

[Political Savvy May Get You The Promotion \(or Clients\) You Deserve](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on June 17th, 2015

I was on Twitter the other day and saw a link to a new book.



I read the first chapter and asked author Bonnie Marcus to share with lawyers, her ideas on promotion and attracting clients. Before you read her advice, take a look at the [about page](#) from her webpage to learn more about her.

In the beginning of my corporate career, I made a conscious effort to avoid office politics. That is, until I had an experience where I was passed over for a promotion. As a result of this experience, I understood for the first time how my avoidance of the workplace dynamics set me up to be blindsided and overlooked.

My comfort level, like many women, was to focus on my work and performance. In fact, according to The Center for Work Life Policy (CWLP), 77% of women believe their talent and hard work positions them for advancement.

Our avoidance of the politics, however, makes us vulnerable because we lack the information about what it takes to get promoted and who makes and influences the decisions.

Political savvy is critical in order to survive and thrive in highly competitive work environments. It involves both the willingness to embrace the politics and the savvy to navigate the reality of your workplace.

Top 5 things you need to do to become politically savvy and get the promotion you deserve

- **Promote yourself with savvy and authenticity.**

In order to promote yourself well, first take the time to understand your value proposition; the unique way you deliver the work for successful business outcomes. Your [value proposition](#) gives you confidence to communicate your achievements.

- **Observe the workplace dynamics.**

There are three major things to look for when it comes to your workplace: the rules, the power, and the culture. Who has power and influence? How are decisions made? Who are the decision makers? Who influences those decisions? What are the formal rules and the unwritten rules? Which rules are sacred? What does it take to get ahead? What type of behavior is rewarded and what is not?

It takes focus and intention to understand the complexities of your workplace culture. Keeping abreast of these dynamics helps you align yourself with those who can best help you reach your goals.

- **Network strategically**

Research supports the fact that networking strategically leads to higher income and bonuses and faster promotions. Start with your career goal. Who do you know and who do you need to know inside and outside the organization to help you reach that goal? Step outside your comfort zone to build connections and relationships with the right people; people who will speak for you and recommend you for promotions and

high profile assignments. Research also shows that the more diverse your network, the more effective it is for your advancement. This requires you to step outside your comfort zone perhaps and reach out to people you may not know but who you believe can help you reach your goal.

- **Find a sponsor**

As you build a network of allies and champions, identify potential sponsors. Sponsors take action on your behalf and help create new opportunities for you. They promote you and protect you from the politics at play.

- **Get a coach**

Working with a coach helps you overcome both your internal and external barriers to success. A good coach can have a huge impact on your career by providing a clear road map for you to reach your goals.

Ambitious men and women understand that great performance only qualifies you for the promotion. Political savvy is necessary to achieve and maintain leadership status.

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.