

[My Guide to Working With Baby Boomers](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on December 27th, 2012

I coach a very successful senior associate who asked for my suggestions for working with a demanding baby boomer senior partner. I know working for my generation, including me, is difficult, so I gave a lot of thought to how to answer his question. Some of you may work with a demanding baby boomer senior partner, firm leader or client, I thought you might have the same question.

Baby boomers were born from 1946 to 1964. In this piece I am speaking for those of us who were born in the late 40s or early 50s and spent our informative years in the 60s. The 60s is known as the decade of the greatest change in United States history. You may not be aware that there is a [60's official website](#). I was surprised by how much interesting information is on the website.

First, we are a product of parents who experienced the depression and whose families lost whatever they had overnight. Most of our fathers fought in WW2 (the greatest generation) and came home to go to school, work or build a business. Our parents believed in American exceptionalism and believed they should sacrifice so we would go further than them. They taught us that we could achieve anything if we worked hard, so we did.

While we were growing up, our country went from “Leave it to Beaver” and “Ozzie and Harriet” to the civil rights movement, assassinations of visionary leaders and the Viet Nam War. I grew up in a very segregated Chicago suburb. I didn't pay much thought to civil rights until I saw what was going on in Birmingham and other southern cities. At that point, I became far more aware of a world different than what I was experiencing.

We were inspired by President Kennedy's vision and words. He said:

We stand today on the edge of a new frontier — the frontier of the 1960s, a frontier of unknown opportunities and perils, a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats. The new frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises — it is a set of challenges.

We all remember exactly where we were when we heard President Kennedy had been shot. The Viet Nam War split us apart. I served in the military. Others protested the war. Most of us also

remember exactly where we were on July 20, 1969 when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. Finally, most of us did not go to Woodstock in August of that year.(Watch for my post on me not being cool enough to go to Woodstock).



How has going to high school and college in the 60s influenced us? We:

1. believe anything is possible
2. question the status quo
3. are very competitive and hate losing (even an argument)
4. are extremely impatient
5. do not like being questioned
6. worked very hard to get to where we are now and greatly value hard work and a work ethic
7. do whatever it takes to get the job done
8. know that whatever we have earned through our hard work can be taken away
9. value people who take responsibility
10. do not like excuses or the people who make them
11. want everyone to have the opportunity to work hard and succeed
12. greatly value the individual and question authority and the government
13. look for causes to become enthusiastic about
14. get bored very easily
15. likely have not saved enough money over the years to retire comfortably
16. still like 60s music

I asked my colleague [Cindy Pladziewicz](#) to share her tips on what this means for working with us. Here is her list, with some thoughts of my own:

- Understand that we still enjoy “face time.” Baby boomers still want to converse with you and work along side you. Email isn’t enough and we rarely text.
- We expect you to work hard.
- We expect your business emails to be grammatically correct and polite. We expect you to have thought through an issue prior to bringing it to us.
- When you are with us, we appreciate your full attention. Please do not text or email when we are speaking or meeting, or when you are attending a presentation we are giving.
- Honor your commitments, be on time, return projects when you say that you will.

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.