



# 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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**Lateral Transitions: The Importance of Working Together.** If you are a new lateral whose goal is an effective transition, the best strategy is finding opportunities to work with others in your new firm. Having good experiences working with other lawyers is more likely to lead to new work and a smooth transition than just establishing a great reputation. [The same strategy also applies to veteran attorneys whose goal is a wider network of firm lawyers who refer clients to them.] If you are a new lateral, consider these steps:

- If you have a written integration plan or a business plan, be sure it includes specific steps toward assignments on matters for firm clients and specifies lawyers who need to have you in mind for their matters.
- Make sure that the firm lawyers who are responsible for integrating you into the firm know that you are ready to take on work with other lawyers. Everyone will assume that transitioning clients and matters from your old firm is your priority so it is important to let people know you will make time to work on new matters for their clients.
- On old matters or on new matters for old clients, look for opportunities to add lawyers from your new firm who bring new expertise or experience. Exposing your old clients to the capabilities--and rates--of lawyers in your new firm will help them understand why you made the move and why it may cost them more.
- Anytime a new matter requires assistance from lawyers in other offices, try to assign them a meaningful role on your matter so you have a chance to work together. If you have joined a firm with a bigger network of office locations than you are used to, do not treat lawyers in other offices as just "local counsel". If you limit the role of other lawyers in your new firm in the way you did with local counsel, such as using them to make minor court appearances, you are not communicating to them or to your clients that you trust them.

**Example:** A new lateral partner became the national coordinating counsel for one of his clients in litigation around the country. In his old firm, he had been used to relying on a network of unrelated local counsel to make occasional appearances and handle minor depositions. When he joined the new firm, he asked his practice group leader to help him assemble a core team of lawyers in his own office and to help him get access to associates in a number of other offices to serve in effect as local counsel with a limited role. The practice group leader encouraged him instead to take advantage of the firm's broad national footprint by assembling a geographically diverse team of firm lawyers to work on the matter. As a result, the firm was able to deploy informed lawyers in more jurisdictions with less travel time and expense resulting in better outcomes and more savings to the client. The lateral partner also deepened his relationships with lawyers throughout the firm.

If you are a lateral or a veteran attorney, are you actively looking for opportunities to work with lawyers in your firm whom you do not know as a way of building a network of internal sources of work? If you are a lateral, are you making it a priority to get into the flow of work in the firm to insure your successful transition?