



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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Elections Matter

We are on the eve of another consequential election. In many law firms, the end of the year is also the time when the firm votes on its leadership for the following year. There are many layers of leadership. The senior leaders go by many titles: chair or chairman, managing partner, presiding partner, and president. There are also many other leadership roles: the executive committee or management committee, the compensation committee, practice group leaders, office managing partners, for example. One thing is clear in both public sector and law firm politics: diverse leadership matters. Working Mother's Best Law Firms for Women Gala Awards luncheon on October 26 in Chicago featured a discussion on The Value of Investing in Women. Working Mother featured a lot of data which demonstrates that companies with diverse leadership are more profitable and that law firms with gender balanced teams of lawyers produce better results and get a larger share of their clients' legal spend. Many firms have already subscribed to Diversity Lab's [Mansfield Rule](#) which requires firms to include at least 30 percent diverse candidates for leadership roles. Here are some questions to consider about the leadership of your own firm:

- Do you volunteer for leadership roles in the firm in your practice group or on firm committees?
- In seeking mentors, are you looking for mentors who are actively involved in firm leadership?
- Do you review firm data when it is provided to you?
- Do you analyze publicly available data on how your firm compares to others?
- Have you used leadership roles in your firm to boost your relationships with clients?

Many lawyers are happy not to be involved in firm leadership and view firm administrative responsibilities as a burden. But if you leave the leadership to others and focus solely on how you and your team are compensated and promoted, are you missing opportunities to protect your future and advance your career?

Example: A partner who was nominally the co-chair of her practice group felt stymied by the non-collaborative nature of the other co-chair. He had been with the firm for many years and had extensive relationships with other partners in the firm. When he received leads from other partners for work for their practice group, he tended to keep those leads for himself and his cronies and did not consult his co-chair who was frustrated. The partner raised these issues with firm management who shrugged it off. She finally had a breakthrough after the co-chair of the practice group left the firm. The firm leadership reached out to her. They said that they had faith in her talent and hoped she would accept sole leadership of the practice group. She agreed. She was then able to distribute work more fairly in the practice group. She also used her role to plan programs at the firm featuring clients of the firm. Whenever she had significant clients in the office, she made a point of introducing them to senior firm leaders. Within a year, she was asked to serve on the firm management committee.

Are you seeking out leadership opportunities in your firm as a way of advancing your own career as well as showing good firm citizenship? If not, are you missing opportunities to build your own practice as well as sustaining your firm? If you are a firm leader, are you doing enough to encourage and help lawyers - especially diverse lawyers - get on the track to firm leadership?