

Nothing Produces Failure Like Success

Rogers Kirven Looks at What Happens When People Cash Out Early

At 44, Rogers Kirven was tempted to sell his businesses, cash out. A buyout offer was his for the taking. Why not live out the American dream? Enjoy the financial rewards. Do something even more exciting and meaningful with his life.

Then he talked to some buddies who had done it. What they shared was enough to replace exhilaration with fear. His friends, far from being happy with their new wealth and free time, unleashed a litany of despair.

So Kirven, an entrepreneur who leads six companies, decided to do more checking. Maybe these guys were the exception. Bright and inquisitive, Kirven has interviewed 26 men to see how people from the top 1 percent of American affluence handled situations like this. "The first three guys I talked to were just like me," says Kirven. "They loved God, loved their families. Same age bracket, 42, 43,44. They all had a strategy. They wanted to spend more time with their families, and wanted to 'develop their own soul.'"

"Within a year all three were divorced. All three blew at least \$1 million on new toys - bigger boat, bigger car, bigger plane. Like Mike Tyson said, they all had a strategy until they got hit. Each of these guys stepped into a stream, and they didn't realize the current was so strong. They got swept away."

"When you start talking to these guys, they tell you about the next deal they're going to do. But the more you talk, the onion unpeels and you find a soul in crisis," says Kirven.

He painfully observes that, "Most of these guys wander (22 of his 26 interviewees divorced after cashing out). They get target lock on a new toy or a 'love affair,' and they've got a lot of energy. But then the corresponding depression after they get it . . . that's universal."