

[Client Development: Lessons from a Great Coach and Star Athletes](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 19th, 2014

Are you stuck figuring out where to start your client development efforts?

If so, you are not alone. I have coached many young lawyers who are struggling with that same issue. Ok, what can we do about it?

I urge lawyers to do what star athletes do. Begin by making small improvements each and every day.

[Coach John Wooden](#) made that point:

When you improve a little each day, eventually big things occur. . . . Not tomorrow, not the next day, but eventually a big gain is made. Don't look for the big, quick improvement. Seek the small improvement one day at a time. That's the only way it happens—and when it happens, it lasts. (Wooden, 1997, p. 143)



What is the small improvement you can make next week? It might be to invite a contact to lunch. It might be to find a topic for a blog post. Do something next week no matter how small.

I have ready many articles on how star athletes train. A 2013 New York Times blog post gives some good insights: [Training Insights From Star Athletes](#).

Stay Focused: I contend that in the distracting world we live in, the best lawyers in 2014 and beyond will be those who are most focused on what they are doing.

Manage Your 'Energy Pie:' You are busy at work and want to spend more time at home with your kids. Your time and your energy are your two most important resources. You need a plan to use your time and energy most wisely.

Structure Your Training: Structure what you want to learn and practice on client development. Structure your client development efforts. Like the athlete mentioned in the NYT blog post, making random client development efforts is a waste.

Take Risks: The lawyers I coach who have been most successful are those who have gotten outside their comfort zone.

The Other Guy Is Hurting Too: Lawyers in other firms have the same issues and challenges you have. If they didn't, they would have already cornered the market.

If you have time, read one more thing today. It is a short one page Forbes article titled: [10 Lessons For Entrepreneurs From Coach John Wooden](#).

The next time you have 30 minutes, I urge you to take each of the 10 lessons and simply write a sentence or two on how each lesson applies to your law career. If you would like, share your ideas with me. I would enjoy posting a blog with readers ideas.

I hope to hear from you.

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.