



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 7, Issue 12

June 10, 2013

Does Your Law Firm's Size Matter? The answer is maybe. No one size law firm fits all client demands. There are competitive advantages to many variations in size. Small firms have many obvious advantages; they can be more nimble, less bureaucratic, more entrepreneurial; and more efficient. They have fewer conflicts of interest. Big firms have significant advantages too: they can deploy armies of lawyers and staff when a major legal crisis occurs and have a wider range of specialists to bring to bear. If you are part of a small firm finding it challenging to compete with larger firms, consider some of these strategies:

- Develop strategic alliances by teaming with other small firms you respect who can add expertise or who can take over a part of a matter even if their expertise is similar.
- Become familiar with legal staffing companies who can supply staff on short notice.
- Initiate various types of collaborations so you can hold yourself out as experienced in such arrangements when you are competing for a significant matter.
- Identify other firms as potential collaborators whom your clients already use; like you, they have been approved and vetted.
- Develop superb project management skills which are applicable to teams made up of your own staff, your clients, as well as third parties. Take every opportunity to showcase your project management skills to clients, on knowledge management projects, for example.
- Use vendors, like litigation support firms, who are appropriate for complex matters.
- Communicate your preparedness to staff large and complex matters in advance to clients.
- If you have access to comparative cost data, such as from a litigation matter in which larger firms and your firm submitted fee applications for comparable work to a court, have it ready to show your greater cost efficiency and effectiveness.

Example: A senior lawyer in the client's law department confided that they were drafting an RFP for a significant matter on which the general counsel requested that only large firms be invited to bid. The senior lawyer asked whether your firm had experience handling comparable matters. Within a few hours, you were able to provide detailed information and talking points covering your successes, staffing arrangements and the costs in a number of similar matters. You also noted a number of situations for other clients in which your firm had taken the lead in coordinating several firms working on similar matters around the country. You made clear your willingness to take on the whole matter or to work on a team with in-house lawyers and with other law firms. Your internal advocate was successful in persuading the general counsel to invite you to participate in the RFP and you were selected to handle one aspect of the matter.

Are you conceding the superiority of larger firms to handle complex matters without fully exploring your ability to manage with creative staffing, superb project management skills, and your skill at playing well with others?