



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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Is Rainmaking Compatible with Law Firm Leadership?

Rainmakers in law firms are often confronted by offers to take on leadership roles in the firm: practice group leadership, management committees, compensation committees, and other management responsibilities. It makes sense for law firms to offer leadership roles to rainmakers who are respected for their success in retaining clients in a very competitive landscape and powerful because of their contribution to firm profitability. But is it in the interest of rainmakers to take on leadership responsibilities? If you are evaluating a leadership opportunity or if you are feeling burdened by leadership roles you have already accepted, here are some questions to help evaluate your situation:

- Will a leadership role distract you from ongoing efforts to build new client relationships or expand existing client relationships? Are you already under pressure to maintain your business development efforts, service clients effectively and have a life?
- Will a leadership title enhance your status with clients or prospective clients?
- Do you need to serve in a leadership role to help you obtain more resources for business development for yourself or your team?
- Does your firm reward leaders financially? Will taking on a leadership role enhance your compensation or help you secure better compensation for your team?
- Have other rainmakers in your firm gracefully declined leadership and management responsibilities? Have any of them suffered negative ramifications as a result?
- If you accept or continue administrative responsibilities, what will you have to give up?

If you are a rainmaker or aspiring rainmaker, you do not have to automatically accept law firm leadership responsibilities as part of the trappings of being a rainmaker. Law firm leadership roles may connote respect and power but may also represent a distraction from what made you powerful and successful in the first place. You should weigh all the potential gains versus losses before accepting or continuing in a leadership role.

Example: For several years, a partner who controlled a significant client relationship moved up in the ranks of the partners who generated the most revenue for the firm. The partner was totally focused on building a great team to serve the client. Managing and executing the client's work consumed most of the partner's time. The firm's management periodically inquired whether the partner would like to take on a leadership role in the firm. She was asked if she wanted to be considered for the management committee or the compensation committee, the two most powerful roles in the firm. She respectfully declined. She explained that she expected that her major client might be the subject of a hostile takeover and that she had to devote all her attention to supporting the company's decision to resist any takeover. In addition, she had to start building a wider pipeline of clients because her client's vulnerability to a hostile takeover made clear that she could not simply rely on continued work from her one major client. Instead, she proposed one of her top lieutenants who was skilled at project management and itching for more responsibility and visibility.

Is your success as a rainmaker leading to opportunities for law firm leadership that might be contrary to your continued success as a rainmaker? Do you have the fortitude to resist offers of law firm leadership that are not consistent with your career and work/life balance objectives?