



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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## Disaster Relief Circa 2017

Huge storms like Hurricanes Sandy, Harvey or Irma give lawyers and law firms a chance to showcase their competency and resourcefulness in risk management and crisis management, both critical skills for practicing law. For firms and lawyers who are themselves directly affected by a major storm, the opportunity - and challenge - is even greater. Here are some examples of responses to Hurricane Sandy which stand out:

- Firms which mobilized lawyers in other offices to support lawyers disabled by the storm.
- Firms which quickly put out client alerts on significant storm-related topics like insurance coverage for hurricane damage and labor law rules on employee absences due to the storm.
- Firms and lawyers who quickly communicated emergency communications systems to clients.
- Firms which provided support to clients affected by the storm, including office space, access to gyms or hotels for showers, and facilities to recharge phones and computers.
- Lawyers who kept track of their clients' family members in storm-affected areas and offered to help them, especially if the clients were themselves not in the area.
- Firms which mobilized financial and legal relief efforts for non-profit groups in the area.

One of the most important rules of marketing professional services is to be memorable and few things are more memorable than how people behave in crisis.

**Example:** When news hit of Hurricane Sandy's imminent arrival, one Lower Manhattan law firm instructed all lawyers to verify that their clients knew how to reach them if the offices closed, through cell phones and the firm's non-NY numbers and that lawyers knew how to reach their clients if their facilities were in the path of the storm. The firm also booked dozens of hotel rooms in midtown hotels for staff or clients who might be stranded in NY. Each practice group leader was charged with compiling a list of matters on which assistance from other offices might be required if the NY office was closed by the storm. The firm also arranged to deliver essential computer equipment to a major midtown firm that gave the firm shelter after 9/11 to help jump start a recovery if their offices were shut down again.

Each practice group leader also asked lawyers for topics on which the firm should consider client alerts given the magnitude of the predicted storm. Insurance coverage topped the list. The firm sent an immediate alert to all clients recommending that they safeguard insurance policies and have them available and also created a kit to provide to all clients on insurance issues, including lawyers to contact.

One lawyer, an alum of a school with dormitories in Lower Manhattan, also reached out to the university to offer the firm's assistance in dealing with relocation of students who might be affected by the storm.

Are you prepared to deal with the impact - business, legal, and personal - of natural disasters on your staff and clients? Have you done enough planning to enable you to be nimble and generous in your response?

This newsletter was originally published in November 2012 in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.