



▶ CAREER GOALS..... 1

▶ MARKET WATCH 1



▶ CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION2

▶ A MOMENT WITH THE DIRECTOR2



▶ BEING INVOLVED... 4

▶ GETTING ORAGAN- IZED.....6

○ Spring | ○ 2009

PARALEGAL

PULSE

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PARALEGALS THROUGH EDUCATION AND TEHCNICAL TRAINING

What is a Paralegal?

A seasoned paralegal will tell you a paralegal is the person responsible for file organization, collection of documents, review-ing exhibits, reminding attorneys about deadlines (more than once), and, perhaps, writing briefs. A paralegal student, on the other hand, will probably say that a paralegal assists the attorney with any required tasks. And an office administrator

may make no distinction between a paralegal and the clerical staff.

Officially, the American Bar Association defines a paralegal as "a person qualified by education, training or work experience who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, corporation, gov- ernmental agency or

(What is a Paralegal, Continued on page 3)



MARKET WATCH

Mention the job you are apply-

ing for in the first paragraph of your cover letter. Employers also like to know where you heard about the position—a job fair, online, or classified ad.



Getting the Most from Continuing Legal Education

August 14-16, 2009 at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, Alabama. Both of these seminars offer not only great speakers, but provide a unique opportunity to network

There are many opportunities for Continuing Legal Education coming up. The NALA Convention will be held this year in San Diego, California July 7-11, 2009. Closer to home the AAPi Summer Seminar will be held Au-

CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION CAN INCREASE YOUR MARKETABILITY

with paralegals from across the state and the country.

Closer to home, AAPi's Region II is holding monthly luncheons in Montgomery. The next meetings will be June 30 and July 28, 2009

TECHNICAL TIPS:

To keep pictures and artwork in proportion in Powerpoint:



- You click the first picture.
- Hold down the Shift Key.
- Click the other pictures.
- Then you mouse drag the picture to the size you want.



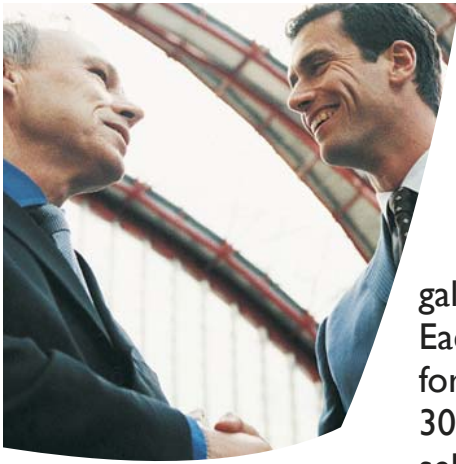
A MOMENT WITH THE DIRECTOR

New Law Office Management Course in Action!

I am very pleased to report that our new Law Office Management course began this semester and we are off to a great start. This course was added to the curriculum based on recommendations by our Legal Studies Advisory Board, area employers, and students. We realized that we were providing our students with plenty of instruction in legal research and substantive law; however, we needed more emphasis on law office dynamics and legal technology. So far this semester,

students have reviewed law firm structure, human resources procedures, management skills, calendaring systems, electronic discovery issues, the legal requirements surrounding the archiving of electronic communications, and much more! We were also very excited to have representatives from Freedom Court Reporting visit our class with a great presentation showcasing Trial Director and other legal technology issues.

This course is a great addition to our Legal Studies curriculum. Not enrolled in our Legal Studies program? Paralegals and other office staff are invited to audit the course! Contact me at mjohns@faulkner.edu for more information.



Scholarships Deadline Nears

Each year AAPi sponsors the annual Janis Davidson Memorial Scholarship Program. This program awards scholarships to 2 qualifying students enrolled in an eligible parale-

gal studies program. Each award is given for the best original 300-word essay on a selected theme, provided that all other eligibility criteria are met. This year's essay topic is:

"What is the Importance of the Paralegal Profession?"

The scholarships awarded are \$250.00 and \$500.00. For details regarding qualifications please contact either Cathy Davis at cdavis@faulkner.edu or Dr. Marci Johns at mjohns@faulkner.edu.

The deadline to apply is June 15, 2009.

COMMUNITY SERVICE:

Why get involved in Community Service?



Community Service often allows you to volunteer and "test" a career. Paralegals can volunteer for pro bono projects or with State Bar projects such as *Wills for Heroes* to work in different areas of law.



*(What is a Paralegal,
Continued from Page 1)*

other entity who performs specifically delegated substantive legal work for which a lawyer is responsible." (Adopted by the ABA in 1997.)

While many state paralegal associations are working with their state bar associations to have a definition of the term "paralegal" adopted or a certification program approved, the perennial question of what a paralegal can and cannot do gains new importance. Firms that have employed paralegals for many years may take for granted that paralegals and attorneys are aware of the ethical requirements placed upon the paralegal profession, while the question of ethical guidelines may be some-

thing new to firms thinking of hiring its first paralegal.

Paralegals, however, should always be aware of what they can do, and the tasks that they cannot perform, including accepting cases, setting fees or offering legal advice which constitutes unauthorized practice of law (UPL).

Canon 2 of the *NALA Code of Ethics* "provides that paralegals "may perform any task which is properly delegated and supervised by an attorney, as long as the attorney is ultimately responsible to the client, maintains a direct relationship with the client, and assumes professional responsibility for the work product." Firms should remain prudent in their responsi-

*(What is a Paralegal,
Continued on page 4)*



BEING INVOLVED

Other organizations available to students are NALA and AAPi. Both offer student memberships. Either association can be beneficial but you



Students: In the past we have asked many of you if you were interested in starting a student organization for Legal Studies? A student association can help you network with upper classmen, as well as graduates, and networking is often key in finding a job.

must be willing to get out of your comfort zone and GET INVOLVED. The state paralegal association has regional meetings and speakers that discuss the hot legal topics and serve our community through service projects,

RESUME TIPS:



Fill your resume with "PAR" statements. PAR stands for Problem-Action-Results. First, state the problem that existed in the workplace, describe how you handled it, and then point out the results.

(What is a Paralegal, Continued from page 3)

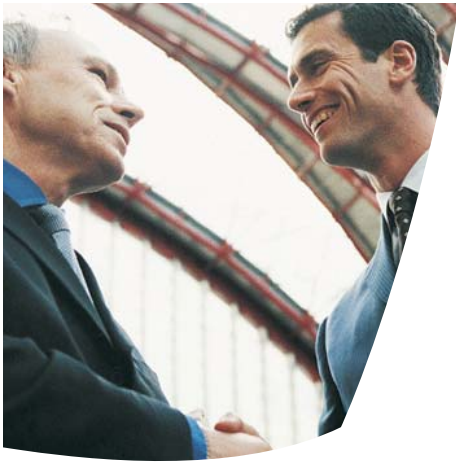
bilities to oversee the paralegals work and maintain direct contact with the clients, especially when a paralegal has worked for the same firm for many years and the attorney has become comfortable with the paralegal's abilities.

Canon 6 spells out the need for paralegals to continue their education and skills by participating in continuing education opportunities. This Canon states that a "legal assistant must strive to maintain integrity and a high degree of competency through education and training with respect to professional responsibility, local rules and practice, and through continuing education in substantive areas of law to better assist the legal profession in fulfilling

its duty to provide legal service." Technology for law firms is changing and improving daily and paralegals are often at the forefront advising firms on which technology would best help their firms. Attending paralegal seminars and technology seminars, while providing great networking opportunities, also provides paralegals with a wealth of knowledge to help keep their computer skills updated and to stay current with rule changes and standard forms.

Finally, Canon 4 states that paralegals "must use discretion and professional judgment commensurate with knowledge and experience but must not render independent legal judgment in place of an attorney. The services of an attorney are essential in the public

(What is a Paralegal, Continued on page 5)



prove invaluable. As a student, you may need help that an upper classman can provide. As a working paralegal, you may need the assistance of a paralegal in another part of the state or with a topic that you are not familiar with. So why not get involved today? Membership forms for NALA and

GRAMMAR TIPS:



such as the Wills for Heroes programs, as well as numerous walks such as the Buddy Walk for Downs Syndrome and the Susan G. Komen Walks for Breast Cancer.



AAPI are available at NALA.org and alabamaparalegals.org.

Do not use a comma when writing only two date elements, namely, the month and the year, the month and the day, or the season and the year.

Being involved in any organization takes time and commitment, but the benefits often

*(What is a Paralegal,
Continued from page 4)*

interest whenever such legal judgment is required."

All paralegals, at times, may be required to ask the following questions: "Is the task that the attorney is asking me to do outside the realm of ethics...is this the unauthorized practice of law...how can I ask to be sure?" For new legal assistants, these questions may be particularly difficult and they may need to seek out the assistance or advice of a seasoned paralegal. Even seasoned paralegals may find themselves struggling with ethical situations in which the attorney, either knowingly or innocently, has thrust upon them. It is in these times that seeking advice from the managing partner, office manager, or someone in the local paralegal association is wise.

Seasoned paralegals also need to take an active role in continuously educating attorneys, bar associations, the public, and new paralegals on the job responsibilities and functions of paralegals and the ethical guidelines which regulate our profession. We cannot rely on others to be knowledgeable in this regard.

We must be persistent with this education so that the paralegal profession will continue to grow unhampered by ethical snarls. Opportunities for paralegals to work with state and local bar associations will be enhanced by our clear understanding of what we do — and making sure others understand as well.



Increasing Your Billable Hours

day. By doing so, you will find that it is easier to track and you do not lose billable time.

Only do things that you can bill for: if the work is not billable, assign it to other staff.

Tracking your billable time can at times be a daunting task. When you are slammed at work and struggling for every minute to just get your work out, entering your time may fall to the back of your list of things to do. Try instead to make it a habit to enter your time as you go along each

Lastly, identify areas where you may be losing time and concentrate on tracking that time. Two of these areas may be phone calls and responding to emails. Make it a priority to write down each phone call and flag important messages that you may bill for if you cannot enter that time during the day.

MANAGING YOUR TIME



First, identify your goals and priorities. Next, analyze how you are using your time. Match your priorities to how you are spending your time. Finally, develop a plan to spend more time on your priorities.



Getting Organized

Much of a paralegal's time is spent getting — and staying organized. Keeping track of multiple pleadings, correspondence, emails and exhibits is a daily task. There are several methods that can be used to stay organized — whether it be a document management program or simple notebooks. Either way a paralegal is spending her time indexing and reviewing documents.

When deciding which method may be right for you, start by looking at the case and deciding how document intensive it may be. Cases

with hundreds of exhibits are often best managed with a software program. Once you have a game plan, talk with your attorney and discuss the plan to make certain that he is on board with your ideas. Some attorneys would prefer notebooks and you may find that a blend of both may work best.

Start organizing your file the minute the case comes in the office and spend time each day organizing new information and documents. Creating a “cast of characters” or index of parties and a timeline of events is a good way to help you keep focused on the issues of the case. Finally, as with the billing suggestions above, make filing and clean-up a daily part of your routine.