

Client Development: Identify the Problem, Offer a Solution

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on June 20th, 2012

On Friday, I will be working with [Kevin O'Keefe](#), [Kevin McKeown](#) and [Lyda Hawes](#) of [LexBlog](#) on a client development coaching program: [Merging Traditional Business Development with Today's Technology](#). If you are a Seattle lawyer, I urge you to take time and join us. We are all donating our time, so it will not cost you anything other than your four hour time investment.

One of the things I will discuss Friday, is how to connect with potential clients and become visible and credible to them. When I coach lawyers on client development, I share with them stories of when I was able to figure out a potential problem my construction clients might encounter and find a way to help them before they were even aware of the problem. I never made a cold call. I never asked for business. Instead, by identifying a problem and offering a solution, clients came to me.

I did this by being focused like a laser beam on what was going on in the transportation construction industry. I was insatiable in my research and spent a lot of time in college libraries. I even belonged to the Engineer's Book Club.

As the Seattle lawyers will learn on Friday, today's technology gives you three advantages I did not have:

1. It far easier to research and find what is going on in your clients' industry and business.
2. You can more timely write and publish blog posts than I could write and publish articles.
3. Today's technology takes a lot of the luck out of your potential clients finding what you have written or a presentation you have made.

For example, when the US Department of Transportation sought permission from Congress to experiment with innovative contracting techniques, including design-build, I put together [detailed guides](#) and began doing workshops. Over time I was asked to help states draft legislation and contracts, and more often I was asked to help contractors put together proposals, identify risks and negotiate contracts with designers and the state DOTs.



One book I recommend to lawyers is [The Best Damn Sales Book Ever](#). In the book, author [Warren Greshes](#) tells an amazing story how Peter Rosengarrd, a life insurance agent, sold a life insurance policy with a death benefit of \$100 million on the life of entertainment entrepreneur [David Geffen](#). At the time that was the largest life insurance policy ever sold.

When Peter Rosengarrd discovered that [MCA](#), the large entertainment company, had just purchased Geffen Records for \$600 million, he realized that David Geffen was the single, indispensable, driving force behind Geffen Record Company and that if anything ever happened to David Geffen MCA's \$600 million purchase would be worth very little. Listen to this [Business Week Savvy Selling podcast](#) to learn how Mr. Rosengarrd was able to make a "cold call" contact with the CEO of MCA and identify the problem and offer the insurance policy solution before the CEO had thought of the problem.

What problem may impact your clients and potential clients and how can you help them deal with it?

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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.