



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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Are You a Good Sponsor? The lawyers who are on track for partnership and career success usually have the benefit of great sponsors. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, author of *Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor*, defines a sponsor as a senior level champion who is willing to act to advance a protégé not just give advice. Hewlett describes the relationship between a sponsor and a protégé as one of mutual benefit. If you are committed to facilitating your protégés' careers, here are some questions to consider:

- Have you helped your protégés join career-advancing professional, business and social networks? Have you helped them get on leadership tracks in relevant organizations?
- Do you look for ways to showcase the successes and talents of your protégés? For example, if you are reporting to clients or law firm colleagues on a recent success or development, do you ask your protégé to take the lead?
- Do you share origination credit with your protégés when they play a significant role in expanding or retaining client relationships?
- Do you insure that your protégés are assigned to career-making matters even if that means they work with others in the firm?
- Are you letting your protégés know what they need to do on your behalf to warrant your continued enthusiastic sponsorship?
- Have you asked other firm leaders for feedback about your protégés other than in connection with yearend performance reviews?

If you are serious about promoting the careers of your protégés, it is critical to verify periodically that you are on the right track. If your protégés are essential members of your team, you will be protecting your own interests as well as looking out for them.

Example: The leader of a prominent national law firm decided to act when his law firm failed to move up in the AmLaw rankings of law firms. He was concerned that the firm's ranking would result in more difficulty attracting the best talent from law schools and among lateral candidates. He was also concerned that clients would take note. To strengthen the firm's performance, he invited a group of the most successful partners in the firm to identify which lawyers in the firm were their protégés. Many of the partners he queried did not have a protégé. His request lit a fire under some partners that they needed to be more proactive about supporting younger lawyers. The leader then added a new agenda item to partnership meetings: reports on work by partners to sponsor talent, including diverse talent. Partners started reporting on a regular basis on their activities to promote their protégés. Their examples inspired other partners to be more intentional in advocating for their own teams. The firm leader also invited the firm's Chief Diversity Officer and Chief Marketing Officer to report to the partners on the impact of the firm's ranking on the firm's recruiting and marketing efforts and invited the Chief HR Officer to report on the cost of turnover of talent. Gradually, the firm leader observed more commitment on the part of more partners to active sponsorship which promoted better retention results and better diversity results.

If you are committed to advancing the interests of your protégés, diverse and otherwise, are you acting systematically to advocate for your protégés and position them for success? If not, are you risking that valuable members of your team will seek greener pastures?