



# 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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## Taking Care of Internal Clients

Our uncertain economy has created stress for some lawyers, particularly those in practice areas that have slowed down or whose clients are in distressed industries. If your work or revenues have slowed down, this is a good time to solidify relationships with partners in your firm who can keep you busy and secure. One way to think about the client relationship partners on whom you depend for work is that they are in effect your clients, your “internal clients”. If you accept the paradigm that the partners who assign work to you are your clients, then you may want to treat them like you would external clients or prospects. Consider the following steps:

- Learn as much as you can about their backgrounds; their tenure with the firm; their clients; their successes; their outside activities; and their preferred means of communication.
- Do great work for them.
- Give priority to their work to the extent possible and let them know you are doing so.
- Keep them informed about your work on their matters, particularly communications with the external clients.
- Pay attention to their needs on your mutual matters and offer to help whenever possible.

**Example:** When a new lateral partner joined the firm, the practice group leader asked a seasoned partner in the group to assume responsibility for overseeing the new lateral’s smooth integration. The seasoned partner’s work had slowed down, and she saw the assignment as a potential way to obtain new work. She also viewed this as an opportunity to provide work to a talented senior associate, who was on track for partnership, and whose work had also slowed down.

The seasoned partner met with the new lateral to review his lateral integration plan and to hear about his former firm, the reasons for his move, his practice, and his clients. The seasoned partner offered to review the staffing on all the lateral’s matters. When she heard about one large matter that was in her domain, the partner volunteered to assist the new lateral on the matter and arranged for the senior associate to work on the matter. Working together with the new lateral gave the seasoned partner an opportunity to see the new lateral in action and to insure that the new lateral’s major client had a good transition to the firm. The seasoned partner also encouraged the senior associate to join in the lateral integration effort. The senior associate followed the model set by the seasoned partner in helping the new lateral adapt to the firm’s technology, systems, and most importantly, its culture.

At the end of the year, the practice group leader expressed gratitude to the seasoned partner for doing an effective job at helping to integrate the new lateral, keeping herself busy, and paving the way for the senior associate to stay on track for partnership. The lateral also shared his appreciation for her help in his integration and proposed that they collaborate in approaching additional prospects and share the origination credit if they are successful.

Are you treating your internal clients with the same level of care and attention that you typically extend to external clients?