



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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## **Persistence and Teamwork: Football Lessons for Law Firms**

In the lead up to Super Bowl 2018, two qualities in the winning teams stand out: persistence and teamwork.

- When the Philadelphia Eagles lost their quarterback Carson Wentz to an injury in December, the team united behind Nick Foles who proclaimed his faith in the rest of the team. The Eagles celebrated their underdog status with fans' wearing dog masks during the Eagles' stunning NFC Championship win over the Minnesota Vikings, led by Foles.
- The New England Patriots trailed the Jaguars in the AFC Championship game but even with Tom Brady nursing an injured thumb, the Patriots came back in the fourth quarter to score twice and win the game.
- In the NFL wild-card playoff between the Tennessee Titans and the Kansas City Chiefs, when Titans' quarterback Marcus Mariota's pass was tipped by his opponent, the ball was still in play. Because Mariota had continued charging down the field, he ended up in position to catch his own pass for an amazing touchdown run. Because he kept hustling, Mariota became only the second quarterback in NFL history to complete a touchdown pass to himself.

Like football, professional services' client relationship management is a "contact" sport and some of the same dynamics apply. For the big case or major transaction, law firms also need persistence and great teams, not just superstar lawyers. Here are some questions to consider:

- Is it standard practice for your firm to market its services based on the quality of the team versus the star power of a leader?
- For major matters, does the team have a backup plan if the lead lawyer has an accident or medical emergency? Does the client know your contingency plans?
- If you lost the firm's lead lawyer on a major matter, are you confident that you would be able to hold onto the client? Or would your client look elsewhere to bolster its odds rather than rely on other members of the team?

**Example:** When one of the leaders of a practice group got a call about a major new matter from a significant client, she was on the eve of starting a trial. She candidly told the client that she personally could not be involved because of her other commitments. She offered to organize a team to handle the matter and assured the client that she would send them a team of top people whom she trusted. The client pressed her for a commitment that she would join the team when her trial ended. Instead, she agreed that she would be available to the team and to the client at that point but as an advisor only. She said that she would not recommend the other lawyers in her firm to the client if she did not have total confidence that they were the best people to handle the matter. The client agreed to meet with the team she recommended, and they got the work. When her case settled, she stayed true to her word and did not displace other members of the team to take over leadership of the matter.

Are you building the kind of deep bench that will sustain your firm even if your best players are sidelined? Can you afford not to? Enjoy the Super Bowl!