



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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Paying Back and Paying It Forward

I had the privilege of hosting the [Legal Momentum Aiming High Awards](#) in New York recently to benefit Legal Momentum's work in protecting the economic and physical security of women and girls. The group honored three remarkable women business leaders, Lucy Fato of AIG, Pilar Ramos of Mastercard, and Jennifer Marre of Bank of America, and presented a lifetime champion award to Robert M. Kaufman, for his decades of service on Legal Momentum's board and in the community. Since 2001, the group has honored over 100 powerful and successful business leaders who have rallied support for Legal Momentum in their companies and their networks; fourteen former honorees, including two of our first honorees from 18 years ago, attended the luncheon. One theme has dominated the Aiming High Awards since 2001: the most successful people feel a strong obligation to pay it forward to create paths for others and to give back. Robert Kaufman, whose family were refugees from Nazi Germany, even published a 2013 memoir called *Paying Back: A Refugee Kid's Thank You to America*. Since paying back and paying it forward are clearly associated with success, consider what you can do to strengthen your professional brand:

- Are you involved in meaningful pro bono work?
- Are you becoming a leader in non-profit organizations?
- Are you mentoring junior lawyers?
- Have you collaborated with clients on pro bono work that they support?
- Have you supported non-profit groups in which your clients are active?

Example: At the end of each year, the client relationship partner for a major firm client organized a planning session between lawyers on the firm's client team and the client's in-house team. This client relationship partner knew that the client's general counsel was deeply committed to several non-profit groups and recommended that they add a discussion of collaboration between the firm and the client on pro bono matters to the agenda. The firm asked the client's general counsel to identify organizations that her lawyers support and opportunities for the firm to lend support to those organizations, both in professional services and financially. The client was delighted that the firm was willing to support the client's charitable activities with substantive legal services and with contributions. The general counsel organized a list of organizations with whom her lawyers and the company's leadership were involved as well as a list of activities on which the firm could work jointly with in-house lawyers. In addition, the firm put money into their budget for the client to use during the year for these organizations. A candid discussion allowed the client relationship partner to get budget approval from the firm's management committee for the charitable contributions and gave the general counsel the ability to make commitments to non-profits with less pressure about soliciting charitable contributions from law firms. These collaborations led to several firm lawyers' joining the boards of non-profits in which the client was active. The general counsel was so pleased at the law firm's initiative that she asked the firm to do a presentation on the subject at a meeting of all the client's outside counsel.

Are you looking for opportunities with colleagues and with clients to pay it forward and pay back for the good fortune you have experienced? Will doing so strengthen your personal brand and relationships with your clients?