



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 Importance of the People on the Front Lines. Most rainmakers work hard at maintaining client relationships. They respond to clients promptly; they pay attention to their needs; they deal effectively with their complaints. They also often have very skilled help on the client relationship front from their primary colleagues, the other lawyers on their teams and their assistants. Find a very successful rainmaker and chances are you will also find a great assistant. Some assistants, like some rainmakers, are born with a propensity to engage well with clients but lawyers can help promising assistants become great assistants by working with them effectively. Consider whether you have these systems in place:

- Do you introduce your assistants to clients as essential members of the client team from day one? If lawyers share their cell numbers with clients, consider having assistants do so too. Consider including contact information for assistants on your automatic signature and on phone messages.
- Do you have systems set up to insure that all client communications are responded to immediately by either the lawyer or the assistant?
- Do you keep assistants in the loop about the nature and progress of clients' matters? Assistants appreciate when they are fully integrated and will function more effectively too.
- Does your assistant always know how to reach you in an emergency?

Example: A group of lawyers in a corporate law department met to review the responses to a recent RFP. The RFP responses had been ranked based on the initial reviewers' assessment of the quality of the lawyers, the extent of their experience, and the competitiveness of the proposed fees. The group had narrowed the initial batch of 10 law firms down to 5. When the group met, they quickly eliminated the firm with the lowest pricing; the cost was great but the firm also had the least experience and the poorest track record. The group concluded that the remaining four firms were roughly comparable although one bid was slightly more expensive. The group invited the General Counsel to join the discussion of the four finalists. The General Counsel said that she would be most comfortable with the firm that was the most expensive because of the quality of their client communications. She said that she knew that she could always reach the lawyers involved, directly or through their assistants. She said that their assistants knew who she was, treated her requests with appropriate urgency, and could access any of the lawyers when needed.

Are your front line troops trained to reflect the same level of client service and responsiveness that you have perfected in your own interactions with clients?