

[How to be a More Effective Mentor](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on November 30th, 2012

If you are a regular reader you likely know that I frequently say:

Teaching is about giving the right answers. Coaching is about asking the right questions. I say this frequently because I am always tempted to give the answer.



A lawyer who is a friend of mine asked me to share examples of questions he could use with a lawyer he is mentoring. I thought it might be valuable to share those questions with you. If you are coaching or mentoring lawyers in your firm, you want to first determine what the lawyer you are coaching/mentoring wants to achieve. I ask questions like:

- What specifically do you want?
- Why is that important to you?
- What will achieving this do for you?
- What level of commitment do you have towards meeting this goal?

Next, I think it is valuable to figure out whether your lawyer the actions he will take to achieve his goal. I ask: “

- Where are you now?
- What makes you believe you can achieve this?
- How will you know when you have achieved what you want?

- What will you need to do to achieve it?
- What is the first step you can take?
- What firm resources will you need?
- What can you do now to start?"

After asking the questions, I actively listen to the answers and observe his body language. In follow up sessions I ask:

- Where are you now?
- What have you tried?
- What results have you gotten so far?
- What challenges are you facing?
- How can you overcome those challenges?
- What is your next step?

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.