

[What is the Best Way to Get to the Peak in Your Career?](#)

Posted by [Cordell Parvin](#) on September 27, 2011

A friend sent me a link to a fascinating [New Yorker](#) article titled: [Personal Best: Top athletes and singers have coaches. Should you?](#) written by surgeon, [Atul Gawande](#). The article was aimed at surgeons, but many points also apply to lawyers. In the article, Gawande discusses when a person peaks in a given profession.

Even if you are not an athlete, you know that many athletes peak early in their life. It seems winners are getting younger all the time. [Lexi Thompson](#) won The Navistar LPGA Classic a couple of weeks ago to become the youngest golfer to win a tournament by almost two years. [New York Times](#) writer [Karen Crouse](#) wrote a great column about Lexi: [Good Enough, Not Old Enough, for L.P.G.A.](#)

Surgeons, on the other hand peak much later in their career. The doctor writer suggests it is at about 45 years old. He then states:

Jobs that involve the complexities of people or nature seem to take the longest to master.

When do lawyers peak? I often say rainmakers peak between 50 and 60. That 10-year period is when they have the greatest success. I know that was certainly true of my career.

If you get a chance to read the New Yorker article you will certainly get a better idea of what coaching is and why it works. I will leave you with a paragraph from the article about coaching teachers. It most definitely applies to client development coaching for lawyers:



California researchers in the early nineteen-eighties conducted a five-year study of teacher-skill development in eighty schools, and noticed something interesting. Workshops led teachers to use new skills in the classroom only ten per cent of the time. Even when a practice session with demonstrations and personal feedback was added, fewer than twenty per cent made the change. But when coaching was introduced—when a colleague watched them try the

new skills in their own classroom and provided suggestions—adoption rates passed ninety per cent. A spate of small randomized trials confirmed the effect. Coached teachers were more effective, and their students did better on tests.

Have you made any changes in your client development efforts during this year?

Cordell M. Parvin built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkins & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm's attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, www.cordellparvin.com or contact him at cparvin@cordellparvin.com.