



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 10, Issue 14

June 27, 2016

**The Leadership Trap.** Since rainmakers are among the most respected lawyers in firms, they are often invited to take on leadership roles: serving on key committees; heading practice groups; representing the firm on major community boards. Diverse rainmakers are offered even more leadership roles, particularly on law firm diversity initiatives. But leadership roles suck up a lot of time and divert rainmakers from the activities that brought them rainmaking success. If you are a rainmaker, or an aspiring one, here are questions to consider before taking a leadership role offered by your firm:

- What is the time commitment?
- When other firm rainmakers held similar roles, what was the impact on their rainmaking?
- Will the leadership role provide you with more access to business leaders in the community?
- Will the role enable you to shape business development strategy in the firm?
- Who else in the firm is involved? Will you have the opportunity to strengthen relationships which will bolster your client development work?
- How do leadership roles affect compensation? If your role depresses your revenue generation, is there a transition period to rebuild your revenue when your role ends? What happened to your predecessors when their terms ended?
- Will you have more or less power as part of the management of the firm?

It makes sense for law firms to tap rainmakers for leadership roles since others respect their success. Firms also hope leadership roles will increase rainmakers' loyalty to the firm. But rainmakers need to take a close look at each offer. Being "just" a rainmaker may be a better deal than being a firm leader.

**Example:** A law firm chairman identified a high potential woman partner in the firm and set out to groom her for leadership in the firm. He invited her to participate in high visibility local philanthropies; he introduced her to major clients of the firm; he noted her successes in firm-wide meetings and publications. He helped brand her as a rising star in the firm and in the local community. She was very grateful for his support but when he asked her if she was interested in becoming a member of the firm's management committee, she respectfully declined. She explained that she did not want to spend hours every week being on conference calls and committee meetings which would distract her from her client and business development commitments. She suggested instead that he recommend her for a leadership role in her practice group and specifically that she be asked to lead an initiative to expand work for the firm's non-US clients in the US. She also offered to support the chairman in his work in a prominent organization which promoted diversity in law firms where she would be exposed to more general counsel in the group's leadership.

Rainmaking success has its privileges but if you are a rainmaker who is offered leadership roles in your firm, take the time to evaluate the trade-offs. Be picky about the leadership assignments you accept and wary of accepting roles which may diminish your revenue generation.

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