

[Why Client Development is More Challenging Today: Some Random Statistics](#)

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Do you believe client development is more difficult today? I do. Your clients have more choices and less time to choose. You likely have less non-billable time to devote to client development.

In 1951, there were approximately 200,000 lawyers in the United States. That is approximately 1 lawyer for roughly every 700 people in the nation. Today, according to the American Bar Association there are currently 1,116,967 lawyers practicing in the United States. That is approximately 1 lawyer for every 300 people, or approximately .36% of the total population. At this rate we are not far from the day that there will be a one-to-one relationship between licensed lawyers and American citizens.

A 1958 ABA pamphlet suggested a quota of 1,300 hours a year for associates. Yes, you read that correctly. In 2000 many larger law firms demanded associates bill 1950 or more hours a year.

In 1960, there were only 38 law firms in the entire country with more than 50 lawyers. By 1985 there were more than 500 firms of that size or bigger. Today, a 50-lawyer firm is considered a small firm in many cities.

What do these statistics tell us? At the very least, it is harder to stand out from the crowd. Business clients cannot distinguish the legal skills from one firm to another. But, as I have written many times, they can distinguish whether lawyers understand their industry, their company and them.

Based on that knowledge, if I was a law firm leader I would build industry based teams that cross practice groups. Lawyers in those groups would join industry associations. If my firm was blogging, I would have industry-based blogs, like:

- Financial Services Law Blog
- Hospitality Industry Law Blog
- Retail Law Blog
- Construction Law Blog



- Healthcare Law Blog
- Energy industry Law Blog
- Transportation Law Blog
- Computer/Technology Industry Law blog

I could go on, but you get the idea. If your firm focuses on industries, builds industry teams and writes industry law blogs, I think you will stand out from the crowd.

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.