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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Bringing the Spirit of GENgagement™ to Career and Firm Sustainability

One of the most frequent sources of tension in law firms are generational conflicts. We invited an expert on generational issues, **Phyllis Weiss Haserot**, to offer strategies for minimizing such conflict.

Law firms have been impacted by the fact that demographics have changed on both the client side and outside counsel side. Changing generational demographics have intensified the normal power tensions between (senior) client relationship partners and experienced #2s on firm teams. At present, most firm leaders and relationship partners tend to be Boomers and older Gen Xers, while the "waiting in the wings" partners typically are younger Gen Xers and older Millennials.

The need for firms to adapt to the new demographics is clear from these trends:

- For the last decade, clients tend to be younger than client relationship partners who control most of the business.
- BTI recently reported that 30% of chief legal officers are new to their role; they are more experienced; 35% are women; and only 30% have been in their role for 5 years or more (down from 50% last year).
- Clients are asking for more associates on their matters and want new ideas to be presented by their outside counsel.
- Increasingly there are disconnects between client contacts and key relationship partners or team leaders in work style, expectations, and resulting comfort level.
- Faster, more permanent change to use of new technologies may favor the #2s and levels below.

These trends are forcing firm leaders to consider changes in firm culture regarding succession planning, knowledge transfer and role shifts, for the benefit of clients and the firm. As noted in my new book *Embrace GENgagement*, firm leaders need to be ready to respond to these generational challenges. Here are some questions for leaders and aspiring leaders to consider:

- How can I be a more effective bridge among generations within the firm and with clients?
- How can we as a firm prevent loss of clients when Boomers retire or prepare to leave?
- How can I incentivize Millennials and Gen Zers to get work done well and sustain the firm?
- How can I make sure that relationship partners see the urgency for ongoing succession planning to sustain organizational strength and retention?
- How can I increase efficiency and productivity by getting teams to rapidly adopt new technology, including AI?
- Can we help current relationship partners better address multigenerational client/prospect pain points?
- How can we increase trust and make relationships more relational and less transactional?

If you are a law firm leader, an aspiring leader, or an aspiring rainmaker, *Embrace GENgagement* will help you confront the resistance to generational shifts in leadership in your firm which may be blocking opportunities for better alignment with clients' new needs and innovation. Especially with the drastic changes brought on by the pandemic, economic pressures and demands for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is critical for talented and courageous leaders and aspiring leaders to consider their options for reducing intergenerational conflict and creating more cohesive and competitive law firms.

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Guest contributor **Phyllis Weiss Haserot**, a trailblazer in solving intergenerational challenges and in marketing/business development for law firms, is President of Practice Development Counsel and the author of *Embrace GENgagement (ABA-LP)*, *You Can't Google It! (MorganJames)*, and *The Rainmaking Machine (Thomson Reuters)*.

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