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BIGLAW, JOB SEARCHES, PARALEGALS

Unhappiest Job in America? Take a Guess

By JOE PATRICE



Workplace satisfaction isn't quite the hot topic it used to be. In the 90s, everyone got all touchy-feely because an unhappy employee could pick up stakes and move at a moment's notice. Today, the primary axis of worker satisfaction is, "Am I working?"

But satisfaction surveys still fascinate, and Jacquelyn Smith of Forbes recently posted a new survey from a firm known as **CareerBliss** that used a multi-factor survey to determine the happiest and unhappiest jobs in America.

Wonder what came in the top spot? Well, OK obviously it was an associate. I'm not going to hide the ball here. If it was anyone else, we wouldn't be writing about it. But what's more interesting is who came in the rest of the top 10, because that really puts in terrifying perspective how terrible a job in Biglaw really is....

According to [Smith's article](#), CareerBliss conducted their research by asking over 65,000 employees to use a 5-point scale:

to evaluate ten factors that affect workplace happiness. Those include one's relationship with the boss and co-workers, work environment, job resources, compensation, growth opportunities, company culture, company reputation, daily tasks, and control over the work one does on a daily basis.

Right off the bat, recognize how terrible an associate must rate the other 9 factors when compensation is so relatively good — the other jobs in this survey include public school teachers.

So the number 1 worst job overall was "[Associate Attorney](#)," with a 2.89 Bliss score. The picture selection is magnificent, really capturing the soul-crushing ennui of Biglaw.

In second place with a 3.16 is "[Customer Service Associate](#)." Consider for a moment that someone making near minimum wage whose entire job consists of being yelled at by irate people over the phone came in SECOND.

The third least happy camper is a generic "[Clerk](#)." While not exclusively legal, many clerks are in this industry, and it's those legal clerks surely bringing down the score. Also note the third place job boasts a score of 3.18. The gap between 2 and 3 is .02. The gap between 1 and 2 was .27. It's more than 10 times worse to be an associate than the gap between Customer Service Rep and Clerk.

Number 7, with a score of 3.38 (5 slots down from second place is still not as large as the gap between 1 and 2), are [legal assistants](#). I'm surprised, because I think of legal assistants as being associates without any of the fun tasks or money. I guess having a buffer between the clients and screamer partners makes all the difference in the survey.

If you're interested in being happier, it's worth noting that in some jurisdictions, your admission to the bar allows you to seamlessly transfer to the happiest position in the survey: "[Real Estate Agent](#)." So get out there and start selling [lawyerly lairs](#) instead of trying to live in them.