

[Client Development Question: What is Charisma?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on October 9th, 2012

Recently, a lawyer I coach told me she doubted she could ever be a rainmaker. I asked why she felt that way. She replied:

I am not an extrovert. I am rarely the life of the party. I don't enjoy going to networking events and I do not have charisma.



I told her that she had a misconception on what it takes to be a rainmaker and what it means to have charisma. I told her I believe that introverts are more likely to have charisma than many extroverts because extroverts tend to talk too much about themselves.

Several years ago I read [Tony Alessandra's](#) book: [Charisma: Seven Keys to Developing Magnetism That Leads to Success](#). I like his definition of charisma:

Charisma is the ability to influence others positively by connecting with them physically, emotionally and intellectually.

He lists seven main components:

- Your silent message.
- Your ability to speak well.
- Your listening skills.

- Your persuasive talent.
- Your use of space and time.
- Your ability to adapt to others.
- Your vision, your ideas.

A month ago, I was flying home from San Antonio. A young 12 year old African American girl, who was traveling by herself, sat next to me in the waiting area before we boarded the plane. She was reading a book. I asked what she was reading. She told me it was the third book she had been assigned to read that summer. That peaked my interest. She told me she would be starting school at a fine arts school in Fort Worth. That prompted the lady sitting on the other side to ask what she wants to do when she grows up. She replied: I want to be an actress.

When we boarded both the 12 year old and I were seated in first class. In the hour flight to Dallas, everyone seated in first class and all the flight attendants got to know the 12 year old. She had charisma. When we landed in Dallas, I wanted to get the girl's name and take her photo with my iPhone. I am convinced she will be famous some day.

My experience marveling at the 12 year old girl's charisma reminded me of a story Alessandra tells that was originally told by Sheila Murray Bethel in her book *Making a Difference*. The story is of a kindergarten teacher who asked a student what she was drawing:

"I'm drawing a picture of God," the child quickly answered.

"But sweetheart," said the teacher, "no one knows what God looks like."

The young girl replied: "They will in a minute!"

Alessandra notes: "Charismatic people possess a similar, almost childlike faith in their vision and their ability to create change. People will follow leaders (and clients will rely on lawyers) whose vision inspires them and makes their lives more meaningful."

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.