



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*

Volume 13, Issue 7

April 8, 2019

## Making Career Choices

There is a fierce battle for talent among law firms. There are also many career choices for lawyers outside law firms: government service, corporate law departments, alternative legal service providers. If you have established yourself as a talented lawyer with a record of success, a sought-after specialty, and a client following, you have a lot of choices. To evaluate whether your best options are inside your current firm or elsewhere, consider these questions:

- Do you have strong mentors and sponsors who have helped nurture your professional development with access to good assignments and clients?
- Are your mentors/sponsors powerful enough to continue to advance your career in the firm?
- Are you likely to inherit key client relationships when senior lawyers retire?
- Are you being groomed for leadership in the firm?
- Does your firm provide enough flexibility to accommodate your outside commitments?
- Do you feel you are being treated fairly in compensation and career progression?
- Are there any factors which concern you — attrition rates, profitability, or firm culture?
- Do your key clients depend on other lawyers in the firm?
- Do key clients have stronger relationships with other firms?

Making a move, to another firm or another organization, entails risk and a lot of effort. Before responding to any of the legal recruiters who reach out to you whenever you notch a success which is reported in the legal press, you may want to consider your options and review them with trusted advisors.

**Example:** A young partner was getting mixed messages. She had been advanced to partnership, as a non-equity partner, with the support of a key mentor. But she sensed that her mentor was grooming another lawyer for succession with a significant client. She had a good experience with the off ramp and on ramp after her first maternity leave. However, having seen others struggle with how they were perceived in their firms after second children, she was concerned whether she would still be viewed as “serious” about her career when she had more children. One major client had made overtures to her to join the company’s law department, so she knew she had options.

To evaluate her situation, she reached out to women lawyers who had had second children and stayed with the firm and one who had left the firm for an in-house position. She also talked to a recruiter to get a sense of her marketability to other firms and learned that she had good prospects. She also consulted a career coach who did not have a stake in whether she made a change or not. Finally, she had a candid discussion with her mentor about her career choices. When he encouraged her to consider an in-house position with their client before she had a second child, she decided it made sense to look at other options. She ended up at another firm and took some of the client’s work with her.

Are you regularly gathering data and insights from trusted advisors, so you are in position to evaluate opportunities that come your way? Can you evaluate your career options in a highly mobile legal market without doing so?