

[Law Practice in 2013: Top Lawyers Have Made This One Important Change](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on January 16th, 2013

If you receive my blog by email, you likely received this on Monday. I apologize. I managed to schedule two blog posts for Monday. Because I feel this post is very important, I chose to publish it again today.

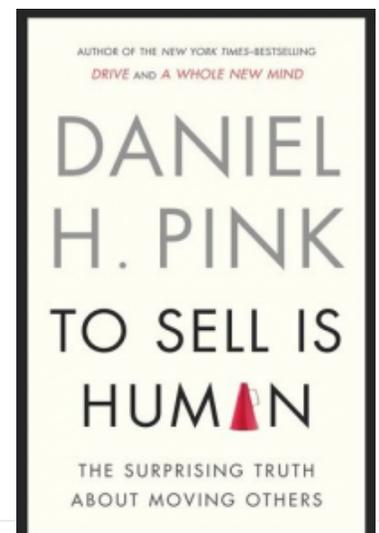
Last week I bought a new printer. It reminded me how purchases have changed. I can remember back in the 70s when the sales team from IBM came to our office and “sold” us a printer. We had no clue which printer was best for us and they were the experts. When I bought the printer last week, I spent about 15 minutes doing research and finding the printer that best suited my needs. I could fairly easily find the solution to my problem.

Think about your own purchases for dining, travel, products and even services. When you know what you want, you likely do research without the help of a salesman.

What does my printer story have to do with practicing law? In a nutshell, in 2013, your clients can likely find solutions for their problems. They might find the solution by reading a blog post you have written. So providing solutions does not set a lawyer apart in the eyes of his or her clients. What does set a lawyer apart? In 2013, the lawyers who will attract clients are able to identify a client’s potential problem before other lawyers and before the client identifies the problem itself.

I touched on the edges of this point when I wrote: [Are You a “Good” Lawyer or a “Great Lawyer](#). I also wrote about it in my post: [Can You Create the Market for Your Legal Services?](#) There I said:

Rainmakers provide creative and innovative solutions to their clients’ problems. Exceptional rainmakers see those problems and provide creative and innovative solutions before their client know there is a potential problem.



I am reading [Daniel Pink's](#) new book: [To Sell is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others](#). I urge you to read it because the points he makes apply to selling legal services. Pink talks about the transformation from problem solving to problem identification as a central attribute to moving others. He writes:

...in the past, the best salespeople were skilled at answering questions (in part because they had information their prospects lacked). Today, they must be good at asking questions—uncovering possibilities, surfacing latent issues, and finding unexpected problems.

When I began practicing law, and when some of you began practicing law, lawyers had the information clients lacked. Clients now have more information than ever before. But, even the most sophisticated clients with in-house lawyers rarely can spend time identifying the minefields their companies are crossing. If you do it for them, and do it before other lawyers, you will make the most important client development advancement you can make. If you take time to understand your clients' businesses and industries, you will more likely identify their problems.

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.