



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*

Volume 6, Issue 15

July 9, 2012

**The Importance of Flexibility.** Princeton's Anne-Marie Slaughter's recent Atlantic Magazine article on *Why Women Still Can't Have It All* highlights one factor that is critical, for men and women, for successfully navigating professional work and life: flexibility. Slaughter has flourished in academia, which allows her a lot of flexibility. She left her senior position at the State Department after two years because its inflexible demands left insufficient room for her family commitments. Slaughter advocates institutional change but to increase your own flexibility, consider these individual strategies:

- Learn to set boundaries. For more on this subject, [click here](#).
- Take the lead on your matters so you can control the schedule to the extent possible.
- Even if you are not the project leader, offer to handle scheduling so you can take your own schedule into account.
- Accommodate the scheduling needs of adversaries and colleagues. Modeling the behavior you expect is very powerful.
- Control as much business as possible. The more powerful you are, the more your firm will accommodate your needs and consider institutional change.
- Build as much redundancy as possible into your own support systems so you have the freedom to adjust your schedule to meet the demands of your clients.
- Learn to delegate and build teams. Then manage clients' expectations of your personal involvement and build their confidence in your colleagues. For more on managing clients' expectations, [click here](#).

Given the enormous demands on lawyers from every direction, self-help approaches to increasing flexibility are critical for preserving sanity and health, for women and men.

**Example:** During a hotly contested litigation matter, the court assigned a trial date that conflicted with the vacation plans of the lead lawyer on one side. The affected lawyer thought her best chance of getting a new trial date was to get the other side's consent before approaching the court. When she contacted the other side to discuss her scheduling problem, they were noncommittal. When the lawyers on the other side discussed the issue with their client, the client was not inclined to agree to ask the court to change the date. They were about to inform their opponent that she would have to ask for a continuance unilaterally when the other lead trial lawyer realized that the Little League team he coached was doing so well that it might get to the Little League World Series. He wanted to protect against a continuance to those dates. He pushed his client and his team to agree to jointly request a new trial date with the other side so they all had more control of the ultimate date. The two sides' collaboration on the issue of the trial date marked a turning point in the level of hostility in the case which ultimately settled.

Are you consistently looking for ways to maximize your flexibility to manage your own work and life?