



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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Access to Approved Law Firm Lists and Sublists. Many companies have adopted approved law firm lists which limit the discretion of in house lawyers to decide which law firms to hire. Among the most important business development skills are the ability to get onto approved law firm lists, the ability to sustain being on the lists, and the ability to expand from one category of a list to other categories. Here are some questions relating to approved law firm lists to keep in mind:

- Do you know which of your prospective clients have approved law firm lists?
- Do your contacts have the authority to hire your firm if you are not on their company's approved law firm list? If so, under what circumstances?
- How often does each client or prospective client revise its approved law firm list?
- What is the process for being considered for the approved law firm list?
- Does the prospective client's approved law firm list have sublists? If you are on one sublist, can you be hired to do work in another area?
- Who within the company controls creation of the approved law firm list? If the people you know are not involved in creation of the list, can they introduce you to the right people?
- Once your firm is approved, who decides which firms get work?
- What will keep you on the list and what gets you knocked off the list in subsequent years?

Especially when pursuing larger companies and when trying to expand business from existing clients, understanding each client's and each prospect's specific policies and practices with respect to approved law firm lists is critical. Getting on approved law firm lists is just the starting point. The most valuable lawyers and business development staff are the ones who continue to work with their contacts to get assignments and grow the relationships.

Example: In getting organized for 2017, a practice group leader asked each member of the practice group to identify clients who might be candidates for new services, including services of other practice groups in the firm. The practice group leader asked each lawyer in the group to come to a meeting prepared to suggest names of specific clients. The practice group leader also asked each lawyer to bring to the meeting information on whether the firm was on an approved law firm list for each suggested client and the scope of the approval. In preparing for the practice group meeting, one partner realized that she did not know how many lists of approved counsel her client had. All she knew was the firm had been approved to do work in her specialty. So she called her principal client contact who agreed to provide her with a list of the several categories in which the client had separate lists of approved law firms. Her contact said that it was the client's policy to not distribute the whole list of approved law firms outside the company but that she would share a few of the sublists that were of interest as long as the partner handled the information discretely. The information was very helpful to the practice group which was able to eliminate certain work because the client was using low-priced law firms with whom the firm chose not to compete. The partner then went back to her client contact and asked for her help in being considered for the approved sublist in just one other practice area.

The MVPs in law firms may be the people who are most adept at getting onto approved law firm lists, staying on the lists and expanding the scope of approved work, not the lawyers who happen in a particular year to have the highest revenues. If you have succeeded in getting on an approved law firm list, what are you doing to drive business to your firm so you will remain on the list and thrive?