

Practical Success

Cordell M. Parvin

What Does It Take To Make Rain?

A lawyer I am coaching asked, “What is the one most important attribute that rainmakers have that the average attorney lacks?”

I said, “They have a burning desire to succeed and help their clients succeed and they work hard at it each and every day.”

I thought about that not long ago when I watched Anna Nordqvist win the McDonald’s LPGA Championship. For those of you who are not fans or did not see the final round, Anna Nordqvist, the unlikely winner, was playing in just her fifth professional tournament. If you go on her Web site you get a sense of why she is a success. Here is the quote on the home page:



“Some people dream of success, while others wake up and work hard for it.”

Lawyers and other super achievers have a burning desire to succeed and help their clients succeed. They wake up each day and work hard for it. Here are other qualities that set rainmakers apart from the pack:

- *Rainmakers have a positive attitude.* To paraphrase Winston Churchill, rainmakers see the oppor-

tunity in every difficulty while other lawyers see the difficulty in every opportunity. A lawyer’s attitude will always tell me whether he or she has what it takes to be a rainmaker. If I hear phrases like “yes...but” or “my problem is,” I know this lawyer does not quite have the per-

sistence to become a rainmaker. I know I’m talking to someone with the right attitude to be successful when I hear “Sure! How?” or “Give me some ideas I can try!” If you ever begin to say “yes...but,” stop yourself. Say “Sure! How?” instead. This is how you can begin to develop the attitude you’ll need to become a rainmaker;

- *Rainmakers are really good lawyers.* They may not always be the smartest lawyers in their fields, but they always focus on becoming the best lawyer possible. Just being a good lawyer isn’t enough to attract business. Being a good lawyer is simply the price you pay to be in the game;
- *Rainmakers are genuinely likeable.* They connect well with others because they sincerely like people. As a result, they’re naturally open and friendly, empathetic and understanding. They’re good listeners and can quickly build trust and rapport;

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.

- *Rainmakers have a confidence-inspiring personality.* When I was a young lawyer, we didn't have formal mentoring programs, but mentoring took place every day. My mentor first taught me that clients need to feel confident that you can take care of their problems. They entrust you with something that is vitally important to them, and they need to feel that you can help them;
- *Rainmakers are willing to move outside their comfort zone.* Real achievement occurs when you stretch and try something that is uncomfortable for you. In 1980, I gave my first presentation to a large audience. Because I was really nervous, I stayed up the night before to review my presentation. I visualized the audience and myself at the podium. The next day, despite my nerves, my presentation was received very well;
- *Rainmakers really care about their clients.* They find joy in helping others. They look at a case from the perspective of the client and figure out how they can add value. They take time to understand their client's industry, company, and individual client representative. Many rainmakers learn the name of a client representative's assistant, and they always treat the assistant as well as they treat the client. They try to learn as much as possible about the client representative's family and personal interests;
- *Rainmakers are patient and resilient.* They know it will take time to build their profile and relationships, and they don't give up. I recently met with Larry, a partner at a large international firm. Larry said he always tries to build friendships with potential clients because he genuinely enjoys people and cares about them. If these friendships also bring him business, it's gravy. Of course, Larry is such a true friend that the business often comes his way—even if it takes a long time. Luckily, Larry is patient. After 10 years of sustaining a particular friendship, his longtime friend became general counsel of a company that needed his services. The company is now one of Larry's largest clients;
- *Rainmakers know their clients' business.* They realize that a major component of being a valuable lawyer is to know their clients' businesses. So, they purposely keep up with what is going on in their clients' industries;
- *Rainmakers know what their clients want and need and have a burning desire to fill those needs.* This burning desire gives the rainmaker a sense of purpose. I learned this concept as a teenager when I read *Think and Grow Rich*, a book written by Napoleon Hill during the Great Depression. Even though Hill grew up in poverty in the coal fields of Virginia, he persevered and became a prominent lawyer and journalist. Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnate, commissioned Hill to write a book about how successful people achieved that success. After 20 years of study, Hill wrote, "There is one quality which one must possess to win, and that is definiteness of purpose, the knowledge of what one wants, and a burning desire to possess it."

Conclusion

You can be a rainmaker if that is what you really want to do. Begin by finding your passion. If you know what you want in your career and life and understand why achieving it is important, you will have the burning desire and go for it. Second, develop a plan and work the plan. Third, don't ever say "yes...but." Instead say, "Sure! How?" If I can do it, so can you. Finally, get up each day and work hard to be successful. Anna Nordqvist taught us that you are never too young or too inexperienced to be a champion. So get up each day and make rain.

Do you have some thoughts on the kinds of things that lead to good rainmaking? Please share your ideas and suggestions with the author at coaching@cordellparvin.com.