



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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To Assess Your Career Prospects, Fire Yourself. If your current firm collapsed, like Howrey or Heller Ehrman, or some other calamity caused you to be thrust on the job market suddenly, how marketable would you be to another firm? To assess your self-sufficiency and survivability, ask yourself these questions:

- Which clients could you count on to use your services if you were out of your current firm? How much revenue would they generate in the next year?
- Which lawyers on whom you currently depend for work would invite you to join them at another law firm? Which ones rely on your unique expertise or relationships with key clients?
- Which lawyers in other firms would recruit you to their firms without prompting?
- Would any of your clients welcome you to their in-house team?
- Have you maintained relationships with prospective clients who have been unavailable because of conflicts of interest?
- Have you established a professional reputation outside your own firm and client base that would be attractive to a new firm?
- If the firm's databases were unavailable to you, do you still have access to critical information like your contacts and form files?

If you breezed through these questions, consider going back and listing the specific answers to each one to give yourself a full picture of where you stand.

Example: When she made partner, a well-regarded lawyer was encouraged to focus more on business development. She felt secure and mostly ignored the advice. Her path to partnership had been clear: superb work and a close relationship to a senior partner who controlled significant firm clients. But when a law school classmate in another firm lost her job and took 6 months to find another position, the young partner reconsidered her priorities and took several steps. She asked her mentor to nominate her for the executive committee of a bar association committee in her field. She started attending meetings of her law school alumni association and reconnected with law school classmates. She finally put all her contacts into the firm's data base to receive firm announcements and alerts [and requested the opportunity to add a personal note to each mailing.]

She sought out more opportunities to attend meetings with clients. She took initiative in her practice group to lead client appreciation activities. She made a list of her most important clients and made a point to communicate with each one at least once a month. She asked to be considered to use the services of a coach who was engaged by the firm to work with select lawyers. She continued to provide first-rate service to the primary partner with whom she worked but stopped treating him like her primary insurance policy.

If your career path has been smooth and secure, in a firm which appears to be strong, do you still need to consider planning for the possibility of a "black swan", an unanticipated jolt that leaves you out in the cold? Which of these steps—or others—should you take now?