



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 14

June 25, 2012

When Second Best Takes First Place. The importance of professionals' establishing and maintaining a reputation among their peers was brought home forcefully by the process by which a friend selected a professional recently. She wanted to find the very best professional in a particular field. So she went to all the best professionals in the field whom she could identify and asked a simple question, "Who is the best in your field?" Predictably, each one said they were the best and that she should hire them for the project. She then asked each one who they considered to be "second best" in the field. When the same name came up repeatedly as "second best" she knew she had found the professional who was uniformly held in high regard by all the best professionals in the field. She then hired the professional who came up "second best" having reached the conclusion that he was in fact the preeminent professional in his field, which was later confirmed by his performance.

To insure that your name comes up when prospective clients survey top professionals in your field, or ask other professionals to validate the references they have gotten about you, consider these steps:

- Know who the top professionals are in your field.
- Identify which professional groups they belong to.
- Become active and visible in the same groups, including writing and speaking.
- Maintain your contacts and build your relationships among the top professionals in your field.
- When you are adverse to another top professional, treat them with respect.
- When you have the chance to do so, such as in a conflict situation, refer work to other top- ranked professionals and let them know that you did so.
- Try to insure you are listed on rankings of the best professionals in your field.

You can assume that when people are looking for professionals, they are routinely going to ask advice from other professionals. Earning the respect of other top professionals is a critical part of the process of generating new business.

Example: When a "bet the company" lawsuit was filed against a company, the general counsel was charged with the task of finding the best lawyer possible to defend the matter. The general counsel went to each of the company's primary law firms and candidly said that she had to run a beauty contest and that a special litigation committee of the board would be making the final decision. She asked each law firm if they wanted to compete in the beauty contest; they all said yes. She then asked them each to rank the other lawyers that the company had invited to participate in the beauty contest. The general counsel also asked each law firm for a confidential assessment of their competitors' best and worst qualities. The general counsel then used the competitors' rankings to whittle down the list of law firms, eliminating several of the firms before the final decision, just based on the fact that they did not enjoy the highest respect from the other competitors.

Have you found ways, through bar associations or other groups, to establish and build relationships with other top professionals? If your competitors are asked for their opinions of you, will you get at least their grudging respect?