

[First Year Lawyers: This one is for you](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 28th, 2014

Does your law firm have first year lawyers starting next week? Do you know a first year lawyer who will start next week? If so, this one is for you and for them.



I remember how excited I was when I showed up for work my first day at my law firm. I had spent four years in the USAF and now I was starting my law practice. If my memory serves me correctly, I wore a short sleeve dress shirt with my tie and suit that day, and learned that was not appropriate attire.

Over the years, I have regularly given presentations to first year lawyers during their firm orientation. I call it [Starting Right for Career Success](#). This fall I will be giving the presentation to University of Nebraska law students. I focus on the importance of taking responsibility for their careers, developing a plan with written goals and using time wisely.

If you are a regular reader, you know I have written my suggestions for first year lawyers. Several months ago I took two blog posts and created a Practical Lawyer Article: [40 Important Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me When I Was a First Year Lawyer](#). Finally, I wrote an article for the Texas Young Lawyers Association titled: [Practical Tips on Client Development for Young Lawyers](#)

First year lawyers have other questions. They rarely ask them because they are afraid the questions are stupid, or they feel they should be able to figure out the answers on their own. Here are 10 questions I have been asked by young lawyers.

Seasoned lawyers might think they are stupid, but for young lawyers ready to start their first “real job,” knowing what to do in the circumstances described may be important.

1. What should I do if I do not understand an assignment?
2. What should I do when I don't know the answer?
3. What should I do if I make a mistake and make the partner I am working for upset?
4. What should I do if I have too much work and another partner wants me to do an assignment for them?
5. What should I do when I am short of work and others in my practice group are busy?
6. What should I do if I have a personal commitment I really need to tend to that will prevent me from timely finishing an assignment?
7. What should I do you if I am not getting any feedback on my work?

8. What should I do when I go home exhausted every day from sitting in front of the computer and working all day?
9. What should I do you if I am not getting secretarial support or help from a legal assistant because their allegiance is to a more senior attorney?
10. What should I do if I am asked to attend an important recruiting event and I have a memo, brief or document a partner expects to receive the next morning?

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.