



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*

Volume 9, Issue 4

February 23, 2015

The Role of Service Partners in Business Development. Because having a book of business has become the price of entry to equity partnership in most law firms, the status of “service partners” has taken a beating. That is reflected in the large gap between the incomes of equity partners—usually rainmakers—and non-equity partners—usually service partners-- in the recent [Major, Lindsey & Africa study](#) of partner compensation. But in fact, the line between being a rainmaker and a service partner, especially for larger clients, is often arbitrary and overblown. There may be one lawyer who had the contact which initiated a client relationship, but there is rarely one lawyer who can do all the work or know all the people who are significant to maintaining and building the client relationship. If you are deemed to be a service partner in your firm and want to enhance your status, security or income, consider these options:

- Understand the firm’s rules on how origination credit is allocated. If a new client calls one lawyer but mentions other lawyers who are also of interest, is that taken into account? If one lawyer got the call but the business is won after a pitch involving many lawyers, how is that handled?
- Make a record of your role in attracting new clients or new matters even if you are not the principal lawyer involved.
- Volunteer to help rainmakers with whom you work closely to prepare for presentations or pitches, for existing clients and prospects.
- Include information in the materials and presentations that features work you have done.
- Tastefully articulate your role in the success of the client representation when appropriate, whether it is as the key brief writer, deposition taker, or project manager.
- Take an active role in pitches and presentations.

There is no reason for service partners to write themselves out of business development activities and when they are involved, no reason not to own their role.

Example: For many years, a partner managed most of the significant matters of one of the leaders of his practice group. The partner felt very secure in his role as chief lieutenant to one of the major rainmakers in the firm. Even when the firm started pressing all the partners to ramp up their business development activities, this partner did not really feel the message applied to him since he was joined at the hip with a major rainmaker. That changed when the partner learned that another partner, whose economic contribution was arguably less than his own, earned more because he had more originations in his column. The partner approached the rainmaker with whom he worked and asked to become more involved in client development and to share more explicitly in origination credit for the clients whose work he managed. The rainmaker replied: “what took you so long?”

If you have labeled yourself a “service partner” or allowed others to do so, are you willing to bring to light your contributions to the successful business development initiatives of the acknowledged rainmakers in your firm? Can you afford not to?