

## [What Would Law Firms be Like if They Were Led by Women?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on March 18th, 2015

A few weeks ago I was fortunate to speak at the firm retreat of the Tennessee law firm [Lewis Thomason](#). The firm leader who asked me to speak is my friend [Lisa Cole](#), the firm's managing partner. I met Lisa many years ago when I was working with her husband [Jonathan Cole](#).

Lisa asked me to speak on Client Development 2015: Old Tools and New Tools and on Preparing a Business Plan for Success. I enjoyed both presentations.

A few months ago, I was asked for my prediction for 2015 which was included in: [25-Plus Predictions for the Legal Industry in 2015](#). As you will see, I predicted:

My prediction for 2015 is that women lawyers will assume more leadership positions in large law firms and many will start their own law firms.

What I suggested when I was asked is supported by what is happening. See: [Two Women Win Spots Atop Big Law Firms](#).

I have coached hundreds of women lawyers. At the risk of over generalizing, I have long believed that women have some unique attributes that make them very well suited to lead law firms and practice groups and offices.

Many years ago I read a hilarious and fascinating blog post by UConn professor [Gina Barreca](#) in Psychology Today [Run By Women, The World Would Be Better and More Fun](#). I found it thought provoking, but the satire may not be for everyone.

Ok, what is it about the women I have coached that causes me to see they have great leadership attributes? Here are some distinguishing attributes. The women with whom I work are:

- Less focused on individual lawyer silos and more focused on teamwork and collaboration
- Less focused on how we always have done it and more focused on innovation
- Less focused on rigid rules and more focused on flexibility

- Less focused on dictating and more focused on listening
- Less focused on profits per partner and more focused on values

I looked at my list and said to myself: “Wow, I would love to be a partner in that kind of firm.”

Unfortunately, as reported in a 2008 article: [Women Law Firm Leaders Still Sparse](#) only 8% of firms are led by women. There are a variety of reasons cited in the article, not the least of which is only a small percentage of men, and smaller percentage of women, have any desire to lead a firm.

Concerned that my instincts might be inaccurate, I looked for scientific research, and was surprised to discover I was pretty much on target. Of the many studies and papers, here are two with interesting insights:

- Caliper [The Qualities that Distinguish Women Leaders](#)
- In Power Women: [The Qualities that Distinguish Women Leaders](#)
- [Four Qualities That Distinguish Women Leaders](#), which discusses the Caliper survey

In the study, male leaders were exceptional in each of the areas, but women leaders set a new standard. They are or have:

- More persuasive in part because of how well they listen, read situations and see all sides
- A stronger need to get things done
- More willing to take risks
- More open
- More empathetic which enables them to be more persuasive
- Stronger interpersonal skills
- More inclusive consensus builders
- More collaborative

What do you think a woman led law firm would be like? I invite your thoughts on this interesting subject.

# Cordell Parvin Blog

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAW FIRM RAINMAKERS

**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).