



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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The New Masters of the Universe: Working Parents with Experience Working from Home

For years, diversity advocates have promoted more flexibility for working mothers including flexible hours, reduced hours, and remote work. In recent years, more fathers have also taken advantage of flexible working arrangements. With the current crisis, working parents who have used these flex policies have a competitive advantage. They are already set up with space to work at home, appropriate technology, and most importantly, the habits and discipline to work from home. Working parents have become the masters of our new, home-based universe. Of course, the current demands on lawyers and other staff who are working remotely are even more intense with other family members in the same boat including children who are out of school and need attention and help. To capitalize on the skills of working parents in your organization with a track record of success working from home, here are some ideas:

- Assign working parents with experience working from home to be leaders of teams for critical projects and let your clients know that you have done so.
- Ask experienced working parents to conduct a video conference for others in the firm and clients on best practices. Showcase examples of successful litigation and transactions in which they played key roles while working remotely in whole or in part.
- Have practice group leaders review team assignments to insure that every client team has an expert on remote collaboration to provide support to others.
- Set up a permanent committee including lawyers, staff, IT leaders, practice group leaders, and diversity leaders to improve the firm's capacity to operate remotely. The group should also review the firm's disaster response plan.
- Provide for backup for all critical work in case people get sick. This is the ultimate in "succession planning". Explain to clients that you are intentionally building in redundancy and not charging them for it. You will build good will and insure completion of important work.
- Assign a firm leader to monitor work assignments to insure there is no discrimination in work assignments against parents with children at home.

Parents who are used to working from home and balancing family and work obligations are better equipped to adjust to our new realities. And the law firms that have built diverse workforces by investing in flex policies and working parents, like the law firms recognized on the [Working Mother Best Law Firms for Women list](#), will reap a well-earned competitive advantage.

Example: As soon as the coronavirus started emptying her law firm's offices, the head of the firm's Women's Initiative proposed to the firm's Chief Diversity Officer that they mobilize lawyers with experience working from home to help the firm adjust to the new reality. They quickly invited a group of lawyers who had successfully handled major matters while working remotely to share their best practices in a video conference with other lawyers. The group was designated the "Work from Home Strike Force". Several practice group leaders tapped members of the Strike Force to lead time sensitive client matters. The Strike Force conducted several sessions on best practices and shared [information](#). The mothers and fathers on the Strike Force appreciated the firm's recognition that they had critical skills to share. And the firm's leadership credited the firm's years of investing in diversity with the firm's resilience when everyone has to work from home.

Has your firm been able to capitalize on a cadre of mothers and fathers with experience working from home to be leaders in the workplace transformation thrust upon everyone by the coronavirus crisis?

I am an advisor to the [Working Mother Best Law Firms for Women Initiative](#). Please email me if you are willing to share a success you have had.