



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 Strategic Value of Speaking Engagements

Speaking engagements have many values: creating visibility; branding your expertise; meeting new people; staying top of mind with clients and contacts. But one of the best strategic values of speaking engagements is sometimes overlooked: the opportunity to invite clients and prospective clients to be fellow speakers. If you have situations in which you want to deepen a client relationship or follow up with someone you met but do not have an easy way to do so, the solution may be an invitation to speak alongside you. For example:

- Have you recently met an interesting general counsel or a senior executive at a reception?
- Do you want to resume your relationship with an old friend who now has a successful business?
- Do you have a partner who has failed to introduce you to a client who could use your services?

The next time you are struggling to find a way to engage with a promising prospective client, consider whether you can use a speaking engagement to make contact. Try to find speaking events like these:

- A prominent event which will be attractive to potential speakers
- An event in which you are involved in the planning as well as a speaker
- An event whose date is still flexible to accommodate the schedule of an invited speaker
- A program with a topic that is highly relevant to your client's or prospect's business

Speaking invitations might even be helpful for making initial contact with people you don't know. Reaching out to a person "cold" with an offer to speak at an event that would likely benefit them is certainly easier than purely calling a person cold to try to do business with them. If you have your sights on someone who may be a good prospect for you and no opportunities for an introduction, consider making the proverbial "cold-call" in this manner.

Example: One partner's business development plan concentrated on a specific industry strategy. She organized an industry practice group in her firm and became active in an industry trade association. She was on the trade group's legal affairs and program committees. Before attending a program committee meeting to plan the group's annual conference, she asked a partner who represented a major industry player to whom she wanted greater access what subjects would interest that client. She then advocated to the program committee for a session on one of those topics and proposed that the group invite a senior leader from the client to speak on a panel at the conference. In her leadership role in the trade group, she then extended a speaking invitation, through her partner, to the client. When the executive accepted the offer, she included her partner in all her phone calls and meetings relating to the conference. The two partners then conferred on how to best use the conference. They considered hosting either a dinner for the speakers on the panel or a dinner for all their clients who would be at the conference. They couldn't decide which dinner would be more valuable so they organized a cocktail party for the panel speakers followed by a dinner to which they invited both speakers and other clients attending the conference. The client was happy to speak at a major industry conference; the partner was grateful to have had the chance to work closely with the client; and her partner was happy to have been able to introduce another firm partner to the client with ease.

Are you taking strategic advantage of speaking opportunities to advance your access to promising clients and prospective clients? What can you organize for 2018 and whose support do you need to enlist now?