



JIM HARSHAW, JR.

Clarity of Action. Peace of Mind.

Success for the Athletic-Minded Man Podcast

Action Plan Episode #522

Keith Ferrazzi

If your team looks good on paper but feels slow in real life, this episode of "Success for the Athletic-Minded Man" will hit a nerve.

I sat down with Keith Ferrazzi, bestselling author of "Never Eat Alone" and one of the sharpest minds on high-performing teams, to talk about what actually separates elite groups from polite, mediocre ones.

We get into why most teams fall into a hub-and-spoke trap where everything runs through the leader, and how "conflict avoidance" quietly creates politics, longer cycle times, and endless follow-up meetings.

Keith also breaks down how to build candor and psychological safety with simple practices like "stress testing" an initiative, not to tear someone down, but to make sure the team doesn't let them fail.

We also zoom out to the future of work and AI. Keith's message is clear: curiosity and reinvention are the new job security. If you want to lead without authority, earn real buy-in, and build team accountability that performs under pressure, this one's for you.

Listen in if you're done with busy meetings and slow execution and want practical ways to raise the standard without blowing up trust.

Top Quotes From This Episode

"The kind of leadership that we need today [are] people who are willing to be curious, lean in, ask the tough questions."

"High performance is not a solo sport, it's a team sport."

"If you want to change mindset, change what you do, and your mindset will catch up."

Show Notes

This episode touches on the following key topics and ideas:

- **[Share this episode! \(1:30\)](#)**: Share the podcast on social media by tagging me and using the hashtag #SAMpod:
 - **YouTube:** [@jimharshaw1](#)
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- **The “level up” standard (2:14)**: Keith shared how his dad invested in him despite having no money, and that planted a lifelong question: “How do you level up?”
- **AI as a Partner, Not a Threat (5:15)**: Keith gets practical: look upstream and downstream in your workflow. Reinvent the handoffs, not just your tasks.
- **Never Eat Alone (7:50)**: Keith shares how curiosity and proactivity helped him build relationships that accelerated his career, including getting in front of decision-makers with real insight.
- **High Performance is a Team Sport, Not a Solo Sport (10:48)**: Keith explains why the team is as important as the coach.
- **Conflict Avoidance to Candor (13:11)**: Replace the polished 20-slide update with a stress test: what I'm working on, where I'm struggling, where I'm going next. Then teammates respond: what you might be missing, one idea, and where they can help.
- **Social Contracts (16:53)**: Keith reframes culture as a social contract. Some relationships protect comfort. Others protect outcomes.
- **The “Two People” Problem (19:35)**: Keith coaches team dynamics, and sometimes progress stalls because a couple individuals are blocking candor or execution.
- **Teamship vs leadership (21:21)**: Teamship is the team stepping up, not one person directing from a podium. It's energy, care, and shared accountability.
- **When It's Not Safe to Speak Up (23:33)**: Keith says some fear is in your head, some is real, but safety increases when candor is built into the assignment.

- **Leading Without Authority (28:42):** Keith lays out the playbook: don't wait for the org chart. Create a vision, recruit people, pilot something small, and feed results upward.

List of Resources Mentioned in the Episode

Books by Keith Ferrazzi

["Never Eat Alone, Expanded and Updated: And Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time"](#)

["Leading Without Authority: Why You Don't Need To Be In Charge to Inspire Others and Make Change Happen"](#)

["Who's Got Your Back: The Breakthrough Program to Build Deep, Trusting Relationships That Create Success--and Won't Let You Fail"](#)

["Competing in the New World of Work: How Radical Adaptability Separates the Best from the Rest"](#)

["Never Lead Alone: 10 Shifts from Leadership to Teamship – A Forbes Top 10 Business Book on Executive Skills and Team Dynamics"](#)

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Guest Website and Social

Keith Ferrazzi

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