



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 16

August 12, 2019

Preparing to be More Accountable

Law firms are requiring more accountability from partners in many sectors including execution of business plans and diversity goals. As part of the compensation process, most firms require every partner to prepare a self-assessment including a business plan for the following year. Many firms also do a side-by-side comparison of projections and achievements. As the [war for talent](#) heats up, especially for diverse lawyers, firms are also requiring and monitoring diversity goals by office and by practice groups and holding leaders accountable for meeting diversity goals. If you are facing more demands for accountability in these sectors, or others, here are some ways to be better prepared to respond:

- Know specifically what is expected of you and ask for clarification if the standards are vague.
- Maintain a contemporaneous diary of your efforts for each of your goals. Efforts are not a substitute for results, but you will be able to describe your results more fully and explain any shortfall better if you record your efforts throughout the year rather than trying to reconstruct what you did at the end of the year.
- For each goal on which you will be held accountable, have a game plan which includes who will help you do the work involved and who will help you stay accountable along the way.
- Put on your calendar specific actions you will take on designated dates rather than just creating a long to-do list. If you cannot do the task on that date, don't just let the date pass. Move the task to another date when you expect to be able to do it.
- Map out all the intermediate steps you need to take. It isn't a plan to just list a client you hope to acquire or a goal to bring in more diverse talent. Quantify your plans where appropriate such as the number of diverse candidates you intend to recruit per quarter.
- Beware of goals that just get repeated year in and year out with no substantive progress. For example, is it realistic to keep listing a law school classmate who works in-house on your business plan? Have you determined if your friend is a decisionmaker or can connect you to one? Do you know if the company is open to new firms and whether there are any business or ethical conflicts which would preclude your doing work for their company?
- If other people offer or agree to help you, are you holding them accountable?

If you are in a firm which has become more rigorous about holding partners accountable, it is important to be certain about what you promise and project and to give yourself tools to hold yourself accountable before your firm takes action in the way of compensation, authority or status.

Example: As part of his annual business plan, a practice group leader committed to increasing the diversity of pitch teams from his group. He organized a group to help including a lawyer in every office and a business development staff person who was involved in coordinating pitch meetings and materials. The group decided to distribute information about every upcoming pitch throughout the practice group so people could volunteer to participate. The group also distributed the names of selected participants for each pitch. Each practice group meeting had an agenda item to review the diversity of pitch teams in the prior month and the leader reported on which offices had the best records year to date on the composition of the pitch teams. The group also kept score on the number of successful pitches by diverse and non-diverse pitch teams. By the end of the first year, the practice group leader had anecdotal results to share and a baseline of data to use in the following year's results.

If you are going to be held accountable for your business generation or diversity results, are you taking concrete steps to build a record of your efforts and success and getting the support you need?