



# 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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**Getting More Referrals from Professional Services Networks and Bar Associations.** Many lawyers and law firms join professional services networks, like Lex Mundi, or national or international bar associations with a goal of referrals in their own jurisdictions from lawyers elsewhere. This goal is often not realized for the same reasons that lawyers in different offices in the same firm don't refer work to one another. The lawyers don't know each other; they don't know their expertise; they lack basic trust in one another; and they don't see their self interest in making referrals. If you have been frustrated by the lack of new business from participation in Lex Mundi-type groups or the ABA or an international bar association, consider enhancing referrals by adopting some of these strategies:

- Decide upfront on a specific goal in the particular group. Do you need to compete with firms with more offices in locations that you don't cover? Do you need someone to handle matters for certain clients in other regions? Do you expect access to clients with headquarters elsewhere who do business in your region?
- Get help from leaders or administrators of the group in identifying and meeting the right people to achieve your goals. Reach out to lawyers of interest before group meetings. Let them know of your interest, ask how you can help them and make plans to meet with them individually.
- With members of special interest, explore what information you need about one another to have confidence in referring valuable clients.
- Ask them if they are willing to introduce you to those clients before there are specific matters to refer. Be prepared to offer reciprocal introductions to your firm's clients. If you are not willing to do so, you cannot expect the others to do so.
- If only a few representatives of each firm participate in the group, consider which other lawyers you need to know, particularly ones who control key client relationships, and meet them.
- Encourage the organization to assemble client information from each member to help identify which other lawyers and firms have clients of interest.

Professional services networks and national/international bar associations which meet infrequently are highly random sources of new business without a strategy dedicated to accelerating the process of building targeted, reciprocal relationships.

**Example:** On several occasions, a European law firm in an international alliance had referred small matters to a US member firm. The US firm's representative partner contacted her European counterpart 90 days before the group's annual meeting with the goal of learning more about the firm. She thanked the European partner for their referrals and asked him to educate her about the European firm so she could reciprocate. The European really perked up when she offered to provide a list of the US firm's clients to the European firm so the Europeans could identify companies that did business in their region to whom the US firm could introduce them. The European member offered to reciprocate. The US firm then did a search of litigation against the European firm's clients in the US courts and discovered several who had been sued in the US. The US member went to the annual meeting well prepared to discuss specific clients of the European firm to whom they wanted introductions.

Does the paradigm for membership in international law firm alliances and national and international bar associations have to be waiting passively for referrals? Are you willing to try to improve the value of membership by encouraging more direct access to new clients and actively learning about other firms?