



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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Doing Well By Doing Good: The Business Value of Pro Bono Work. Pro bono work is mandated or encouraged by the [ABA and many state bar ethics codes](#). Groups like the [Pro Bono Institute](#) have spearheaded widespread adoption of law firm and corporate pro bono programs. For many lawyers, their pro bono work is among the most fulfilling work they do. For some lawyers, their pro bono work also propels their careers. For example, Roberta Kaplan of Paul Weiss was recognized as an American Lawyer Litigator of the Year in 2013 for her pro bono work in her Supreme Court win on marriage equality. Not every lawyer will rise to such heights but to maximize the business value of your pro bono work, here are some issues to consider:

- Will the pro bono matter allow you to work with firm partners to whom you want access?
- Will the pro bono work facilitate your meeting lawyers in other firms?
- Are any of your clients likely to be involved or interested in the work?
- Is the matter likely to be high profile? Will your firm be comfortable if it is?
- Will you get more responsibility than you do in matters for fee-paying clients of the firm?
- Will you get more time in court/trial than on other matters?

Even if you are doing pro bono work primarily because you are committed to social responsibility or because you are required to do it, there is no reason not to consider the potential role of the work in advancing your career.

Example: After a senior associate successfully handled a number of small matters for a public interest law group, the public interest group asked if she and her firm would be co-counsel on a high impact matter against a major municipality. The associate invited a prominent partner in the firm to be involved, to help secure firm approval and to supervise her work. She then did a conflicts check before submitting a proposal to the firm to undertake the matter. She knew her law firm would be concerned about public relations and proposed that they request joint approval of all press releases on the matter as a condition of the law firm's participation. As the matter progressed, she regularly reported inside the firm, to the pro bono committee and to a relevant practice group. When the matter concluded very favorably, she wrote a client alert and got the firm's support to be featured in press on the matter. Her effective management of the matter led to partners entrusting more significant client work to her as well.

Are you taking advantage of pro bono work to gain more experience, work with new people, and get more visibility inside and outside your firm, while tackling important social issues and helping disadvantaged clients? Can you do well while doing good?