

[Success: Steps to Get to Your Personal Best](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on April, 21st, 2014

How many of you have a written plan with goals for 2014?

In 2007, I was asked to speak at a law firm retreat. I was in one of the break-out sessions, so I gave the presentation three times. At the beginning of each session, I looked out at the audience and asked:

How many of you have a written plan with goals for 2007?

I was surprised to find that only 20 or so lawyers, out of 500 raised their hands. I then asked:

How many belong to Costco?

After most raised their hands, I asked:

What happens when you go to Costco without a list?

When I do it, I take more time, spend more money, buy things I don't need and forget to buy things I do need. I am also thankful I have a cell phone because Nancy and I lose each other.

Since 2007 I have coached 9 groups of lawyers in that firm. I suspect that over 80% of the firm lawyers have created a written plan for 2014, and their plans are not the type designed merely to fulfill a firm requirement. They are specifically aimed at helping the lawyer achieve his or her definition of success.

In 2014, you have a vast array of ways you can spend your non-billable time. Since time and energy are two of your most important resources, you can best use both when you have written down what is important to us and have a plan on how to achieve it.



I was still in high school when I began setting goals to become a lawyer, inspired by the writings of such great thinkers as Viktor Frankl, who said,

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.

Frankel contended that it is not what happens to you in life that determines the kind of person you are, but how you respond to those events. ”

Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answers to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.”

Try changing “life” to “business” and “individual” to “lawyer” and you can begin to see how his philosophy shaped my career and how it can change yours.

Setting goals at a very young age has helped me enormously, and I enjoy showing lawyers I coach the wisdom of goal setting to achieve their career and life success.

Setting goals, however, does not prevent making mistakes. I made many. It’s what I learned from those mistakes and how I responded to them that helped me quickly advance my career and to teach others how to advance theirs.

Before I heard Stephen Covey say: “begin with the end in mind,” I was thinking about what I wanted to achieve. And that’s where you, too, must begin.

Where do you want your life and career to be one year, three years, and twenty years from now? If you want to move forward, you must be able to see the finish line. Do you want to do some reading? Check out [Personal Best](#) by [David Rock](#). He writes:

Getting to your personal best performance requires you to have an inspiring, visionary goal to pull you forward, to draw the best out of you.

Many authors suggest you visualize your retirement from the firm and think about speeches by your spouse, a child, a partner, a client and an adversary. What would you want each to say about you?

To accomplish great things we must first dream,
then visualize, then plan . . . believe . . . act!

Alfred A. Montapert

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.

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