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Dreaming can lead to a satisfying career

East Bay Business Times - by [David Goll](#)

Joel Garfinkle's teen-age years were like most others'. He did lots of searching and took many detours. Now, as a full-time career coach, he's helping other professionals do the same, leading them to the careers of their dreams.

"The key thing I tell my clients is that everyone must search for a way to express their gifts that come from within," said Garfinkle, who calls his San Leandro-based business Dream Job Coaching. "I help them realize they're uniquely special people with uniquely special talents."

Though many are told those very things by parents, friends and elementary school teachers, those sentiments are seldom expressed at higher levels of education or in the workplace. As a result, many people dislike their jobs or are working in the wrong profession.

"Many studies I've seen show that as many as nine out of every 10 people do not enjoy their work," said Garfinkle. "But making changes is still very difficult for most of us. In our society, people often identify themselves by their jobs and if they've invested lots of money, time and effort into a given career, they're very reluctant to change course. There's lots of fear around this."

People who express an interest in Garfinkle's help may take months or even years to take the plunge. When they finally begin working with Garfinkle, he said, it's usually because they've exhausted all enthusiasm for the work they've been doing. He said most of his clients are between 38 and 45.

"Something happens to make them realize how unhappy they are," said Garfinkle, a native of Piedmont who now lives in Oakland's Montclair district.

One client is Art Honegger, who worked in the commercial insurance business for 30 years. Honegger owned his own firm for much of that time, but he reached "burnout" last year.

"I finally hit the wall in May," said the Antioch resident. "The insurance business just wasn't fun anymore."

Honegger heard about Garfinkle while doing career exploration work at John F. Kennedy University.

"I met him for lunch late last summer and just during that time, he had really zeroed in on what I felt passionately about," he said. "During later discussions, we've even discussed the spiritual aspects of work and life."

As with his other individual clients, Honegger meets one on one with Garfinkle and has completed exercises in two workbooks – "Love Our Work: Make the Job You Have One You Always Dreamed Of" and "Define, Land and Live Your Dream Job."

Today, Honegger is a consultant who helps companies with strategic planning and determining an effective organizational structure.

"I'm still defining my niche, but I'm definitely in my element," Honegger said. "I love it. I never felt this way about insurance."

Garfinkle, who received his professional training from Colorado-based Coach University, charges \$150 an hour or \$350 per month. It's worth it, in Honegger's opinion.

"He's a miracle worker, a very gifted man," Honegger said. "He is certainly doing the right work."

Chris White is another Garfinkle client. Though he works in new business development for San Francisco-based Airtreks.com, he eventually wants to do the same kind of work on his own, helping those with good ideas secure enough financial backing from venture capitalists. He started working with Garfinkle three months ago.

"Joel helped me realize that one of the most important things for me is freedom, which I definitely would have working for myself," said White, who resides in Oakland. "He's been great at helping me clarify what I love in this world and what I really want to do with this short life of mine."

Garfinkle said his clients range from middle-age managers contemplating career changes to older workers seeking help in making a transition from work to meaningful retirement. A few, though, are still in school or have been in the work force a short time.

"Younger people do approach me, and some are sincere in wanting to find a career they will love," he said. "But when people of any age tell me they want to change jobs so they can make more money, I tell them that's not what this is about."

Garfinkle said the Bay Area's technology-fueled affluence – which has produced thousands of millionaires who've yet to see their 30th

birthdays – will eventually create an emotional void for many of its current beneficiaries.

"I believe in a few years there's going to be a major backlash among dot.com people toward just making a bunch of money," he said. "We live in a very materialistic society, but most people finally realize at some point money isn't everything."

Equal Time explores the challenge of juggling work and life. To suggest topics and make comments, contact David Goll at dgoll@bizjournals.com or 925-598-1436.

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