



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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**Start at the Top and Drill Down.** Marketing initiatives that start at the top—with a general counsel or top decision maker—often have a greater chance of success. If you win the confidence of a general counsel or CEO who supports sending work to you, and instructs others to do so, that is a very powerful place to be. But it is often not enough. If you have been frustrated that you haven't gotten work even after a great meeting with a CEO or general counsel who said they would look for opportunities to retain you, or even after the general counsel introduced you to their team, consider whether you need to do more work in drilling down in the organization. Even if you have the confidence of the top decision maker, you often need to get the buy-in of other people in the law department before work materializes. In evaluating whether your expectations that the work will flow from the top are reasonable, consider these questions:

- Did the CEO/general counsel explain the process of assigning legal work?
- Is the CEO or general counsel usually involved in assigning the kind of work that you do?
- Have you met the people who are involved in assigning work? If not, do you have a plan for meeting them and building their confidence in you?
- Do you understand the basis for the CEO's or general counsel's enthusiasm for you and do the other people involved share the same priorities and perspective?
- Do you know who does the company's work currently and what their relationships are with key people in the law department? Are there entrenched relationships with other firms?
- Do you still need to go through a process to get on an approved list or negotiate a fee arrangement before being considered for work?

It is usually easier to go down in an organization than up but don't assume that your efforts are complete because you appear to have the confidence and support of senior people.

**Example:** A trial lawyer deposed a senior executive of an opposing party and met the general counsel who attended the deposition. The general counsel was impressed with the trial lawyer's skill and professionalism. When the matter was over, she invited the trial lawyer to lunch and said candidly that she had been impressed and was interested in using his firm's services. The lawyer proposed that he bring a team of colleagues to meet with the company's law department to make a presentation on their area of expertise. The general counsel set it up, and introduced the group to her law department with a glowing commentary on the quality she had observed. The group left the meeting expecting that work would be forthcoming.

The lawyer ran into the general counsel at a bar function a few months later and expressed surprise that they had not heard from the company. The general counsel said that she generally left decisions about litigation counsel to the head of litigation and asked if the lawyer had followed up with the head of litigation. When he said he had not, she recommended that he invite her to lunch. The trial lawyer then started courting the head of litigation and got his first piece of litigation six months later.

If you have established great relationships with general counsel and CEOs which have not resulted in work, have you insured that you have drilled down far enough in the organizations to release the flow of new business?