



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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Using Diversity as a Business Development Strategy. Over 70 major US companies now require that law firms participating in beauty contests or RFPs must propose a team with a woman or diverse lawyer as the primary billing partner. If the firm wins the business, the woman or diverse partner must receive origination credit consistent with the firm's policies for the work. **For more on this, click here.** Over 130 of the largest US law firms have also agreed to submit annual metrics to these companies on the participation of women and diverse lawyers in RFPs and beauty contests. For law firms to these clients, diversity is not just one business development strategy; it is a required part of the business development process. If you are concerned that your firm may lose potential business because of a lack of diversity, these questions will help you evaluate if your firm is "diversity-ready":

- Do you know the diversity requirements of each of your clients and prospective clients?
- Have you communicated them to all relevant lawyers and law firm personnel?
- Does your business plan take into account prospective clients' diversity requirements?
- Do your marketing professionals and diversity professionals work closely together?
- Is someone reviewing each RFP and beauty contest response from a diversity standpoint?
- Has your compensation system evolved to allow for women and diverse partners to receive credit for new business they help generate from longtime firm clients?
- Are you helping junior women and diverse lawyers build networks among peers in corporations?
- Are you consistently communicating your commitment to diversity and inclusion inside the firm and in the community?

Example: A law firm's Chief Diversity Officer collected data on women and diverse lawyers who were involved in RFPs, beauty contests, and less formal pitch teams ["Pitches"] for a year. To boost diversity, the CDO encouraged partners who were organizing pitch teams to post the opportunities on the firm's diversity intranet page. The CDO also asked the marketing staff to remind lawyers who asked for pitch materials that they could post the opportunities on the firm intranet and solicit volunteers.

Anytime a pitch team did not include women or diverse lawyers, the CDO then inquired how the team had been selected, encouraged the team leader to be more inclusive the next time, and strongly recommended use of the firm's diversity intranet to post new pitches.

Once a quarter, the CDO and the CMO published a report on the firm's diversity intranet page on the composition of the firm's pitch teams and their success in attracting new business. Over the course of two years, the firm's utilization of women and diverse lawyers on pitch teams doubled and the firm's success in winning new business increased by 20 percent.

Are you prepared to respond to client demands that you field diverse teams of lawyers to handle their work?