

[A Recruiter/Professional Development Person Asked](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on October 26th, 2012

I recently gave a presentation to the [Recruiting Administrators of Dallas \(RADS\)](#), which is a [NALP city group](#). As is my custom, prior to speaking I asked members to send me questions they wanted



to make sure I address. One member sent several questions. Here are her questions and my answers:

Q. In your experience, have you found standardized professional development curricula beneficial? In particular regarding programming for first years (e.g. legal research and writing workshops).

A. I have never favored standardized professional development curricula to be the best, but the two areas you mentioned lend themselves to standardized curricula.

Q. What are your thoughts on surveying incoming first year associates prior to their arrival to find out what programs are of interest/importance to them?

A. First year associates are not equipped to know what kind of programs are of interest/importance to them. I read that Steve Jobs and Apple never surveyed customers about new products because they believed the customers could not envision an iPhone or iPad. I believe the same is true for first year lawyers.

Q. If you think a survey would be advantageous, do you think personalizing curricula would be a worthwhile endeavor?

A. Personalizing is always helpful. When you personalize it, they take greater responsibility and feel they have more control.

Q. Have you found general programs (i.e. soft skills – business development, leadership, firm economics, etc.) helpful, and how would you rate the usefulness of these programs compared to, for example, practice area-specific programs (e.g. “Career Milestones for Construction Lawyers”)?

A. Soft skills are absolutely essential. You likely have heard it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert. If an associate bills 2000 hours a year in a practice area they may over 5 years become an expert. But, being a lawyer is as much about people skills, speaking etc. Where are they getting their 10,000 hours for that skill? I have written about this:

- [The Secret to Developing the Next Generation of Rainmakers](#)
- [Client Development: How Much Time Are You Spending On...](#)

I would do both because as I said to be successful a lawyer needs practice area skills capital and people skills capital.

Q. How can we add more value for our Junior Associates?

A. First, they need to know what it takes to be successful in your firm. Then, help them develop the right habits and execute to be successful. They will develop habits early in their career. It is important those habits are ones that will lead them in the right direction. That begins with creating a career development plan for each year that includes written goals. have a plan, implement the plan and create. Finally, create interactive programs that teach your junior associates the people skills they will need to build trust based relationships with clients.

I want you to share [my presentation slides](#) and my [Legal Recruiters Presentation Handout](#) materials with recruiters and professional development professionals. If you are involved with a [NALP City Group](#) or a [PDC chapter](#) please share the slides and handout with your members.

Cordell Parvin Blog

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAW FIRM RAINMAKERS

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.