

STARTING YOUR SECOND CAREER

You have finished your paralegal program and probably an internship but where do you go from here? I have seen this blog post many times but the answers for the most part are the same. Get involved! Yes, most firms or businesses hiring paralegals want experienced paralegals however, there are some that don't. Smaller firms like paralegals with limited experience so they can mold them their way. I don't care how experienced you are when you start a new job the new office has a different way of doing things, so don't feel like a fish out of water when it happens to you. It's not because you are new to the paralegal world it is because you are new to the office.

Of course, there are many places that want experience. But how do you get experience when you just got out of school? Don't forget about your internship experience, but most of all don't forget about your prior experience! Use your prior experience to bring out the best of who you can be and what you can bring to your new firm or business. Never forget that legal offices/departments are also teams and everyone brings something to the table. At times what you bring to the table is your life or prior work experiences. Don't be afraid to speak up in interviews or once you land the job. Times change and so do people, so when you are working on a case your judgment of what are key facts or stratagems may not fit with what someone else thinks because you are different ages, ethnicities, backgrounds and the list goes on. We are all important. Law firms and legal departments are looking, or should be, for diversity not just in race but all areas so they can get a good perspective on what a judge, jury, administrative officer, etc. may see that they don't.

You should always study the firm/business you are interviewing with to look sharp in the interview but also to work out ways that your prior experiences can help you land the job. It may not be obvious to the interviewer or it may be something that you left off of your resume due to size restrictions. I recently experienced that myself in an interview. I brought up past legal jobs in real estate and bankruptcy to help get a job because I had not listed them on my resume due to keeping my resume at two pages but still listing good bullet points at the most recent positions. It's like a teeter totter what do you include and what do you leave out?

Another way to gain experience is to volunteer at your area legal aid office. Many of them have monthly projects in which they will train you for their project and you get to list the training and experience on your resume. Besides you never know who you will end up working with on these projects, it may be an attorney doing pro bono work looking for someone just like you. It is an easy way to show off your skills and personality while serving the community, what can be better than that!

It never hurts to join and be involved in your local paralegal association either. You would be amazed at the networking that goes on at local events, mixers and meetings. You find out about jobs that never make it to the newspapers or job boards. Plus, you now have access to the association job board and you gained a lot of friends looking for a job just for you!

Don't give up too easy, you will get there. There are more places for paralegals than ever before and yours it out there.

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