

Esquire,

WORKING

A MAN'S GUIDE TO FORTUNE AND FULFILLMENT



The bar at the Four Seasons restaurant, 1959. Everyone still goes there.

HOW TO MASTER THE BUSINESS LUNCH

KENNETH FEINBERG, "PAY CZAR," SPECIAL MASTER OF THE \$7 BILLION SEPTEMBER 11TH VICTIMS' FUND, AND ADMINISTRATOR OF THE BP DEEPWATER HORIZON VICTIMS' FUND, NOT ONLY KNOWS HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE, HE KNOWS HOW TO DO IT OVER A MEAL. HERE HE IS AT **THE FOUR SEASONS** IN NEW YORK, SHARING WISDOM.

→ **[12:30 P.M. THE ROOM IS FULL OF MANHATTAN'S BUSINESS ELITE, AS USUAL. FEINBERG IS SEATED NEAR THE WINDOW. HE LOOKS AROUND THE FAMOUS WOOD-PANELED ROOM. THE CEILING SEEMS A THOUSAND FEET HIGH. THE SERVERS MOVE SWIFTLY. THE ATTIRE IS BUSINESS—ALL BUSINESS. A PLATE OF RAW VEGETABLES, ON ICE, IS PLACED BEFORE HIM.]**

Venue is 90 percent. It's existential. People don't understand. "What difference does it make where we meet as long as the parties are there?" It makes a huge difference. *Huge* difference.

Now, obviously, you gotta deal with some basic questions: Who's doing the inviting? If I get a call from a CEO and he invites me to lunch, the question is, Where? He may say, "Let's go to the Four Seasons." He's saying, I want to chat with you in a surrounding conducive to credibility, authority, respect.

[The water glasses are refilled, and menus are placed on the table. Feinberg glances at his for four seconds, tops.]

That doesn't usually happen—with me,

anyway. Usually the individual doesn't want to be seen eating with Ken Feinberg, problem solver, fixer. "Uh-oh, why was that guy eating with Feinberg?" So very often the suggestion will be "Let's meet at the 3 Guys diner on 75th and Madison." Or Monte's Italian dive in the Village. Let's meet where we won't be interrupted, and people won't be looking, and you can be candid.

[Bread. Butter.]

I will always agree to the venue—with one exception. I discourage executives or lawyers from having lunch at corporate headquarters or at the law firm. Two antiseptic. Too official. Too many diversions. Phones ring. Secretaries walk in. It's not so much a matter of neutral ground. I don't

worry about that. It's more, Are we really going to be able to have a concentrated, hour-and-a-half intimate conversation? The reason the person wants to have lunch with me: *How do we get to yes?* That's the way I put it. How do we get to yes?

[The waiter arrives.]

Waiter: What would you like for lunch, sir? We also have a special soft-shell crab, if you like.

Shad roe for me.

Waiter: Actually, sir, I'm sorry. It's very popular, and it's sold out today.

All right, then let me have the Dover sole. Water for me.

[The waiter leaves. Feinberg salts a vegetable.]

You can laugh, but watch what people order. They don't order anything that's gonna distract them from the real purpose. You don't want to order spaghetti or shellfish when you're gonna be working. Bouillabaisse—forget it! Let me have a piece of fish or a piece of veal or a salad. And if it's a salad, can they toss it in the kitchen? Done.

Booze: No. They want to order one? Go ahead. Not me.

There are three types of power lunches. One: *getting to yes*. You would never come here for that. I love the Four Seasons. But in 35 years I've never been invited to the Four Seasons for a power lunch designed to get to yes. Two: the social luncheon. "We haven't seen each other in a while. Let's go to the Four Seasons." There's still probably an agenda, but not one that troubles the CEO that there will be any downside risk to being seen. If anything, they may *want* to be seen. And then the third type of power lunch is there's absolutely no agenda. Just, "Let's exchange war stories, and the Four Seasons is fun; it's convenient."

A lunch that's the first kind—getting to yes—can break up an e-mail and phone-call impasse. "We started like this. [*He puts his hands far apart.*] We're 82 1/2 percent of the way to getting it done. [*Brings hands closer together.*] It's this last 17 1/2 percent. Let's have lunch and, at the end of the lunch, shake hands."

Say everybody knows the agenda: You want to get them to say yes. "Look—"

[The food arrives.]

Waiter: This is a caper-lemon sauce.

On the side, please. "Look"—perfect, thank you—"Look, I didn't invite you here to say yes, because I know you won't say yes. But can you go from here [*puts hand on table in front of him*] to here [*slides hand to the edge of the table*]?" Because if you'll give me not the last 17 1/2 percent but *half* of that, I can go back to the other side and have a lunch with them and get them to say yes."

You never, ever believe that there is a line in the sand beyond which anybody will not go. They wouldn't *be* there having lunch!

Let's say you want to get down to business, but the guy you're with is having a great time, yakking away. Fine. Let him go. But if we started at 12:30, it's now ten of two, and we're having coffee and dessert, now what? In the last ten minutes, something like this: "Well, you may like Derek Jeter, but I think he's over the hill. Now, *let me tell you why I asked you here.*" Usually he'll go, "Yeah, okay. What's up?" Because he knows, sooner or later, Ken didn't come here to talk about the Yankees.

There is the issue of what to order and how much. Let's say you're the CEO and you invited me. The waiter comes over to me first. "What would you like?" I'd say to you, "You picked the place. What's good?"

[The waiter removes the plates.]

The question of who pays is very simple: Who invited who?

I'll tell you about a big lunch I had.

'AMERICA'S BEST

POWER MEALS

THE BEST RESTAURANTS FOR BUSINESS IN MANY, BUT CERTAINLY NOT ALL, CITIES. CLOCKWISE, FROM THE TOP OF AMERICA.



MINNEAPOLIS DOWNTOWN

• Welcome to Minnesota. They eat meat here. And nowhere do they eat it better than at **MANNY'S STEAKHOUSE**. On the Web site, next to a photo of the luscious wild-caught salmon, a caption reads: "Why are you even considering this?" **WHERE TO SIT:** Along the wall, under the cowhide mural. 825 Marquette Avenue; 612-339-9900; mannyssteakhouse.com

CHICAGO THE LOOP



• Nobody but the grizzled regulars at **GENE & GEORGETTI**, some of whom look as if they've been there since it opened in 1941, will give a rip who you are, so if you want to get out of the way, here's where to get some of Chicago's best steaks. **WHERE TO SIT:** Don't let them shunt you to the dreary upstairs room. 500 North Franklin Street; 312-527-3718; geneandgeorgetti.com

• **HENRI**, across from Millennium Park, is new and sophisticated but unpretentious. The three-course lunch is \$29—the best bargain in town for food of this caliber, including a hell of a croque-monsieur. **WHERE TO SIT:** Anywhere. 18 South Mich-

igan Avenue; 312-578-0763; henrichicago.com

BOSTON DOWNTOWN

• **NO. 9 PARK** is chef-owner Barbara Lynch's homage to New England cuisine, and its civilized ambience and pacing make it ideal for entertaining. **WHERE TO SIT:** To the right of the bar. 9 Park Street; 617-742-9991; no9park.com

NEW YORK MIDTOWN

• The Grill Room at the Four Seasons (see opposite page) is the pinnacle, but if the point is not to be seen by the glad-handing hordes, make a reservation at **SEASONAL**, a sleek Austrian restaurant where you can order the transcendent Wiener schnitzel and get on with it. **WHERE TO SIT:** Front room, back-corner booth. 132 West 58th Street; 212-957-5550; seasonalnyc.com



• Pssst! The **NOMAD**, with French-American cuisine overseen by master chef Daniel Humm, hasn't yet been discovered as a business-breakfast place. Be among the first to claim a table under the glass atrium that catches the morning sun like

few other spots in Manhattan. **WHERE TO SIT:** At one of the back tables by the bar. 1170 Broadway; 212-796-1500; thenomadhotel.com



• The Financial District has few restaurants of note because no one used to live there. People do now, and they're loving **NORTH END GRILL**. Good vibes and a whole wall of Scotch. **WHERE TO SIT:** Against the far (south) wall of the boisterous main room. 104 North End Avenue; 646-747-1600; northendgrillnyc.com

PHILADELPHIA LOGAN SQUARE

• The clientele at the clubby **FOUNTAIN RESTAURANT** at the Four Seasons is all business at breakfast and lunch, catered to by an impeccably trained staff. **WHERE TO SIT:** Closest to the window overlooking the Swann Memorial Fountain. One Logan Square; 215-963-1500; fourseasons.com/philadelphia

CENTER CITY

• Nobody goes to **PARC** for breakfast, which is why it's perfect for breakfast. Order scrambled eggs with Nueske's bacon and coffee from Philly-based La Colombe, one of the great