



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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Personality is Not Destiny. Have you refrained from marketing because you are too shy or just too uncomfortable about “sales” kinds of behaviors? Have you resigned yourself to being dependent on other firm rainmakers because you don’t expect to be successful in business development? It helps to be outgoing and comfortable with promoting yourself and your firm but your personality does not control your effectiveness. Professional services business development is more about learning what your clients need, and acting on the information, than it is about selling yourself or your firm’s services. The two best predictors of successful business development are ability to discover client needs and skill in building trusting relationships. Whether you are shy or outgoing, consider the following steps:

- Get in the habit of inquiring about your clients’ business challenges outside the narrow scope of the projects on which you are working.
- Be attuned to the legal implications of the problems that you learn about.
- Ask questions designed to uncover more about the extent of the problems.
- Identify your prior experience, and your firm’s, that have a bearing on your clients’ new problems and mention your relevant expertise.
- Take action immediately to provide support to your client on the new problems; send material; make introductions; make an appointment and follow through.

Do not worry about the propriety of probing for client information outside the scope of your immediate assignment or specialty. Are you offended when you see a specialist doctor and she asks you about your health generally? Would you even want a specialist who considered only a narrow aspect of your health without knowing about your overall health?

Example: You have worked intensely on just one matter with a senior lawyer at your client. You do not have a longstanding business relationship or a close personal relationship. For an all-hands meeting at the client’s, you make a point of arriving early so you can ask your contact whether the problem you are dealing with has had any effect on other business operations. When he says that they are just beginning to deal with a related problem, you probe, gently, looking for a way to be helpful.

- What is the nature of the problem and how big is it?
- How long has it lasted?
- What has it cost?
- What will happen if they don’t fix the problem?
- Have they gotten advice from other lawyers on the problem?
- Would it be helpful if you introduced them to the people in your firm who have expertise on the subject or sent them materials from a similar matter?

If you find any opening, take action, on the spot. Offer to send information or make an introduction to your colleagues who could help.

Are you willing to use your everyday interactions with clients to identify new opportunities, not by selling your services but by discovering how you can help?