

[Beyond Selling: A Lawyer's Tips for Becoming More Comfortable Selling](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 7th, 2013

I have been conducting a workshop for lawyers I coach titled: "Beyond Selling." I am considering doing the workshop as a webinar if enough lawyers are interested. If you are interested, contact Joyce at jflo@cordellparvin.com.

I call the program "Beyond Selling" because selling legal services is different than selling other products or even other professional services. Also, selling legal services in 2013 is different than it was 25 or 30 years ago when lawyers just did good work, got a Martindale AV rating, became visible in their community and waited for the phone to ring. In those days you could also get by on who you knew as well as what you knew. In 2013, who you know is less important than who knows you.

[Matt Sanderson](#) is a [Looper Reed & McGraw](#) Dallas real estate lawyer I coached five years ago. When I coached him, I thought Matt did client development very naturally. He enjoyed developing relationships with clients and prospective clients.



Because many of you have shared with me that you are uncomfortable “selling,” I asked Matt to create a short “how to” article titled: [Closing the Sale – Client Meetings](#). I recommend you read the entire article, but I will briefly touch on his ideas here.

Matt begins with just one suggestion: “Ask questions of your prospects. There is no greater sound to any person than the sound of their own voice.” Additionally, too many lawyers want to tell or sell, when they meet with prospective clients. Instead, clients want you to ask them questions about their business and demonstrate to them through your questions that you know something about their field or industry.

In Matt’s experience, most of his prospects like some small talk before business, even as small as asking: “Did you get here ok?” Matt suggests that even though this step may sound unimportant or a waste of time, he finds that it is key to establishing that you are not there just to get their business. He told me: “Treating people with this human element sets the right tone that you are more than their lawyer – you are a person concerned over their well being and on your way to being their trusted advisor in the future.”

Matt refers to his approach with the marketing idea of “peeling back an onion.” We peeled the first layer by talking to them person-to-person, rather than lawyer-to-client. It is now time to peel back the next layer, which is to take an overall, broad interest in their business, again rather than the specific reason for their visit. Matt does this by asking great questions: “Tell me about your development.” “What type of development is this, again?” “Where is it?” “How large is it?” “Are there any other investors?” The questions, even at this broad level, are endless. Matt then listens intently-really listens.

I think you can see that Matt really understands how to do “Beyond Selling.” I think you will find the way he approaches prospective client meetings effective for you also.

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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.