

## [16 Lessons I Learned About Attracting Clients](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 1st, 2012

As you may know, I began my career practicing law on active duty in the United States Air Force. As a captain, my job was litigating government contract cases. That turned out to be great preparation for what was to come. Yet, when I started in private practice, I did not know what I did not know. I hope this is not what happened, but it is possible that I showed up for work my first day in a short sleeve dress shirt. That is how much I didn't know about practicing law in private practice.

This week I am coaching a group of lawyers I have coached for the last 18 months for the last time. They were all associates when we started. Now many of them have been promoted to partner and others will likely be promoted when they are eligible. In our last meeting I will discuss some of the 16 lessons I learned about attracting clients:



1. Having clients who want to hire you when they need you is a lawyer's only security.
2. In addition to being a fine lawyer, clients want their lawyer to understand their industry, business and them.
3. In addition to understanding their industry, business and them, clients want lawyers who are responsive.

4. A lawyer can attract clients by writing and speaking on topics that are most important to clients.
5. Lawyers who identify a potential client problem and offer a solution before his or her competitors, will have a better chance at attracting clients.
6. Client development is a long term process. Most lawyers work at it without success and give up too early.
7. All things else being equal, clients want to do business with lawyers they know, like and trust.
8. Most new clients find a lawyer when someone they know and trust recommends that lawyer.
9. When you actually have clients, the best practice is to make your current clients “raving fans” rather than spending the majority of your time trying to attract new clients.
10. First impressions and first meetings with a potential new client really matter.
11. Clients do not want to be “sold” or to have a lawyer trying “closing techniques” to win their business.
12. Never say anything bad to potential clients about other lawyers, especially lawyers or law firms they have used.
13. Best advice for a potential client meeting is to be extremely prepared to ask great questions and then actively listen.
14. The more narrow a lawyer’s practice, the easier it is to identify potential clients and become visible and credible to them.
15. Find your strengths as a business developer and do things that fit you. Client development is drudgery if you are doing things you do not enjoy.
16. You have to make time for client development. You will never find it.

Just on the potential chance I showed up for work at my first firm my first day, I could have added: Never wear a short sleeve dress shirt, wear over the calf socks, wear tie shoes with a suit (I currently violate this one and my excuse is airport security).

If you are attracting clients, what would you add to my list?

**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](http://www.cordellparvin.com) or contact him at [cparvin@cordellparvin.com](mailto:cparvin@cordellparvin.com).