



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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Don't Be Collateral Damage in a Lateral Move. Many mergers and lateral moves are initiated by rainmakers who negotiate to bring along their colleagues. Following a rainmaker is often a positive career move. Nearly 60 percent of new partners at AmLaw 200 firms in 2013 started their careers elsewhere. ([Read more here](#)) But following a rainmaker who does not flourish can be a liability and a large percentage of lateral moves are unsuccessful ([Read more here](#)). If you joined your current firm on someone else's coattails, you may be vulnerable if they do not succeed, or succeed enough to protect your career. Here are some protective strategies to consider:

- Before agreeing to make a move, find out what protections the leaders have negotiated for you, especially your path to partnership. Try to get the information directly from firm management.
- Get involved in the integration process at your new firm to the fullest extent possible.
- Identify opportunities to participate in whatever committees are available at the practice group, office or firm-wide level.
- Request opportunities to work on matters with new people; working together is the most certain path to relationships.
- Encourage the senior members of the lateral team to share credit with you for clients they retained, especially if your relationships were significant to keeping their work.
- Try to find new mentors in the new firm; if the partners with whom you joined the firm fail, you need to have new allies.

It is not disloyal for associates, counsel and junior partners to establish their own relationships in a new firm. Riding a rainmaker's coattails to a new firm may be smart but remaining hostage to that rainmaker's success is not.

Example: A senior associate's path to partnership was derailed when the rainmaker to whom she was tied decided to move to a new firm. She would have been considered for partnership at the old firm in a year but instead followed the rainmaker with no guarantee when she would be considered. The first year, she accepted the rainmaker's assurances that he would help her but could not press for her partnership until he was better grounded himself at the new firm. The rainmaker claimed all of the associate's time to work on their old clients, to maintain continuity. After a year, the associate became concerned because the rainmaker did not appear to be thriving in the new firm. Their old firm successfully competed for some clients and their team was not getting introductions to clients of the new firm they had expected. Concerned that if the rainmaker failed, she would lose her job, too, the associate sought guidance from young partners in the firm who had started as lateral associates. They encouraged the associate to get involved on some of their matters and to become active in the firm. When the firm asked the rainmaker to leave, the associate was no longer a hostage to the rainmaker's fortunes. She had two options, to stay or go.

If you are a junior member of a group making a lateral move, are you protecting your career from the risk that the rainmakers may not thrive? Can you afford not to?