



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.

Volume 3, Issue 17

August 24, 2009

Build Relationships Before You Need Them. The best time to build relationships is before you need them. It is hard to call a classmate who has become a general counsel to ask for business if you have not spoken in 20 years. And even if you have enough *gumption* to make the call, the potential for success is about the same as for any “cold call.” If you need to revive a stale relationship, read *Reconnecting with Former Clients and Old Friends*. <http://www.newellis.com/MondayArchive.html> (April 2008).

The better approach is to be consistently mindful of the opportunities to build relationships with people who may be valuable down the road. You need to develop an ability to tune into other people’s interests and needs, and not just for your own immediate self-interest. With promising junior level clients or colleagues or interesting friends, neighbors—and even former adversaries, consider these strategies:

- Take a personal interest in them
- Introduce them to colleagues or clients who can help advance their careers
- Offer your help as a resource or sounding board for business or career issues
- Find ways to help them or their families
- Pay attention to them

You may be surprised at how much good will you can generate with small investments, especially when the people involved don’t expect it. The specific effects of being tuned into other people may be random but the overall value is highly predictable.

Example: After you speak at a bar meeting, a man approaches you and asks: “Do you remember me?” He reminds you that you worked briefly together on a deal when he was a paralegal at one of your clients. He said that one day at your office, when he got a call from his child’s school that his child was sick, you discreetly offered to check if your firm’s emergency childcare facilities could accommodate his child. He said that he ended up relying on a family member but really appreciated the offer and your subsequent inquiry about how his child was doing.

He explains that meanwhile, he has finished law school and joined a new company’s law department. He proceeds to introduce you to several colleagues with obvious enthusiasm and invites you to stop by their offices when you are in their neighborhood. One small act of generosity years earlier has become a business opportunity.

Have you developed antennas to tune into the needs of other people, at all levels of influence and power, whether or not you see an immediate reward from doing so? Are you building a reservoir of good will to use to connect with people when you need them?