

## Have You Asked Your Clients How You Can Better Serve Them?

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on April 9th, 2013

Have you asked your clients how you can better serve them? If so, what did you do with what you learned?

Early in my career I learned that my contractor clients hate lawyers. Contractors share that lawyers slow down their construction, or tell them they can't do something. So, it is easy to understand how they feel.

I have told the story many times of my experience early in my career flying on a plane with one of my first clients. He was my father's age and was the CEO of his family-owned construction business. During the flight he leaned over and told me he hated all lawyers. (That day he had been on the phone with a lawyer handling an acquisition the company was making.) Then he paused and said:

But, of all the lawyers I hate, I hate you the least.

I don't think the construction industry is different than other businesses. While the public likes watching lawyer shows on TV and movies about lawyers, actually needing to hire one is not high on their list of favorite purchases.

Over time I read about business clients complaining about client service. I decided that we could differentiate our lawyers if we asked what our clients wanted and expected and then worked hard to provide it to them. So, I spent several months interviewing clients. I put together a client roundtable in Dallas consisting of construction company in-house lawyers. After digesting what I was told, I created [Client Service Goals](#).



When we began each project, I gave our Client Service Goals to our client representative and let him or her know we wanted feedback throughout the project. I followed up at appropriate points during the project and after we completed it.

Asking and listening and then responding to what you hear will tighten your relationship with your clients.

**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).