

[Thoughts on Coaching Junior Partners](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 13th, 2015

I have coached several hundred junior partners on client development. I am amazed at how their needs are similar regardless of firm, practice area, gender or any other distinction.

I am also amazed at what they can accomplish with coaching from someone who understands how to attract, retain and expand relationships with clients and takes the time to get to know them.



Here are some thoughts for law firms searching for ways to help junior partners develop, maintain and expand relationships with clients.

When I begin coaching a junior partner, I typically ask what I can do in coaching them that will provide the greatest benefit.

Almost every one responds by asking me to help on where to focus. I then ask what they consider to be their “niche” and explain their niche could be an industry, a type of work or something that makes them unique.

I explain that it is important to focus on something that energizes them, that utilizes their unique talents and background and that clients and potential clients need. With that prodding, almost every junior partner has some idea of where to focus his or her attention.

I then talk about goals. Many junior partners have never set goals. Others have set goals that are either very ambiguous or are not energizing them.

Experts have found that the highest or most difficult goals produced the highest levels of effort and performance, until the limits of ability are reached. I have found very few lawyers set goals that are beyond the limits of their ability. So, coaches should encourage junior partners to set goals that “stretch” them.

What does that mean if you are coaching junior partners? It means we first must determine what each person wants. I ask questions like:

- What specifically do you want?
- Why is that important to you?
- What will achieving this do for you?
- What level of commitment do you have towards meeting this goal?

To determine their level of belief they can achieve their goals, I ask:

- Where are you now?
- How will you know when you have achieved what you want?
- What will you need to do to achieve it?
- What firm resources will you need?

- What can you do now to start?

Most senior lawyers want to tell younger lawyers what they need to do. It is far more effective to let them figure that out for themselves by asking the kind of questions I have outlined above. If your firm wants to start a client development coaching program, take a look at my [eBook](#) that I use as part of “Coaching the Coaches.”

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.