



# CRAINS

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### Break with the law: How to escape

BY MARK HENRICKS

For some dissatisfied attorneys, changing specialties isn't enough. They have to get out altogether.

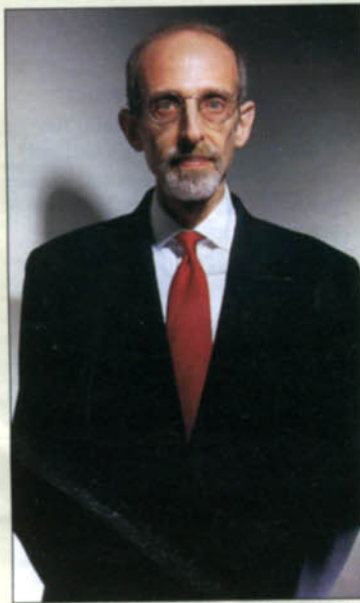
Scott Jordan saw lawyering as a way to earn a good, secure living. He got more than he bargained for.

"I graduated in 1992 at the top of my class and I was immediately presented with a pair of golden handcuffs," Mr. Jordan says.

He found the profession overly obsessed with money, specifically on billing lots of hours and attracting big new clients. "Typically, partners are expected to bring in business of \$1 million or more a year, every single year," he says. "If you don't you're penalized significantly."

Still, the cuffs fit until 2000, when, after working at two Chicago firms and a couple of tours as in-house corporate counsel, Mr. Jordan broke with the law completely. With an idea for "technology-enabled clothing," Mr. Jordan formed SCOT-TeVEST Inc. and began marketing a vest with pockets specially designed for cell phones, personal digital assistants and other electronic paraphernalia.

As an entrepreneur Mr. Jordan works from Ketchum, Idaho, where he moved the company from Chicago last year. He bikes, skis and runs SCOTTeVEST, but



PEIRCE SCHMIDT

Sherwin Lesk resigned his partnership in a law firm and joined a financial planning firm. "I have absolutely no regrets," says Mr. Lesk.

never cracks a law book.

"I would never practice law again," he says. "There's no perfect solution and some days are better than others. But I control my own destiny, which I didn't when I practiced law."

#### DECISION TIME

Sherwin Lesk is another legal refugee. After passing the Illinois bar in 1979 he became a partner in a mid-sized Chicago firm,

### golden handcuffs

where he enjoyed the work but wanted more training to help with tax and estate planning. In 1991 he earned a financial planner's certificate, but found himself in a regulatory no man's land: Legal clients requested financial advice, but in Illinois law firms can't offer financial planning. His partners, being lawyers, had other arguments against the idea.

"If a client didn't like the planning work, not only would we get sued but we'd lose the legal business," Mr. Lesk says.

Eventually, decision time arrived. "Am I going to stay here the rest of my life and wonder what would have happened?" he asked himself. The answer was no, and Mr. Lesk resigned his partnership and joined Leonetti & Associates Inc., a Buffalo Grove financial planning firm.

Today he practices law mainly on infrequent occasions when a planning client needs a will drafted or has other planning-related legal work.

Mr. Lesk left the law in 2000, the last year of the bull market. He has adjusted by doing more retirement planning and less investment management, and hasn't considered returning to full-time legal practice.

"I have absolutely no regrets," Mr. Lesk says. "I enjoy what I'm doing."

