



Article of the Week from Harrison Barnes

Why You Should (and Should Not) Quit the Practice of Law

Summary: So many attorneys are leaving the practice of law to go into alternative careers. Find out if you should leave the law or if you should stay.

One of the most depressing things to me about the practice of law is how many good attorneys quit. They quit for a variety of reasons, but for the most part attorneys quit the practice of law for the wrong reasons.

If you are thinking about quitting the practice of law and doing something else, the odds are you are thinking about doing this for the wrong reasons and will quit for the wrong reasons. Lots of attorneys quit the practice of law and in my experience most of them do so for the wrong reasons.

- See **[Why You Should Quit Practicing Law](#)** for more information.

There are a few valid reasons for quitting the practice of law, however, and to make the best use of your time I will outline these reasons briefly below.

I will then tell you why you should not quit the practice of law—because the odds are pretty good you should not.

A. When You Should Quit Practicing Law

1. You Should Quit the Practice of Law If You Really Detest the Work.

I am talking about the work and not the firm you work for, or the people you work for. I will get to those later. By the work I mean everything you are doing. For example:



- If you are a litigator who hates writing and hates arguing, you should not be a litigator (you might want to get into another practice area, but you should not be a litigator).
- If you are a corporate attorney who hates putting together deals and negotiating deals, you should not be a corporate attorney.

The same goes for being a patent attorney who does not like writing patents, a real estate attorney who does not like doing transactional real estate work and so forth. You should not be doing it if it is not something you enjoy. It is as simple as that. You can switch practice areas, but if everything about the practice of law is so unappealing to you that you cannot stand it then do something else.

I've seen attorneys from major American law firms become truck drivers (being on the road appealed to them), screenwriters, actors, start bike shops and more. They generally became much happier and often far more successful when they switched to doing something they were more interested in. You will be too.

See the following for more information:

- **[Twelve Sexy Things You Can Do With a Law Degree That \(1\) May Make You Famous and \(2\) Do Not Require Practicing Law](#)**
- **[LawCrossing's Guide to Alternative Careers](#)**
- **[60 Nontraditional Jobs You Can Do with a Law Degree \(And Should Strongly Consider Doing\)](#)**

Whatever it is about the practice of law you do not like needs to be something that cannot be fixed. It needs to involve the work itself. Actual work is researching the law, drawing conclusions and synthesizing that information back to a client, court, company, or opposing counsel. That is the essence of what an attorney does and it is never going to change. Things you can change, however, are:



- If you do not like working with other people, you can work on your own.
- If you do not like your practice area, you can change it.
- If you do not like working long hours, you can work fewer hours in a different environment.
- If you do not like being tied down and working for someone else, you can be a contract attorney.

These sorts of things you can always fix. You simply cannot fix not liking the work. It is important that you make sure to distinguish between what you do and do not like.

See the following for more information:

- [**Love What You Do**](#)
- [**You Need to Enjoy What You Are Doing**](#)

2. You Should Quit the Practice of Law If You Really Suck at It.

If you are not good at the practice of law and really do not see things improving, you should quit. If you are losing cases, you are hurting your clients. If you make lots of stupid mistakes and often do not understand what you are doing, you should not be practicing law.

Look, there is nothing wrong with not having the aptitude for something. Passing the bar is not difficult and not “proof” that you should be an attorney. I know of one attorney who is borderline retarded that was given all sorts of special accommodations to take the bar exam. He was given more than a week to take a two day exam! This attorney was so out of it he spent years driving 30 minutes each way to the law library to look up statutes before someone explained to him that he could look this stuff up on the Internet at his desk!

Alternatively, it might just be your skill set that is at issue. Very few people that are skilled in one thing—athletes, rock stars, business tycoons and others—would ever be very good



attorneys. Their skills lie elsewhere and the world believes in them because of this. You need to do what you are good at. The last thing you should be doing is unleashing your skills on the world when it is likely to do more harm than good.

- Attorneys need to be detail-oriented and enjoy details. Otherwise, they will miss deadlines and do all sorts of harm.
- Attorneys need to take pride in catching small errors.
- Attorneys need to be able to comprehend the stuff they are working on and then reach conclusions from that information.
- Attorneys need to be interested in others' problems and take pride from solving them.

You would not want to go to a doctor who did not know what he was doing and who harmed you. In the same way, the last thing in the world you should be doing is harming your clients, your law firm, your company and others because you do not know what you are doing or because you are bad at it.

I've scarcely ever played basketball in my life. If I was suddenly drafted to play basketball for the [Los Angeles Lakers](#) and started every game I would get booed off the court. I would be hurting the team and hurting the pride of the city by taking a spot that could go to someone who actually knows what he is doing and could help the team. I should, however, be a legal recruiter, because that is a good use of my skills and that is what I am doing. There is nothing wrong with me being bad at basketball. I would be incompetent and doing more harm than good were I to play it.

I once worked with a graduate of [Harvard Law School](#) who was fired from a major American law firm I worked in. She was fired primarily because after multiple explanations from partners and associates she continually confused the difference between federal and state law. I am not kidding. This is someone who certainly had some "apparent" aptitude for the law and got a job with a very prestigious law firm, but had no business being an attorney. If you should not be an attorney then do something else.



3. You Should Quit the Practice of Law If You Are More Concerned With Yourself than Helping Others.

There is nothing wrong with being interested in yourself. But practicing law is about helping others (whether it is a company, person, or group you are working for). You simply have to have something inside of you that gets you “fired up” to want to help someone. If you are not concerned with helping others and interested in this then you probably should not be an attorney. This is what the job is all about.

The problem is that you may just be in the wrong environment and you may not be seeing this.

- You may, for example, be in an environment where you are involved in document review and it has nothing to do with a client.
- You may be in an environment where you are doing mindless work with unpleasant people and that also has nothing to do with a client.

If you do not like these environments, that is good! You should want to do something where you feel like you are more directly advocating and helping other people. That is what attorneys do.

- **See [Over Deliver Because It is Not About You](#) for more information.**

I've seen many attorneys go to work for the government, become public defenders, go into public service helping the poor, become family law attorneys and go into various other jobs that give them more of a connection with people and the feeling that they are doing something positive. If you are naturally motivated to want to help others you should want to be an attorney. If you are not, then you should not be an attorney. Not being able to put yourself in the shoes of whomever you are trying to help is a recipe for disaster.



4. You Should Quit the Practice of Law If You Know There is No Way You Will Be Doing It in a Few Years.

Some attorneys just “know” deep down that practicing law is not in their future. They spend a great deal of time plotting their escape and thinking about other things they would rather be doing than practicing law. If you spend your time reading books about alternative careers and gravitating towards this information then you might be in the wrong profession. If you really know this is not something you will be doing in a few years then the odds are very good you should get out. If you have reached a state where you could walk away from the practice of law and know that you would not feel too bad about doing so you should get out.

The problem with this line of reasoning, however, is that there could be environmental factors that are motivating you to want to leave. It could be the people you are with, the sort of work you are doing, the environment you are in or other factors. These are not reasons to quit practicing law and are, instead, reasons you should switch environments. If you are an advocate and are drawn to various aspects of practicing law, but not happy in your environment, then you should leave your environment and find one better suited to you.

One of the dumbest things I see (on a weekly basis, it seems) is a pattern in which very talented attorneys from major New York law firms who have been worked to death quit the practice of law. These attorneys with sterling credentials have been indoctrinated into a world where it is “all or nothing”. They believe that if they are not at the top of the heap in terms of working in a prestigious law firm then they should not be practicing law at all. Is this crazy? Of course it is. It is completely crazy, but this is what happens and it is very common. These attorneys are reacting to being in extreme environments, and this certainly does not mean that they should not be attorneys.

5. You Should Quit the Practice of Law (Even Temporarily) If You Know It is Doing Severe Harm to Your Health and May Kill You.

I’ve seen practicing law kill several attorneys. The drive to please clients, superiors and



others and an inability to prioritize their own needs literally kills them.

- If the stress of practicing law is driving you off the edge to a nervous breakdown and you cannot cope, you should stop and at least take some time off.
- If you are bingeing on all sorts of substances and are out of control and cannot stop, you should stop for some time.
- If you have turned into someone who consistently drives spouses, friends and others away because you are so unhappy with your work life, you should stop for some time.
- If you are thinking about committing suicide because the stress of the job is too much and it makes you hate your life, you should stop for some time.
- If you have been repeatedly hospitalized for stress, drugs or alcohol, cancer, heart disease and other ailments that could have been caused by your job, you should stop for some time.
- If your health is such that you have gained 100 pounds (or some other outrageous amount of weight), people you knew years ago no longer recognize you, doctors are giving you all sorts of alarming warnings, you do not have time to exercise (nor do you care to) and you continue to grow larger and unhealthier, you should stop for some time.

There is no reason whatsoever you should kill yourself in the service of someone else. You need to take care of yourself. Too many good attorneys end up dying and I am sick of it. It needs to stop. No job is so important that you should die from it.

- **See [Another Big Law Attorney I Know Just Died Young](#) for more information.**

The sad thing about attorneys who kill themselves practicing law is that these same attorneys are the ones who often are most committed to being attorneys. These attorneys are the same ones who care about their work the most and are trying the hardest. However, killing yourself is not the same thing as being effective. You need to do everything within



your power to take care of yourself so that you do not die trying.

6. You Should Quit the Practice of Law If You Are Doing It Only for the Money.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to make money. Most people will not turn down money for working. In fact, very few people will. However, if you are practicing law only because you want to make money you are wasting your life.

I speak with attorneys all the time who seem like they are practicing law only because they want to make money. This is not healthy. A good percentage of attorneys practicing law sit behind a desk each day unhappy with their work and lives only because they want to make money. They may have the intelligence and ability to do the work, but they dislike it and do not enjoy it. This is not a productive use of your life. If there is something else you would rather do then you should do it. If a different legal environment would make you happier, you should do that too. You should not be doing what you do just for the money—that is prostituting yourself to the highest bidder and letting someone use you for something you do not enjoy.

There are plenty of ways to make a lot of money. I once knew a guy in Michigan who made \$700,000 a year (in mostly cash) running a small business washing windows in a residential neighborhood. I've known bartenders who make \$5,000 a weekend serving drinks in bars. If you want to make money, there are much easier ways to do so than practicing law. If you do not enjoy practicing law, you should do something that you enjoy that you can make money doing as well.

When an attorney is doing work he or she does not enjoy just for the money, the people he or she is working with and for will pick this up as well. People want to give work, promote and advance (and pay more money to) people who really enjoy what they are doing. You will make more money doing something else and be happier if you are not just doing the work for the money.



See the following articles for more information:

- [**Never Focus on the Money: Focus on Your Higher Purpose and Contribution**](#)
- [**Why the Best Actors and Attorneys Are Exactly Alike**](#)

7. You Should Quit the Practice of Law If You Are Spaced Out and Lazy.

You cannot be an effective advocate if you are spaced out and lazy, and there are some attorneys who are spaced out and quite lazy. Regardless of what type of law you practice, you cannot function as an attorney if you are spaced out or lazy. You need to constantly be motivated. You need to get things done and be alert.

- [**See The #1 Attorney Career Killer that Attorneys Are Never Taught**](#) for more information.

8. You Should Quit the Practice of Law If You Are an Easily-Manipulated People Pleaser.

For some attorneys, it is very important for them to make people happy and please other people. This is just how they are. They are not capable of standing up to others effectively and want to make everyone else happy.

These sorts of attorneys are out there and there are a lot of them. I run into attorneys like this frequently in my job and I like them a great deal; however, I tell all of them that they should be in another profession. You cannot be an advocate for someone else if you are always concerned about what people think about you. You will harm your client, because being a lawyer is never about you, it is about the people you are helping. You can never be a good attorney if you just want to make people around you happy. Lawyers have to be capable of being assholes and they also have to be capable of not caring too much about what others think of them.



While I hate to say this, a good lawyer often borders a bit on the sociopathic: He or she is not afraid to hurt the other side and he or she goes home at night after doing so and sleeps well. Good lawyers are able to get into the skin of their clients (no matter whom their clients may be), advocate on behalf of their clients and not care about pissing off the other side.

If you are very sensitive to how people perceive you and how you come across to others, you should probably not be practicing law. You will hurt others.

B. Why You Should Not Quit Practicing Law

One of the more amusing parts of my day is picking up the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times.

On the one hand, the [New York Times](#) front page generally will have one or more lead stories dealing with companies oppressing the poor, people not making enough money, people being discriminated against and generally a story that is supportive of a democrat and critical of a republican. The New York Times is not news as much as it is propaganda for leftist thinking. The newspaper, its headlines and the way it covers stories are completely biased towards its point of view of the world. It approaches and treats each issue a certain way, and you always know which way it is going to come out on the issues. The editorial page—and I am not sure why they bother with one since their coverage and treatment of each issue is editorial in itself—comes out the same way.

On the other hand, the [Wall Street Journal](#) will have one or more stories about people who have succeeded under capitalism or have found interesting ways to make money. They will have lots of stories about companies, profits and how various companies are succeeding or failing. The publication is geared toward capitalist thinking and not “humanist” thinking. The paper is typically critical of democrats and less critical of republicans. The paper consistently sides with the people with money and gives democrats much harsher treatment than it does republicans. The editorial page—and, again, I am not sure why they bother with one since their coverage of each issue is an editorial in itself—comes out the same way.



Yesterday I read two stories covering a republican political candidate giving a speech in Alabama. The New York Times headline was that [the republican candidate had failed to fill a stadium](#). The article then went on to mock the speech and make it seem like a failed event, even though 30,000 people showed up. The article talked about what was wrong with the event. In contrast, the [Wall Street Journal talked about](#) what a huge event it was, how they had to change venues and move to a stadium because so many people wanted to attend the rally and then had positive quotes from people who had come from all over the country to attend the event because they were so enthusiastic about it. Incredibly, the Wall Street Journal does not even like this candidate, but he is a republican.

I've worked for liberals and conservatives before and something I've noticed is this: They generally read one of these papers or the other. They do not read both because reading something that does not agree with how they feel about life and the world would make them cringe. They read the stuff they do and gravitate towards reading the stuff they do because it supports what they already believe and makes them feel good about themselves.

You generally cannot change what people believe. They are going to side one way or the other no matter what.

When I was clerking for a federal judge, everyone in the local court knew that certain judges would almost always rule in one direction or the other: staunchly republican judges, for example, would almost always rule on the side of corporations and those with money. They would also treat criminals very harshly. On the other hand, very liberal judges would employ the opposite approach and generally come down on the side of people fighting corporations and be lenient on criminals. That is just the way it is and works. People make decisions about others and issues based on what they believe. People treat others based on their own preconceptions. People see people through a certain type of lens and their views are generally inflexible.

Why do people reach conclusions about others and treat them either very well or very poorly? It has to do with a lot of factors that are no different than the differences between



the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times.

- Do you think a reporter from the Wall Street Journal would be comfortable at the New York Times and vice versa?
- Do you think someone who was extremely liberal would fit in and be treated well at the Wall Street Journal?

The point I am making is more than just that there are differences between democrats and republicans. What is going on in every environment (including every work environment) is that you either fit in or you do not. These work environments differ drastically across law firms, practice environments and groups of people within law firms.

See the following articles for more information:

- [**Control Your Environment**](#)
- [**The Importance of Environment**](#)
- [**You Need to Be in the Right Environment**](#)

When I was in law school I spent one summer working at the Justice Department in Washington, DC. On my floor, most of the people left by 5:00 pm each day. People were frumpy and not too interesting. They seemed tired and bored. The surroundings were drab and depressing. No one decorated his or her office and it was completely uninspiring. I could tell it was a place I was not interested in working.

Moreover, we would go to lunch in a drab cafeteria each day and everyone would sit silently eating bland food served up by equally unenthusiastic government workers. Many of my co-workers' eyes seemed bloodshot and glassy. Some of the men and women wore the same drab suits to work several times a week.

Had I taken a job there and worked there after law school I would probably be dead by now. At the very least, like a computer overwhelmed that just freezes up with an incessantly



spinning icon on the screen, I too would have “frozen up” and possibly turned into a motionless zombie sitting in a corner somewhere staring at a wall.

After leaving work at 5:00 each day with the other government workers, I used to see well-dressed attorneys grabbing coffee or late lunches and talking about various matters with excitement. They looked healthier to me, they seemed more confident and that was a group I decided right then and there I would rather be working for. I wanted to work with the sort of people working in a major law firm. It just felt more comfortable and “natural” to me.

In reality, it is much, much harder to get a job with the Justice Department in Washington, DC than it is to get a position with a major law firm. It seemed like half of the people I was working with were from [Yale Law School](#) and had done major, important clerkships. The Justice Department division I was working in was a very serious place. Nevertheless, it was not for me. Were I from Yale Law School with a bunch of peers harping about how great it would be to work there, I might have felt differently—I do not know. I just knew I wanted something else.

One of the mistakes that attorneys make is not listening to their guts and not doing what motivates them and makes them happy. When I speak with attorneys who are unhappy practicing law and contemplating leaving the practice of law completely, they usually would **NEVER** consider going to a small law firm that no one has ever heard of, going into public interest, or doing something else that does not seem significant and look significant to others. They allow others to define whether or not they should continue practicing law. They are more concerned with how they look to others than what is good for them. They are unhappy because they are in the wrong group.

- The Justice Department would have been the wrong group for me. I never would have fit in and would have been incredibly unhappy no matter what I did.
- Lots of groups would have been the wrong fit for me. A large law firm is probably the wrong group as well. I would have resented the lack of immediate control over my future. A smaller law firm would make me happier because I would have the control



that I need deep down. I love practicing law. I cannot get away from it.

Most attorneys have just not found the right group for them. That is why they are unhappy practicing law. They are unhappy because they are in the wrong sort of group and need to find a different group. The issue could be that the firm they are with is too conservative and they do not fit in.

- Alternatively, the firm could be too liberal and they do not fit in.
- On yet another level, a large law firm could be wrong for them.
- A law firm altogether could be the wrong fit for them.
- Some attorneys would be better served working for the government.
- Some attorneys would be better served with their own law practice.

All of this is more complicated than it sounds, though, because most attorneys who quit practicing law refuse to look at the myriad of other options they have and do not see the big picture and what else they can do with their degrees. They do not see where everything can lead if they stick with it and what else they can do.

One common thing I see is this: Attorneys working in a major law firms fear they will look stupid to their colleagues if they do something else—like go do public interest work, or go to work in a smaller law firm, or take a job in something that does not have the “panache” of a large, prestigious law firm. Instead of using their law degrees, training and skills in a different environment where they could be happy, they conclude that law practice is not for them (every legal environment must be like a big firm!) and quit the practice of law. In many cases I have seen, they are afraid of how it will look to others.

For a long time there have been people in our society and others that felt that they could not “come out” if they were gay, for example, because they were ashamed of what other people thought of it. These people lived in silence and could never be the person they are and want to be because of the environment they were in. If you are living in a small town in



a conservative state, you might marry someone of the opposite sex and never let anyone know you are gay and live your whole life like this. You live your entire life hiding who you are and never allow yourself to be the person you really are.

People often feel the need to be “in hiding” and hide their sexuality simply because of the environment they are in. While someone might be uncomfortable “coming out” in rural Utah, that person would be far less likely to fear coming out in San Francisco. It is the environment we are in that allows us to be the person we want to be. If the environment we are in supports us being the sort of person we want to be we will be much happier. The people who surround us and give us approval and disapproval are the same people who often control who we become.

- **See [Seek Out Environments, Conditions, and People That Create Positive Beliefs in Yourself](#) for more information.**

The people who most often quit the practice of law are the people who should not be quitting. I see attorneys from all sorts of major law schools and from large law firms quitting because they got a bad taste of practicing law while working in a huge law firm. Conversely, attorneys from smaller law firms, the government, public interest organizations and other organizations—quite often with lesser qualifications—very rarely quit. This has led me to the belief that people who most often quit are simply in the wrong environment.

If you are considering quitting the practice of law, the odds are pretty good that you should not: You are in the wrong environment and need to make some changes to that, but you should not give up.

I’ve spent almost my entire career reviewing resumes of attorneys a few hours a day. My remaining hours are spent speaking with attorneys and speaking with law firms about attorneys. Something I notice quite often are attorney resumes that are littered with a series of moves between law firms and various explanations for leaving each one—often explanations that make little sense. When I see five or six moves to different law firms (over



an equal number of years), then I generally know the person should not be in a law firm, but should be practicing in a different environment.

Another reason people often quit the practice of law is because they get fired. This is extremely common and thousands of attorneys quit the practice of law each month after losing their jobs. Attorneys lose jobs for a variety of reasons.

They lose jobs

- due to the fact someone does not like them,
- they make a series of mistakes (or one),
- their firm thinks they do not work hard enough,
- they have poor client skills,
- the firm does not have enough work,
- the firm partners want to make more money by having fewer people to feed,
- they do not fit in with the people they are working for.

One of the most successful attorneys I know, who is now the General Counsel of a major transportation-related company, was working in a major US law firm and had been getting good reviews her entire time with the firm. She was in her third year of practice and in the middle of getting ready to go to trial on a major case. One day someone walked into her office and said: "We've been talking it over and do not think you are a good fit. We would like you to leave now."

This incredible behavior from a law firm is something I see again and again. I got this woman a position with another major American law firm and she did extremely well there before moving in-house four or five years later. When I met her she was considering quitting the practice of law and was quite serious about doing so. I went all out to try and get her a job and went so far as to befriend someone inside of the law firm where she ended



up getting the job and taking that person to lunch to make an “in person” pitch for her. It worked. I was worried if it did not the woman might have jumped off a building. She was considering moving overseas for a year and backpacking and had booked her ticket, put her stuff in storage and was less than a week from leaving when the offer came through.

Throughout my career I’ve had multiple instances where talented attorneys were “on the ropes” and about to leave the practice of law all because of a bad experience—often getting fired. Getting fired is something that happens to almost every attorney that has practiced more than a few years. When it happens to you, of course, there is no reason you should not take it incredibly personally. However, getting fired from a law firm or other legal job should not disappoint you. You were just in the wrong environment.

Remember the Wall Street Journal versus New York Times examples? Both papers have great writers and interesting stories, but they are completely different animals and groups. If someone does not fit in one environment, he or she might fit in the other. Similarly, a talented writer of romance novels might not be a good journalist working in a newsroom. You just need to do what you do in the right environment.

Another common reason that people quit the practice of law that makes my heart sink is not being able to find a job. It is not easy for many attorneys to find jobs and it all depends on what you do and where you are.

- It is extremely hard to get a position in New York City unless you have very good qualifications.
- It is difficult to get a job in certain markets if you are in a slow practice area.
- It is difficult to get jobs if you are in small area of the country without many jobs.

If you are looking for a legal job you need to do everything you can to look at a lot of markets, consider changing your practice area and search broadly. You need to use a lot of sources to find jobs and you need to look exhaustively and apply to a lot of places. You also need to use a recruiter with some balls who is not afraid to get you out to a lot of places.



I see people leave the practice of law all the time who concluded it was too hard to find a job, but who did very little in their searches. I am passionate about what I do and follow up with everyone I ever worked with to see what he or she is doing. Some attorneys get frustrated and leave the practice of law after only applying (unsuccessfully) to just a few law firms. When you are looking for a legal job, nothing is more important than going “all out” to find one however you can.

As part of my job, I have the opportunity to speak with a wide variety of attorneys. While infrequent, I have run across a few attorneys who have done things like switch from being a corporate attorney in a high-profile law firm to being a divorce attorney—with great success. When I see these sorts of resumes I am intrigued. I pick up the phone because I know the person is going to be cool and well adjusted.

“You mean you were making \$285,000 as a corporate attorney, graduated order of the coif from [Columbia Law School](#) and decided to take a job with a family law firm paying \$80,000 a year in New York City?”

“Yes, I’ve never been happier. I’m also going to be making almost twice that this year because I love what I am doing and can bring in clients as well. I get to meet people all day and I love the drama involved in all of this.”

These cool, well-adjusted attorneys have figured out how to find happiness as attorneys in different practice areas and environments. They did not need to quit the practice of law. They just needed to change their venues.

There is a final point that bears mention. Many attorneys who quit have the majority of their experience as associates in law firms. Associates feel vulnerable. Associates are low on the totem pole and are expected to follow directions. The role of an associate is to be a “soldier” and worker bee and follow directions.

The role of an associate is not forever. Being an associate is no different than doing



an apprenticeship. The job of an associate is to learn a trade and become proficient at something. Once you are proficient and get a title, you are expected to go out and get business. Partners with business often enjoy what they are doing a great deal. They are businessmen and businesswomen with clients who need them. They have job security because if they have enough clients they can always move to another firm. They have more confidence, are respected and can control their income and futures by bringing in more business. In short, the job is often a great deal of fun for partners and they feel much different about their jobs than when they were in the apprentice period.

I have had this talk with countless associates throughout the years, and today many of those who were once very serious about leaving are now important partners at major US law firms like [Skadden Arps](#), [Davis Polk](#) and other great firms. I spend time each morning reading news periodicals and I see their names associated with big cases or deals and I see them quoted. Like a teacher who watches his student go onto much greater things, I see these formerly confused lawyers now in positions of national prominence. Sometimes I have to compose myself because it brings tears to my eyes to see great things happen to my candidates and people who were once so close to leaving the practice of law.

Conclusions

You went to law school. You wanted to go to law school. You started practicing and presumably have committed your life to this work and you want to quit? This makes very little sense, and the odds are very good that you are wrong.

- I do not care if you were fired.
- I do not care if you cannot find a job.
- I do not care if you are too stressed out working in a large law firm.
- I do not care if you do not feel like you fit in with your firm.
- I do not care if people act like you are stupid.
- I do not care if you find the work you have been doing boring.



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The odds are very good you should not quit. I have dedicated my life to helping people like you and I beg of you not to quit if you are considering doing so for the wrong reasons. The world needs you and your talents as an attorney. You just need to put them to use in the right place. You should never care about what other people think. This is all about you and your life and career. I hope you do everything you can to make the most of it. I really hope you do.

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