



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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Wartime: No Time for Amateurs

If you have read my newsletters or worked with me, you know my usual advice: Keep your antennas up constantly for new business opportunities. Since Russia invaded Ukraine, my inbox has filled with a barrage of client alerts and webinar invitations relating to the impact of the war and sanctions. Many of the emails have been from law firms that I did not associate with expertise in international trade or economic sanctions. I have observed that some firms are doing an extraordinary job in marketing themselves with client alerts and even launching a new podcast series devoted to the war. I have also observed that many of the subjects, like economic sanctions, are very complex and specialized. So, this time, I offer a word of caution. It is great to harness all your firm's assets to respond to your clients' pressing needs in so many areas: sanctions compliance; cybersecurity; immigration; offices and employees in Russia or Ukraine; insurance; international trade, insolvency, and supply chains. But overreaching creates a potentially fatal risk of destroying your clients' trust and belief that you will always put their interests first. Before you invite your clients to rely on your firm in this crisis, here are some questions to ask:

- Before the Russian invasion, did your firm have a practice group devoted to economic sanctions or other specialized practices?
- If you had clients with specialized international trade issues before the war, did you refer the work to lawyers inside or outside your firm?
- For significant war-related matters involving "bet the company" risks or reputational risks, are you prepared to reassure your client that getting advice from your firm will be considered in hindsight as having sought out the best experts?
- Are you immersing yourself in the most time-sensitive legal and business issues your clients are likely to face so you can help them find the right resources?
- Are you willing to recommend that your client retain lawyers in other firms who have more knowledge and experience to address their most time-sensitive and urgent questions?

Wartime is no time for amateurs. Your clients will particularly value the lawyers who help them find the right resources, even if they are outside their own firms. [Being a trusted "go-to" lawyer](#), a lawyer who can be trusted to refer the best talent, is especially important in wartime and crisis when your clients have to make fast and critical decisions.

Example: When Russia started saber-rattling before the invasion, a technology company with facilities and employees in the Ukraine started preparations to shut down its operations and safeguard its employees and their families. The general counsel reached out to the company's outside lawyers for help. One firm, not a full-service firm, offered to quarterback the effort. The firm assigned a partner to be the point person. The partner started by identifying the areas at issue and which ones could be handled by the firm. The most important issue was the safety and security of employees and their families. The firm did not handle immigration or labor and employment issues and assembled a list of immigration lawyers and labor and employment lawyers to assist with extracting the client's employees and their families and arranging for them to work elsewhere and be paid. After the invasion and imposition of sanctions, the firm advised the client to retain a law firm which specialized in international trade and economic sanctions. The company was successful in relocating its Ukrainian staff and maintaining business continuity; and ultimately recommended the law firm to other similarly situated tech companies. The law firm continued its critical role as quarterback to help other companies assemble the legal resources they needed to address the wide-ranging business, legal, and human challenges of the Russian invasion.

Are you prepared to help your clients find the best legal resources they need even when that means recommending other counsel?