



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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Staying Relevant and Sane During the Pandemic

[Stephanie Francis Ward](#), a senior writer for the ABA Journal, recently invited me to participate in a special series on the ABA Journal's Asked and Answered Podcast on the Legal Talk Network on the way that lawyers' lives have changed during the pandemic. I am pleased to share a [link](#) to the podcast and to share some highlights of the discussion.

To respond to her timely questions on how lawyers are staying relevant and sane during the pandemic, I drew on two sources: my work as an advisor to the Working Mother Best Law Firms for Women Initiative, which recently [honored](#) 60 firms on the 2020 list -- and my work on business development strategy with lawyers around the country.

Everything Has Changed and Nothing Has Changed.

The pandemic forced everyone to make fast adaptations to working from home. Some firms were better equipped to support remote work because they had already invested in flexible work arrangements to support diversity goals. For example, Morgan Lewis, a Working Mother Best Law Firm, drew on the firm's 2017 initiative in which 300 associates had worked from home two days a week. One lesson Morgan Lewis had learned: lawyers' working from home needed the same technology at home as in the office. Post pandemic, lawyers often need better tools, like headphones, lighting, and standalone cameras, separate from cameras built into laptops, to enhance virtual meetings. With no end in sight to the pandemic, it is not too late to upgrade the quality of your virtual meetings.

Business Development Starts with the Work on Your Desk.

With everyone scrambling to work remotely, the priority has been servicing clients on time, cost effectively, and in a way that puts the least burden on clients and other firm colleagues. My law partner, Marshall Grossman, a great Los Angeles trial lawyer, used to drum into everyone that getting new business "starts with the work on your desk". These days, that requires attention to the schedules and priorities of each team member. I learned this lesson as a young lawyer. I was a "cliffhanger" who would stay up all night to complete a project if necessary. But my law partner, Blanche Bersch, the married mother of three school age children, explained that she needed us to complete all our work in advance so if she had a family emergency, we would not miss deadlines. During the pandemic, ability to align with the schedules and priorities of others and being prepared for emergencies stand out as critical skills for success.

The Best Business Development is Not a Standalone Activity.

Some lawyers have been concerned about the loss of access to in-person networking activities. I reassure them that random networking at in-person events is overrated. Even before the pandemic, clients often did not have the time or interest in meeting their lawyers for coffee, drinks, or meals. During the pandemic, making use of regular contacts is more important than ever. Here is a piece, [Business Development Is Not a Numbers Game](#), written during the last recession in 2009, on organically integrating business development into everyday interactions. Stay abreast of your clients' business activities, so you can frame relevant questions about new challenges you might help them address during regular contacts with them.

The Importance of Providing Relevant Information

Tailor your communications with clients to what is relevant to them. Some firms learned the hard way that inundating their clients with client alerts during the pandemic led to clients' "unsubscribing" from firm mailing lists. It is more important than ever to be "client-centric". And if you hope that other firm lawyers will share your expertise with their clients, make it easy for them to do so. Provide them with a cover note to use to explain why your client alert or services are relevant to their clients.

Pay Special Attention to Clients and Colleagues Who Need Help

[Helping displaced clients](#) will earn you their loyalty like nothing else. Stay alert for clients or colleagues who may be socially isolated and in need of your support or support from others. Affinity groups have proved invaluable during the pandemic; if your firm does not have one that is relevant to you, create one.

Staying relevant and staying sane may be more challenging during the pandemic but this is a risky time to drop out. If possible, stay the course. The road back in an economy with a lot of job seekers could be a long one.