



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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## Matching Your Business Development Strategy to the Current State of Affairs

A lot has changed in a short time. The pandemic was disruptive but highly profitable for many law firms especially in lucrative practices like private equity. Then the slowdown in 2022 and the risk of a further possible economic downturn led to many law firm layoffs, especially in firms serving the tech sector. Even highly profitable law firms were impacted by late 2022 with layoffs from the downturn. Then this month we experienced a major bank crisis. Although it has not yet ended, calamity seems to have been averted so far. With so much change, is it time to review your business development prospects and strategy to make sure that your current strategy matches your current experience? Here are some questions to consider:

- Have you observed any changes in the volume or type of work you are getting from clients?
- Have you checked in with clients to see if their priorities have changed or whether they are under new legal budget constraints?
- Are you under pressure from clients to reduce rates or at least not raise rates?
- Are more clients asking you to consider alternative fee arrangements or considering litigation finance?
- Have some clients announced a review of their preferred provider lists and asked for new bids?
- Are you under pressure from your firm's management to raise rates?
- Have you compared your 2022 year-end projections to your results so far in the first quarter of 2023?
- If your own hours have declined because the workflow is slower, have you made yourself available to support others in the firm?

Sometimes it is hard to detect changes in workflow and harder still to change expectations, your own as well as your firm's expectations of client demand. But the sooner you identify the current trends, the sooner you can modify your strategy and expectations.

**Example:** In year-end discussions, the firm's leadership questioned how solid one practice group's projections were for 2023. The practice group leader went back to all the partners in her group and asked each one to review their projections for 2023, encouraging them to be realistic and conservative. The group's leader also met individually with each partner to review their business development plans. Those reviews resulted in many adjustments. The leader advised one partner who worked with both tech companies and energy companies to concentrate on her energy clients in the near term. Another partner who had relied for work on a recently retired partner was urged to intensify his efforts to retain those clients. The practice group leader urged partners in the group to utilize the firm's in-house business development staff. The practice group leader also told partners that they could apply their business development budgets to retain outside business development coaches. The practice group leader then scheduled monthly meetings of the partners in the group to review results and to stimulate more collaboration. The practice group leader gave firm leadership new projections with more modest numbers but also proposed that the practice group be considered for a discretionary bonus if they hit their higher numbers in 2023.

As your clients are buffeted by an uncertain economy, are you staying current and realistic with your own projections? Can you set yourself up to be rewarded if you underpromise and over perform? Do you need to modify your own expectations?