

**In the  
Final  
Analysis**

**“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look once in awhile, you could miss it.”**

— Ferris Bueller

One movie that I have yet to tire of seeing is 1986’s *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*. Structured around a day in the life of a precocious, highly manipulative, and exceptionally quotable high school senior who shams his way out of the classroom in favor of a day of adventure in Chicago, the movie is funny, sophomoric, thoughtful, and oddly archetypal. Like so many other tales about young people, this is a coming-of-age story, with optimism and trepidation about college and career choices looming in the windshield while flavored with wistfulness about childhood shrinking in the rearview mirror. The film’s message is encapsulated by the above oft-quoted Ferris-ism. Who among us would not benefit by stepping back from our day-to-day pressures, putting down our smart phones, and spending more time with our families and friends?

As I can be as guilty as the next person of wearing the workplace blinders too closely and missing some of the wonderful things going on around me, I had planned to craft some stop-and-smell-the-roses advice into this month’s IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS. Forget that plan. A new bit of data analysis shows that I would have been waaaaay off of the mark with such a message.

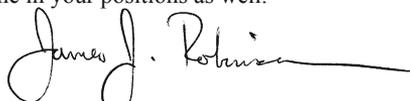
To wit: According to the article “Five High-Paying, Low-Stress Jobs” by Bridget Quigg of PayScale.com, *materials scientist* (with a median annual salary of \$90,600) ranks number two on the scale for which the article is named. Numbers three through five are *economist* (\$85,600), *aeronautical engineer* (\$82,800), and *user experience designer* (huh?) (\$79,100). Number one is *optometrist* (\$99,200). While the article says nothing about the methodology of the analysis, the author writes that “the most enviable gigs are typically knowledge-based and require highly specialized training and education. . . . It seems that being able to walk into a room and command everyone’s attention as you share your expertise makes you less likely to crave that sixth cup of coffee.”

I’d always sensed this about optometrists (honestly, how hard is it to ask, “is this better . . . or this?” all day long?), but I never knew that my pals in the materials science field were enjoying a let’s-take-a-break-for-mint-juleps-and-maybe-a-round-of-Angry-Birds-before-getting-back-to-those-phase-diagrams profession. The only way it could get better, I suppose, would be if you had one job that I found at the PayScale.com web site: *optical materials scientist*. That has to be the Ferris Bueller dream life! Surely the person who lands this position will have his/her stress measured in negative numbers.

I exaggerate in the ridiculous extreme, of course, but I will admit to feeling a little envious about the situation until I clicked around and read a companion article: “High-Paying Jobs, High Satisfaction: Happy Workers with Hefty Paychecks” by Lydia Dishman. The subject positions, from bottom to top, are *accounting firm partner* (\$164,000), *interior design director* (\$79,300), *high school principal* (\$82,200), *nurse anesthetist* (\$152,000), and, leading the list, *nonprofit organization president* (\$89,500). Ummmm, . . . that last one is kind of my job. The reason for the ranking is that even though salaries for nonprofit presidents are lower than those for similar corporate leadership positions, there’s a sense that what you are doing makes a difference.

Yes, absolutely true.

Looking at my situation, TMS is a difference maker, and I take immeasurable satisfaction from the work that we do and the professional staff and volunteers that I work with. And that is a daily tonic to a lot of stress opportunities. I hope that you find the same in your positions as well.



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