

## [9 Major Problems with Practice Groups](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on June 18, 2013

I was a practice group leader for many years. It was a thankless job. Each month I got a report on the “productivity” of each lawyer in my group and I was frequently told to “make” them more productive.

I finally fired our most “unproductive” income partner and learned for the first time that while I had the authority to “make” income partners more productive, I did not have the authority to fire one who would never be more productive.

If you are a regular reader, you might recall my blog: [Is Your Firm Rewarding or Punishing Practice Group/Office Leaders?](#)



I don't see much has changed. I still see the same problems with practice groups. Here is my take on some of them:

1. For client development and everything else external, it makes **no** sense to organize practice groups around law what the lawyers do (corporate, real estate, litigation.) For everything external, it makes sense to organize by industries.

2. Practice groups rarely have a strategic plan or a marketing plan. (I created one for my group and was then asked to help other practice groups create theirs. If you are interested, I will share our practice group plan with you.)
3. Practice group leaders are not asked to lead. They are asked to manage.
4. Practice group leaders are rarely given any leadership or management training.
5. Practice group leaders are not compensated or held accountable for the success of their group.
6. Practice group leaders are not given the authority to allocate funds for marketing and other expenses to lawyers within the group.
7. The lawyers selected to be practice group leaders are not always the best to take that role.
8. Practice groups either have no budget or do not have the appropriate budget. (My old firm's litigation and corporate practice groups were allocated the largest amounts for marketing and could barely spend a quarter of the budgeted amount.)
9. Finally, for many law firms, the lawyers within the practice group are silos or fiefdoms competing with each other rather than their competitors outside the law firm.

If you are interested in reading more, consider reading [Patrick J. McKenna](#) and [David H. Maister](#)'s book [First Among Equals](#), or their 2002 paper [ON BEING A PRACTICE GROUP LEADER](#).

**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).

# Cordell Parvin Blog

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAW FIRM RAINMAKERS