



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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Preventing the 24 hour Client. Do you have clients who expect you to be available 24/7? Do you worry when you are tied up with one client and cannot respond to another important client? Have your children started calling your Blackberry a "Crackberry"? Everyone is struggling with the same phenomenon of cell phones, Blackberries, IM, pagers and, above all, clients' expectations of total access and undivided attention. Your clients expect a great deal when they are paying up to \$1000 an hour for lawyers. They already patronize more than one law firm and have other ready choices if you don't show an appropriate sense of urgency about their work. If you are struggling to serve-- and preserve-- your clients and have a reasonable life on top of your career, consider whether you are training your clients to have reasonable expectations of you. When you are with your clients, do they get your undivided attention? Do you have built in contingencies to handle important clients when you are absent or unavailable? Does your staff know exactly how you want them to respond to key clients when you are tied up on another matter?

Example: To train your clients to have reasonable expectations of you, show them your standards for treating clients. When your client meets you at your offices, use a conference room where you won't be distracted by your computer or phone. If you meet in your own office, show your client in, openly instruct your secretary to hold all calls, turn off your computer monitor, and turn off your own phones. Tell your client explicitly that is the way you operate and invite them to do the same. Then give your client your undivided attention. When you are meeting on their turf, the rules are the same: your phone and pagers are turned off. You are setting and communicating your standards of attention to your clients so when they call you and your assistant says you are in a meeting, they will understand that someone else is enjoying the level of service they experienced. The flip side of giving each client your undivided attention is that you must arrange for other people to respond effectively to your clients when you are not available. That might include someone monitoring your email and phone messages when you are tied up in a meeting, in court, or on an airplane.

Are you ready to shift back from impulsively answering every phone call, IM and email to establishing zones of concentration and respect for each client and maybe even carving out some zones for your own life priorities?