

[Lawyer Marketing Key Point: If You Are Marketing to Everyone, You Are Marketing to No One](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on July 31th, 2012

I recently ran into a lawyer I coached a few years ago. When her coaching program began, I reviewed her answers to my coaching questions. I could tell that she had not given much thought to what she wanted to accomplish and where she wanted to focus. Like many lawyers I have known, she basically said “I do not want to narrow my focus because I might miss an opportunity.” In our first meeting I told her that her approach had not worked for me and I seriously doubted it would work for her.

When she picked her chin up off the floor, I explained. Early in my career in the 1970s, I thought the same way. I was a commercial litigator in Roanoke, Virginia and I did not be “pigeonholed” into a narrow practice. So I worked on everything from criminal cases to government contract cases. I even tried and won a patent infringement case. Then, I successfully defended a white collar criminal case. I marketed to anyone who might potentially need to hire a litigator.



While I enjoyed trying the cases, this approach didn't work for me, and may not work well for you. I realized that trying to reach and connect with potential clients in a wide variety of industries and to

build relationships with so many people is time-consuming, expensive and challenging. I also realized that business clients want their lawyers to understand their business as much as the law impacting their business.

When I tried to market my services to everyone I ended up marketing to no one. What would I write about? What organizations would I be given an opportunity to speak? Less important to many, but very important to me, I ended up working within a lot of industries (mobile homes, coal mining) I just wasn't passionate about. I wasn't having very much fun and I wasn't developing my own business.

As you know, I changed my focus and narrowed my target market to construction and later even more narrow to highway and transportation contractors. It was by far the most important decision I made in my career. It took some time to get traction. But, almost immediately my efforts were more effective and were certainly more efficient.

If you focus your client development efforts on an industry or a niche practice you are really passionate about, you will likely share my experience. You will see the same people at your industry's annual meetings. You will be asked to speak at those meetings. You might be able to write columns for industry magazines that these same people read.

By focusing on an industry and your specialization within it, it's easier to establish credibility and develop relationships. Also, when you have something to talk about of genuine interest to you and your potential clients, it's not just "work" anymore.

P.S. The lawyer I coached narrowed her focus and over time began to raise her visibility and credibility in her niche. That led to getting asked to write and speak, which in turn led to new business.

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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.