

## [Why Build Your Next Generation of Rainmakers?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 19th, 2013

I have friends who are with a top notch law firm where every lawyer bringing in business is over 55. As best I can tell, they have made no effort to help their next generation with client development. I suppose they either don't care what happens to their firm when they retire, or they think their young lawyers will automatically inherit their clients.



That may be fine if a firm has institutional clients, but most firms I know are more entrepreneurial. (It may not even be fine for firms with institutional clients, since many are no longer loyal to one firm.) For most law firms, building the next generation of rainmakers is critical to leaving a legacy.

I have given many presentations at law firm retreats on this subject. I frequently use a David Letterman style: "Top 10 scary things I have heard law firm partners say about client development." My number 10 has always been:

We just want our associates to do good work (and bill lots of hours).

That statement was popular in the 90s when the economy was churning so fast that most law firms had little trouble attracting clients. In those days the last thing on earth a firm would want was for their associates to do would be to build relationships with clients and potential clients. The firms simply wanted associates to do the work partners were bringing in.

In 2013, most associates have figured out that just doing good work is a recipe to get laid off or never promoted. Hopefully, associates are learning those skills on their own.

Why should law firms care if associates learn about client development?

When brand new associates finish law school, generally the best that can be said is that they have been taught through the Socratic Method “to think like a lawyer.” They have not been taught what it is like to be a lawyer and certainly have not been taught to “think like a client.” Yet, each task your lawyers do, even dull and boring document reviews, is being done for a client.

My first mentor (I never used that term at the time) made a very important point to me. He said:

There are more lawyers who do good work than there is work for them to do. They graduate from law school in large numbers every year. Lawyers must also know how to attract, retain and expand relationships with clients and law schools are not teaching that.

He was right back then, but his statement is even more important today.

As I see it, the problem is that most law firms aren’t teaching their young lawyers how to attract, retain and expand relationships with clients either. Is yours?

**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).