

[Your Career: Does Being Happy Really Matter?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on August 6th, 2015

Each year law is near the top of most unhappy jobs in America. Last year there was an Atlantic Article: [The Only Job With an Industry Devoted to Helping People Quit](#).

Isn't that sad? So many lawyers want to quit that there is a calling for coaches to show them how.

I recently read another Atlantic Monthly article: [There's More to Life Than Being Happy](#). Is it really important to be happy? I don't think so. Here are two quotes:

Leading a **happy life**, the psychologists found, is associated with being a “taker” while leading a **meaningful life** corresponds with being a “giver.”

Happy people get a lot of joy from receiving benefits from others while people leading meaningful lives **get a lot of joy from giving to others**,” explained Kathleen Vohs, one of the authors of the study, in a recent presentation at the University of Pennsylvania.

There are several references in the article to Viktor Frankel.

Viktor Frankel died the same day as Princess Diana and Mother Teresa. He was a holocaust survivor who wrote a short book titled: [Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning](#). It is one of my favorite books. The essence is the importance of not measuring success by external measures, but rather focusing on internal measures.

I particularly like this Viktor Frankel quote:

Again and again I therefore admonish my students in Europe and America: **Don't aim at success** - the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself.

Many people (including my wife Nancy) have asked me why I gave up my law practice after having my best year. I did because while I felt great joy helping my construction clients, I felt even more joy helping young lawyers.

What's the point? Put simply, don't aim at getting your hours or increasing your book of business.

Instead focus on helping your clients achieve their goals. When you focus on your clients rather than yourself, you are actually more likely to achieve the success you desire.

Want even more meaning in your career? Help someone who will never be able to pay you. When was the last time you did pro-bono work?

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.