

Everyone Needs an Entourage

It is literally true that you can succeed best and quickest by helping others to succeed.

—Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*

You may be wondering exactly what I meant when I told you in the book's introduction that you need an entourage. I'm not referring to the old-style entourage that surrounds royalty and A-list celebrities or the kind that follows the Queen to serve her every need: opening doors, fetching her lunch, having her hanky ready when she sniffles, and bowing and curtsying to acknowledge her wonderfulness. That traditional kind of entourage is useless; it merely serves as an appendage to superstar celebrities, who gallivant throughout the world with their make-up artists, hairdressers, nannies, assistant nannies, teachers, and parents-in-law all in tow. This entourage serves one person and gets nothing in return, except a paycheck or maybe, an occasional smile.

What you need is the new kind of entourage, the one that functions more like a team. Think of the Seinfeld gang, the Beatles in their heyday, or a World Series Championship team. This is a mutual fan club in which everyone is cheering

Table 1.1 Network versus Entourage

Network	Entourage
One- or two-time connection	Life-long relationship
A stack of business cards	People you talk to regularly
Forgets your name	Returns your calls and e-mails
One-way support	Mutual support—people help each other
Quick surface communication	In-depth, sincere communication
Inconsistent follow-up	Reliable follow-up
Call/e-mail only when they need something	Call/e-mail to make introductions and referrals
Self-win attitude	Win-win attitude
No interest in your personal life	Interested in your professional <i>and</i> personal life
Lack of trust in the relationship	Trusted relationship

one another on to victory and success. The new entourage helps its members achieve their goals, get the jobs and clients they want, move up the ranks in the corporate world, and start and build businesses, all by providing constant mutual support.

An entourage is different from a network insofar as it is built on trusted relationships among people who can count on one another to lend advice, support, and introductions on a long-term basis (see Table 1.1). A network is made up of people we meet, but not necessarily people we can rely on to help us. People in our network might help us if it suits their own goals; however, they are not necessarily consistently trustworthy for the long term.

The new entourage is like the solar system with the sun at the center and the planets rotating around it. Each planet is different, and brings its own unique qualities to the solar system.

The planets are the sun's entourage. They are always there; the sun can depend on them, and the planets depend on the sun as well to provide warmth and light. There's a mutually beneficial relationship between the sun and the planets, just as there is between you and your entourage.

In addition, each planet has its own moons revolving around it. Because they, too, are part of this solar system, this creates even more mutually supportive relationships. That's exactly how the new entourage works. Each of us is the sun in our own solar system.

The new entourage gives you great advice, ensures that you receive valuable introductions and referrals, and surrounds you with a group of influential people who offer

their support throughout your career. In order to create these trusted relationships and establish a long-lasting entourage, your role is to do the same for them. Each member helps each other and then pays it forward.

You can also think of your entourage as your informal board of directors. There is a good reason that the members of most public companies' boards of directors are employed elsewhere: They don't have a direct stake in the company by working there. They take an outsider's view of the company's activities when they're appointed to guide, counsel, and advise a company's CEO.

If you think of yourself as the CEO of you—your career, your path, and your decisions—then it makes perfect sense for you to have a board of directors. You may not always know what's best for you, and it's probably difficult for you to take a step back and analyze your own situation, but your board can see things about you more objectively. You don't also know all the people that your board knows. As such, these advisors of yours can introduce you to people who can help you, as CEO, run you, your career, and your business much more effectively.

If it sounds to you as if there's some work involved here, you're right. There is. You may even wonder if it's worth the effort to link out. I can only say what millions of people have discovered since the beginning of time: life is better together.

If you like people, linking out will be easy and fun. Of course, it might be a bit more difficult if you're more introverted. If you are a loner, it might make you a little uncomfortable at first, and you may have to push yourself. You may be inclined to work at your desk all day, and then

go home and plop in front of the TV and the computer instead of linking out. That's exactly what I felt like doing plenty of times myself—especially, after I had prepared dinner, cleaned up, and helped my kids with their homework. I'm sure many people have felt this way, but believe it or not, in the end it's not the easy way I once thought it was. I had to learn to stand up for myself and my own goals to get the help I needed from family, friends, neighbors, or babysitters so I could go out and link out.

If you have ambition, the so-called easy way out is a road that never ends. It's like a maze that constantly keeps you from finding the route to your next accomplishment. But once you start to link out, you find partners to help you on the road. They take you by the hand to show you the way to the golden door at the end of the maze. And the effort you make to find and connect with these people is worth it because *you* are worth it.

Who Do You Want in Your Entourage?

The ideal entourage is composed of influencers and people who are connected to other influencers and achievers. You want to surround yourself with self-sufficient, self-confident, and self-fulfilled individuals. You do not want people who are interested in themselves and their own success exclusively in your entourage.

Your entourage could consist of professionals from all walks of life: teachers, lawyers, accountants, artists, small business owners, executives, and more. Although you might assume that you should limit it to people from your industry

or walk of life, a true entourage has members with a range of expertise from various fields. They are involved in businesses, corporations, communities, nonprofits, government, or other outside activities. They are doers. They may be movers and shakers. They are active, busy people who are making a difference in their own jobs, businesses, industries, and even in the world. These are the ideal candidates for your entourage. They may be friends, members of your family, or people you don't even know yet, but you will get to know them after you put the link out strategy into action.

For now, consider the notion that anyone that you like, find interesting or engaging, or anyone who shares a common interest or goal could be a candidate for your entourage. As you progress in building your entourage, you may discover that people in particular related industries can be the most valuable to have in your entourage. If that's true for you, then seek out more of them. However, consider that people with diverse experiences will help you in diverse ways.

It Takes an Entourage

The most successful people in the world have many things in common, and one of them is that they all have entourages.

It is widely acknowledged in the business world that success depends on the efforts of a team, not just one individual.

When famed inventor Thomas Edison was asked why he had a team of 21 assistants, he said, "If I could solve all the problems myself, I would." Management guru Ken Blanchard accurately pointed out, "None of us is as smart as all of us." Similarly, Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly*

Effective People, said, “Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success.”

Think about it. “None of us is as smart as all of us”; well, that’s a no-brainer. As brilliant as someone may be, we are all limited by our own knowledge, experience, and the people with whom we have had relationships. When we have an entourage, we have access to people who think differently than we do. They look at challenges and opportunities in an entirely different way. They know people that we don’t know.

So if all these leading business experts and authors espouse the value of teamwork to help us produce winning results, why do individuals go it alone in launching and growing their careers? Why do so many small business owners think they have to do it all by themselves? Why do many marketing and salespeople believe the only way to find new customers is by cold calling or snooping them out without a little help from their friends? Why do so many believe that if they can’t succeed on their own it must mean they’re failures?

These beliefs are false. We unfairly burden ourselves with an extremely heavy responsibility, and that load could be significantly lightened if we asked for and accepted the help of others.

Look at most of our greatest leaders; they did not do it alone. When members of the world male power circles refer to the “old boys’ network,” they are really talking about their entourage: a group in which they invest time and energy to build strong, trusted relationships. Many of those relationships began early in their careers, and they continue to add new connections to their entourage as they climbed the ladder of success.

A Look Back at History

Henry Ford is well regarded as one of America's greatest industrialists, yet he would never have achieved his towering success without his entourage. Napoleon Hill's book *Think and Grow Rich*—first published in 1937—tells Ford's story in detail. After working as an engineer for Thomas Edison at the Edison Illuminating Company early in his career, Ford started his own business and ultimately invented the first automobile after countless failures. Some of Ford's greatest achievements came as a result of the support of his entourage, which included his former employer Thomas Edison; Firestone Rubber Company founder Harvey Firestone; literary naturalist and Henry David Thoreau follower, John Burroughs; and agricultural scientist Luther Burbank.

Even President Warren G. Harding became part of Ford's entourage. The Ford/Edison entourage consistently supported each other's businesses and professional aspirations. They even participated in a series of camping trips together, traveling with what could be considered the first recreational vehicle (RV). Much of the back story of Ford's success involved the role that Thomas Edison played in encouraging this promising employee to continue to develop the self-propelled vehicle—later known as an automobile—while he was working at Edison's company. When Ford gained enough funding to leave and work on his project full time, Edison continued to support his success with advice and introductions to his entourage.

Gloria Steinem is famous for leading the women's rights movement of the late 1960s and 1970s and for founding

several organizations that promoted gender equality. Steinem's success in gaining equal economic opportunities for women was a result of her leadership. However, change would have been impossible without the support of her entourage, which included attorney Flo Kennedy, US Congresswomen Bella Abzug and Shirley Chisolm, writer and feminist Betty Friedan, voting rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, and civil rights activist and journalist Myrlie Evers, to name a few. It took a team effort to change the world for women.

Martin Luther King is the acknowledged leader of the Civil Rights Movement, but he couldn't have ended segregation without his entourage. It included civil rights luminaries like Whitney Young, Dorothy Height, Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, and John Lewis, all of whom were just as dedicated to achieving equality for African Americans as Reverend King was. All these individuals worked together, supporting one another's organizational goals to lead the way to civil rights for all, despite the fact that they each had his or her own, sometimes competitive, goals.

Back to the Future

It's amazing how powerful we can become when we are willing to reach out and ask others to help us, and it is equally amazing how powerful we are when we help others reach their goals. The historical examples cited throughout the chapter illustrate how we can each become agents for social change, groundbreaking innovation, or whatever our goals happen to be. History shows us how imperative it is

to engage others in our cause, whether it is social, political, business, or even personal. The power of engaging an entourage makes *all* the difference.

The stories presented throughout the chapter can help us all learn from the past and move forward into the future by using what works in the present. I'm a big believer in crowd-sourcing wisdom from others. When I think about relationships, teamwork, and building your entourage, I'm drawn to what others who have "been there, done that" have said on the topic. That's why their experience is our insight to be followed for our future success.

Teamwork is so important that it is virtually impossible for you to reach the heights of your capabilities or make the money that you want without becoming very good at it.

—*Brian Tracy, management expert and author of*
Earn What You're Really Worth

Relationships are like muscles—the more you work them, the stronger they become.

—*Keith Ferrazzi, author of Never Eat Alone*

Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.

—*Oprah Winfrey*

All these experts—people who have enjoyed such success in their own lives—cannot be wrong.

They tell us, quite explicitly, that in order to achieve what you want in your life, you absolutely must surround yourself with people who are willing to help you realize your goals. They also tell us that we need to help our helpers as well, and be there when the going gets rough for them as much as they are for us.

The way these leaders created their entourage was to link out. They knew that the most important work they did was not getting done at their desk. Making personal connections in face-to-face situations was a vital part of their efforts. They got up from their desks, left their daily routine, and linked out to build new relationships. They joined associations, attended gatherings and conferences, scheduled breakfast or lunch meetings, volunteered their time to causes that mattered. Some entourages, like Henry Ford's, even went on trips together. Today, business and political leaders alike build their business and personal relationships at conferences like the World Economic Forum in Davos and the Allen & Company Sun Valley Conference, as well as at golf and spa retreats. These incredibly successful people all know one thing: concentrated face time forges strong relationships and builds entourages that last a lifetime.

The following chapters will teach you precisely what steps you need to take to successfully link out to build your system of friends, contacts, and colleagues into a supportive network of people—your entourage—who will help propel your success. Your responsibility is to do the same for them, because, as I've emphasized already, linking out works in two directions. People help one another to achieve their goals.

Linking out is *not* a competition. It's a mystery to me why so many feel that building supportive relationships is akin to conspiring with the enemy, and such people see anyone who does something similar to what they do as competition. Wake up world! We can *all* be victorious when we work together. Yes, it may appear on the surface that we are competing. When we dig down, we discover that most of us have different goals and different definitions of success. By forming partnerships we realize that the person or business we initially perceived as competition can become a valued partner. This is true for individuals as well as companies. Several books espouse the belief that cooperating with companies that one may consider competition leads to positive results for both parties. James F. Moore's *The Death of Competition* is one such book; *Co-Competition* by Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff is another. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said,

Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off.

In other words, the sooner you stop looking at your colleagues as competitors and start seeing them as collaborators and potential partners, the quicker you will be on your way to achieving your definition of success. When people take time to truly get to know one another nowadays, and explore how they can support one another's goals, then everyone wins!

The Power of a Link

Think of a silver, gold, or platinum chain around your own neck or that of someone you love. One link is connected to the next link, and each leads to another link. That's the power of linking out. When you establish a strong relationship with one person and you share your vision or goals, they have the opportunity to link you with another person and another person. Each link has its own chain of connections and relationships, and when you link out, these connections and possibilities can go in absolutely *any* direction.

Think how much more we glow and inspire others when the shine from those links surrounding us reflects on everything we do. It's almost magical. Sometimes my life does seem like magic—as though I found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. My life has been exciting and fulfilling because of linking out. I never would have accomplished all that I have without the magical power of the link. Now the power of the link can be yours, too.

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