



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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Who Would You Hire for Yourself?

One way to understand what your clients and prospective clients are looking for in a lawyer is to ask yourself who would you hire if you needed a lawyer and what selection process would you follow. Would you go online to research who was ranked in Chambers or recognized by American Lawyer for one of the top verdicts or deals of the past year? Would you be impressed by a law firm website that advertised the firm as “award winning”? Chances are that you would start by identifying lawyers you know and trust who have had experience in the relevant area and ask for their recommendations. Your sources would give you all kinds of data points including interpersonal qualities like responsiveness. Once you had gathered some names, you would do your due diligence and look at their website bios and online presence to get additional intelligence to authenticate the personal recommendations you had received. At that point, accolades, awards, recognition, and social media presence might be differentiators but your selection process is still likely to be most heavily influenced by the advice from trusted sources.

You can assume that your clients and prospective clients go through the same kind of process when hiring lawyers; they start by asking trusted sources for recommendations. If you start with the knowledge that the most important sources of new work for you are the people who know and trust you and are comfortable vouching for you to others, then your own planning should focus on the people who know and trust YOU, including:

- Lawyers in your firm who know your capabilities and experience.
- Clients for whom you have gotten good results.
- Opposing counsel or parties who were impressed by your skills and character even if your client did not prevail.
- Fellow board members of professional, business, or charitable organizations who have seen your problem-solving skills.

Have you identified the people in your networks who know and trust you who are the most likely sources of referrals of new work, and do you have a plan to build those relationships?

Example: While handling a complex, high stakes dispute for a client, a partner was impressed with the work of a young in-house lawyer. After the matter was successfully resolved, the partner invited the young in-house lawyer to lunch where they shared their mutual respect. Afterwards, the partner invited the client to join a committee she chaired in an industry group to give the young lawyer more exposure outside her own company. The partner was happy to have the opportunity to provide guidance to a promising young in-house lawyer. The young lawyer then surprised the partner when she made an unsolicited e-introduction of the partner to a senior lawyer at the company who had not been involved in the matter. The senior in-house lawyer invited the partner to lunch and then asked the partner to make a presentation on lessons learned from the matter to the law department.

Are you in the habit of building relationships with the people in your own networks who know and trust you? Once you have identified the people who will vouch for you, your next job will be to stay top of mind. Your best potential sources need to have you in mind when they are asked for recommendations of lawyers. Look for the next issue on June 20 for strategies for staying top of mind.