

Lifeline Relationships

Behind every great leader typically stands an indispensable circle of trusted advisers, mentors and colleagues. These groups come in all forms and sizes, and can be found at every level and in nearly all walks of both professional and personal life. What they all have in common is a unique connection with each other that Keith Ferazzi, author of "Who's Got Your Back" has coined "lifeline relationships." He believes that to build these all-important lifeline relationships there are four core mindsets that can be learned and practiced and help lead to personal and financial prosperity. They are:

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 creatively share our deepest insights and ideas with the world. It's the promise to help others succeed by whatever means you can muster.

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 in whom you confide. 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 advisers in your career and in your personal life is how these four mindsets work together. The process starts with generosity. It jolts people out of traditional transactional do-for-me-and-I'll-do-for-you relationships. Actively reaching out to and helping others gives us the opportunity to take a relationship to a deeper level.

If we've created a safe space, a place where we feel safe enough to say candidly what we think and feel, we can take greater risks in the relationship. It can lead to making a commitment to mutually support one another through thick and thin and to hold one another accountable for doing the things that will allow us to achieve our goals. Taking such risks can lead us to create more than just friendships -- we can create lifeline relationships to a better future.

Ferazzi says that once you work within the four mindsets, you will find that it can be an inspiring experience. Whether you're working with an experienced sales team or building a business from scratch, the lifeline relationships you build will become more than your colleagues or assistants. They will become you're a trusted circle of advisers and your peers.