



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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Seeking Work from Friends. Do you have a friend who runs a company or a law department who could be very helpful in steering work to you with whom you have never raised the issue? Or a friend with whom you have raised the issue but dropped it when nothing happened? Approaching friends for work can be fraught with emotional peril for many lawyers. Before writing off friends who are well-positioned to use your services or refer work to you, consider these strategies:

- Show interest in your friends' business activities when you meet. Be prepared to inquire about their news by googling them and their businesses and industries beforehand.
- Get them to talk about their business activities as much as possible. Listen carefully and ask probing questions, to the extent that is appropriate given the place and the presence of others.
- Listen for situations in which you or your firm have relevant experience and might be of help.
- Offer your help when possible such as an introduction to an expert in your firm or information on any subject that is causing your friend trouble.
- Follow up immediately on any offer of help.
- Do not take for granted that your friends know what you do.
- Be candid if you feel awkward talking about doing business together and give your friend the chance to encourage or discourage the conversation.

Do not expect friends to hire you solely because of your friendship; you have to find services which will benefit them. But before you write them off as sources of work, consider how you would feel if your friend suffered a major legal loss that you or your firm could have prevented but which you never even discussed.

Example: You play golf regularly with a friend who is a senior executive at a company which would make a great client. You often discuss business and your friend offered to introduce you a few years ago to the general counsel of the company. You called the general counsel's office a few times but gave up when you didn't get a lunch date; you did not want to be too pushy with your friend's general counsel. Recently, your friend complained that the company was cutting back on expenses across the board but having trouble reining in their legal expenses. You asked whether the company had considered some of the tools your clients are using, like lists of preferred provider law firms, alternative fee arrangements, or litigation financing. Your friend again encouraged you to get together with his general counsel. This time, you asked your friend for the name of his own assistant and said that you would call his assistant to make arrangements for you to meet the general counsel. You followed up the next day with an email to his assistant, copying your friend, and promptly got an appointment to meet the general counsel.

Are you shying away from friends who might be good sources of new business out of concern they will be offended and losing opportunities to help friends and their businesses in situations when they could really use your help?