



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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## Hitch Your Wagon to Emerging Stars

Working Mother's Best Law Firms for Women Initiative recently honored 60 law firms for their success in diversity and inclusion including 17 firms that have been on the [Working Mother list](#) for 10 years or more. At the awards program, Working Mother featured a [panel](#) led by [Ripa Rashid](#) of Culture@Work and lawyers from three law firms on the list. The panel addressed the challenges and opportunities of multicultural and other women lawyers and highlighted some striking data points from the 2006 ABA study *Visible Invisibility*:

- 49% of multicultural women lawyers reported that they were denied informal or formal networking opportunities because of their race; 46% thought they were denied networking opportunities due to gender.
- 60% of white women lawyers reported that they were denied informal or formal networking opportunities because of their gender.
- 35% of multicultural women lawyers thought they missed client development and client relationship opportunities because of race; 32% attributed missing such opportunities due to gender.
- 55% of white women lawyers reported missing client development and client relationship opportunities because of gender.

Rashid also noted important data from a recent [study](#) in the corporate sector that demonstrated that women as a group are ambitious [80%] and driven to succeed [91%] and data from [Working Mother's study on the Gender Gap at the Top](#) that multicultural women are even more ambitious than white women [**2x** as likely to aspire to be CEO, for example].

This data leads to some obvious conclusions. First, law firms have pools of underutilized, highly ambitious women lawyers. That means that when partners are looking for lawyers for their matters, if they select women lawyers in general, they will secure highly motivated and underappreciated lawyers. And if they select multicultural women lawyers, they will secure lawyers who are even more driven to succeed. The opportunity is clear. Diversity is not charity; there is enormous potential value to partners who invest in diverse talent in their firms. Partners should consider staffing their matters with diverse talent and should plan on actively sponsoring diverse talent out of pure self-interest. Of course, satisfying the demands of clients who are pressing law firms for greater diversity and meeting the expectations of law firm leaders who are promoting greater diversity are additional benefits.

**Example:** A practice group leader met with the firm's Chief Diversity Officer ["CDO"] to review the progress of the practice group's senior associates. The practice group leader was particularly concerned about the relatively thin ranks of multicultural women among the group's senior associates and asked the CDO for advice on how to retain and advance the multicultural women to partnership. The practice group leader reported that these associates constantly received solicitations from recruiters about other firms and corporate law departments. The CDO offered to help the practice group leader organize a group of partners who would each agree to sponsor one of the multicultural women. The CDO recommended that they appeal to partners based strictly on the partners' self-interest. The practice group leader then approached the partners with profiles of the multicultural women including their billable hours and their leadership in the firm and in professional and community organizations. The profiles clearly demonstrated that they were above average for associates in the group. The practice group leader quickly signed up a group of partners to support the sponsorship initiative.

Have you hitched your wagon to the lawyers in your firm who are the most ambitious and driven to succeed? Have you intentionally sought out underutilized diverse talent to meet your needs?