



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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Minimizing Risks in Lateral Moves

If you are considering making a lateral move, you are undoubtedly aware of the data that indicates that [attrition rates](#) for lateral partners are close to fifty percent. You can minimize the risk that you will make an unsuccessful move by taking steps from the beginning of the recruiting process. First, you want to select a recruiter who will support your being a careful candidate. Before deciding to meet a firm, and definitely before committing to make a move, you and your recruiter should probe the firms:

- What are their attrition numbers? You can ask the firms directly or ask your recruiter to do so on your behalf. Recruiters may also have access to data bases like Leopard Solutions and Legal Compass that provide such data.
- Ask the firms to explain the extent of lateral attrition they have experienced.
- Does the firm have a formal lateral integration process? Who manages lateral integration? How long does the process last? How long have they had a formal lateral integration process?
- Can you identify some laterals who have left the firm to whom you can talk? If you don't know anyone personally, you can ask your recruiter to get names for you which are available on their data bases that list lateral moves.
- Ask the internal firm recruiters who coordinate your meetings whether the firm will obtain feedback from each lawyer you interview. Ask if the firm captures and memorializes the ideas that will be generated in your interviews.

Laterals frequently report frustration and disappointment when they join firms and discover that the lawyers they met when they interviewed do not follow through on the introductions and practice building ideas that excited them as lateral candidates. Firms that have a process for capturing the great ideas that are discussed in recruiting interviews and including them in a business plan for the lateral are more likely to be firms that take lateral integration seriously and have lower attrition rates.

Before asking your clients to endure the disruption that your making a lateral move will cause, you and your recruiter need to do as much due diligence as possible that you are joining a firm for the long haul and will not be back on the market in a few years.

Example: Several factors led a partner to consider whether a lateral move might make sense. Her firm's revenue and profits had been flat for several years. Several of the firm's key rainmakers had moved to more profitable firms. Her own client base was increasing but she had not been rewarded with big bumps in compensation or status in the firm. She was not feeling the love and decided to explore the possibility of a lateral move. She asked several friends who had made lateral moves to recommend a recruiter. She got several names of recruiters and interviewed them. She was candid that she was testing the market and had not decided to make a move. She asked each recruiter to explain their process for identifying firms to approach on her behalf. She eliminated recruiters who did not have experience with lawyers with profiles like hers. She made her ultimate selection of one recruiter based on that recruiter's understanding of the importance to her of doing due diligence including a look at each firm's attrition rates and experiences with recent laterals. She was a demanding lateral candidate who was committed to not being another attrition statistic.

If you are considering a lateral move, are you approaching the process with the kind of thoughtful analysis that you would encourage your clients to adopt if they were making a major business commitment? Can you afford not to?