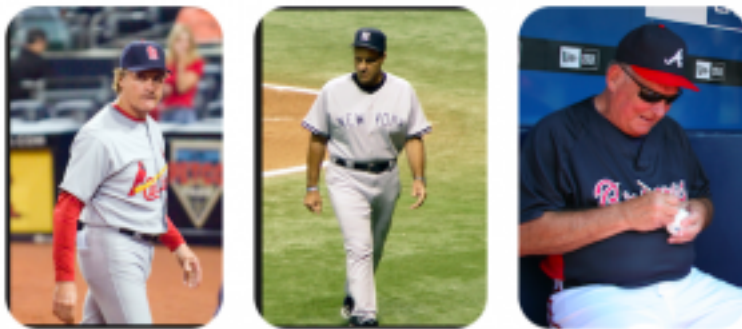


[Law Firm Leadership: Is It Like Managing the Best Baseball Players?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 7th, 2014

Have you ever wondered how a baseball manager can lead a team with several players making significantly more money? I thought of that question recently when three managers were inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame: [2014 MLB Hall of Fame Inductees: Tony La Russa, Joe Torre, Bobby Cox](#)



Years ago my firm gave me a copy of [Patrick McKenna](#) and [Gerry Riskin's](#) booklet: [Herding Cats](#). That title reminded me of what it must be like to be the manager of a top baseball team. I am sure there are technical things I do not understand, but I also believe each manager knows how to take a group of individual stars and get them to win as a team.

Here are my thoughts on how they do it.

1. They find a way to align the team goals with the individual aspirations of their players.
2. They realize they cannot motivate the unmotivated. They get rid of those players. Instead, they focus on finding the motivation their players already have and tapping into it.

What does this mean for law firm leaders? Let me give a personal example to illustrate.

During my law career, I met a couple of law firm leaders who shared these traits. In both instances they were trying to recruit me to join their firms.

They both asked questions to learn what motivated me. They each discovered I wanted to build a preeminent construction law practice group and that I wanted to join a firm where I would want to stay until I retired.

One leader asked me to pretend like resources were not an issue and prepare a three year plan to develop a preeminent construction law practice group. He also talked about the efforts the firm made to cause partners to believe there was no better place to practice law.

The second leader focused on describing his firm's culture specifically focusing on how teamwork was rewarded. He showed me the firm's retention statistics.

I know both of these leaders and their firms. While the firms are vastly different, the leadership is similar.

Have you discovered what motivates your lawyers? Are the firm's goals and the partners' ambitions aligned?

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.