



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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Helping Your Fans Steer Work to You. As you gear up for 2017, let's tackle a common source of frustration for aspiring rainmakers. You have fans within prospective client companies who keep assuring you that they are trying to steer work to you but they have not been successful. Assuming they are sincere, their lack of success probably means one of several things: they are not able to influence selection of counsel; their companies have not had any relevant new matters; or you have not helped them with the tools they need to sell your firm to their company. Consider these strategies for addressing this issue:

- Be sure to understand the prospective client's process for selecting new counsel. When your contacts assure you that they are looking for opportunities for you, pin down the specific procedures including how to get on approved counsel lists.
- Understand where in the hierarchy your contacts fall and what their authority is to select counsel. Ask your contacts to introduce you to other decision-makers.
- If your contacts are not the decision-makers, help them connect with the people in their companies who are (for more on this, read [here](#)).
- Make it easy for your contacts to introduce you to others by scheduling meetings at their offices and by offering to present CLE at their facilities to which they can invite colleagues.
- Ask your contacts to tell you which lawyers have been getting the work and then compare yourself to those competitors in as much detail as possible. Has your firm successfully opposed them or their firms? Does your firm have more depth in your field of expertise than they do?
- Give your contacts ammunition to promote retaining you: lists of successful similar work; articles that show your knowledge; invitations to prominent speaking engagements on relevant subjects; client references.

If you are facing a year end self-evaluation in which you are listing the same old prospective clients from last year with nothing to show despite continued assurances, this is a good time to refine your strategy.

Example: To mark the holidays, a lawyer invited a good friend from law school to meet for cocktails. The friend, who had worked in the law department of a major company for several years, assured the lawyer that she was still looking for opportunities to refer work to him and his firm. The lawyer asked her to be candid about what was standing in the way. She said that the main obstacle was that the company was very satisfied with their existing counsel. When the lawyer pressed her for suggestions about how to break in, she said that the one area in which the company was actively seeking out new outside counsel was among diverse lawyers. She said that her company was in the process of extending invitations to firms to send diverse lawyers to be seconded to the company for three months in 2017 so the company could train them and vet them. She said that the diverse lawyers who completed the secondment successfully would get on the company's approved counsel list and be assured of assignments. She said that there was still time for her to recommend that the lawyer's firm be invited to send diverse lawyers to the company—if they had appropriate candidates and acted quickly. The lawyer then had a very concrete proposal to discuss with his firm's management before the end of the year, not just a line item for his year-end self-evaluation.

If you have been satisfied with general assurances from friends who have not come through for you with work, is this a good time to consider a change of strategy? If not now, when?