



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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Meet the Neighbors Circa 2010. Memorial Day launches the season of “relaxed” entertaining and the challenge of blending family social activities and business networking. You don’t want to violate the social norms by inappropriately interjecting business but you also want to take advantage of meeting or catching up with interesting neighbors and friends, especially given the struggle to achieve work/life balance.

It helps to have a willing spouse or partner who can educate you on what any newcomers do for a living so you can Google them to prepare to talk intelligently [but casually] about their industry or company. Try to get the names and ages of their children straight, and which ones are friends with your own children. You need to get all your ducks in a row on the entertaining front, too, so you are not too distracted by your cooking responsibilities to engage people of interest. Above all, avoid the fatal mistake of ignoring the spouses or partners of people who interest you.

Example: You are hosting a barbecue to mark the end of the school year. Your spouse alerts you that the father of one child is the CFO of a local biotech company. You don’t do any work in biotech but you check out the company with one of your partners and look at some recent news about the company. You also identify biotech companies your firm represents. You are ready to have a conversation if the occasion arises. If your interesting neighbor volunteers to help you, take him up on it and install him next to you at the grill, assembling hamburgers and hot dogs or making drinks.

How do you transition from a purely social situation to business? Ask lots of questions, about his family, their vacation plans, and, of course, his business. Your questions should reflect your interest, curiosity, and business awareness. You will have a chance to explain what you do, too, and you can mention that your firm represents many biotech companies whose names you happen to have at your fingertips!

When everyone is packing up their kids to go home, you have set the stage to propose continuing the conversation in a more peaceful setting, sometime over lunch downtown, with your biotech partner.

Are you ready to spice up your next barbecue with tasteful business networking?

Enjoy Memorial Day! This newsletter was originally published on May 21, 2007.