



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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Diversity: Don't Take Anyone For Granted. Diversity as a strategy for business development sounds particularly promising given the record numbers of women and minority general counsel in the Fortune 500. Vivia Chen of American Lawyer recently reported that minorities now comprise 9.4 percent and women 21 percent of Fortune 500 general counsel in 2011, both records. Click [here](#) to read more. Combined with the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity's Rooney Rule, which requires law firms to make a woman or minority lawyer the lead lawyer on RFPs and beauty contests, the path to business development success for diverse lawyers in law firms looks more assured. Click [here](#) for more on the Rooney Rule.

Taking for granted that more women and minority in-house lawyers will result in more business and professional success for diverse lawyers in law firms is a risky proposition. Not only is there a lot of competition for their attention, but diverse in-house lawyers are not always in a position to promote diversity. Among other things, they may be uncomfortable about being identified in a one-dimensional way, a phenomenon Guy Rounsaville observed at times when he was general counsel of Wells Fargo Bank. If you intend to use diversity as a strategy for business development, do not limit your strategy to building relationships with diverse general counsel and in-house lawyers. Consider these approaches:

- Do build relationships with women and minority lawyers who work in-house but maintain relationships with non-diverse in-house lawyers too.
- Foster relationships among the diverse and non-diverse lawyers you know in the same law departments.
- Create support for retaining your firm across the board inside law departments.
- Help diverse clients get recognition for themselves and their companies for their work promoting diversity.

Example: A group of diverse partners in a law firm were excited when a minority lawyer with whom they had worked closely was promoted to Deputy General Counsel of her Fortune 500 company. They hoped they and their firm would be the beneficiaries of more work from the company but did not want to pressure her or make her uncomfortable in any way. The group took a number of steps. They approached the chairman of their law firm who they knew was close to the company's General Counsel. They asked the chairman to send a note to the General Counsel congratulating him for promoting such a high quality lawyer, with reference to her successful management of a matter the firm had handled for the company. They also suggested that the firm's chairman ask the General Counsel to introduce him to the new Deputy General Counsel the next time they were meeting at the company headquarters. When the firm's chairman retired, the firm hosted a reception in his honor and invited the General Counsel and the Deputy General Counsel. The diverse partners insured that the Deputy General Counsel had the opportunity to introduce them to the General Counsel. Given the range of relationships with the law firm, it was easier for the new Deputy General Counsel to send more work to the firm.

In developing a diversity strategy for business development, are you relying too heavily on the support of women and minority in-house lawyers and overlooking the role of others in the process?