

## Taking Your Firm to the Next Level

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on March 29th, 2013

I hope you read my blog yesterday: [Want to get clients to a breakfast presentation? Try this](#) and I hope I did not mislead you by the title. I used a “remarkable” breakfast as a tool to get you thinking about differentiating your firm from your competitors.

I suggested that your firm would do very well if there is a client service culture that extends from the most senior lawyer to the most junior person in your mail room. Saying you should strive to develop that culture is one thing, actually doing it is more challenging. Today I want to give you some ideas on how your firm can stand out in the crowd.



First, you have to decide what you want to become as a firm, what your clients value and what contributions you expect from each lawyer and professional staff member. When those three things are clear, it is time to focus on training and development of your lawyers and staff. Ritz Carlton did not become known for its high level of service just by deciding that was important. Check out:

Customer Service: The Ritz Carlton Way. (For some reason I cannot create an active link, so you will have to do a search of the title.) Writer Warren Geshes lists 6 Ritz Carlton principles:

1. **Make Customer Service an Elite Club.**
2. **Once You Have the Right People, Indoctrinate Them.** (Ritz Carlton actually offers [training courses](#))
3. **Treat Staffers the Way They Should Treat Customers.**
4. **Offer “Memorable Service.**
5. **Talk About Values and Stoke Enthusiasm.**
6. **Eschew Technology, Except Where It Improves Service.**

I encourage you to search the article and read the details of each item and rate your firm. The interesting thing is your firm has complete control over each of those items. You get to decide who you hire, how well you train and motivate your lawyers and staff, how well you treat younger lawyers and professional staff, whether you offer “memorable” service, whether you talk about serving clients and stoke enthusiasm and whether you only use technology where it improves service. When was the last time your firm talked about values and “stoked” enthusiasm?

[McCarthy Tétrault](#) partner and friend [Phil Moore](#) sent me a link to CBC’s [Tales of Customer Service](#). Every story is inspiring. I want you to think about this one, in part because it does not take an extraordinary effort:

David Ogilvy, one of the legends of the advertising business, and the founder of Ogilvy & Mather New York, had high customer service expectations for his staff.

I always remember one of the things he insisted upon.

He said, “We don’t walk our clients to the elevator, we walk them to the street.”

I know a lawyer who walks me to the street every time I visit him. It is really, really a small thing. It might take him five extra minutes. Yet, it sends an incredibly important message. Now I know where he might have gotten the idea.

When was the last time you, or your assistant, road down the elevator with a client and walked him or her to the street?

P.S. I have written an iBook you can download to your iPad from iTunes. If you do not have an iPad, you can read it on your computer: [Client Service iBook](#).

**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).