



May



***eDigest
Mini***

May

2022

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

Thank you to everyone who attended our Annual Conference! There were so many wonderful moments: the old friends we hugged, new friends we made, the business connections with our amazing vendors (and the much appreciated gifts they brought for us), the generous donations to Ukraine, our distinguished speakers who knocked it out of the park, all came together after a two year hiatus. Amazingly, there were quite a few attendees who traveled a distance to participate, which was quite heartwarming. THANK YOU TO ALL! I heard from so many that the APA conference is one of the best around and the Conference Committee works hard to earn that reputation. After a couple of weeks of R&R, we will begin planning the 2023 conference. If you had fun and were enriched by the event, I encourage you to reach out to us at board@azparalegal.org and volunteer with planning. A survey requesting conference feedback went out to attendees last Friday. If you haven't already, please take a moment to respond so we can keep providing the content you want.

We were so appreciative of everyone who contributed to our charity raffle to support Ukraine. The APA contributed a few of the prizes and some amazing friends (Dee Tartaglio and Sylvia Oliver) also donated handmade quilts and diamond art. Together we collected and donated \$1,100 to St. Mary's Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the charity we adopted through local attorney Mike Baraban. It is not too late to contribute. [UKRAINE COMMUNITY CHARITY](#).

With never a dull moment at the APA, we are now focusing on the NALA conference which, as you know, is being held right here in Phoenix from July 14-16. A link to register is below. Remember, early bird registration (and the reduced attendance price) expires on May 13th so don't forget to take advantage of that deal! Your APA board members will be in attendance, handing out "survive the heat" gift bags to the conference attendees. If you do plan to attend and would like to help man the APA table, we would love to have your participation. We're also hosting a first night happy hour in the lobby of the JW Marriott Desert Ridge for arriving attendees, so if you're making the conference a staycation, join us! The keynote speaker this year is Arizona's own Commissioner Melissa Zabor who will share the successes of Maricopa County's Therapeutic Courts and the life transformations that participants experience through the program. Surely something NOT to miss!

Lastly, as a correction to the CODEJ article in the April eDigest. It was brought to my attention that APA member Sybil Taylor Aytch has been a long time member of CODEJ (which is under the auspices of the Arizona Supreme Court) as she was appointed in 2021 to a 3 year term by committee chair, Judge Frankie Jones. We look forward to working with Sybil on the amazing work

CODEJ is doing in the community. We greatly appreciate receiving everyone's feedback and learning of our members' accomplishments.

While the board of directors is a big part of the operation of the APA, YOU, our members, are the true life blood. I am humbled and awed by the successes of our members and look forward to hearing more from you. Just like me, many of you have traveled a circuitous route to where we are now, but those course corrections and life scars have made us who we are today. Everyone is much appreciated and very welcome.

Until next month, be well.

Karen Flaaen, CP

We would like to share this space and highlight you and your accomplishments. Please consider sending us original works on topics of interest to our membership. Just reply to this newsletter with content and/or questions.

Membership NEWS

Welcome New Members

Joseph Baca

Bret Cunningham

Michele Johnson

Deidra Migliorini

Danielle Miller

Gabriella Montagnino

Anastasia Murray

Roslyn Muzychenko

Michele Pfeiffer

Tiffany Rivera

Michelle Ziegler

If you have any questions, suggestions or comments, please feel free to contact us at membership@azparalegal.org.



NALA'S WEBSITE: Visit www.nala.org for information on all things NALA, including certification, advanced certification, and upcoming webinars. Be sure to check out NALA Commons, an area where paralegals can network, ask questions, get advice, and share valuable information with one another.

NALA MEMBERSHIP: NALA provides exceptional continuing education and professional development for Paralegals. Joining NALA gives you access to a number of benefits that can help you advance your paralegal career. Check it out here!
<https://www.nala.org/Membership>

NALA MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY MEMBERS: Are you celebrating a milestone anniversary with NALA? Each quarter, NALA honors and recognizes those individuals who have reached 5, 10 15, 20, and 25-year anniversaries with them. If you have reached one of these milestones, you are eligible to receive one of NALA's complimentary anniversary pins. Claiming yours is easy, just visit

www.nala.org/about-nala/milestone-members to start the process. Congratulations on this achievement!

NALA FACTS & FINDINGS AND WEBINARS: NALA is always looking for individuals to write articles for their quarterly publication, Facts & Findings, and presenters of webinars. If you have a gift of writing or speaking, or simply want to try your hand at it, contact me at cheryl.viscontii@gmail.com. This will afford you the opportunity to gain national exposure and teach to others at the same time. You do not have to be a member of NALA to do either of these.

SAVE THE DATE: 2022 NALA Conference is being held on July 14-16, 2022, at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa in Phoenix, Arizona. Visit [NALA CONFERENCE](#) to learn more about it.



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Recent Legal News:

Justia Legal Analysis – Verdict:

[Religious Freedom in Prisons and the Military](#)

[US Supreme Court rules Puerto Ricans can be excluded from federal benefits program](#)

Notary Bulletin - National Notary Association:

[How To Fix A Bad Notary Seal Impression](#)

[3 Tips For Documents Without Notary Certificates](#)

[How To Notarize For A Visually Impaired Signer](#)

Other Articles:

Maricopa County Superior Court Announces eFile capabilities expansions for Family Court went into effect on March, 17, 2022. eFiling for case initiating family law documents will become mandatory for attorneys beginning June 1, 2022. This expansion allows for the eFiling of case initiating documents through the statewide eFiling portal, [eFileAZ](#).

The court now also provides electronic applications for the deferral and waiver of court fees. The application is only applicable to the Family Court, Civil and Tax case types. [Visit application page](#).



[Click Here for More CLE Opportunities](#)



Recipes

Some fun recipes to try!

[Lemony Tortilla Soup with Spinach and Dill](#)

[Lemon Bars](#)

[Paper Plane Cocktails](#)



A Little Inspiration for the Week

**"Spring will come and so will happiness. Hold on.
Life will get warmer. "**

- Anita Krizzan

The Pros and Cons of Going Solo vs. Large Firm

By: Laurie Fields

April 15, 2022

Are you a paralegal trying to decide on working at a solo vs large firm? Applying for your first or early-career legal positions may be a little daunting. A little research, introspection, and narrowing the field will assist in targeting your search.

Decide Where You Want to Work

People will float, fight, or navigate. This is true in all areas of life. In the legal field, floating along to get your foot in the door can result in you being somewhere you didn't know you *weren't* looking for. Floating means you aren't intentional, and you stumble into an area of law, a type of law firm, or a specific position in a firm that may not be the best fit.

Fighting means you take a specific legal position because, well, you need a job, and once there, you wish it were something different. You're left fighting against the current methods of the firm or with your position in the firm, which can leave you with an unhappy experience.

Why not navigate those choices to land where best fits your personality, work style, energy level, and desired compensation?

Solo vs Large Firm

If you are new, you may not understand the pros and cons of working for a solo practitioner or smaller firm versus a large (or gargantuan) law practice. Below are the pros and cons to consider:

Solo Practice

- Often lacks extra support staff
- You will likely be required to perform multiple functions
- Will likely have greater levels of responsibility
- Can lack benefits packages or benefits may be limited
- Greater opportunities for remote work
- Greater opportunities for larger bonuses
- Can lack the compensation of larger firms
- Chief cook and bottle washer – literally
- More relaxed in overall policies and procedures
- Lack of peers

Larger Firm

- Often more support staff
- A little more glitz
- More compartmentalized
- Often better benefits packages
- Compensation generally higher
- Not as highly bonused
- More room for upward movement
- More personalities to learn
- Greater opportunities for peer relationships

Before we step into the differences in compensation, it is helpful to evaluate the differences between a small or solo firm versus a large firm. Smaller does not mean a practice that is not high-powered and busy. Depending upon the area of practice, small or solo firms can run at breakneck speed.

A larger firm handles volume, but in general, a larger firm will offer greater levels of support. That may come in the form of legal secretaries, runners, file clerks, copy people, or even assistants whose job it is to schedule, docket, or do document management.

One downside of a larger firm is your potential limitation to a specific area or set of tasks. In litigation, for example, in a large firm, as a [litigation paralegal](#), you may perform only discovery tasks whereas, in a small firm, you may be handling case intakes, case management, writing demands, filing lawsuits, performing discovery, legal research, motion practice, and trial practice. You may be happy in a setting where you perform specific tasks but that is a good thing to know when interviewing.

In this pro/con scenario, the chief cook and bottle washer thing of a smaller firm is literal. In a smaller setting, you may feel like you handle everything, and that can even include some of the accounting chores (and a little trash removal – seriously!).

Whichever you prefer, [when interviewing](#), ask questions about the responsibilities of the position and if there is room to learn new skills or tasks that will assist you in becoming a

more well-rounded paralegal. Beware of firms that run like mills and have a track record of spitting people out through a revolving door. Make a few phone calls, call a few connections, join your local paralegal associations and national associations like NALA or NFPA. Networking is crucial and will steer you to firms, big or small, that have good reputations for compensation, mentoring, and upward movement.

I've worked in both settings. Moving out to a more suburban area resulted in a \$15,000 a year cut in pay many years ago (many), but I was close to home, which meant little to no commute time, and I regained 2 hours a day of my life. That was more time for kids, laundry, cooking... (hmm...Is this a good thing?) Before my daughter was born, I used the commute time to decompress, but after becoming a Mom, I was not interested in late-night, 1:00 a.m. run-throughs of opening statements, last-minute changes to trial schedules, and making sure my people were going to show up at the courthouse the following day.

Circumstances change. Make sure the position fits the needs of your current circumstances. For me, larger firms created friendships and peer relationships, while the smaller firms allowed me to stretch myself. Be introspective.

Ask yourself a few questions.

- What is your highest priority?
- Are you high-energy?
- Do you enjoy the hustle and bustle of the city and being close to the action?
- Or do you prefer close-to-home, no-traffic drama and being out of the midst of the major law firms and courts?

That will dictate the “where.” The “who” is a little trickier because small firms can be extremely busy, insane in fact, with evening runs downtown to drop notebooks for a big mediation and little additional staff to support your needs.

Compensation

I hear about the low incoming wages for new legal assistants, and yes, someone at Chick-Fil-A might indeed make a larger hourly wage than a new, incoming paralegal. No disrespect to Chick-Fil-A, but do you really want to serve crispy chicken sandwiches all day? You have chosen a profession presumably because you enjoy the law and want to contribute at the highest level. Starting incomes may not reflect that, but that is not the end of the story. Incomes rise as experience grows.

The new Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics will be released on March 31, 2022. Looking back to 2020 information, the mean hourly wages for Paralegals and Legal Assistants was \$27.22 per hour, with a mean annual wage of \$56,610. States with the highest employment levels were Florida, California, Texas, New York, and Illinois, with annual wages ranging from \$52,100 to \$60,390. Cities such as San Francisco have an annual mean wage of \$75,820, whereas Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale comes in low at \$54,040 annual mean wage.

The top-paying industries that utilize paralegals and legal assistants are merchant wholesalers or in nondurable goods, where an annual mean wage could be as high as \$134,210, followed by investment pools and funds at \$76,560, to the management of companies and enterprises.

Federal jobs don't lag too far behind. These numbers exclude all legal secretaries and administrative assistants. When you dig a little further into the statistics, the metropolitan area with the highest annual mean wage was Napa, CA, where hourly rates run \$44.76, while the nonmetropolitan area with the highest employment of paralegals and legal assistants was the Kansas nonmetro area with an hourly wage of \$15.03. See [Paralegals and Legal Assistants \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov).

Perhaps the statistics will steer you into an area of law because of the higher pay. If that is not your driving factor, look for a firm that fits your personality, mission, and drive. That will serve you best in the end.

6 Ways to Expand Your Paralegal Education

By: Eva Merrell

April 8, 2022

Don't Settle for the Tip of the Iceberg

Anyone who has spent any time on social media has seen memes depicting an iceberg. The top part of the iceberg illustrates what people see, while the portion below the waterline depicts what people don't see. That portion is not only much deeper than the portion above the surface, it is often much wider as well. If such a meme depicted a paralegal's education, the visible tip of the iceberg would represent the formal, foundational education and essential working skills of that paralegal.

These are the qualifications that clients, attorneys, and other professionals see in day-to-day interactions with the paralegal. What, then, would the underwater chunk of ice delineate?

And what would a paralegal do if they wanted to delve into that deeper and wider realm of ice?

Most paralegals have at least an associate's degree or a certificate in paralegal studies.^[1] Many possess a bachelor's or master's degree. In addition, certified paralegals and paralegals who work in certain states are required to continually update their legal education.

Many paralegals feel that obtaining and maintaining their education is not enough. They wish to dive into the depths in order to broaden their legal education, deepen their understanding, diversify their skills, and learn new areas of the law. Fortunately for these paralegals, there are numerous ways in which to do this.

1. Maximize Continuing Legal Education

Although the stated purpose of continuing legal education ("CLE") is to update and maintain a paralegal's legal education, CLE can also be used for advanced training. Attending webinars presented by [paralegal associations](#), bar associations, and other providers on subjects outside a paralegal's field of law is a great way to broaden their legal understanding. For instance, commercial litigation paralegals can benefit from CLEs

explaining the methods of determining the appropriate type of business organization or drafting contracts. Conversely, corporate paralegals can increase their understanding of properly filing Uniform Commercial Code financing statements by attending CLEs analyzing litigation related to invalid liens.

2. Explore Other Formal Educational Opportunities

Many professional associations outside the legal field provide continuing education sessions in their areas of expertise. Attending webinars or seminars presented by accountants, insurance brokers, surveyors, information technology specialists, and other professionals can allow a paralegal to develop a deeper insight into financial, business, or scientific factors relating to their legal specialty. For example, paralegals concentrating in construction law may benefit from continuing education seminars presented by engineers regarding trends in the construction industry.

Vendors such as business service providers and title insurance companies often provide free or nominally priced webinars, making these courses a great choice for paralegals who desire to expand their education into disciplines outside their usual area of law.

Community colleges offer non-credit courses in such areas as business formation, project management, finance, real estate licensure, and estate planning. Although these are geared to the general public, they can provide a helpful introduction to, or refresher on, such topics for paralegals who specialize in other areas.

LinkedIn and similar apps provide a wide variety of online training and certificate programs.

3. See the Bigger Picture

Reading books, visiting museums, watching documentaries or historical films, and listening to podcasts that dig deeply into a subject can provide paralegals with a greater understanding of their field of law. These activities can help paralegals comprehend not just how things are done, but also why they are done. For instance, the book “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks,” by Rebecca Skloot, demonstrates the need for and purpose of disclosure, consent, and other ethical considerations in healthcare law.

Museum exhibits and podcasts personalize significant court cases or legal developments such as the evolution of labor or environmental laws. Paralegals who subscribe to trade journals in fields related to their area of expertise can gain a more thorough insight into the business conducted by their firm’s clients. An example would be a paralegal working in maritime law who subscribes to *The Journal of Shipping and Trade*.

Even general interest magazines such as *Bloomberg Businessweek* or *Time Magazine* can alert paralegals to national and global news events and trends that may impact their employer, clients, or legal specialty. Paralegals can use all of these sources to deepen their understanding of the relationships between a particular area of law and the economy, industry, society, and politics as a whole.

4. Volunteer

Becoming an active member of a paralegal or other professional association can be a valuable way to broaden a paralegal’s legal skills and knowledge. For example, serving as a

secretary or treasurer of a paralegal association can increase a paralegal's grasp of corporate procedure and financial reporting.

Volunteering at a legal aid agency or other nonprofit can provide paralegals with the opportunity to practice skills they may not be able to in their work. Participating in the work performed by professional or charitable organizations can increase paralegals' knowledge of the substantive area of law addressed by those groups.

Working on pro bono cases or projects with colleagues can introduce paralegals to areas of the law outside their usual legal discipline. For instance, transactional paralegals may increase their knowledge of litigation by volunteering at a nonprofit organization that assists low-income persons facing eviction.

Additionally, becoming active in any of these types of associations or charities can provide paralegals with an opportunity to participate in the following activities.

5. Write Articles and Blog Posts

Although it may sound counterintuitive, teaching others is a great way to learn new information or skills or to strengthen one's understanding of a topic. Many paralegal associations publish journals and newsletters for fellow paralegals. Paralegal blogs and magazines provide additional [educational resources for paralegals](#).

The publishers of these media often seek articles, columns, and [blog posts from paralegals](#) on substantive or procedural topics.

Writing an article about a familiar legal issue is a wonderful way to practice one's research and communication skills and to develop a deeper understanding of that particular topic. Composing a post for a blog or social media account regarding a favorite procedure, tip, or shortcut can be an invaluable way to solidify one's understanding of the subject.

In the words attributed to Aristotle, [t]hose who know, do. Those who understand, teach."

6. Present Webinars, Seminars, and In-House Training

These endeavors incorporate all of the procedures required to write articles and blogposts but add the challenge of public speaking. Many surveys report that fear of public speaking is one of the top phobias for numerous people. Conquering this fear has many benefits for paralegals. Those who have the confidence and skills to present webinars, conduct in-house training, or present a topic at a meeting have a substantial advantage over those who do not.

Additionally, the practice of public speaking encourages the speaker to become thoroughly familiar with the topic upon which they are presenting. Interacting with audience members bolsters a paralegals' ability to actively listen to other parties, think on their feet, and refocus after having been distracted. All of these skills are essential to [effective communication](#).

Paralegals can find many opportunities to increase their public speaking ability without committing to presenting a lengthy seminar to a large audience. Paralegal association meetings and other professional organization gatherings furnish such opportunities. Paralegals can preside over the proceedings, introduce guest speakers, or deliver committee or officer reports.

Training new paralegals or other staff members, educating junior associates on how to utilize paralegals, or making presentations at practice group or departmental meetings are additional ways in which paralegals can flex their public speaking muscles and deepen their substantive knowledge.

Groups such as [Toastmasters](#) provide the chance to practice their public speaking skills regularly in an informative, friendly environment.

Benefits of Diving Below the Waterline

Although paralegals, especially those working at law firms, have limited opportunities to be promoted to positions with new titles, they have an almost endless capacity to grow their careers. By undertaking any of the steps outlined above, paralegals can broaden and deepen their skills and understanding of the legal field. They can increase their appreciation of the role their chosen area of law plays in their community, the economy, and society at large.

Perhaps more importantly, these endeavors can inspire paralegals to excel in their careers, become leaders in their field, and find greater meaning in their work.



Remember -
our fallen heros.
They are the reason
that we are free.



Board Meeting

The next APA Board meeting will be held on **Tuesday, June 7, at 5:45 p.m.** via Zoom. Contact board@azparalegal.org for more information. All are welcome to attend.

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