



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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**Are You Swimming in the Right Pond?** People tend to thrive when they are in environments which complement and nurture them. When lawyers fail to thrive, both the individuals and their firms must evaluate where the problem lies. Firms often conclude that there was a bad fit when lawyers fail to thrive and recommend that the lawyers move on. Lawyers make the same judgment when they either fail to thrive or find barriers to growth. Some of these perceptions are wrong. Sometimes, it was not that the fit was wrong but that the firms or individuals were simply not willing to do the things they needed to do to promote the firm's or the individual's success. Making a lateral move is often a necessity, such as when lawyers are tied to more senior lawyers who have decided to move or when firms go out of business. But if a lateral move is not a necessity, you may want to consider these issues before concluding the fit in your current firm is not right:

- Do you fully understand the rules of the game? If you thought you were doing what was expected of you but fell short, can you review your understanding of the rules with someone in authority so you are less at risk of not meeting expectations?
- Have you concluded that you cannot do certain things expected of you such as meeting hour requirements or bringing in new clients? If so, have you looked for help on time management or business development from resources inside or outside your firm?
- If you are not getting the support you need from other lawyers to meet your clients' needs, have you discussed the issue with your management? If your immediate management has not helped, have you sought out other firm leaders before giving up?
- Are you in the habit of regularly comparing your current firm to your last firm, negatively? Before concluding that your old firm was "better", have you given yourself enough time to settle in?

**Example:** A young partner decided to make a move to a new firm after becoming a parent for the first time. The demands of work and parenting were challenging and he decided to move to a less prestigious, less profitable firm which held itself out as respectful of its lawyers' lifestyles. Initially, he was able to transition some of the matters on which he was working at his old firm even though he had not been the primary client relationship partner. He was so busy on those matters that he remained fairly isolated. When those matters concluded, he found that his old firm fought hard to retain the clients and he did not pick up new matters from many of his old clients. When his hours fell off, he hit a wall. He did not have relationships with lawyers in his new firm who brought him into new matters. When he sought work from firm clients, in some cases he was told that clients wanted their matters staffed with associates, not other partners. By the end of his first year, both the young partner and the firm wondered whether they had made a mistake. Fortunately, both decided to give each other another year to sort things out with more attention in year two to integrating the new lateral into the fabric of the firm.

If you have made a lateral move, especially a lateral move to a different type of firm, have you given yourself enough time to establish yourself and insured that you fully understand the rules of the game at your new firm?