



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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Filling the Gap in Business Development Skills. The financial crisis has exposed gaps in the training firms provide lawyers in critical business development skills. Many firms defer training lawyers to be rainmakers until they become partners. But the economic crisis has deprived new partners of the luxury of time to learn new skills. Many new partners are suddenly confronted with intense pressure to generate their own work. Partners who used to rely on them are staffing their matters with associates either to keep valued associates busy or because of client pressure to use lawyers with lower billing rates. Either way, many junior partners, without training or notice, have to fill their own plates without knowing how to do even the basics like:

- Creating a business plan
- Building networks and client relationships
- Approaching clients and prospects about new business opportunities
- Selecting and participating effectively in organizations
- Using writing and speaking as marketing tools
- Thinking strategically

If you are in this situation, take an inventory of your own skills and consider these options for upgrading your skills quickly:

- Lobby your firm to provide more training.
- Offer to help organize a training program.
- Sign up for CLE programs which include practice management and business development skills, whether or not your firm will reimburse you.
- If your job is at risk because your hours are light, consider negotiating a period of reduced pay while you ramp up your business development skills and pipeline.
- Find—or create—other training resources. Seek out successful rainmakers as mentors or hire personal coaches.

Example: After scrambling for work for several months, and being shell-shocked by associate layoffs, a group of first year partners at a firm organized their own monthly series on business development skills when their firm cut its training budget. Each partner took responsibility for finding a resource person for one session; some used senior partners; others went outside the firm. Each created training materials for their session which could be reviewed and improved for subsequent occasions. When one group member was traveling, they hooked her in through Webex. When that was successful, they used Webex to open the sessions to first year partners in other offices of the firm. They set aside time at each session for problem-solving and identifying leads for work for each participant—inside and outside the firm. After each session, they solicited feedback from each other, honed the program and offered to repeat it for other lawyers in the firm. Each partner in the group gained valuable skills, extended their networks within the firm, and felt less vulnerable to the risk of a layoff.

Instead of losing sleep about your job security and lack of marketing skills, are you ready to take initiative to find your own resources or to organize your own business development series if your firm is not providing training for you?