

## [Want to Get Ahead? Try This](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on April 3rd, 2013

[Is Giving the Secret to Getting Ahead?](#) If you are a regular reader, you likely know I believe it is. I have written many times that one key to client development is to:

Identify a problem and offer a solution and give it away before your competitors and your client has even identified a problem.

That is also the title of a recent [New York Times Magazine](#) article my friend [Betsy Munnell](#) forwarded to me last week. It is a fairly lengthy article and well worth reading every page. The article is about Wharton professor Adam Grant, the youngest and highest rated Wharton professor and the author of: [Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success](#). I pre-ordered the book after reading the article.

Read about the experiment that Grant did with students working in call centers to raise money for scholarships. Grant brought in a former student to speak to the callers. The student described how the scholarship he received had changed his life and how excited he now was to work as a teacher with Teach for America. A month after the testimonial, the workers were spending 142 percent more time on the phone and bringing in 171 percent more revenue, even though they were using the same script.

I thought this quote was very helpful.

Givers motivate themselves to avoid complacency by focusing on the benefits to others if they succeed and worrying about disappointing them if they fail.

He is right. I was always motivated by helping construction contractors and I never wanted to disappoint them.

Even though the article and Grant's book was not written about lawyers or law firms, he describes three types of people I have run



into in almost every law firm. Think about your own firm, do you have...

- Givers give without expectation of immediate gain; they never seem too busy to help, share credit actively and mentor generously.
- Matchers go through life with a master chit list in mind, giving when they can see how they will get something of equal value back and to people who they think can help them.
- And takers seek to come out ahead in every exchange; they manage up and are defensive about their turf.

Lawyers and law firms make the news when they churn bills or do other things in their own interest. That is part of the reason that in [Gallup Honesty/Ethics in Professions](#) studies lawyers rank so low. I guess we should feel good that in the last poll we ranked above Members of Congress. We are now right between insurance sales people and state governors.

The great joy I experienced practicing law, and the joy I now experience coaching lawyers is the opportunity to help my clients and the lawyers I coach succeed. I am energized when I get home from a coaching trip. I love coaching and helping lawyers. I hope someday I can work with each of you who read my blog.

Just suppose your plan for the rest of the year was to see how many clients and potential clients you can help achieve their goals without expecting anything in return.

**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).