



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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**The Rich Get Richer.** If you have tried to get a line of credit, you know that banks prefer to loan money to people who don't need it. Banks often require borrowers to keep funds on deposit to match a line of credit. Laterals encounter the same phenomenon: they are more likely to get work from new partners if they have clients, they don't need the work, and they are likely to repay any referrals.

So a key strategy in every new lateral's integration plan is to refer work from existing clients to new colleagues. For many laterals, that is counterintuitive. To accomplish a smooth transition, many laterals try to change as little as possible in their key client relationships. Others are fending off fierce competition from their old firms to retain the business. But when laterals hold on tightly to clients, it is the kiss of death to a successful lateral move.

Bringing new colleagues into existing client matters sets in motion the elements of a successful transition: establishing a setting to get to know new colleagues and establishing a basis for reciprocity. Since this strategy is a strong declaration of commitment, they also reduce one of the most toxic aspects of lateral moves: fear that the lateral will move on to another firm.

Implementing this strategy has to start during recruiting; firms must get recruits to commit to assign new lawyers to their matters immediately and recruits must be assured they will get timely introductions to the right talent.

**Example:** A practice group leader asked a recruit to identify matters she expected to bring which would allow her to work with other lawyers in the firm. She said she was inclined to leave her old associates in place to minimize disruption to clients. The practice group leader encouraged her to reconsider that strategy since the new firm could offer lawyers with greater depth. He arranged for her to meet them to verify their suitability. When she still resisted, the practice group leader said it was a deal breaker. She finally saw the light and they mapped out ways the recruit could use the new firm's lawyers, without harming important client relationships.

Does your firm have a system in place to insure that each new lateral has a detailed roadmap to maximize the amount of work they can and will refer to new colleagues? Are you willing to be bold enough to call a recruit on a deal breaker? And for laterals who have remained siloed, is it too late to try this approach?

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