

## [Client Development: Practice, Practice, Practice](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on September 2nd, 2014

How to do get to Carnegie Hall? That was a question asked in a recent New York Times article: [How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall? Talent](#). It focuses on a recent study.

I still believe deliberate practice is a key for lawyers. Last year I read: [What Mozart and Kobe Bryant Can Teach Us About Deliberate Practice](#). Then, I posted a blog: [Career Success: What learning is most important?](#)

Great athletes and musicians practice. Soldiers and sailors in our military practice. Most lawyers I know don't. I always practiced, especially when I was not getting real life billable work experiences.

If you want to become a great trial lawyer and you are not trying cases, you actually have to find ways to practice opening statements, or cross examination, or final arguments. Obviously there is NITA training, but I recommend doing more than that on your own. When I was a young lawyer I read as many actual cross-examinations as I could get my hands on. Then, I would create a scene and outline how I would cross exam the witness.

At my old firm, I asked one of our most senior and respected transactional lawyers to create a NITA type course for transactional lawyers. He created scenarios which included, tax, real estate and M&A issues.

If you want to become a better negotiator, get a group together and create a mock negotiation. There are books and articles with negotiation exercises. I did a Google search and found [Negotiation Exercises](#). The Harvard Program on Negotiation has over [200 roleplaying exercises](#).

Client development skills can be learned the same way.

If you want to learn how to network, go to events where you can practice. In fact, go to a networking event and approach strangers and introduce yourself. I coached a group of associates at one firm and we created a mock networking event with partners in the firm and their spouses playing the roles of potential clients. It was both great fun and a great learning experience.

If you want to become a better public speaker, speak in public. Consider joining a Toastmasters International club, or starting your own speaking club. Practice speaking and get feedback. Consider having someone shoot video of you speaking and watch.

If you want to become a better writer, write and have someone review it and offer a critique. There are plenty of editors and senior lawyers who are retired, who would gladly critique your writing.

If you want to practice meetings with potential clients, set up a potential matter and role-play the meeting. Again, consider having the mock client meeting taped so you can see yourself.

What can you practice now?

**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).