



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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Training the Next Generation of Rainmakers. Many firms agonize over when to train associates in business development. Firms do not want to distract newer lawyers from billable hours or create anxiety that new lawyers are expected to deliver business early in their careers. At the same time, firms evaluate associates for partnership in part based on their ability to generate business. So there is a Catch-22 around marketing training for associates. Instead of debating when to train associates, law firms can use themselves as training grounds in business development for associates by integrating marketing training into the daily life of the firm. Partners who dispense work to associates are in effect the associates' first "clients." The truth is that the same skills and habits that associates need to be successful in the law firm are the skills they can use later in external marketing: doing great work on a timely and cost effective basis; good communications skills; and close attention to what the partners want and need from them. By focusing on internal marketing, firms can defer formal and advanced training to prepare associates to transition to partnership but still insure that associates start learning important marketing skills.

Example: Nothing sells like success. One critical marketing skill partners can teach associates is to create and share success stories within the firm. Let's assume that your team in the real estate group has just closed a transaction involving an unusual use of historic tax credits. Instead of your reporting on the successful transaction at the next practice group meeting, you could ask the associate who worked on the deal to make a presentation. When you help the associate prepare a presentation on the deal, the associate gets a chance to develop a success story which can be used internally and externally. In the course of the presentation, the associate will of course credit you for the creativity of the deal structure and you in turn will praise the associate's effective execution. During the discussion at the practice group, you can also help the associate learn to identify other lawyers whose clients might need similar tax vehicles and to follow up with them. Using a practice group meeting as a training ground is a safe way to train associates on essential communications skills they need to market themselves and an opportunity to identify other clients who might benefit from the same type of deal structure.

Are the partners in your firm willing to share the limelight and credit for successful deals with associates to start training the next generation of rainmakers?