



THE NEW ELLIS GROUP

Monday Monday

Connecting the Dots with Karen Kaplowitz



*Helping you create and reinforce the habits of successful career building,
gleaned from my work as a business development strategist, trainer and coach*

Volume 4, Issue 8

April 19, 2010

Marketing Under Pressure. If you are scrambling to reinvent yourself as a rainmaker because of the pressure you feel from your firm, you are not alone. The pressure is real. Older service partners are being pushed into early retirement; promising associates are being laid off because there isn't enough work; new partners are suddenly expected to generate their own work; and colleagues are hoarding work and hoarding relationships. Some people respond to the pressure by looking for other jobs, often bailing out before they are at risk. If you think your only choices are transforming yourself overnight into a rainmaker or leaving, consider these questions before making any drastic moves:

- Can you get better information from trusted sources on your firm's expectations?
- Have you fully assessed your value and leverage? How are you indispensable? Are you the repository of critical knowledge? Are you a key liaison to some clients? Do you manage a team of outside vendors or more junior lawyers? Do more senior lawyers rely on you to keep them organized?
- Is your internal PR—communicating your value inside your firm—up to par? Are you overly depending on more senior lawyers to broadcast your value?
- If work from good sources has dried up, have you asked why?
- Do you have a business plan which concentrates on the best sources of new business, namely people with whom you have worked who think highly of you or are you planning just a scatter shot approach to everyone you know?
- Has your anxiety caused you to tell clients and referral sources how much you need their work instead of probing what they need that you can ideally provide?

Example: After the champagne, the new partner orientation seemed more like a fraternity initiation or a bad joke. The partnership rewards: partner draws lower than senior associate salaries; expectations that new partners will generate their own work by marketing actively; and personal liability for a share of the firm's credit lines. With a major matter winding down, you have no idea how to fill the hole. Your first instinct is to call a law school classmate who just went in house to tell her you really need her work but she is not returning your calls. You consider looking for an in-house job or another firm but recruiters tell you that without a book of business your options at other firms are limited. So you take a deep breath and formulate a strategy. On the way back from a meeting, you ask your key client's relationship partner how she plans to staff matters now that you are a partner. She admits she won't be able to use you as much because the client doesn't want to pay partner rates for the second chair. You propose to help train associates to do your most routine work over a six month transition period but advocate staying involved in the complex work only you have mastered. She acknowledges your critical role in that aspect of the work and agrees to your proposal, subject to the client's consent. Once the partner acknowledges your importance, you also gently explore if she will share origination credit for new matters for the client going forward.

In the face of increased pressure to generate business, are you selling yourself short by panicking too early? Can you position yourself to buy the time you need to get on track to develop business of your own and get your fair share of credit for existing business?