



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*

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The Importance of Role Models. Identifying good role models is as important as finding good mentors – but much easier. It is great to find mentors who will take a personal interest in your career, show you the ropes and share all the unspoken rules of the game. But many people never connect with a mentor who takes a personal interest in guiding their career. If you have lamented the lack of strong mentors, consider looking instead for good role models to emulate. Here are the qualities of good role models:

- Lawyers who do the kind of work you do or hope to do.
- People whose career paths are observable, either in person or online.
- Lawyers who are held in high regard.
- People who are like you in some way.

It is helpful to find multiple role models to use to build your own strategy. The idea is to gather information to enable you to deconstruct the career paths of lawyers whose success you admire and to apply their strategies to your own career. Having personal access to role models so you can ask them which strategies worked best for them is useful but not essential. Your role models do not have to be in your own firm, either. In fact it is better to look at the paths of lawyers in various firms.

Example: A young lawyer was one of the first minority lawyers in his firm. He felt very welcome; many people went out of their way to include him on new matters and made clear that they were pleased that the firm was more diverse. But as he progressed, he realized that he did not have a close personal relationship with any one partner in the firm who was grooming him for partnership and felt somewhat insecure, especially when the firm extended the partnership track because of the economy.

He started compiling a list of partners he admired, including the most successful minority partners in *other* firms in town. He researched each one, starting with their websites, LinkedIn, Google and then asked friends about them. He developed a picture for each one of how they built their careers, including what professional and community organizations they were active in, what leadership roles they had assumed, what job changes they had made, what kinds of matters and clients they had, what kind of public profile they cultivated, and who had helped them. He also did Google alerts to continue to follow the careers of the most interesting ones. (www.google.com/alerts)

When he noticed one of his role models had a speaking engagement, he made a point of attending the event and introduced himself. The more senior lawyer was flattered that he had sought him out and encouraged him to give him a call for lunch. At lunch, he probed which activities had proved the most valuable to the more senior lawyer and got a lot of insight to apply to his own situation. He was looking for a role model and stumbled into a new mentor, too.

Are you identifying good role models and using the wealth of available information on their careers to map out your own career strategy?