

[Client Development: Change What You Think it Takes to Succeed](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on September 25th, 2012

I want to share two stories with you about how changing what you think it takes to succeed can make a difference in your client development success.

Years ago I coached a lawyer as part of a dozen lawyers in the coaching program at a well known regional firm. She was struggling with her client development, in part because she was not comfortable doing what the senior lawyers in her firm suggested that she do. She was not particularly optimistic that she could become a rainmaker. Fast forward: Five years later this lawyer brings in the most business of any female lawyer in her firm. This dramatic change was not because I was a great coach, it was because I was able to get her to change her idea of what it takes to succeed.

My second story is about a lawyer I just finished coaching. [Anastasia Wagner](#) is a partner with [Lamson Dugan and Murray](#) in Omaha. Coaching Anastasia was a great experience for me, because she was so open to coaching and put so much **effort** into it. I am confident she will keep working at client development. At the end of our coaching program, each participant sent a report to firm leaders.



Here is excerpt from Anastasia's report:

Cordell once told me: "I have to make you believe you can have a seven figure book of business." He believed in me. It took quite awhile, but now I believe in myself. Not only as a quality lawyer, but also as a business developer. Prior to working with Cordell I secretly enjoyed not having to be responsible for attracting clients. Now it is my goal.

I finished reading [Heidi Grant Halvorson's](#) book: [Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals](#) (a great book I have recommended to lawyers I coach). Near the end of the book Dr. Halvorson writes:

Americans believe in ability. East Asians believe in effort.

I suspect she is right. I know for sure that many lawyers believe client development is about ability and you either have it or you don't. While a lawyer must be a good lawyer and must have some ability to communicate, client development is more about effort.

Before the coaching, each of the two women thought that **ability** was the key to becoming a successful rainmaker. Each looked around her firm and concluded she did not have the same kind of ability she saw in the older lawyers (near my age), who were extroverted, great at networking, played golf with clients and took them to dinner and football games.

During our coaching a lightbulb went off. I convinced each lawyer that successful rainmaking is based less on **ability** and based significantly more on the level and quality of her **effort**, and on using her strengths most effectively.

Lawyers who believe client development success is based primarily on **ability** typically come to a point when they quit trying to develop business. Lawyers who figure out success can be obtained based on the level and quality of their effort persists until they succeed and constantly strive to get better. The very most successful are able to recognize their strengths and their ability and constantly strive to use them and develop them further.



One final note: My wonderful wife, Nancy exemplifies the very point I am making here. She started playing golf when she was 40. I am sure she has some natural **ability**, but I have never seen anyone make the **effort** to improve that Nancy has made ever since. Last week she won the [Dallas Women's Golf Association Senior Tournament](#). Needless to say, I am very proud of her and the **effort** she has made.

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.