

## By the Book

Beverly A. Loder



### ***The Opportunity Maker: Strategies for Inspiring Your Legal Career Through Creative Networking and Business Development***

by Ari L. Kaplan (Thomson/West, 2008)

I first became acquainted with Ari Kaplan three years ago when we were recruited as presenters of a Webinar for lawyers on “Getting Published.” We spoke by phone along with a third presenter as we planned our program and coordinated our PowerPoint slides, and although I found Ari friendly and collaborative, I had no idea what a charismatic speaker he was until the actual Webinar was underway. We had decided he would present first, I’d go next, and our co-presenter would conclude. Although I had previously done a number of live programs on this topic, this was my first Webinar experience and I found it a bit challenging to be sitting alone at my desk, speaking into my phone to an audience I could not see, trying to engage them without the benefit of the visual cues one looks for to guide the presentation, while monitoring my computer screen for attendee questions and instructions typed in by the moderator.

And then Ari began his segment. He immediately grabbed my attention with his enthusiastic, engaging delivery, and I could vividly picture him strolling up and down a virtual stage, venturing into the audience, effortlessly connecting with every individual. I had never met the man and yet I somehow could visualize him clearly. My heart sunk precipitously as I suddenly realized . . . *I have to follow this guy!*

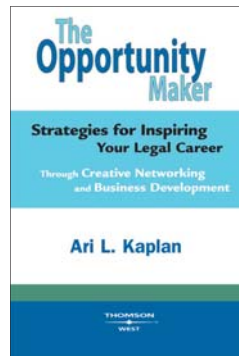
Kaplan brings that same contagious energy and motivating voice to his book *The Opportunity Maker*, guiding you through the tenets of relationship building and rainmaking while sharing a multitude of practical but creative techniques to build your personal brand, identify and leverage your unique strengths, and maximize your business development potential. Although the book is especially targeted to law students and junior associates, the strategies Kaplan outlines could benefit any lawyer facing the unprecedented challenges of client acquisition and retention in today’s fiercely competitive arena.

Throughout the book’s 17 succinct but detailed chapters, Kaplan draws on his own considerable experience as a practicing lawyer, prolific writer, speaker, trainer, and coach. But he also shares inspiring stories and solid advice gathered from dozens of successful lawyers, technology leaders, and business development pros, as well as from law students and new associates who have managed to distinguish themselves early in their careers.

Kaplan’s key message is that lawyers can create their own opportunities by being proactive—and by enlisting the help of mentors, friends, colleagues, and clients with whom they build strong and reciprocal relationships. This can be done through traditional means such as writing, speaking, and actively participating in professional, community, and charitable organizations. But it can also be done through trying creative ways to connect, perhaps

starting a breakfast, lunch, or dinner club, hosting a local radio or TV show, forming a book club, even creating a new charity or association. Kaplan’s book doesn’t stop at merely making these suggestions, but describes how others have made them work and how the reader can, too.

Several chapters discuss the art and science of networking, rainmaking, and self-promotion. Lest this sound overly self-serving, consider Kaplan’s exhortation to “meet people to learn about them, not so that they will become clients. Be charitable because it is worthwhile, not because it will impress a prospect. Get creative because it will enhance your work and it will inspire your day, not to attract business.” Throughout the book he encourages readers to make friends, not contacts, and explains how helping others inevitably enriches our own lives and careers and, yes, creates opportunities.



To learn more about this book and other resources, visit [www.theopportunitymaker.com](http://www.theopportunitymaker.com) and [www.AriKaplanAdvisors.com](http://www.AriKaplanAdvisors.com). If you’d like to view a clip of Ari’s thought-provoking keynote speech on the convergence of technology and legal marketing at the 2010 ABA TECHSHOW®, you can find it [here](#).

I asked Ari to share additional insight on how to become an opportunity maker. Here’s what he told me:

**Q:** *Ari, you’ve talked about how when we shine a spotlight on others, it reflects well on us. Can you elaborate on this?*

**AK:** Many people believe that self-promotion is about spotlighting one’s own talents and abilities; however, in my research, I have found that the most successful students and professionals find creative ways to showcase the efforts of others and let that reflect on their character. It encourages those you are highlighting to share your work, makes your interaction more memorable, and creates opportunity for genuine follow-up. In fact, I created a Webinar series called 30-Minute Thursdays [30MinuteThursdays.com](http://30MinuteThursdays.com) to provide programs twice a month that give subscribers creative ideas for engaging others.

**Q:** *I’ve also heard you say that missed opportunities can become real opportunities. How so?*

**AK:** A sincere attempt to connect with someone or learn about his or her work will often lead to an unexpected chance to achieve forward momentum. For example, I regularly suggest that professionals and students reach out to distant contacts or those individuals they would like to meet when they travel, because most people are generally more inclined to connect with those who are not normally in their area. A rejection by someone, whether it is a prospect, member of the media, or client, who may have a scheduling conflict the day you are in town can result in a future meeting (or call) when your schedules do coincide. That opportunity will be a direct consequence of the one you missed.

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