

## [Tips to Get the Most from a Mentor](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on July 5th, 2013

I am frequently asked questions like these on Mentoring:

1. How do you find a mentor when no one has a shingle outside their door that says “Mentor available”?
2. How can you attract the attention of a mentor without damaging your image within the firm by appearing that you are needy and desperate for career help?
3. What is the best way to develop a meaningful mentoring relationship?

[Stites & Harbison](#) Nashville partner, [Matt DeVries](#) recently sent me a link to a video interview he had done about mentoring: [How to Find a Mentor](#). In the interview Matt very kindly tells about my mentoring him. More importantly, he answers some of those questions I am frequently asked.



Here are some thoughts I have on each question.

1. Even though mentors don't have a shingle outside their door identifying themselves, associates can tell pretty quickly who are the best and most interested in their firm. Associates need to take the initiative to find the right mentor. Alternatively, associates can tell which of the senior lawyers are not well suited to be mentors. Some senior lawyers don't often give associates recognition for high quality work or service or going the extra mile for clients, it's probably true. I think many of these senior lawyers did not get the positive feedback I received as a young lawyer. Therefore, they are less inclined to give it. In my old firm I tried to convey to senior lawyers that associates want, need and deserve feedback. My goal was to encourage my partners to be better mentors and to teach

associates how to get the most out of their mentoring experiences. I learned over time that no matter how hard I tried, I was not able to change those partners. So, even though the great mentors do not have a shingle outside their door, associates need to look for them if they get to choose their mentor.

2. I sincerely do not believe that wanting to have a mentoring relationship is any sign of weakness. I frequently tell lawyers that the greatest athletes and the greatest musicians in the world, have coaches. I had mentors throughout my 38 year law career.
3. The best way to develop a good mentoring relationship is to convey to your mentor that you want to become the best lawyer you can be and you are open to his coaching. In the process, also convey that you are responsible for your career success and you have taken that responsibility by knowing what you want to achieve, developing a plan with goals and taking steps to execute what you have in your plan.

**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).