

[Question: Do you have “It” ?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on July 3rd, 2014

Were you born with *It*? If not, can you develop *It*?

A 60 something year old managing partner at a law firm once told me:

Rainmaking, you either have *It*, or you don't

I have coached hundreds of lawyers that managing partner would have said didn't have *It*. I am sure he is not aware, but I included his thoughts in my book: [It Takes a Team](#). Here is some dialogue from the book



“Before we get into that, let associates come to work right away whether they have star potential?”

me ask you this: when for you, are you able to pick out

“Absolutely,” replied David. “Usually after working with them on one assignment I know whether they have *It* or not.

What do you mean by *It*?

“It is something I remember from an old interview with Jackie Gleason. While talking about ‘star quality,’ he said, ‘If you have it and you know you have it, then you have it. If you have it and don't know you have it, you don't have it. If you don't have it but you think you have it,

then you have it.' It's an ephemeral and elusive combination of talent, skill and charisma that separates outstanding members of a profession from all the rest. It is the difference between a Cary Grant and a capable B actor."

"I see," said Bruce. "So you're either born a star, or you're not."

"Yes. Of course, you need to work on developing your inner potential. But you have to be born with a certain 'critical mass' of talent to succeed in a certain field. Michael Jordan was born to be a basketball player. He was born with It. If he'd never picked up a basketball, and pursued a career in baseball instead, he'd have wasted his potential, because as he showed when he played baseball, he didn't have It."

"I can see where you're coming from," Bruce said. Jordan had natural ability. At the same time, I think Larry Bird was not born with It. He wasn't a natural athlete. "

"Even Larry Bird had It," David argued. His It may not have been the same as Jordan's, but he had eye hand coordination and a the natural ability to become a great shooter."

Bruce was a disappointed. He had hoped that the Larry Bird analogy would work. After all, Larry Bird probably worked harder on his shooting than any NBA star in history. "So let me get this straight, you believe that if you don't have It, but decide to pursue a particular interest ..."

"—Then you are wasting everyone's time," David interrupted.

I know many senior lawyers who think the same way that David and the managing partner think about "It." I have coached many, many young lawyers who David and the managing partner would put aside because they did not see *It* in them. Many of those lawyers, including some of you reading this blog have become top rainmakers and/or leaders in their law firm.

I recently saw a Forbes article: [The 'It' Factor: How To Have Executive Presence In A Meeting](#). I liked this quote from the article:

In business, this is called executive presence. While it may seem like some people “just get it,” executive presence is actually something that they’ve probably worked very hard to achieve.

What’s the bottom line? Don’t pre-judge who you think has *It* and who you think does not have *It* and remember that most of us were not born with *It*. We worked very hard to develop *It*. You can also.

One final quote for you. In his book [Linchpin](#), [Seth Godin](#) made the point:

Being tall helps you become a star in basketball, but how many of us have a shot at playing in the NBA? It’s not about what you’re born with; it’s about what you do.

So, if you are like me and were not born with *It*, what are you doing?

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.