



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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The Art of Onboarding Lateral Partners. Many firms are doing a better job of recruiting high potential partners than they are of integrating those partners in ways which capitalize on their potential. The responses to my newsletter, *The Lure of Greener Pastures*, which cautioned rainmakers to consider the readiness of firms to integrate them before making lateral moves, confirmed my concern that there is a breakdown in many firms between recruiting lateral partners and bringing them on board. Typical responses were: “I wish I had considered these issues before moving two years ago” and “I have been virtually on my own since my move and I am even thinking of going back to my old firm.” Many lawyers reported that their firms simply had no consistent process for onboarding new lateral partners and seemed to assume that if they brought in successful lawyers, they would make their own way. Before committing to a lateral move, consider these questions about a new firm’s onboarding process:

- Will someone with deep institutional knowledge be assigned as your guide?
- Will someone help you translate your preliminary business plan into a targeted plan specifying client relationships and lawyer relationships to build?
- Will you have access to all the necessary stakeholders, including staff, client team leaders and practice group leaders?
- Will someone hold your new partners accountable for helping you?

Example: One firm which has a process which recognizes the difficulty of integrating lateral partners is Brown Rudnick. Its plan involves collaboration of the recruiting staff and the marketing staff, beginning during the recruiting stage and continuing after lateral partners arrive. The firm’s chief marketing officer meets all lateral partner candidates to help ensure clarity on both sides about the candidates’ business plans and the firm’s needs and expectations. When lateral partners arrive, the firm assigns each one a lawyer advocate, usually someone who interviewed the lateral and supported the hire. In addition, the firm provides ongoing support from the director of professional recruitment and the marketing chief who team up to identify specific lawyers for each lateral to meet, as well as particular deals and cases that they think new lawyers should be aware of. They make certain that new lawyers know when practice group meetings are set, encourage laterals to report on their progress and become visible through the firm’s internal communications tools, set up meetings and monitor their progress. The director of professional recruitment reports on new lawyers’ progress to the firm’s management at regular intervals, after one week, three weeks, 45 days and 90 days. The firm also monitors the responsiveness of lawyers in the firm, looking critically on lawyers who advocate for bringing in a lateral and then fail to contribute to their success once they are onboard.

If your firm is not getting what it expected from high potential lateral partners, are you blaming their lack of initiative or are you willing to consider that the firm may need to improve its integration process to allow the firm to recoup its investment and realize on their potential?