

[What Can a Mentor Do?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on December 14th, 2012

I recently posted: [How to Be a More Effective Mentor](#). That post generated a lot of interest, so I want to add more thoughts on mentoring.

What can a mentor do? Historically a mentor had many roles and functions including:

- Teaching and training,
- Giving career guidance,
- Being available to answer the really stupid questions,
- Explaining unwritten firm politics,
- Helping get quality work assignments,
- Providing opportunities to observe the mentor or others,
- Observing and providing feedback,
- Helping the mentee market herself internally and position herself to get raises, bonuses and promotion.



I believe these roles and functions remain important today. Yet, in 2012 and 2013, an associate may have many formal and informal mentors. So no one mentor may provide all of the support previously provided.

Here is some very specific tasks you can do to help your associate mentee:

- Have the associate identify four or five specific goals she wishes to accomplish for the year.
- Help her determine how much investment time (non-billable) she will spend for the year and how she can best spend it for her own career development and to meet the firm needs.

- Then ask her how you can help her obtain her goals.
- Follow up with her to keep her on track.

Finally I want to share my good news with you. Yesterday at 7:30 AM I had my hip replaced. By 1:00 I was doing laps on my hospital floor with my new walker. The physical therapist was amazed and said I was incredibly motivated and my pre-surgery exercise had helped a great deal. I am ready to go to sleep as I am writing this and I am still feeling great.

I am amazed at the high quality of service I am receiving at the hospital. Law firms could learn from this hospital and I will share my thoughts with you down the road.

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.