

# Headhunters' advice: Look within

Chanhassen Villager

Thursday, May 25, 2006

## Authors offer direction for job transitions

By Unsie Zuege  
STAFF WRITER

While these two women did not turn their backs completely on their law degrees and their extensive experience, they found a way to “sculpt” new careers — still in law — using their experience, skill sets and passion. The result, they said, is that they are both a lot happier and fulfilled not only professionally, but also emotionally, and most importantly, spiritually.

They hope to help other professionals, not only lawyers, change jobs and careers by looking inward, to discover what makes them happy. That is the message in their new book “Lessons from a Headhunter...With Heart: *Spiritual and Practical Keys to Navigating (and Surviving!) Job Change.*”

Patricia A. Comeford and Gina Sauer are attorneys who quit practicing law when they realized they did not like their original career choices. Both graduated from William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul.

Both had accomplished law careers.

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Recruiters and career counselors Patricia A. Comeford, left, and Gina Sauer wrote the book on how to survive a career change. Comeford of Golden Valley and Sauer of Chanhassen are lawyers who changed their careers to better suit their interests. “Lessons from a Headhunter...With Heart,” is in local bookstores, including Excelsior Bay Books in Excelsior where the two authors recently had a book signing.

Comeford, a Golden Valley resident, once served as a judicial clerk for the Hon. Charles A. Flinn, Jr. of the Minnesota State District Court, and was a litigation associate with the St. Paul firm of Manu & Simon.

Sauer, of Chanhassen, was an associate at Gray Plant Mooty, the Twin Cities oldest established law firm, founded in 1866.

In the book, Comeford writes, "There I was in a well-respected law firm, making good money, and I just hated it..." After being miserable for a couple years and a lot of soul searching, Comeford decided to quit her law firm. Her parents could not believe it.

"People would say, 'You went to law school to be a lawyer,'" she writes. "—what do you mean you don't want to practice law?' or 'You spent all that time going to law school and now you don't want to use your law degree? What a waste!' *What they were all really saying was, 'What is wrong with you?'*"

Actually, there was nothing wrong with her, or law. She just realized, "...It just wasn't the right profession for *me*."

### From attorney to headhunter

After much job hunting and soul searching, she eventually redirected her career path to become a recruiter for law firms. In 1989, she founded The Esquire Group, a national legal search and placement firm headquartered in Minneapolis, with a Denver office and affiliate offices across the country. The firm provides job search services for both the job seeker and the legal industry employer. It also has a division that provides career coaching and counseling services.

Law is a wonderful profession, Comeford said, but practicing was not the right fit for her. However, placing lawyers and helping law firms in their search for legal professionals was. During the years, in working with clients and firms and drawing on her own career quest, she determined that there was a need to write a book that focused on the spiritual side of career change.

Too often, she said, books focused on the mechanics of the job search — how to write a resume, interview, network. Comeford could not find anything that talked about the spiritual and emotional challenges the job hunters and career changers face. Six years ago, she began a draft for such a book.

Two years ago, she began working with Sauer, whose background in career coaching and counseling for law professionals dovetailed with what Comeford saw as an unmet need in the job search market.

With Sauer's assistance, the book she planned took shape. The book, just published, is available at local bookstores, including Excelsior Bay Books in Excelsior, and online.

### Advice for lawyers, and other professionals

The book is not just for professionals in law.

"It's for everyone," Comeford said. "Many of our clients are non-lawyers — doctors, MBAs, executives. For many professionals, their career developed from the first job they took right out of college. Instead of matching their skills and their passions, they were too busy

getting into the job market to ask themselves what they really want to do. That question doesn't come up until maybe 10 years down the road.

Sauer described a client who had been an attorney for a long time. He needed a change. As they dug into his motivations and interests, his consistent theme was community service. He spent his personal time volunteering in his community, serving on civic committees and the chamber of commerce.

"We asked him, 'Why aren't you getting paid to do that?'"

He was surprised.

"He never made the connection," Sauer said. "Right now, he's exploring a job with a city administrator.

"We're raised to believe, 'If it feels good, it must be wrong,'" she said. "Also, it's easy to get hung up on titles. 'I'm a doctor. I'm a lawyer,' instead of pursuing your passions. Ask yourself, what motivates you? What gets you excited?"

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Gina Sauer



Contact the authors at [www.esquiregroup.com](http://www.esquiregroup.com).

Published by Beaver's Pond Press, Inc.

204 pages

\$16.95

Available at Excelsior Bay Books, and other local independent bookstores. The book is also available online at the [www.BookHouseFulfillment.com](http://www.BookHouseFulfillment.com), or call 1-800-901-3480.

**"Lessons from a Headhunter...With Heart: Spiritual and Practical Keys to Navigating (and Surviving!) Job Change," by Patricia A. Comeford, J.D. with Gina Sauer, J.D.**

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