

[To Get Their Business: Pay More Attention to the Person Hiring You](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on June 13th, 2013

I coach many lawyers who take potential clients and referral sources to lunch and come away with nothing of value. They ask what they are doing wrong. In many cases they are paying far more attention to themselves than they are paying to the person they hope to persuade. I learned the hard way that the many executives who were considering hiring me were not all just like me. It was a rude awakening but one that served me well.

What is your personality type? What is your potential client representative's personality type? What do you share in common? What does your potential client representative like or dislike? What does he or she do when not working? If you don't know, you may be missing the opportunity to connect with your potential client representative. If you are seeking to get hired, that is a disaster.

One mistake I see many lawyers make is not recognizing the differences in each person they meet. Have you ever been in an important meeting and felt you were not "connecting" with the decision maker? If you want some help, I have two short Harvard Business Review articles for you to read. Start with: [Change the Way You Persuade](#) by Gary A. Williams and Robert B. Miller.

After you read the article, think about the last person with whom you met who was deciding whether to hire you. Was she charismatic, a thinker, a skeptic, a follower or a controller? How did you try to persuade her to hire you? How would you do it now?

I hope you will bear with me. I want to use telling the potential client representative the time compare the five personality types.



- People who are charismatic are big picture thinkers. They do not want to know the history of Swiss watch making. They simply want you to tell them the time.
- People who are thinkers do want to know the history of Swiss watch making from the very beginning to the present time.
- Skeptics do not believe anything you are telling them about Swiss watch making.
- Followers will decide whether you told them the correct time by asking others they trust to verify the time, or looking at their watch to verify the time themselves.
- Controllers must be the person to decide and they hate risk, so they will research before they agree with you on the correct time.

I also recommend reading: [Harnessing the Science of Persuasion](#) by Robert B. Cialdini. The article includes Cialdini's six principles of persuasion. At the end of the article, Cialdini puts the six points together and writes:

Legitimate expertise, genuine obligations, authentic similarities, real social proof, exclusive news, and freely made commitments can produce choices that are likely to benefit both parties. And any approach that works to everyone's mutual benefit is good business, don't you think?

So, what is the bottom line point? Put simply, if you want to get their business, don't try to sell them, at least until you really get to know them.

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.