

[Law Firm Associates: Here is what you need to learn about client development now.](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on June 26th, 2014

In a podcast interview with Dallas lawyer [Tricia DeLeon](#), I asked: [What is One Piece of Advice for Young Lawyers?](#) When you listen you will hear her say “start your client development efforts now”.

Are you an associate in your firm? Have you begun learning about client development and implementing what you are learning? Does your firm have a program on client development for associates?

Every partner I coach tells me they wish I had coached them earlier in their career. The time to learn, to practice and to ramp up client development activities is significant. By the time you are eligible to be promoted to partner, your firm leaders expect you to have the skills to attain, retain and expand relationships with clients.

I gave presentations for Junior Associates and Senior Associates on client development. Click on [Client Development in a Nutshell: Junior Associates](#) for the Junior Associate slides. Click on [Client Development in a Nutshell: Senior Associates](#) for the Senior Associate slides.

I am frequently asked for ideas for these two groups. Here are a few.

Junior Associates:

- Focus on learning your legal skills
- Treat your supervising partner like a client
- Make a list of 50 people you know who you think will be successful in the future and stay in contact with them
- Each time you work on a project do research on the client’s industry
- Get to know client’s business by reviewing the company website and setting up Google Alerts on the client
- Develop a system to remember names
- Develop a plan with written goals



- Send hand written notes to contacts
- Dress for success

Senior Associates:

- Find a client development mentor
- If the firm has blogs, contribute posts
- Practice public speaking in front of groups
- Become visible in the firm
- Visit other offices if your firm has more than one
- Start to think about a niche
- Find a sub niche within the niche
- Consider working toward leadership positions in bar associations
- Be a mentor for a junior lawyer
- Join industry organizations your clients belong to and go to the meetings
- Read industry publications your clients read
- Create a business plan with goals
- If it is appropriate to help develop your practice, be active in your community
- Get outside your comfort zone

Law Firms: When was the last time your law firm did any kind of program to help associates get started on learning and practicing good client development habits?

Associates: Take my word, if you start learning client development skills now, you will enjoy your career more in the future. I did it and had a blast practicing law.

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.