



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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Managing Client Complaints About Other Lawyers. You sold an important client on using another practice group in your firm and the nightmare scenario has happened: your valued client has complained about your colleagues. Your first instinct is to dive in, take over, or do whatever it takes to unravel the troubled relationship. Don't. If you react in a highly defensive manner, your client may wonder why you recommended that they entrust their matter to your colleagues in the first place. If you fail to support your colleagues at the first sign of trouble, they may also be reluctant to service your clients the next time. Dealing with complaints is an important aspect of managing the firm's relationship with the client. Do you give your clients regular opportunities to vent about problems with your firm's services or fees? When you make internal referrals for your clients, do you get a commitment from your colleagues that they will report to you about the matter on a regular basis so you are never surprised when problems arise?

Example: When your New York-based manufacturing client had issues with regulation of greenhouse-gas emissions in California, you brought in the California lawyers in the new clean technology practice group who assured you they could help. You set up the new matter with a process to stay in the loop; you have received regular reports from your California colleagues; and you periodically check in with the client about the matter. This week, your client unloads on you: the bills are sky high and the State of California has issued an order to show cause why the client's manufacturing operations should not be suspended. You do not panic; you reassure your client that you have great confidence in your colleagues; and gather information from the client on the current crisis. You then call your colleagues and reassure them that they have your confidence and want their help to sort out the current crisis in client relations.

Are you managing your client's extended relationships throughout your firm to insure timely notice of complaints and are you secure enough in your relationships with your client and colleagues to problem-solve the inevitable complaints in a constructive manner?