



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*

Volume 9, Issue 10

May 18, 2015

**To Move or Not to Move.** The high volume of lateral moves and mergers has a daily, industry-wide destabilizing impact. Lawyers are bombarded by legal recruiters. Lawyers constantly wonder whether another firm would pay more, provide more security, or be a better platform. Many lawyers who control client relationships think twice about introducing colleagues to their clients for fear they may leave—and try to take the clients. Clients worry that their lawyers may make a disruptive move. For lawyers who are unsure if they should join the migration, here are some questions to consider:

- Are you being paid fairly compared to peers in your firm or peers in other firms?
- If you consider yourself underpaid, are you on a trajectory in your firm which will close the gap?
- Can you enhance your standing in your current firm? Internal leadership? Increased book of business? External visibility?
- Do your firm's culture and compensation system promote collaboration which opens doors for you to new clients?
- Is your firm financially stable? Do you know the firm's debt? Do you know the firm's level of dependency on key clients or partners?
- Do you rely on other lawyers and practice groups to service your clients?
- Are you losing business to competitors because you lack key services or geographic scope?
- Are you likely to retain clients if you make a move? Would lawyers you need move with you?
- What is your tolerance for change and for risk?
- Is it riskier to stay put or to look for something new?

As you weigh these questions, do you have a circle of independent advisors on whom to rely for objective guidance?

**Example:** A successful partner in a growing practice area got so many cold calls from recruiters that he stopped answering the phone personally and had his assistant screen his calls or let them go to voicemail. He had been a satisfied partner and practice group leader for many years and not inclined to look elsewhere. Then his firm changed direction. The firm decided to expand and took on considerable debt to finance the expansion. The firm also recruited several laterals who were installed as leaders of his practice group and paid more than him. He then sought out recommendations of two different legal recruiters. He explained to each one that he had not decided to make a move but wanted market information. Both provided information. One recruiter pressed the partner to sign a retainer agreement and to allow him to suggest firms that might be a good fit. The other recruiter asked the partner to explain why he had initiated the call and recommended that he first consider whether he had options within his current firm to improve his level of satisfaction there. The second recruiter offered to work with him, along with a coach, to assess whether a move to another firm really made sense. The partner chose the second route-- to work with a recruiter in conjunction with a coach-- and invested six months in an effort to reclaim his leadership role and achieve pay equity. When that effort proved futile, the partner proceeded to look elsewhere with clarity that he had no other choice.

Law firm partnerships are a lot like marriages: easy to enter; harder to leave. If you wouldn't abandon a long-term marriage without counseling, you may want to consider counseling with trusted professionals before diving into the lateral marketplace.