



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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Replicate Your Own Success. You got where you are because you have done a lot of things right. Your colleagues thought highly enough of you to keep you on the team. But in these more challenging times, it is necessary to be more intentional about the strategies that have worked for you in the past. If you want more work from a current or recent client, or more of a particular type of matter, ask yourself which factors enabled you to get the work in the past:

- Had you developed a trusted relationship with the client in another context, like law school or a professional or community group?
- Were you introduced to the client by a colleague or client with whom you had worked on a similar matter and gotten a good result?
- Had you stayed in touch with the client in an effective way?
- Did you structure an attractive fee agreement?
- Was the work in an area in which you have developed a reputation as an expert?

Chances are that if you identify the work that has been most satisfying, remunerative, and career-building, and reflect on how you got that work, you will have a roadmap to more of the same. If you treat your past success as just random luck, you will miss the opportunity to create your next “lucky break.” “Luck” is preparation meeting opportunity.

Example: An industry practice group set aside a meeting to focus on business development. The agenda for the meeting was two-fold: to plan how to strengthen existing client relationships and to identify a short list of high potential new clients. The practice group leader circulated a list of the group’s clients by revenue and asked the relationship partner for each of the top ten clients to describe the history of the relationship. In a few cases, the clients had been legacy clients of the firm and the people in the room did not know the genesis of the relationship. For the other clients, there was a clear pattern. Most of the group’s top clients had come from an in-house lawyer who had had experience with the firm. The experience came from three main sources: from the in-house lawyer’s having worked at the firm; from the in-house lawyer’s having been opposed to the firm; or from the lawyer’s having worked with a firm lawyer in a professional or community group. The other major source of the top clients was from recommendations from another client of the firm.

Based on the history of the practice group’s best clients, the group agreed on several priority projects. The group identified firm alumni who were in-house and assigned a lawyer to each in-house alumnus to formulate a strategy to strengthen the relationship. The group also listed opposing counsel in several major concluded matters where there was a respectful relationship with opponents and assigned a lawyer to each one to explore opportunities for conflicts referrals or other work. The lawyers who took on the assignments agreed to report back on their progress at the next monthly practice group meeting.

Are you so determined to find new ways to succeed on the rainmaking front that you have stopped doing the things that made you successful in the past? Can you replicate the steps that led to your most successful client relationships and make business development more intentional and less “random”?