

[Client Development: The Power of Observation](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on November 26th, 2012

How well do you pay attention? Are you like [Sherlock Holmes](#)? When you are with a client do you see things others miss? Do you listen and hear things others miss? I think most lawyers are not like Sherlock Holmes and do not listen or observe as well as they could. Why? I believe we are too focused on what we are going to say and too impatient.

How did [Sir Arthur Conan Doyle](#) create the character Sherlock Holmes. Watch this Ted Video Clip of Dr. and Stanford [Professor Abraham Verghese](#) from 2:26 to 4:30 to find out.

[Abraham Verghese: A doctor's touch](#)



You might also enjoy watching this 1926 Arthur Conan Doyle interview. In the interview he describes how he wanted to write detective stories where the character explained scientifically how he reached conclusions:

[Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - Interview \(the only COMPLETE version\)](#)



Being observant starts before you meet with your potential client. Before you meet you have homework to do. Prepare for the meeting by finding out as much about the person and the company as you can. Where did the client representative go to college and law school? Where did she work before joining the client company? Has she written any articles or given any presentations? Is she on LinkedIn? If so, take a look at her profile there and consider checking out who both of you are linked to there.

When you arrive at the office, pay close attention. Take a look at the coffee table books, magazines and newspapers in the reception area. They may be industry magazines or may be books about the city or state of the business. Whatever they happen to be; they convey the client's interests or values.

Meetings in the client's office provide ample opportunity for observation. What is on the wall and shelves? Are there sports pictures, pictures of his or her kids, works of art? What books are on the book shelves? Is the office neat and tidy or kind of messy?

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DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAW FIRM RAINMAKERS

When you are meeting with the client focus, listen and observe. Like Sherlock Holmes, you want to hear and see what others miss.

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.