

[One Mentoring Role: Teach the Art of Lawyering and Clear Up the Confusion](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on February 8th, 2013

Did you read the recent [New York Times](#) Article: [What They Don't Teach Law Students: Lawyering?](#)

I certainly did not learn lawyering in law school and, even though law schools are changing, most students do not learn it either.

When your first year associates arrive at your firm each year, they know more about the science of law than they ever will in their career. After all, they will have just taken, and hopefully passed, the bar exam. They will know all about proximate cause from briefing the [Palsgraff v. Long Island Railroad Co.](#) case in law school, but they would not have a clue how best to work with Mrs. Palsgraff's family, or how best to work with the Long Island Railroad Co. They know little or nothing about the art of lawyering because they have no experience working for real clients.



When it comes to the future, many young lawyers are confused. They feel like they are on a trip to an undefined and constantly moving destination (making partner). They are uncertain of the time expected for their arrival, feel they have been given no map to get there, and no compass to let them know where they are. They feel they have no coach or sponsor in the firm. Studies show when professionals do not know how they are doing, they will not perform at their highest level.

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Your job as a mentor is to teach them the art of lawyering and help them clear up the confusion. This requires you to get to know them, to understand what makes them unique and to encourage them to achieve success as they define it. Your work with your clients is not any different and just was you get good vibes from helping your clients achieve their business objective, you get the same feeling helping your young lawyers achieve their career goals.

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.