

# Considering an Alternative Career

By Chet Olsen, Esq.

One thing that most lawyers have in common is that they don't want to be lawyers. It's almost part of the lawyer culture to be constantly searching for something new and different. We are inspired by stories of former lawyers who go out and start airlines or produce television shows. We tell ourselves that's how we want to put our legal education to work.

Producing television programs may or may not be in your future, but at one time or another, [you have probably been intrigued by an advertisement for one of those seminars focusing on nonlegal careers for attorneys](#). These ads are placed by [individual career counselors and career counseling companies that specialize in helping lawyers escape the law](#). I may be exaggerating a bit, but the names of these companies and their seminars are typically "A Million and One Things You [Can Do with a Law Degree](#)" and "Lawyers Who Quit the Law and Ended Up Marrying Michelle Pfeiffer."

**See [Twelve Sexy Things You Can Do With a Law Degree That \(1\) May Make You Famous and \(2\) Do Not Require Practicing Law](#) for more information.**

If you attend these seminars and/or read books on these topics, you will get some of the things you need, but may not get all you were looking to find. In other words, I don't think many people walk out of there saying to themselves, "Hot damn! I now know I was meant to be an astronaut. I've got to call NASA right away."

One of the good things about [considering career alternatives](#) outside the law is that it makes you seriously consider how you really feel about [being an attorney](#). If you're unhappy with your current career situation, is it the law you have an issue with, or is it something else? There are several things that could be that "something else."

**1. Your own situation.** Maybe there are not a million and one of them, but there are many options available to you in your current profession. Working in the D.A.'s office could be as different from [being a bankruptcy attorney](#) in a large firm as it is from many of the nonlegal jobs you might consider. In other words, [don't give up all you put into becoming a lawyer to become an insurance adjuster when you haven't thought through all your options](#).

**2. What you are looking for may be closer than you think.** Be careful not to make the assumption that all law firms are alike, even if you have worked for two or three that were very much alike. Again, there are big differences to be found. A larger or smaller firm, a firm in another geographic region, starting your own firm—these are all options that can give you an entirely different perspective on the law.

**3. Is it law, or is it working that you don't like?** If you are just out of law school, it may be that you are having trouble adjusting to working 40 or more hours a week for the first time in your life. Speaking of adjusting, if this is the case, you probably won't enjoy insurance adjusting any more than you do [practicing law](#).

If you are used to working 40 or more hours a week, that too could be a problem. Especially if the "or more" is "or much more." In other words, maybe you like the law, but it takes so much out of you that it's no longer fun or enjoyable. In this case, maybe too much of a good thing is bad, and you just need to manage your workload.

**4. Are you itching to start and run your own business?** Whether you had a Rich Dad or a Poor Dad, you may be feeling the urge to start your own business. When most lawyers do this, they think about what kind of business ventures they might want to launch. Take a minute to consider that a [law practice can be very much like your own business](#). This is true if you start your own firm, or it can also be true within a law firm environment.

Especially when you hit the partnership level, or even as an of counsel, you may be able to find a situation where you can work autonomously, be paid directly for your efforts, and call most of the shots. Some firms, of course, will be more conducive to this than others, but the point is that again you might find what you are looking for within the legal profession.

**5. Finally, it may be that you just need to give yourself some time before making the jump out of law.**

Your situation might improve, and you'll enjoy the law more as you get more senior. One of the advantages of paying your dues [practicing law](#) is that more and more opportunities present themselves to you. With a few years under your belt, you will have a better sense of what you are looking for and be in a position to do things you were not qualified for just [out of law](#) school.

If none of the above applies, it might actually be the case that you were meant to be an astronaut.

**See [60 Nontraditional Jobs You Can Do with a Law Degree \(and Should Strongly Consider Doing\)](#) for more information about alternative careers for lawyers.**