

[Want to be More Focused about Your Contacts?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on April 22nd, 2013

First, thank you for the kind comments on my “If you can...” post both here and by email. It is interesting that the poem resonates with so many.

It was a couple of months ago. It was the first group coaching session with a great group of lawyers. I made a comment:

Don't be random about connecting with your contacts. Be focused and purposeful.

One lawyer asked:

How do you suggest we can do that?

I mentioned that when I practiced law I had Joyce prepare a “Focused Contacts” Excel Spreadsheet template for me and I offered to share it with the coaching group.



By the time I landed in Dallas. I received an email from [McCarthy Tétrault](#) partner [Leila Rafi](#). She told me she had already found the Focused Contact Sheet helpful. I asked if she would share her experience with you and Leila agreed.

Cordell started as my coach a couple of months ago. After teaching me many useful business development basics, such as how to use Twitter, he passed along a 'focus template' to use to track business development activities. Business development templates and plans are a dime a dozen but Cordell's focus template is different – it isn't simply a list of contacts, rather, a list of contacts which is ranked by 3 indicators:

1. The frequency of interaction with each person;
2. The nature of the interaction; and
3. The importance of the interaction.

Once you rate each interaction, Excel does its magic and the individuals who have the highest aggregate rating will come out on top. The automatic rating system makes the focus template easy to use for lawyers who typically don't 'excel' at math.

Once you have the rated list, you can *focus* your energy on those contacts with the highest potential. Cordell suggests concentrating 80% of your business development efforts on the individuals at the top of the list. Interestingly, you can also strategize about how to move contacts up in the list.

For example, I had a business contact on the focus template who came out dead last in the ratings. After going through the exercise of doing the focus template, I realized that much of my interaction with this individual was periodic and unplanned.

I decided to try out a few different ideas with this contact to better engage her, and by doing so, increased the amount of exposure I had to her. After 3 short weeks, she referred a piece of work to me. As a result of this, she has moved up to the middle of the focus template.

One of the great things about the focus template is that you can continually update it, adding and revising based on how your contacts develop. Having a list like this makes it easy to keep in touch with, and keep track of, a large number of people.

The list also has a spot for personal details. Some of the strongest connections I have are with clients who I have gotten to know very well outside of work.

Being a technically competent lawyer is only part of being successful. Making an effort to get to know your clients, including their interests outside of work, is central towards becoming a trusted advisor. Connecting with your clients is how a lawyer can distinguish themselves in the legal industry which is in the midst of big changes.

If you are a busy professional and not very good at math (like me), the focus template may become your new best friend as it is simple and effective.

I could not have explained it better. Thanks to Leila. If you want to give this a try, contact Joyce jflo@cordellparvin.com to get the template

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.