



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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**When Clients Bring Their Work Inside.** The current decline in demand for legal services arises in part from clients looking for ways to reduce their reliance on law firms by bringing more work in-house or switching to lower cost providers. Instead of waiting for clients to inform you of their plans, and asking you to transition the work to your replacements, you might consider whether you can salvage more of the work, particularly the higher value work, by inviting clients to review their overall goals with you and collaborating to meet their budget constraints. Here are some questions to consider:

- Do you routinely invite clients to review what work could be done by them internally?
- Do you ask clients at the beginning of each matter if they would like to assign their paralegals or lawyers to work on a team side by side with your staff?
- Do you invite clients to send their staff to training programs you conduct in your firm for your own paralegals and lawyers?
- Do you encourage clients to consider sending their staff to outside training programs your people attend?
- Do you offer clients the opportunity to place their lawyers and paralegals in your offices to work directly under your supervision on their matters for additional training?
- Do you offer to send lawyers and paralegals to work at your clients' facilities to provide more training?
- Do you offer to partner with other firms who can handle part of the workload at a lower cost?

Are you constantly attentive to how to help your clients shave the costs of legal services, even if that sometimes means reducing your own revenues?

**Example:** A client shared with the client relationship partner at one of her major outside firms that she was scrambling to deal with the fact that her legal budget for 2014 had been cut by 20 percent. She asked the firm to consider deeper discounts on its rates and candidly explained that she would have no choice but to use some lower priced firms. The client relationship partner said that of course she would work to reduce their rates but also offered to help analyze the overall problem. The two of them worked out a series of changes in the way the client and firm managed some of their work. They did joint training of lawyers and paralegals from the company and the firm; they created and shared a unified set of documents and resources; they improved the workflow between the firm and the company; and they created alternative fee arrangements that put a premium on early disposition of matters. The collaboration between the client and the firm solidified the firm's relationship with the client. In the second year of the arrangement, the client invited the firm to propose a flat fee for all the work in their particular area, eliminating other law firms altogether.

Instead of waiting for your clients to reduce the work assigned to your firm, are you taking the initiative in designing new ways to deliver services which are respectful of the pressures on your clients to reduce costs?

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