



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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Love the Ones You're With. Are you one of the lawyers in your firm who controls significant business? If so, you are undoubtedly under pressure from your firm to expand business from your existing clients to feed hungry lawyers in the firm. For most people, it is harder to sell *other* lawyers' services than to sell their own. You know your own capabilities, experience and track record. To promote other lawyers, you have to be able to vouch for them. If you haven't worked with them, or even met them, it can be uncomfortable to vouch for them. And if the clients who are asking about other services are valued clients, there is risk; if you recommend someone who is not up to par, it can damage your own client relationship. How do you get past *reluctance to refer* your partners to clients? Consider some of these strategies to make it easier to refer other lawyers in your firm to important clients:

- Learn everything you can about the other lawyers' clients and successes.
- Find ways to work with them, on firm administration or in organizations, to acquire personal knowledge of their judgment and style.
- Meet with them at firm events or when visiting their location.
- Do the level of due diligence you need to satisfy yourself that they are high quality lawyers, including talking to their "references" like colleagues or clients.

Example: You are the managing partner of an East Coast office of your firm which recently acquired a group of West Coast lawyers with national prominence in their practice area. In your East Coast office, you have less prestigious lawyers in the same practice area. You want to take advantage of the prominence of the new group to pitch significant East Coast clients. You would like to include the East Coast lawyers in the pitch but when you suggest to the new group that they include the *existing* East Coast lawyers, they question whether they are up to par. They suggest that the firm recruit *additional* lawyers in their practice area on the East Coast who match their prominence and that you hold off pitching your East Coast clients till you have recruited some new talent.

Instead, you meet with the less prominent group of lawyers and help them overcome the reluctance of your new stars to work with them. You help them lay out their experience and successes to date. You confirm that other lawyers who have introduced them to their clients have been satisfied with their work. You invite the two groups of lawyers to collaborate on revamping the firm's website relating to their specialty which gives them a chance to work together and develop mutual respect. Then you identify a group of specific clients to whom you can introduce the combined group. In the process, you satisfy your new star lawyers --and yourself--that you can vouch for the quality of your existing lawyers. You improve the utilization of your existing lawyers and avoid new recruiting fees, and risks.

When you face reluctance --your own and others'--to stand behind existing legal talent in your firm, are you willing to consider whether you have underestimated their value before turning to expensive options of bringing in new talent or cutting them loose?