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In-House Counsels Prove The Rolling Stones Wrong, They Can Get Satisfaction!

By: Karen Anderson

I have decided that there is no better season than Spring. The weather is cool and dry, the sky is a cloudless, azure blue, and the landscape is breathtaking. I say all this while sitting on my back porch after a weekend of perfect weather and yard work. Yep, my family and I dusted off the closeted lawnmower and rakes, put on our crunchy, stale work gloves, and transformed ourselves into weekend warriors.

We got a lot done. I believe the moon and stars must have been perfectly aligned because even the annoyed teenagers got in on the yard work action. Excuse me for a minute while I savor the memory of teenagers with rakes and sip some lemonade... I feel deep satisfaction that we transformed our wintery-looking yard into a springtime yard; that we worked together, that our trusty mower started after all this time, and that we completed what we had planned to complete. This satisfaction is why you find me still thinking about the weekend and smiling.

Apparently in-house lawyers feel the same way about satisfaction. While they get paid less than their law firm peers and there isn't a lot of room for upward mobility, 86% said they were satisfied with their in-house job. In addition to getting paid less than their law firm peers, their average salary actually went down from \$250,000 per year to \$247,000 per year. Still satisfied?

You have to be asking, "What are in-house lawyers doing that's so satisfying?" The answer is a lot. The typical day of an in-house lawyer might find them doing a wide variety of legal work ranging from compliance to employment law to intellectual property law. At the very least, the variety keeps them learning new things and thinking new thoughts. It seems that all this variety helps the in-house lawyer to overcome their desire for upward mobility.

"So what else?" you may ask. In-house lawyers feel connected to their work. They see, experience, and feel the fruits of their labor. While their law firm peers may never actually experience the benefit of their legal arguments, the in-house lawyer experiences the benefits first hand. They have a positive goal and they are connected to it. Often this "fruit" comes in the form of terrific benefits. While they may not get paid as much, their family and their future are secured with great life and health insurance and a rock-solid 401K.

Satisfaction in your work takes on many forms from variety to connectedness to security (notice the absence of money, piles of depositions, and managing partner). So here's what my back porch experience is telling me: The Rolling Stones were wrong... We can get satisfaction!