Angeles company called YaYa that's generating more than its share of buzz, Ferrazzi is a networker, a great networker. Indeed, some of the world's best networkers say that the still-only-36-year-old Ferrazzi may be the best of all. Ferrazzi is something else, too: an archetypal American story, the poor kid -- born to a steelworker and a cleaning lady -- who works his ass off to get into Yale and Harvard B-school; who becomes the youngest elected partner at Deloitte Consulting and then the youngest Fortune 500 chief marketing officer, at Starwood Hotels; who gets tapped by famed financier Michael Milken and others to become CEO of YaYa, a pioneering company in the creation of on-line games as custom-marketing vehicles. In two years Ferrazzi has transformed YaYa from a clever idea into a thriving business. He's got game, as they say. But the exact nature of that game -- the magic of it, everyone claims -- is networking, the acquisition and cultivation of influential connections.

And yet, sitting with Ferrazzi in the cab, I am aware of what many company owners will think of all this. Networking? Give me John Wayne individualism and the aggressive single-mindedness that's required to build something, to lead, and to do it all alone. Schmoozers are brownnosers, sycophants more suited to middle management than to the Wild West of the entrepreneurial world. Would it be a surprise if entrepreneurs recoil at the thought of consciously courting any person who has more power and money than they have?

In the cab I'm thinking I'll press Ferrazzi on that issue, lead him carefully through my list of questions, get to the bottom of networking's unseemliness. But it won't happen that way. Instead, in the course of following Ferrazzi throughout the day, at lunch and during a few hours of phone calls and a discussion that can only be described as a lecture, I will become a pupil. Keith Ferrazzi will teach me how the inner circle operates. He'll teach me how even I can operate. He'll teach me the system.

"Have you ever thought of broadcast journalism?" Ferrazzi is asking me now as we sit in traffic. He asks many such questions, personal and probing, and he does it with such an easy charm and sincerity that I find myself answering them.

"I guess I've considered it," I say.

"Well, this lunch will be great for you," he says. "She's a terrific woman who happens to be very powerful. This is your opportunity to start practicing your networking skills." But halfway through our meal in the Rainbow Room's members-only lunch club, all is not well. I'm polite but passive, asking a few questions but nothing more. Ferrazzi, on the other hand, manages the conversation like a yogi -- all deliberate, delicate movements, his listening as assertive as his banter. And now I'm about to face my first test. Choosing a moment when he and I are briefly alone in the buffet line, Ferrazzi leans in and whispers, "You're a fucking loser if you don't walk out of here with some reason for getting in touch with her again."

Later, when he is painstakingly explaining the practice of his system -- the rules of elite networking -- he'll also explain the critical difference between what he does and what most people do. He'll try to explain the nuances that the Rolodex builders and card passer-outers fail to grasp. But he'll admit that in the beginning it was more straightforward even for him.

EYES ON THE PRIZE: It was his father's pluck that got Keith Ferrazzi out of his working-class suburb.

As a kid he caddied at the local country club for the homeowners and children living in the wealthy town next to his, and it made him think often and hard about those who succeed and those who don't. He came to believe that business, like life, is a game, and that the people who play it best will win. And the rule in the game that trumps all others, Ferrazzi became convinced, is that he who knows the most people, and knows them well, becomes a member of the club, not a caddy. Hence his gradual construction of a plan, a set of existential operating procedures that today has bred a network of oceanic proportions. Whether you want to speak with Michael Milken or Bill Clinton or celebrity doctor Dean Ornish or CEO Barry Diller, Ferrazzi can open the door.

"So how'd I do?" I ask him when we're back at the Yale Club, his base when he's in New York, after our Rainbow Room lunch.

"Awful," he reports. And it's true. The entire experience had the feel of a first date. When I did manage to speak, I actually stuttered. My questions weren't particularly passionate or insightful. And when at the very last moment I went in for the metaphorical kiss, I instead got a chummy punch on the shoulder. Ferrazzi stepped in -- because I'd forgotten my business cards -- to say he'd get us in touch. I now ask him to grade my performance. He gives me a preposterously charitable C-minus. "You can do better," he says. "You just have to work on it."

Rule 1: Don't network just to network.

"Well, what do you want?" Ferrazzi will ask any would-be networker seeking instruction in the art. What do you want?

"If your aspirations lie with the crème de la crème," he says, "that is, if your aspirations are to be one of the top x people in the world in whatever you do, if you're so bold as to want to be president of the United States or a respected CEO in the *Fortune* 500, I would argue that you won't get there by knowing a lot of middle-level people." You need to know the right people, for the right reason.

As a Yale undergrad, Ferrazzi, who grew up outside Pittsburgh, thought he wanted to become the governor of Pennsylvania. So he became the president of Yale's political union. When he was looking to join a fraternity, he researched which one had the most active politicians as alumni. (Sigma Chi wasn't chartered at Yale, so he founded a chapter.) When he was a sophomore, he ran for New Haven City Council, but lost. From 1991 through 1999 at Deloitte Consulting, his first job after Harvard Business School, he desperately wanted to distinguish himself from the other striving postgrad consultants. Since Michael Hammer of "reengineering" fame was the guru of the moment, Ferrazzi befriended him and helped Deloitte ride Hammer's fame. Ferrazzi became the youngest person ever elected partner at Deloitte Consulting. The more focused Ferrazzi's goal was, the more outrageous his networking fortunes became.

In November 2000 the YaYa board named Ferrazzi CEO and handed him two goals: establish a viable business model, and then either find a major investor or sell the company to a well-heeled strategic acquirer. At the time, YaYa had the tech capability to invent on-line games that corporations could use to attract and educate their customers, but the company had no customers -- or revenue. "I was hired to get a new concept heard for the first time in the marketplace," Ferrazzi says. He mapped out the most important players in the on-line-games industry, from CEOs and journalists to programmers and academics. He knew almost all of them within a year. And in 2002, YaYa recorded \$8 million in sales.

Rule 2: Take names.

"I'm constantly ripping out lists in magazines. I was one of Crain's '40 under 40' when I was 30. Interestingly enough, I had been ripping out 40-under-40 lists for years and continue to do so. Those are individuals who somebody has spent enough time to identify as an up-and-comer, a mover, an intellectual, and these are the kinds of people I want to surround myself with. I rip out lists of top CEOs, most admired CEOs, regional lists. A recent book by Richard Saul Wurman lists the 1,000 most creative people in the United States. It's fantastic."

Either Ferrazzi or his assistant enters the gathered names into a database. He has call sheets by region, listing the people he knows and those he'd like to know, and when he's in town, he phones all of them. The numbers are also put into his two PalmPilots, one that has names strictly relating to the particular business he's involved in at the moment (YaYa now) and another that contains his own personal contacts. There are more than 5,000 contacts in all, some of them people Ferrazzi doesn't know yet. Those are what he calls "aspirational contacts."

He pulls out his Palm and shows me the contact information for Richard Branson, chairman of the Virgin empire. "I don't know him. But I want to," he says. Then he scrolls down and comes to Howard Stringer, CEO of Sony Corp. of America. "He was on my aspirational list once. I now know Howard," he notes.

Rule 3: Build it before you need it.

Back in 1999, when Ferrazzi arrived at Starwood Hotels from Deloitte, his goal was to become president or even CEO of the multinational hospitality corporation. But by early 2000 things weren't going well. The company, under the mercurial leadership of chairman and CEO Barry Sternlicht, was known for the early defections of its top executives. Ferrazzi's relationship with Sternlicht was "strained," according to one insider, and Ferrazzi realized he had no future at Starwood.

On his last day at the company -- as on most days -- he made more than 40 phone calls, one of which was to Sandy Climan, a well-known Hollywood player who once served as Michael Ovitz's right-hand man at Creative Artists Agency and who now runs an L.A.-based venture-capital firm called Entertainment Media Ventures. What's interesting about the call, and the dozens of others like it that Ferrazzi made that day, was that long before they knew Ferrazzi, many of the people he spoke with had been on one of his lists.

ANCHOR MAN: "What you do," says Ferrazzi, "is find somebody in your peer set who has a friend who is two levels above -- the anchor tenant."

Three months later, Ferrazzi had five job offers. Climan had him meet with people from YaYa, one of the companies in his firm's portfolio. It didn't hurt that one of the other investors with a stake in YaYa, Knowledge Universe, was backed by Michael Milken. Milken had been on a list for years, until Ferrazzi finally connected with him through a nonprofit cause. Ferrazzi has since come to consider Milken a mentor. "You build your network before you need it," says Ferrazzi. "When someone comes to me for advice on how to build a network because they need a job now, I tell them it's useless. People can tell the difference between desperation and an earnest attempt to create a relationship."

Rule 4: Never eat alone.

The dynamics of status in a business network are similar to those in Hollywood: invisibility is a fate worse than failure. Above all, never, ever disappear. "Keep your social and conference and event calendar full," Ferrazzi tells me. "I give myself one night a week for myself, and the rest is an event or dinner."

Is this a life?

Ferrazzi, who has no children but has been in a 10-year relationship with another man, spends almost all his time working. "I wake up around 5 or 6 in the morning, and I go until 1 in the morning," he says. "Every free moment is a chance to E-mail or call someone. But I don't consider that work. That's my true joy. I have balance, but it's my own version. My career and my community-service stuff have always taken a front seat to my personal life. But, in a sense, that is my personal life. There's no distinction for me. Yes, I'd like to go to church more and meditate more. And it's been a while since I've taken a real vacation. But do I feel like I've sacrificed anything? No."

Rule 5: Be interesting.

To show that he was smart yet unconventional, Ferrazzi used to wear a bow tie to conferences. To emphasize his charitable nature, he is always passionately involved in one philanthropic cause or another. He is keenly aware that perception drives reality and that we are all, in some sense, brands. All his choices -- his Prada suits, his conversational style, his hobbies -- help him fashion a distinctive identity that is both interesting and attractive. And the cornerstone that supports the design of a person, he instructs, is content. "Being known is one thing, but being known for content is something else entirely -- and much better," he says. "You have to have something to say to be interesting to people."

"If you're so bold as to want to be president of the United States or a respected CEO in the *Fortune* 500, I would argue that you won't get there by knowing a lot of middle-level people."

In college, that something was politics. At his first job, at Imperial Chemical Industries, he mastered the ins and outs of total quality management. (He persuaded the industrial giant to craft a new position for him called head of TQM in North America.) Later, when he worked at Deloitte, reengineering was his hook. Today it's on-line games and "how the new medium will impact society and corporations."

What sets Ferrazzi apart from everybody else is the relentlessness he brings to learning and packaging and selling these hooks. YaYa's board knew that that characteristic would prove vital for a company whose market and product were totally untested. The on-line-games industry has always been driven by hits, by competing in a race for the latest, greatest diversion. But Ferrazzi began to trumpet the industry as the next powerful communications medium, an untapped \$20-billion marketing vehicle perfect for product placements, branded gaming events, custom games-related training for businesses, and on and on. It wasn't long before he was not only attending games conferences but speaking at them, "which is always preferable," he says.

Once the pitch is perfected, getting attention is never a problem. Journalists are powerful (the right exposure can make a company), needy (they're always looking for a story), and relatively unknown (few have achieved enough celebrity to make them inaccessible). It's a combination that Ferrazzi has learned to exploit. He knows people in top positions at almost every major business magazine in the country. Which is why it's little surprise that in less than a year after Ferrazzi took over YaYa, with barely a shred of revenue to its name, the company -- and, more important, the content -- appeared in places like *Forbes*, the *Wall Street Journal*, CNN, *Brand Week*, and the *New York Times*.

Fame sells. An executive at Honda motors spotted the article in *Brand Week*, and YaYa had its first big account; it would create for Honda a multiplayer on-line racing game to help sell the new Acura.

Rule 6: Manage the gatekeeper. Artfully.

Last summer Ferrazzi met Jane Pemberton, a former Disney executive, while flying first-class, as always. "That's where the decision makers sit," says Ferrazzi. (See "Where to Meet the Power Elite," at right, for Ferrazzi's recommendations regarding the most fertile venues for top-shelf networking.) Pemberton suggested that Ferrazzi might like to get to know Michael Johnson, president of Walt Disney International.

There wasn't anything obvious that Johnson could do for Ferrazzi or YaYa. There rarely is when Ferrazzi reaches out. But it couldn't hurt for Ferrazzi to know him, and who could say whether Disney would someday become a potential suitor? The only problem was getting through Johnson's gatekeepers; that's often the only problem -- but not for Ferrazzi. "When you don't know someone, the first concept is getting past the secretary," he says. "So Johnson's secretary says, 'I'm sorry, Mr. Johnson is traveling, he's traveling all month.' And I say, 'That's OK. Why don't you tell him a friend of Jane Pemberton's called? Tell him to call me back if he has some time.' I didn't push. The first call you don't push, because the admin doesn't know you, and you never want to get the admin pissed off at you; they're the gateway.

"Second call is almost the same thing: 'Hi, this is Keith Ferrazzi. I'm just calling back because I haven't heard from him,' as if the presumption is that I would have. It's totally innocuous, no obligation. On the third call, she's getting a little pissed. 'Listen,' she says with a little strike in her voice, 'Mr. Johnson is very busy. I don't know who you are....' I counter: 'I'm just a personal friend of a friend, I just moved into the city, Jane suggested that I should meet Michael, and I don't even know why, besides Jane being a good friend of Michael's. Maybe it's all wrong, maybe we shouldn't meet. I apologize.' That puts her on the defensive. Now she thinks that she's been a dick to a personal friend of a friend of her boss. She backs off, and I make a proposition: 'Why don't I just send Michael an E-mail? What's his E-mail address?' And at this point she thinks, 'I want to be out of the middle of this thing.' She gives me the E-mail address.

"The E-mail is simple: 'Dear Michael, I'm a friend of Jane's, and she suggested I talk with you. Fifteen minutes and a cup of coffee is fine. Jane thinks we should know each other.' I get a cordial 'Of course we can' response.

"So now I go back to the secretary with the 'Of course we can.' Now it's not if, but when, we'll meet. Now it's 'Michael would like to set up this meeting, just let me know when.' And finally it happens."

Rule 7: Always ask.

This is the story Keith Ferrazzi tells about his father:

Pete Ferrazzi, a steelworker whose world was hard hours and low wages, knew he wanted more for his son. He knew his boy's life would be better if he could find a way out of their working-class Pittsburgh suburb.

"Keep your social calendar full," says Ferrazzi. "I give myself one night a week for myself, and the rest is an event or dinner."

But the elder Ferrazzi didn't know the exits. He'd never been to college. He knew nothing of country clubs or private schools. He could picture only one man who might have the sort of pull that could help: his boss. Actually, the boss of his boss's boss -- Alex McKenna, CEO of Kennametal, in whose factory Pete Ferrazzi worked. The two men had never met. But the elder Ferrazzi had an idea about how the world worked. He'd observed that audacity was often the only thing that separated two equally talented men and their job titles. Pete Ferrazzi asked to speak with McKenna, who, upon hearing the request, was so intrigued that he took the meeting. In it, he agreed to meet Pete's son, Keith,

but not to do anything more.

However, it turned out that McKenna liked the precocious adolescent -- especially because of the way young Keith had come to his attention. McKenna was on the board of a local prep school where he sent his own children, by reputation one of the best schools in the country. Strings were indeed pulled, and Keith entered a new world, on scholarship, that set him on an entirely new course, just as his father had hoped. "I got one of the best educations America has to offer," Ferrazzi says today. "Starting with elementary school, prep school, on to Yale and Harvard - it would never have happened if my father hadn't believed that it never hurts to ask. The worst anyone can say is no. Not many people believe that. Embarrassment and fear are debilitating."

Totally fearless is how Joshua Ramo, an editor at Time Inc., describes Ferrazzi. Ramo remembers a moment at the Davos economic forum, where the two first met, when Ferrazzi walked onto a hotel bus, saw Nike founder Phil Knight, and made a beeline for the seat next to his.

Boldness, and its particular genius, was the father's gift to his son.

Rule 8: Don't keep score.

Successful networking is never about simply getting what you want. It's about getting what you want and making sure that people who are important to you get what they want, too. Often, that means fixing up people with one another. Take, for instance, this unsolicited E-mail message that Ferrazzi sent to two key executives in digital gaming:

Steve and John,

I wanted to introduce the two of you. John, I've bragged about Steve to you already. And Steve, John is the president and COO of EA [Entertainment Arts], the largest games company in the world. John has been an outspoken believer that the future of games will converge with ITV and that EA is the kind of company that will be at the forefront given the leadership of someone like John, the size of EA, and power of their content. I know, Steve, that you get the power of games as the one who allowed G4 to come to life. It would seem that the two of you would benefit from some conversations about your mutual visions. Not to mention that I suspect that you'll really like each other as well.

Best,

Keith Ferrazzi

"It's about a personal connection that makes you feel a sense of reciprocity," Ferrazzi says. "Superficiality is not networking. There are people who have lots of superficial connections, and people call that networking. But that's not successful. You feel dirty when you talk to someone

like that. The outcome of good networking is the capacity to have a conversation with anyone you want to have a conversation with and then to leave that conversation with a lasting connection of some sort."

The best sort of networking occurs when Ferrazzi can connect two people who don't know each other. Which drives home a surprising implication: the strength of your network derives as much from the diversity of your relationships as it does from their quality or quantity. Most of us know the people within our own profession and social group, and little more. Ferrazzi makes a point of knowing as many people from as many different worlds as possible. The ability to bridge those worlds is a key attribute in managers who are paid better and promoted faster, according to an influential study conducted by Ron Burt, a professor at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business.

The care and feeding of contacts is a relatively new concept for the business networker. In *Power! How to Get It, How to Use It*, a 1975 self-help screed on the secrets to becoming a corporate chieftain, Michael Korda advised that "masters players ... attempt to channel as much information as they can into their own hands, then withhold it from as many people as possible." That is, 30 years ago old-style connectors attained power through a monopoly of information, whereas today people like Ferrazzi view the system as social arbitrage, a constant and open exchange of favors and intelligence. It's a sort of career karma, too; how much you give to the network determines how much you'll receive.

Rule 9: Ping constantly.

Eighty percent of success, Woody Allen once said, is just showing up. Eighty percent of networking is just staying in touch. Ferrazzi calls it "pinging." It's a quick, casual greeting. He makes hundreds of phone calls a day. Most of them are simply quick hellos that he leaves on friends' voice mail. He sends E-mail constantly. He remembers birthdays and makes a special point of reaching people when they have one. When it comes to relationship maintenance, he is, in the words of more than one friend, "the most relentless, energetic person I know."

Rule 10: Find anchor tenants. Feed them.

By now, an invitation for an evening at Ferrazzi's is a hot ticket. Nearly once a month influence peddlers from different worlds gather to gossip, talk business, and schmooze at his Hollywood Hills home. But in the early days, before his dinner parties had cachet, Ferrazzi had to develop a very deliberate strategy for attracting the right people.

"You, me, every one of us -- we have our peer set, and we can always have dinner parties with our peer set, but if you keep having dinner parties with your peer set, why would somebody two levels above your peer set ever come to your dinner parties?" he asks. "The point is, you don't randomly invite somebody two levels above your peer set to your dinner and expect them to come, because they won't. They want to hang around people of their peer set or higher. This is a crass way of talking about it, but this is the formula."

So Ferrazzi developed his theory of the anchor tenant. "What you do," he says, "is find somebody in your peer set who has a friend who is two levels above -- the big swinging dick of the group, the anchor tenant. You get them to come and, in all invitations subsequent to that, you use the anchor to pull in people who otherwise wouldn't attend."

On a typical evening last summer, all the guests at Ferrazzi's could have been considered anchors. And the function of the festivity remained the same as it had been back when Ferrazzi was trying to land just one big name: mixing different people for good fun, lively conversation, and perhaps a few mutually beneficial encounters to boot. The doing of deals was inevitable. But so was a sing-along around Ferrazzi's baby grand.

The evening started with champagne, followed by cocktails served "early and heavy." On this night, political columnist Arianna Huffington stopped by for drinks but left before dinner. Other notables included Chrysler vice-president Jeff Bell; design impresario and TED conference founder Richard Saul Wurman; Disney president of interactive games Jan Smith; and Paul Bricault, senior vice-president at William Morris Consulting.

Around the long dining-room table Ferrazzi had placed name tags in an effort to orchestrate a symphony of successful interactions. A wealthy CEO might sit next to an official of a nonprofit that's looking to raise money, or a potential YaYa investor who is a rabid Republican might find herself next to a GOP heavy. On this night, Bell, a film buff, was seated next to a well-known movie director. As always, the meal was hearty and down-home to make people feel cozy. After dinner, led by a hired piano player, the guests retired for some singing and port wine. Several days later, Bricault called to thank Ferrazzi. "My wife told me," he swooned in a voice-mail message, "she wants to be Keith Ferrazzi when she grows up."

We're back at the Yale Club, and my tutelage is coming to an end. The afternoon is edging into night, and Ferrazzi is still networking away with the restless energy of an obscure presidential hopeful -- indeed, among those he's dancing with at this particular moment is the obscure presidential hopeful Governor Howard Dean of Vermont. (Ferrazzi is arranging a fund-raiser for the governor in L.A., and, as a small favor, he's asking if Dean might take on a fellow Yalie's wife as an intern.) We're in Ferrazzi's regular suite, and he's standing at the desk, one leg propped up on a chair, two phones buzzing, E-mails pinging, his fingers constantly fidgeting with a PalmPilot. In the course of three hours he's spoken to or left messages for some three dozen people in addition to Dean, including the managing editor of *Forbes*, the president of Martha Stewart Living, and the chairman of DuPont.

I've followed Ferrazzi for months now, talking or E-mailing at all hours, becoming accustomed to "Ferrazzi Time," a zone of operations in which the switchboards are always open. Deals, companies, jobs: they come and go -- the ringmaster of the Big Top remains. Yet, nearing the end of my time with him, I realize that one of the most basic questions in my notebook remains unanswered.

What about the manipulation, the gamesmanship, the using of people? Doesn't he ever feel uncomfortable, like a phony? Well, no. This is simply who Keith Ferrazzi is. And I can see that he's a little disappointed in me, a little saddened that maybe I haven't completely understood.

Sitting there with him, I realize that two scenes have stuck with me. One is a memory that Ferrazzi related of getting picked up at his prep school by his mother in a beat-up old Nova while other children were ducking into limos and BMWs. "And I'd be teased about my clothes, the lack of money.... It really set a hard line in my head. It fundamentally made me pissed off at the old-boy network because I wasn't an

inheritance kid. It put the biggest fucking chip on my shoulder. And one of these days I will have surpassed all of them in terms of success."

So here he is, more successful than his father ever dreamed, still bearing the weight of that mighty chip.

Then there is the tale he told of his own aspiring group of mentees, young men in their twenties. Inevitably, Ferrazzi says, there comes a time when he can make a difference in their lives. He can open a door or place a call or set up an internship -- one of those simple acts by which destinies are altered. But too often the offer is refused. "They'll say one of three things. They won't take the favor because they can't pay me back or because they don't want to be obligated to me, or they'll insist right there and then that they do me a favor of some kind in return," he says. To Ferrazzi, nothing is as infuriating as encountering such blindness in people he cares about as to how things work.

What he does, he'll say, has nothing to do with quid pro quo, with a running equation in which you give just so you can get. For Ferrazzi, networking may be the power tool for somehow, someday, dislodging that heavy chip. But it's something much more: a way of engaging with the world. For Ferrazzi, networking is about making a difference, exploring, learning, connecting. For Ferrazzi, it's the conscious construction of his life's path.

As conversations with Ferrazzi and his peers reveal, the network functions precisely because those with money and power know the rules. There's recognition of mutual need. There's certainty that investing time and energy in building personal relationships with the right people will pay dividends. And here is the point: the majority of "one percenters," as Ferrazzi calls the ultrarich and powerful who inhabit the territory he now travels, are one percenters because they understand this dynamic -- because, in fact, they themselves used the network to arrive at their present station. They are forthright in their pursuits, almost unconsciously conspiratorial in their collective and mutual understanding that real networking -- life-permeating networking -- is a requisite part of the game. It's not crass. For those who wield this kind of power, it's mandatory.

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Where to Meet the Power Elite

Keith ferrazzi's favorite places to hang with other people on the rise.

Young Presidents' Organization (YPO). The organization is for executive managers under the age of 44 and has regional chapters across the United States.

Political fund-raisers. Although Ferrazzi once ran for office as a Republican, he no longer openly discusses his political affiliation. Why? So he can have access to both parties. He does 3 to 10 fund-raisers at home each year, supporting both regional and national politicians. It's easy pickings at the nexus of money and passion.

Conferences. "Have something unique to say and become a speaker" is Ferrazzi's hard-and-fast rule on attending business conferences. Networking is never easier than when people are coming to you.

Davos World Economic Forum. Held at the end of January or beginning of February each year, Davos is where corporate chieftains and political heavies discuss making the world better while slaloming the Alps. Your best chance of being invited is if you run a multinational or know someone who does. Many of Ferrazzi's most important relationships -- including Nike's Phil Knight -- have come from Davos.

Nonprofit boards. Ferrazzi suggests starting out by finding four or five issues that are important to you and then supporting them locally. Eventually, the goal is to become a board member.

Renaissance Weekend. Bill Clinton's favorite New Year's event (and, not surprisingly, the place that generated quite a few political appointments) is arguably the network of networks. If you're not a celebrity, a politician, or a friend of a friend, tough luck. This party, held in Charleston, S.C., is invitation only.

Any airplane's first-class cabin. First class is where the bigwigs sit when they fly. When Ferrazzi was at Deloitte Consulting, he'd pay for his own upgrades, and he eventually generated enough business to get the company to pay his way. There's a trick, however, to making it work. "You've got one shot at starting a conversation," he says, "and that's when someone is eating. They're bored and more receptive than at any time during the flight."

TED Conferences. This annual gathering in February in Monterey, Calif., brings together the well-connected nerd set under the theme "Technology, Entertainment, and Design." It's not hard to get an invitation, and the players come out for the heavy mingling, deal making, and often-interesting, if esoteric, seminars.

Allen & Co.'s Conference. New York investment banker Herb Allen organized the first event in 1983 to bring media moguls together at a lush ski resort in Sun Valley, Idaho, to do one thing: make deals. Very big deals.

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