



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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The Value of Older Partners

In a recent [post](#), Lois Weiner, an experienced legal recruiter, discussed the plight of older lawyers who are under pressure to retire before they are ready. Firms are under great pressure to harmonize the interests of older partners who are not ready for retirement and the interests of mid-career partners who are itching to take the reins of client relationships and firm leadership. There is a lot at stake for firms since both groups can be attractive lateral candidates for other firms. As you deal with these competing interests, here are some questions to consider:

- Is the firm fully utilizing older partners?
- Does the firm's compensation system specifically reward collaboration?
- If the firm has client teams, do they each have multiple leaders including both older and mid-career partners?
- Does the firm require or encourage that origination credit be shared?
- Is origination credit shared among all members of each client team? Or shared among only partners on a client team?
- How many clients require that leadership of their matters be assigned to multiple lawyers?
- Are senior partners used as mentors and sponsors in a consistent manner?

Example: A firm paid close attention to the leadership of the team responsible for one of the firm's oldest and largest clients. As the client relationship partner reached his sixties and faced some patches of poor health, the firm management encouraged him to make a mid-career partner a co-leader of the client team. The senior partner chafed a bit but met with the mid-career partner and worked out a plan to include him in the leadership of the client team. They met together quarterly with the client to review pending matters. They jointly managed billings to the client. They kept each other informed of the status of all client matters so they could each answer questions from the client. As a result, they were well organized when they faced a crisis.

The mid-career partner learned that he needed major surgery and would be out of commission for several months. Because of their shared leadership, they could quickly assure the client that the senior partner would be able to oversee the mid-career partner's matters while he was on medical leave and even try a case he was preparing for trial if necessary. Other people in the firm took notice of their success in managing the mid-career partner's medical leave and applied the same ideas to helping younger lawyers who were planning parental leaves. The firm assigned an older partner to each lawyer—men and women—who had a parental leave coming up. This policy created important roles for the older partners while providing security to clients that there would be great coverage and smooth transitions on their work.

There is no way to eliminate the friction between older partners and mid-career partners but there are many ways to capitalize on the value of creating planned collaboration between older and mid-career partners which will benefit them, clients and the firm. Does your firm have policies in place that show respect for the value of older partners while encouraging them to make room for the career aspirations of mid-career partners?