

[Making Progress: Here is an example](#)

Posted by [Cordell Parvin](#) on September 13, 2011

Yesterday I posted: Client Development: [Stay Motivated By Focusing on Progress](#). I thought it might be helpful if I shared a real life example of making progress.

Last Friday I received an email from a successful partner I coach. He asked that I call him so he could share, not just progress, but a "breakthrough" story with me.

When I called the lawyer shared his breakthrough with me. Even though he is very successful, he is introverted and generally either avoids networking events or stands in the corner by himself.

Last week he was scheduled to attend a small networking event. For this event he had bios of each person attending. Just to see what would happen, he took time to study the bios, memorize the names and found something for each person that he shared in common.



When he arrived at the event, he started seeking out those attending. He approached a person and introduced himself. When the person shared his or her name, the lawyer checked back into his memory bank. The person started with some "small talk." The lawyer let each person do it. But, as soon as there was a pause, the lawyer asked how the person got involved in.....

The lawyer told me:

The first time I did it, the other person almost fainted from surprise and he could not stop talking. The fact that I took the time to learn something about him (and found him interesting enough to remember it) made a significant impact.

I spoke with about ten people -- and rather than hanging out by the buffet table -- found myself wanting to move from person to person to continue getting the same surprised, pleasant reaction. It was the first time I ever had to make a graceful exit from a conversation.

It's funny ... I could actually see they were disappointed our conversation was coming to an end -- but I broke away gracefully. Quite an experience!

There are many points to this story. Here are a few:

1. You will really feel motivated when you are making progress.
2. Doing something successfully that is normally not in your comfort zone is making progress and it will energize you to do more.
3. When doing something outside your comfort zone, find a way to have fun doing it.
4. Prepare for networking events by finding out what you can about those attending.
5. In a conversation with a stranger, search for something you share in common to put that person at ease.

6. You have to be able to exit gracefully and respectfully to be able to work the room.

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.