

# Practical Success

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Cordell M. Parvin

## Practical Ideas on How a Coach Can Help You

How many senior lawyers realize that attracting, retaining and expanding relationships with clients in 2015 will be more difficult for young lawyers than it was for them when they were young? I don't think many senior lawyers appreciate just how challenging client development is now and will be in 2015 and beyond.

I recently read an NPR interview of Atul Gawande, professor of surgery at Harvard Medical School: *Athletes Have Coaches. Why Not Everyone Else?* In the interview there is a reference to Gawande's New Yorker article: "Personal Best: Top athletes and singers have coaches. Should you?" I urge you to take a moment to read both articles.

In the New Yorker article, Gawande describes paying a recent college grad for a tennis lesson. Then, he writes: "Not long afterward, I watched Rafael Nadal play a tournament match on the Tennis Channel. The camera flashed to his coach, and the obvious struck me as interesting: even Rafael



Nadal has a coach. Nearly every elite tennis player in the world does."

### Professional athletes use coaches to make sure they are as good as they can be.

But doctors don't. I'd paid to have a kid just out of college look at my serve. So why did I find it inconceivable to pay someone to come into my operating room and coach me on my surgical technique?

After he describes how athletes and musicians have coaches, he then turns to other types of coaching. He notes that researchers from the University of Virginia found that many teachers

see no need for coaching.

If those University of Virginia researchers had studied lawyers, I am convinced they would have found even a higher percentage of lawyers who see no need for coaching.

If you have an intense desire to learn, change and develop a successful career, here is what a coach can help you do. (I have also included what

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**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.cordellblog.com/>, connect with him on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/cordell-parvin>, 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>.

you might hear from senior lawyers who don't see the value of coaching.)

**1. Help you develop an action plan.** (You know how to prepare a business plan and you can use my template if you don't have one.)

**2. Hold you accountable.** (You will know whether you are taking the actions you plan and keeping with it.)

**3. Help you figure out how to best use your strengths for client development.** (If you take StrengthsFinder 2.0 survey, you will get a report. Just figure out how the suggestions in the report apply to practicing law.)

**4. Help you become more focused and purposeful about your efforts.** (Over time you will be forced to become more focused and purposeful.)

**5. Encourage you and help you stay motivated when things are not going as well as you would like.** (You can encourage yourself to stay motivated. I always could get energized listening and watching high energy rock and country music concerts.)

**6. Help you figure out what client development activities will give you the greatest return on your time investment.** (You can keep a journal and over time figure that out.)

**7. Share with you ideas on how to raise your visibility and credibility to your target market.** (If you are able to write in your target market's publications or speak at their industry meetings, you will raise your visibility and credibility.)

**8. Share ideas on how to make your blog most effective with your clients.** (You can get statistics telling you how many hits you are getting on any given blog post and obviously if a potential client calls and says he saw your blog post and wants to hire you, then you will know that blog post was effective.)

**9. Give you feedback on an article or blog you have written.** (Your readers will give you feedback over time.)

**10. Give you feedback on presentation slides.** (You can tell if your audience is connecting with the slides you are presenting.)

**11. Watch you give your presentation and give you feedback.** (Get someone to shoot video of you practicing your presentation and then look at yourself on the video.)

**12. Share ideas with you on how to become more focused on your most important contacts.** (Over time you will likely go from having "random" lunches to something more purposeful.)

**13. Give you feedback on how you can most effectively use social media.** (There are many books and articles on social media.)

**14. Help you with ideas for meetings or pitches to potential clients.** (You will figure out over time what is effective in meetings and pitches.)

**15. Help brainstorm ideas to retain and expand relationships with existing clients.** (You can ask your clients for feedback and respond to it and you can pitch them for more business.)

**16. Help brainstorm ideas on dealing with difficult clients or difficult partners in your firm.** (There are some books and blog posts on dealing with difficult people. You can read those and try what the author suggests.)

**17. Help make your client development efforts more enjoyable and less stressful.** (Over time you will figure out what you enjoy.) It is true that senior lawyers in your firm did not have a client development coach. When they were young lawyers, they weren't billing as many hours as you are now, there were fewer ways to use non-billable time, and they had more time for trial and error in their client development efforts.

We are one month away from starting a new year. Are you prepared to take your practice to the next level in 2015? Wouldn't it be easier if you had some help?