



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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Tracking Client Information. Does it really make sense to communicate with clients when you learn news about them or their industries, either by reading the business press or as a result of tracking information about them? Many news events have direct legal ramifications: lawsuits, hostile takeovers, proxy fights, government investigations, layoffs, or transactions. But by the time news appears about these events, the company often has a legal team in place. Are you concerned that you will appear foolish or too aggressive for getting in touch with clients when you hear about significant events from another source? It is clearly preferable to be the “go-to” lawyer who gets the call from the client at the first hint of trouble or a new deal. Second best is positioning yourself for the next time by astutely calling issues as you see them to your client’s attention. It may not be too late to be considered when the news breaks. The client may need more horsepower than their existing lawyers can muster. New issues may have emerged on which your firm has expertise. There may also be conflicts requiring separate counsel for related entities, officers, directors, or employees. Even if there is no immediate opportunity for representation, clients usually appreciate when their outside lawyers consider the impact of new developments on existing matters and also appreciate that their lawyers are paying attention to them.

Here are some suggestions on keeping track of clients:

- Encourage other lawyers in your firm to be on alert for new developments with potential legal impact and to share the information with you promptly, with appropriate care about confidentiality.
- Ask your library or marketing staffs to recommend the best services for tracking clients and prospects, including services which track litigation.
- Read the business press daily with attention to your clients and their industries.
- For simple free tracking, consider Google alerts, <http://www.google.com/alerts>.

Example: You read in the business press that a new study suggests problems with a particular drug which competes with one of your client’s leading products. You spring into action to consider the implications of this news for your client. First, ask your colleagues if anything about the issue has come up in discussions with the client so you don’t look uncoordinated. Next, consider whether the information you already have about your client’s product suggests that their drugs share similar characteristics which would give rise to the same problem. Then reach out to your clients and probe the implications from their standpoint and how your firm can be helpful. Can they be proactive and avoid the problem? Can they minimize their risk by giving notice to consumers? Do they need to put their insurance carriers on notice? If they are not affected by the same issue, can they take advantage of their competitor’s situation? Do they need your help in shaping an advertising campaign to promote their product as superior to their competitor’s? Even if they have already engaged other lawyers, your probing may suggest new initiatives that they had not considered which may lead to immediate or later opportunities.

Are you ready to be more proactive with the necessary tools to track clients and their industries? When you learn about events which may have legal implications, are you willing to take the initiative to contact your clients even if some of the time you will be too late to the party?