

Practical Success

Cordell M. Parvin

Finding Opportunities For Business

Several lawyers I work with say to me: “I know I can be successful getting business if I can get in front of potential clients or referral sources. What do I need to do to get in front of potential clients and referral sources?” I do believe it is important to get to know people, and there are more opportunities out there than you might imagine.

Here is my list of potential opportunities for you:

- **Colleagues.** A good starting point is colleagues in your own firm;
- High school, college, and law school. The friends you made in high school, college and law school are potential sources of business;
- **Former colleagues and firm alumni.** With the amount of turnover in law firms, firm alumni can be a potential client source;
- **Other professionals.** Depending on the kind of work you do, other professionals, like accountants, bankers, and financial advisors may be good referral sources;
- **Industry associations.** If your practice is industry focused or could be, being active in industry associations can be a great source of leads;



- **Industry association executives.** If you join an industry association, get to know the association executives. They are well respected by their members and may recommend you;
- **Current clients and client representatives.** If your clients appreciate you and your work, they are great referral sources. In this era, people do not stay with one company, so when they move you may have a new client. I am confident that if you build relationships with your client contacts, you will develop new clients when they leave for other companies;
- **ABA, state bar, and city/county bar associations.** Are you active in your Bar? If so, the lawyers you meet can be a great source of referrals;
- **Places of worship.** You likely are not active in your place of worship to get business, but if you are active, your church friends get to know you. If they trust and like you, they will recommend you to their friends;
- **Charities and civic activities.** Being active in the community gives you a chance to meet more people who share your passion and interest in the community or charity. Through your leadership and fundraising, you may meet some of the business leaders in your community in a way that enhances your stature with them;

Cordell M. Parvin built a national construction practice during his 35 years of practicing law. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development, planning, and client development. You can subscribe to his Blog at <http://www.lawconsultingblog.com/>, connect with him on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/cordellparvin>, join his Facebook Fan Page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cordell-Parvin-Lawyer-Coaching/222291473905?ref=ts>, and follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/cordellparvin>.

- **Spouse.** Your husband or wife can be a source of opportunities, especially if they are also professionals. Several young lawyers I know have found going to their spouse's company and industry events a great opportunity to meet people who are with potential clients or are potential referral sources;
 - **Children's school.** I know several young lawyers who are active in their children's school. Being active may include being a PTA leader or being on the board of a private school;
 - **The soccer field or baseball diamond.** Several lawyers I coach have met potential clients on the sidelines of the soccer and baseball fields. Some have met parents and potential clients as a result of being the team coach;
 - **Junior League.** In 2006, I gave a presentation for the Junior League here in Dallas. Over 200 young women attended. I understand that the vast majority of them work. If you are a Junior League member, get more involved and look for leadership opportunities;
 - **LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media.** LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other social media were not available when I practiced construction law. If they had been available, I would have actively participated. Social media can be a great way to connect with "loose ties." Look for opportunities to meet these "loose ties" in person;
 - **Women's golf class.** As business and professional women are increasingly looking at golf as a business-generation opportunity, many cities across the country have women's golf classes. Participating creates an opportunity to meet other professional women without attending a networking event;
 - **Government officials.** My largest client was actually referred to me by a government official. Over my career I frequently conducted workshops and programs with government officials;
 - **Writing.** If I had to choose the one thing that gave me the greatest number of opportunities to meet perspective clients and referral sources, I would choose writing a monthly column for a trade publication. I wrote a column titled *Law: The Contractor's Side* for Roads and Bridges magazine for over 20 years;
 - **Speaking engagements.** If you write, you may be asked to speak at functions. If you are asked, work the room before the room is assembled. If you know who will be attending your presentation, contact each person by email and ask what he or she wants to make sure you cover. If you get a reply, make sure and respond and share your ideas on the topic. Always arrive early at your presentations and as people file in, introduce yourself and try to get to know something about each person. During your presentation, make reference to something you have written that you can share with anyone in the audience who is interested. That is a way to be able to follow up after your presentation;
 - **Blogs and podcasts.** Many young lawyers I coach are writing blogs. Several have told me that clients found them because of their blog posts. So, if your firm permits blogging, consider doing one. Kevin O'Neill, a public policy lawyer with Patton Boggs started a weekly podcast, which became so popular that he started an internet radio show called *Capital Thinking*. It really has been an effective way to communicate with those potential clients interested in what is going on in Washington. Your practice may not lend itself to podcasts, but if it does consider doing a regular one.
- These are just a few of the many opportunities out there for you to meet potential clients and referral sources.