



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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Who Are You Taking Out to the Ball Game? This time of year you are inundated with offers from your firm for box seats at great venues like Yankee Stadium, Wrigley Field and the Hollywood Bowl. You want to do more client entertainment and take advantage of your firm's considerable investment, but you are struggling to get away with your family on vacation, do your fair share of recruiting summer clerks, and you have a large matter to conclude. Be strategic and realistic as you decide whether to sign up for the box seats. Don't do it just because the venue is very attractive. Definitely don't burden clients who would only attend out of a sense of obligation to you. Evaluate whether the considerable time commitment makes sense. But don't reject the opportunity just because your schedule is highly uncertain. Consider these steps to insure that the tickets will be put to good use:

- If you are concerned that a particular matter will interfere with your using the tickets, consider inviting the client involved. Then if your deal or case blows up, neither of you may be able to attend but your client will understand.
- Consider offering the seats to clients to take their families without you. Many would enjoy taking their children and would prefer not to combine business and family anyway.
- Have a contingency list of lawyers or others who refer work to you who would appreciate the tickets if you get stuck and can't use them at the last minute.

If you are going to entertain clients in this fashion, be sure to get the logistics down so it is a smooth process and really provides for the kind of relaxed evening you expected.

Example: The last time you were in your client's office, you noticed she had a coffee mug with her child's picture, playing baseball. You asked about it and she explained that her son is an avid Little Leaguer. You shared your own experience a decade ago with your child and stored the information. When you get the offer of the firm's baseball box seats, you can take the opportunity to call your client. Tell her that you just got the notice about your firm's season baseball tickets and thought of her. Then have a frank conversation. Tell her that you would be delighted to take her and her son to the ball game but that if she would prefer, you would also be happy to give her the tickets to take her whole family. Her choice. If she decides to go with you to the ballgame, you may want to invite a colleague, or a summer law clerk, with a child the same age as hers. If she decides to go without you to the game, then of course suggest getting together another time, just the adults. And be sure to put a reminder on your calendar to call her afterwards to check on how she enjoyed the game.

Are you using the summer season to connect with clients in ways that best suit your clients' interests and your own schedule? Whether it is Shea Stadium or a barbecue in your backyard, you can't hit a business development home run if you don't get up to bat.