



***eDigest
Mini***

July 2022

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

The APA's mission is pretty straightforward: "To promote the professional development of paralegals, and to provide continuing legal education programs, seminars and monthly lunch time online webinars for its members." To accomplish that goal, a hard-working group of volunteers makes sure that programming, scholarships and general information is available to our members. I'd like to give a shout out to a few of these volunteers that you very rarely see but nonetheless are critical to the APA's success.

Take for instance, this eDigest. Two of our board members, **Alesia Hansen and Vanessa Fort**, create the newsletter each month. While we encourage members to submit content, the bulk of the news comes from research that Alesia and Vanessa do on their own. They strive to find current and interesting legal articles and also include some fun recipes so the eDigest has a lighter side. Since they took over as editors in mid-2021, the eDigest has a new feel and readership has increased.

Another little seen but much appreciated board member is **Briana Oliver**, who oversees the Job Bank. Briana is located in Tucson, but that never stops her from participating in APA meetings and events. She has been instrumental in making sure that Tucson job positions are highlighted in the Job Bank. Briana is assisted by long-time member and faithful volunteer **Betsy Wolf**. When emailing jobbank@azparalegal.org, you are communicating with Betsy. She uploads all the ads into the online Job Bank and provides Briana with a weekly listing of those positions to blast out via email each week. Briana and Betsy are a great team!

There are many others working behind the scenes at the APA. My point is to remind everyone that it takes a village to keep the APA going. All of our planning work is done remotely. If you have a computer, internet and a heart for service, you too can make a difference. Elections are coming in December 2022 and **all** elected positions are open. We would love to see new people take a leadership role at the APA, try out new ideas and bring a fresh outlook to the table. Please stay tuned for more information, but if anyone is thinking of joining the board, begin by reviewing the descriptions at: [Board of Directors](#).

Until next month, stay 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

Karla Mostenbocker

Daniel Rhinehart

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

UPCOMING APA WEBINARS

Mark your calendars for the upcoming APA
webinars!!!

- Mental Health Court with Commissioner Van Wie on August 10th!
- Deed Fraud in Arizona with Jesi Wolnik on September 14th!



August 2022 “Learn at Lunch” Webinar:

Wednesday, August 10, 2022

12:00 to 1:00 p.m. - 1 CLE



Mental Health Court: A Matter of Justice

***Hon. AnnieLaurie Van Wie, Commr. of Superior Court
and Colleagues***



Hon. AnnieLaurie Van Wie was appointed a Commissioner of the Superior Court in Maricopa County in 2013. She received her B.A. and J.D. from University of Wisconsin. Commr. Van Wie served as a Maricopa Deputy County Attorney prior to her appointment to the bench, and served as Chair of the Arizona State Bar’s Criminal Justice Section. She serves on the Arizona Special Olympics’ General Management Team, Not MY Kid Professional Advisory Committee, and facilitates ASU’s Mock Trial Program.

- ***What Rules and Statutes govern the Mental Health Court?***
 - ***Can the Mental Health Court assist a homeless relative of a Client?***
 - ***What ethical issues exist in making a Mental Health Court referral?***
 - ***What forms must be completed for Mental Health Court?***
 - ***What happens at a Court-Ordered Treatment Hearing?***
-



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.

UPCOMING WEBINARS:

[Addressing Our Professional, Emotional, and Mental Health](#)

Wednesday, August 24th, 2022 - 12 P.M. Central Time

[Should I Stay Or Should I Go? Handling Burnout and Strategizing Next Steps](#)

Wednesday, August 31st, 2022 - 12 P.M. Central Time



Make sure your employer knows we have a FREE Job Bank! Please send ads to jobbank@azparalegal.org. To view current jobs please visit: <https://www.azparalegal.org/Jobs>



Recent Legal News:

eDiscovery:

[You Can Address the Inclusive Emails in Discovery Without Producing Them](#)

Jurist:

**Arizona Supreme Court
June 11, 2022 Decisions**

[Cal-Am Properties, Inc. v. Edais Engineering, Inc.](#)

Business Law, Construction Law, Contracts, Professional Malpractice & Ethics

[State of Arizona v Robinson](#)

Civil Rights, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law

Recent Decisions:

[Viking River Cruises, Inc. v. Moriana](#)

Arbitration & Mediation, Civil Procedure, Class Action, Labor & Employment Law

[Golan v. Saada](#)

Family Law, International Law

[Ysleta del Sur Pueblo v. Texas](#)

Gaming Law, Government & Administrative Law, Native American Law

[American Hospital Association v. Becerra](#)

Government & Administrative Law, Health Law, Public Benefits

[George v. McDonough](#)

Government & Administrative Law, Military Law, Public Benefits

Notary Bulletin - National Notary Association:

[4 Illegal Things Notaries Should Never Do — And Why](#)

[Notary Guidelines For Accepting Or Rejecting A Signer's ID](#)

Other Articles:

Mandatory eFile for Attorneys Initiating Family Court Documents - June 1st

Effective **June 1, 2022**, in accordance with Arizona Supreme Court [Administrative Order 2021-183](#), eFiling of case initiating family court documents is mandatory for attorneys appearing before the Maricopa County Superior Court.

Family court documents subject to mandatory eFile that are filed in paper form by attorneys will be rejected by the Clerk's Office, and the attorney will have to re-submit rejected documents via eFile. **The filings will not receive a retroactive filing date.**

The Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts offers live, online eFileAZ training sessions for attorneys, law firm staff and self-represented litigants. The training provides attendees with an opportunity to learn how to create and manage an account in eFileAZ, as well as create submissions for family court cases, obtain confirmed copies and e-serve other parties. The training is free of charge. You can find training details by visiting the [eFileAZ Training webpage](#).

STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

Applying for jobs can be stressful and overwhelming. Especially, when you are attempting to break into a new field with little to no experience. The article below has some great pointers for landing your first paralegal job. It is also important to practice for job interviews ahead of time. Have someone practice asking you questions. Preparing answers ahead of time will help you with answering on the spot later.

3 Mistakes That Could Be Preventing You From Landing That First Paralegal Job

By Ann Pearson

You went through your paralegal certificate program, and now you're looking for a paralegal job. But unfortunately, the fact that you have spent all that time and money preparing yourself to become a paralegal can feel fruitless when you are struggling to find that first paralegal job. There's a lot that [paralegal schools forget to mention](#).

Of all the posts I see on social media, whether it's in Facebook groups or LinkedIn groups – this is the biggest struggle for [new paralegals](#) and legal assistants – how do I get my foot in the door when everyone says they want 2 or more years of experience, but no one is willing to give me that experience.

There could be things that you are unknowingly doing that are preventing you from landing that first paralegal job, and I'm going to talk about the big 3.

But before I tell you about those 3, let me start by saying that in this job market, if you're seeing a paralegal job posting that wants at least 2 years of experience and you have no experience, I would still apply. Employers, especially in the legal industry, are having a really hard time filling open positions right now. If there was ever a time in history when law firms were more willing to look at hiring entry-level paralegals and legal assistants, it's now.

That being said, I would caution you in applying for a paralegal position that states they are looking for at least 10 years of experience. Here's why. They're most likely trying to fill a position that the hiring manager knows that the new person will not get much training. They need someone to come in immediately and know what to do, or the attorneys on that team are not very patient with mistakes or willing to provide training.

But if the ad says anything less than that, say 2 – 5 years of experience, in this job market you have a shot at landing that position. BUT and this is a big but – that's only going to happen if you're not making these 3 big mistakes.

1. Your Resume Has Mistakes or Formatting Issues

When you are trying to land your first paralegal or legal assistant job, you must make sure that you have an impeccable resume with absolutely no mistakes.

This may seem like a no-brainer, but you would be surprised at how many people send out resumes with typos or other errors. Usually, it's because you're in too much of a hurry to get the resume submitted. You're better off submitting it the next day if that means you have extra time for another proofread.

One skill that I talked about in an earlier podcast episode was attention to detail. Attention to detail is a skill that goes beyond just proofreading. I'll include a link to that episode in the show notes.

I would recommend that you have at least one other person proofread your resume before you start applying for jobs. And be sure to tell that person that you want their brutal honesty. If it's your mom and she doesn't want to hurt your feelings, that does no good whatsoever.

Look, I'm just going to be blunt here – if you can't take the time to make sure your resume is perfect, you are going to struggle, and it's going to take you a lot longer than other paralegal graduates to land a position.

I want to give you an example of something I see a bunch on social media. Someone complains about the whole “they won't hire me without experience, but how do I get the experience if no one will hire me?” I get it. It's the chicken and egg thing.

Here's a good litmus test to know if it's your resume that's holding you back from getting a position: how many times have you submitted your resume compared to how many times

you've received an interview request? If you've submitted your resume to 30 or 40 employers and have not received a single call-back, it's probably your resume. holding you back.

Look, you might be PERFECT for that paralegal position, but the employer is never going to know it if you never get to the interview phase.

2. Your Cover Letter is Generic

You're using a boilerplate cover letter addressed to whom it may concern, talking about how you would be such an asset to this company or that this is the perfect paralegal job for you.

You should write a strong, specific cover letter for each position you apply for instead of a copy and paste version that gets sent to everyone.

This is especially important when you have no paralegal experience. You have to find a way to connect your life experiences and transferrable skills to the paralegal position. A resume doesn't necessarily do that. The cover letter is the way to do that. Need inspiration? Check out these [cover letter samples](#).

3. You Don't Have the Right Mindset

I've got two different areas of the mindset that I want to talk about. The first one is the mindset that you are capable of doing this job. Even if you lack the hands-on paralegal experience they are looking for, that doesn't mean you can't quickly learn the ropes (assuming that you will be getting some on-the-job training).

I've conducted hundreds of job interviews over the past 3 decades, and you know which one stands out the most in my memory? The one I didn't want to give. When I was a paralegal manager, I was approached by a senior partner who said his long-time client and friend (in-house counsel at a big corporation in Atlanta), this client's brother's wife's sister or something like that, was moving into town and was looking for a paralegal job. The partner knew I was hiring for a paralegal position and asked if I would take a look at her resume and give her a courtesy interview...meaning you don't have to consider hiring her; just agree to interview her. So I did. Reluctantly, because it's not like I didn't have a dozen other things I could be doing with an hour of my time.

Her resume looked good, with no errors, and she had a great cover letter. The problem was that she only had an undergrad degree. No paralegal certificate. No paralegal experience. In fact, NO legal experience whatsoever, not even as a receptionist. But I agreed that I would interview her, so I did.

She showed up to this interview with such a vibrant personality, confident, comfortable, easy to talk to, and well, she just thoroughly impressed me. I knew that she would make a great paralegal from how she answered those questions and her attitude.

I convinced the attorneys on the team to interview her, even though they said the same thing "as a favor to the partner, sure, but you realize she has NO experience, no paralegal certificate, nothing. I realized that, but I think they needed to see what I saw in that interview.

They interviewed her and agreed that she would make a GREAT fit for their team, and with a willingness to learn, she'd eventually be a great paralegal.

She got the job. I trained her. And you know what, she was a GREAT paralegal. No experience. No certificate. She got the job because of her mindset and her attitude. And a perfect resume that didn't mess up her chances of getting the interview.

The Danger of the Wrong Mindset in the Interview

Now I want to tell you a story that's the complete opposite of how your mindset and attitude in the interview could hurt your potential to land that job. And the story is mine. Not a lot of people know this story. I know, well they will NOW. But I think it's that important to tell.

If you've been reading our blog for a while or been a part of the Paralegal Boot Camp world for a while, you know I started the company in 2010. So it's been a while. Well, when I first left Big Law, I would frequently get contacted by recruiters wondering if I'd be interested in this position or that position. Which I wasn't.

Until one day, a couple of years into the business, a recruiter reached out to me to see if I'd be interested in applying for a position at an AmLaw10 firm in a director role. It was a huge leap from the AmLaw 100 firm management position, and I thought, well, the worst that can happen is that firm now knows my company name and maybe will consider me when they need training for their paralegals, so I applied. I had a couple of Skype interviews. And the recruiter called to tell me that of the 250 applicants, they had telephone interviews with 84 people. Of those, they now chose 3 of those 84 to fly them out to San Francisco for in-person interviews and I was one of those 3.

That's quite a compliment, right? They paid for my flight and put me up for one night at the Four Seasons Hotel in San Francisco. So I spend the whole day in airports and on a flight. Then I go in for a 5:00 interview (5:00 California time, so it was 8:00 Atlanta time for me). But that's okay.

I was sitting in this huge law firm's plush, beautiful reception area. As I was sitting there waiting for them to bring me back to the conference room for one split second, I looked around and said to myself, "I just don't know if I can go back to this lifestyle. I don't know if I want to give up my business to go back to this." It was just a flitter of a thought.

They came to get me. We had a great interview that was more conversational than a question and answer session. I felt pretty good about how it went.

A few days later, the recruiter called me and said they had chosen one of the other 3 candidates. Then she added, you know they REALLY liked you, or you wouldn't have gone that far in the interview process. So I asked them why not me...and they said, "she didn't really act like she was excited about the job. Almost like she didn't want it."

Now I swear to you that I had wiped that thought out of my mind before I went into that conference room. But you know what, it doesn't work like that with mindset. Subconsciously, I didn't want to close my business and go back to work for a law firm, and the universe helped me out. Thank goodness! Because I wouldn't trade the last 10 years for anything. I absolutely love what I do every single day.

So for your next interview for that paralegal or legal assistant job, what kind of mindset do you want to have? Because that will help dictate what the result of that interview will be. You can prep for that next interview with this [paralegal interview checklist](#).



Recipes

Some fun recipes to try!

[Hawaiian Hot dogs](#)

[Loaded Baked Potato Salad](#)

[Red, White and Blue Trifle](#)

[Fourth of July Cocktail](#)

[Raspberry Cocktail - Non Alcoholic](#)



A Little Inspiration for the Week

"It's okay to look back at the past. Just don't stare."

- Benjamin Dover

THANK YOU APA MEMBERS!!!

We would like to thank all of the attendees who graciously donated to Ukraine during the Annual Legal Conference. We received a wonderful response and thank you letter from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Everyone had a part in helping the individuals who have been impacted by the war and aided in providing some much needed things. Below you can read how much the assistance was appreciated. We hope this helps encourage everyone to have a wonderful month of July.



Ukrainian Orthodox Church of

ST. MARY'S PROTECTRESS

1102 N. 10th Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Tel: church (602) 254-3752

Vicariate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in the USA, Australia, Canada, and Japan Inc.

Federal non-profit tax-exempt status under IRS Code Section 501 (c) (3). Tax # 45-048814

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Arizona Paralegal Association

P.O. Box 10364

Phoenix, AZ 85064

Dear Arizona Paralegal Association

On behalf of St. Mary's Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Church, I would like to thank you for your generous donation of \$1100 in support of humanitarian aid for Ukraine. We're overwhelmed and inspired by your kindness and generosity.

Please know Ukraine needs three things to prevail in this war: more military support, more sanctions to isolate Russia, and financial support to those remaining inside Ukraine. Your unselfishness helps Ukraine achieve one of these goals. Thank you for caring so deeply and helping St. Mary's Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Church help Ukraine and give the Ukrainian people the power of resilience and hope.

As of today, we've shipped three full trucks, with over 600 boxes of donated medical supplies to Meest Cargo Company in Glendale, CA for shipment to Ukraine at a cost of \$20,000. We've sent \$25,000 to the Ukrainian National Bank Humanitarian fund. We've sent \$10,000 to the Polish Congress Committee Ukrainian Relief Fund. We've sent \$10,000 to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Ukraine Kyiv Emergency Relief Fund, \$10,000 to the Prytula Charity Humanitarian Fund. \$25,000 to the Murahy Charity Fund for 80 armor vests and an emergency transport vehicle for a mobile hospital unit. We've sent over \$25,000 worth of negative pressure vacuum devices (11) to a trauma hospital in Lviv. We recently received a letter from a doctor at the hospital telling us how these devices are saving limbs and the lives of soldiers. They asked if it was possible to get more devices; we will be shipping 14 more devices this week. All of this was possible because of your generosity. We ask for your prayers and continued support for the Ukrainian people.

Thank you once again and God bless you.

Sincerely,


Victor Szwed

It Is About More Than Just Paralegal Skills

By: Ann Pearson

June 9, 2022

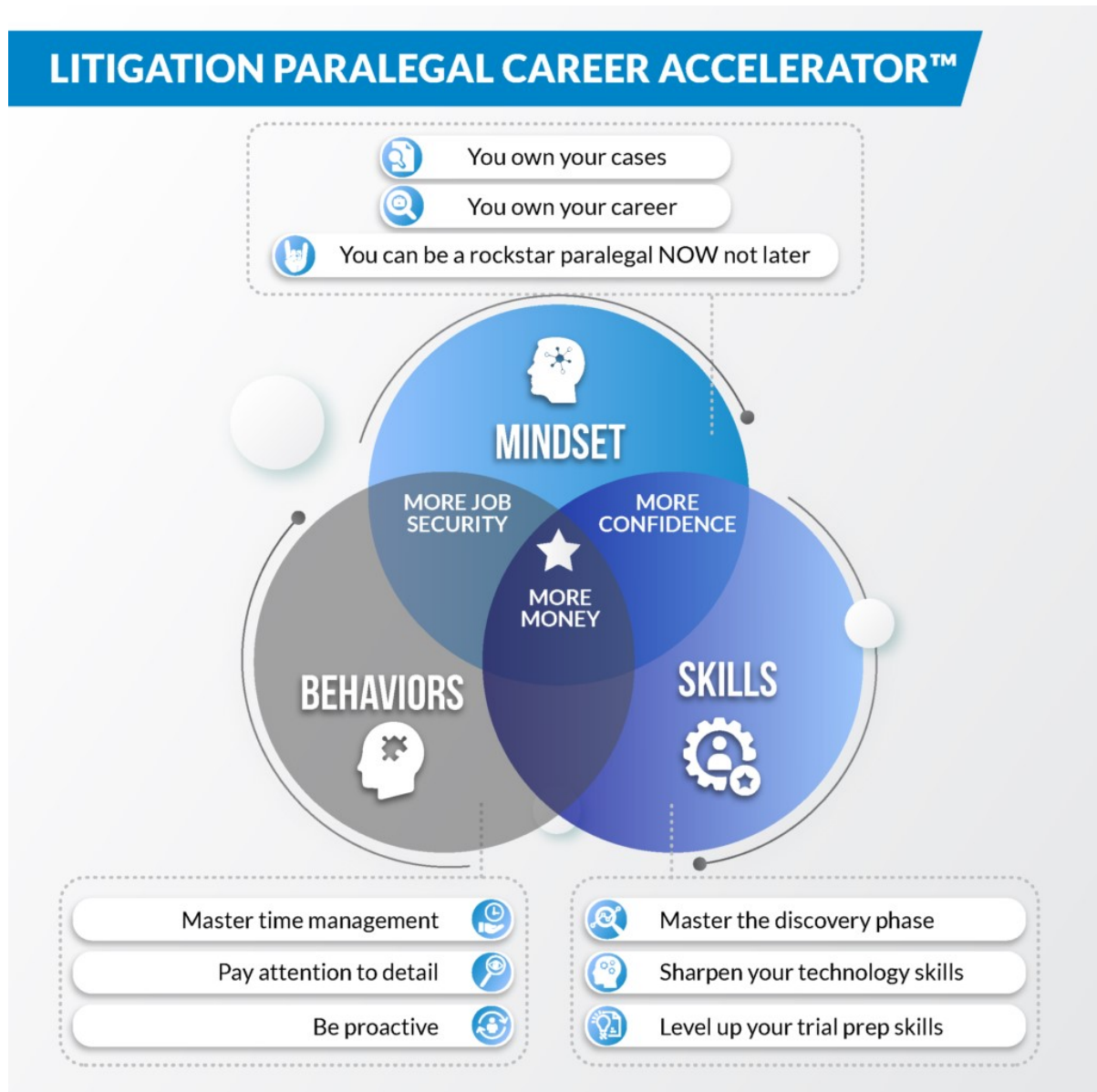
A new litigation paralegal should look at three key areas early in their career. If you only focus on the paralegal skills that you might be lacking early in your career, then you might spend too much time focused on how many decades it will take you to gain all of those skills.

These three key areas to focus on early in your litigation paralegal career are about more than just paralegal skills. They are mindset, behaviors, and skills and are the key to your success.

Now, the problem too often is most people just focus on paralegal skills, and ignore the other two. I can tell you, in the last 30 years, I've met a lot of paralegals who had excellent skills, but not the right mindset or behaviors.

And because of that, they haven't seen the same success as other paralegals. The same could be said about someone who has the right mindset, the right behaviors, and lacks the skills.

You can see in the Venn diagram below, that they all intersect. And there are three key areas that stem from each of them.



I developed this framework years ago when I designed the [Litigation Boot Camp](#). I call it the Litigation Paralegal Career Accelerator, and I developed the course curriculum around those nine critical areas.

1. Mindset

First, we focus on mindset:

- You can be a rockstar paralegal now, not 10 or 15 years from now
- Own your career
- Own your cases

2. Behaviors

Next, we look at behaviors:

- Be proactive
- Pay attention to detail
- Master [time management](#)

3. Skills

Finally, we center on litigation paralegal skills:

- Master the discovery phase (because that's where a litigation paralegal spends most of their time and energy)
- Sharpen your technology skills
- Level up your trial prep skills, even if you don't go to trial

The problem with focusing on just one of these areas is you might think that it will take years of experience to get it right.

I'm telling you it doesn't have to, but it does take all three: mindset, behaviors, and skills. Now notice how there isn't anything about education in there. That's because, as you know, if you're working as a litigation paralegal, they don't teach you how to be a great litigation paralegal in any paralegal certificate program. And education is not in this Venn diagram because there are plenty of successful litigation paralegals out there with no paralegal certificate.

Now, I'm not advocating that someone should not get a paralegal certificate. Not at all. I have a paralegal certificate. And it was while I was getting my paralegal certificate that one of the instructors told me about a job opportunity at a local law firm. The reason I don't advise skipping the paralegal certificate is that not having one will limit your job opportunities. Most large law firms require a paralegal certificate. But it's not critical where you get your certificate from, and it's not the paralegal certificate that determines how successful you will be. It is your mindset, your behaviors, and your skills.

I hired a paralegal who didn't have a paralegal certificate. And you know what, she is a great paralegal.

What makes firms allow for an exception during the interview where they hire someone who doesn't meet the firm's exact job description is their mindset and their drive. Litigation paralegal skills can be taught. Mindset and behaviors – they are learned, they are constantly changing, they are constantly evolving. In other words, you have to have a growth mindset.

In this blog, we're going to dive into that mindset, and I'm not talking about how you should have a positive, upbeat attitude.

Mindset #1: It Doesn't Take Years To Be A Rockstar Paralegal

What does it mean to be a rockstar litigation paralegal? Well, what would it look like for you? Maybe it's boatloads of money. There's nothing wrong with wanting to make a decent living, but it could also mean respect, credibility, and doing work that is challenging and rewarding.

Maybe it's having a window office. Or having the freedom to work from home.

I promise you, the mindset thing is so important. If nothing else, take away from this a little bit more kick in your step and confidence walking down the hall, knowing that you don't need to compare yourself to that 30-year paralegal. Maybe it did take them 10 or 20 years to get there when they started their career in the 90s. But that doesn't mean it has to take you that long.

Mindset #2: Take Ownership of Your Paralegal Career

Okay, the next mindset is to take ownership of your career. I call it investing in your career. And I love the story in Stephen Covey's Seven Habits about the habit of sharpening the saw because I think that this relates so much to a paralegal career and the importance of investing in your career. You can also check out the 7 Habits of the Indispensable Paralegal [here](#).

The story goes that this guy is up in a tree cutting this branch with a dull saw and somebody comes up underneath the tree and says, "Hey, I've got a saw sharpener down the road. It's in my barn a mile down the road and you're welcome to use it." The guy using the dull saw says, "No, it's going to take me too much time to get the saw out of the branch, climb down the tree. Walk to your barn. Sharpen the saw. And then walk back here and climb back up the tree. By that time I'll already have cut the branch."

Well, he didn't. It took him twice as long as he thought to get that branch cut. And where I see this a lot is when you don't continually invest in your career or take ownership of it and say, "This is my career. I own it. I'm only going to be as successful as what I put into it."

What happens to the quality of your work product if you continue working with a dull saw? 5, 10, 15 years in, it will take you longer to do things than other people. If you're not keeping up with technology and ways to do things better and more efficiently, you're essentially working with a dull saw.

Oftentimes paralegals go and get certified through NALA, NFPA, NALs, or get an eDiscovery certification or Legal Project Management certification, but only care about getting CLE credits. These certifications are all great and something I encourage, but the problem comes from concentrating on meeting the CLE credit requirement in the limited time you have, rather than focusing on adding the skills and changing behaviors or your mindset.

So over a two-year period, [you're required to get X amount of CLE credits](#). You take an hour webinar here and there from a judge or a lawyer teaching other lawyers how to interpret

some rule, maybe even in a practice area you don't even work in, which adds nothing to your skillset, does nothing for your mindset, and it does nothing to show you behaviors that could improve your career. But you get those CLE credits. In reality, though, what you really need is something that could impact your mindset or behaviors or your paralegal skills, not lawyer skills.

The problem is when you find something that doesn't give you a CLE certificate, it gets passed by.

It's not that I'm not saying that owning your career means taking extensive training. What I'm talking about could be a daily 15-minute video showing you how to do one little thing or a 20-minute podcast episode while you're driving to work. I highly recommend using a [career development plan](#).

It could be something as simple as setting up an Excel spreadsheet, where you make a list of everything you want to improve on this year. But it has to be more than just a list of what you want to learn.

Make a plan. Write down – This is the category of training I'm going to get. How am I going to get it? How much time is needed? When am I going to do it? What's the cost? Is it going to get reimbursed by my employer? And then keep track of it was completed.

Mindset #3: Take Ownership of Your Cases

In the Litigation Boot Camp, I call this becoming the information manager of your cases, rather than the task-master who gets piecemeal projects and doesn't know the big picture.

The way to take ownership of your cases is to know everything that is happening in those cases, and proactively manage those things well before the attorney asks you to do something.

You might be saying, well how can I possibly know everything that is happening in all of my cases. Put your eyes on everything that comes in on those cases.

Learn how to add mind-reading to your paralegal skill set [here](#). I don't talk about how to learn how to read someone's mind. Instead, I discuss how to [proactively manage your cases](#).

3 Ways to Work Better With Attorneys

By: Ann Pearson

May 27, 2022

Working with attorneys can be challenging. Really working with anyone can be, but we're here to give you 3 tips that will help you start working better together today.

From having the sometimes uncomfortable but necessary conversations to overcoming the obstacle of last-minute requests, here are 3 ways you can start working better with your attorneys.

1. Speak Up

Have the confidence to speak up when you know something is going wrong. Why? Because you're going to get blamed for it anyway, so why not at least speak up and let them know it's not the right way or the best way. Let me give you an example.

Back when I was a litigation paralegal, before I went into management, I went to a lot of trials. I had gained a lot of experience going to trial, but I was put on a case with a new attorney I had never worked with before. The case had been going on for a while, and I needed to get up to speed and [prep for trial](#) in a few weeks.

The night before the trial, the attorney asked me if he could see the notebooks for the judge's trial exhibits. Of course, weeks before, like any good litigation paralegal, I had called the office of the judge and asked how they wanted their copy of the trial exhibits. The clerk said, "For God's sake, do not send them in 5-inch D-ring binders or large notebooks. The judge is getting up there in age, and it's getting hard for him to lug those binders around. He would prefer individual folders for each exhibit labeled in big writing so that when the attorney calls out that trial exhibit number, he can just grab that one file folder out of the box." So that's how I organized them.

Fast-forward to the night before trial when this attorney asked to see the exhibits. I brought in one box, and he said, "No, no, no, that's not going to work. What I want is for each witness to have their own notebook, and it should only contain the exhibits that I'm going to talk to that witness about, in the order of the outline."

I told him that I didn't think that was going to work because the Judge's clerk said no notebooks and I explained the reasoning. He argued that these would be small notebooks, but I insisted that I didn't have the time to change everything that night before, but if he wanted it that way I could work on them a few days into the trial. It was simply too late to get it done then.

He was upset with me, but I spoke up. Because I knew what was going to happen. If he used these notebooks based on what he thought he was going to use and changed his mind while the witness was on the stand, then I would be scrambling not only to update the witness on the stand's notebook but the opposing counsel and judge's versions.

Fast forward, we're finishing one of the days at trial. The jury is dismissed by the judge and the judge turns to the opposing counsel asking them to take their notebooks back and redo them so that they look like ours. The attorney turns back and smiles at me, and I mouth I told you so. Yes, I could have been totally wrong in doing that and even into trouble for not doing what he wanted originally, but I knew it wasn't going to go over well.

For years after that, this attorney would always say, as I was talking to other partners, "Just listen to how she wants it done; she knows her stuff." I tell you this because there are so many times that you could be doing something where you know inside it's wrong. The attorney is telling you to do things a certain way because it's all they know, but keep in mind they're looking at it from a different perspective. They want to make sure their argument makes sense. They aren't looking at it from an organizational perspective like a litigation paralegal is.

Actionable strategies:

I want to give you a couple of different ones for working with attorneys depending on your situation. My first choice would be to join [toastmasters](#). Most people think the organization is just for people who want to give speeches. That's not all it does. It's a great way to build confidence in your speaking in all different areas of your life.

Another choice would be to join your local improv studio. There's nothing like being up on stage and having to come up with things to say to build up your confidence level.

If you have the budget, maybe take an online course or coaching program on speaking with confidence or building up self-confidence in a work environment.

But here's the thing. The more you do it, the better you will get at it. Just remember, you also have to get it right. Here's what I mean. In that situation, if I had been wrong about how to organize the exhibits and was just going on a whim, or I just didn't want to reorganize those trial exhibit notebooks the night before the trial began, and we'd gone into the courtroom, and we were the ones who the judge told to take our exhibits back and organize them as the other side had theirs. If that happened, then it would impact my confidence in the opposite direction. And if that happens too often, then it's going to get more and more difficult to have the confidence to speak up when something is going wrong.

2. Change Your Response

Don't think that you can change the procrastinator attorney; instead, change your response.

I get it. It's frustrating to get those last-minute projects thrown in your lap or thrown in your inbox. There are SO many jokes out there about attorneys being procrastinators.

But it's really pretty simple if you think about it. If you work with a procrastinator, you only have two options: change them or change how you respond to them.

I told [a story about the time](#) I felt like I needed to drive like a maniac (going way faster than the speed limit) to get that brief to the clerk's office and how that response to a procrastinator had to change.

Here are your options when working with attorneys. Option 1 is to change them. Get them to stop waiting until the last minute to give you projects. I can hear the laughter out there! I did a google search on how to work with a boss who was a procrastinator. If you really want to laugh, and you've got an hour to burn going down the Google rabbit hole, do that search. One of the articles was on an online newsletter for workplace issues. It gave 5 or 10 things that you can do. I want to read you one of them and see if you think this would work with your attorney:

Send him an email one to two days before the deadline and give a suggestion of how you will proceed if he isn't able to provide you with what you need. You say, "The deadline on this project is tomorrow. I still need you to review it and give me your feedback before I submit it to the client. If I don't hear back from you by 3 p.m. tomorrow, I will assume you approve of my efforts, and I will submit the project." WHAT?

I know! I was laughing too when I read that. You know – that’s one of the reasons why I started this blog because so much of the work advice out there just doesn’t apply to a litigation paralegal.

Going back to the advice in that article, first of all, it’s most likely that the project is something that has to be signed by an attorney who has a license to practice law. But let’s give it a try and say that it’s not something that’s getting filed with the court or sent to opposing counsel, let’s assume it’s something that’s a draft or something that you’re putting together that the attorney wants to send to a client. That’s still not going to fly – sending that project to the client if you don’t hear back from the attorney by 3 pm. No. It’s not happening in the legal profession.

Okay, so changing them is off the table. Then you have to go with option 2: change how you respond. If you know you work with a procrastinator, what can you change in how you respond?

Well, you could get access to their calendar so that you know of any deadlines coming up. You could ask for weekly meetings with them – whether in person or on a Zoom call. And ask them, what are the top 3 priorities this week? Check out these [time management tips for paralegals](#).

You could also go into their office and say, “I see we have the XYZ deadline coming up late next week. I’m going to go ahead and get started on that now.” That way, you’re not asking them if there’s anything you can do to help on the XYZ case. You’re saying, you see what’s coming up on it, and you’re going to start doing X.

Asking an open-ended question like “is there anything I can do to help” is not going to get you to the top priority in that case for that week. [Here’s what to do if you feel like you are being underutilized](#).

3. Remember They Don’t Teach Management Skills in Law School

I think we all know this, but it’s good to have a quick reminder every now and then. Just because the attorney is your boss or your supervisor doesn’t mean they know how to be a manager. They just want their work done, and no one’s ever told them how to do that or how to be a great leader.

Now, this is not to say that someone should be excused for bad behavior in the workplace. I’m not saying that at all. This isn’t about putting up with bad behavior. If that’s your situation, here are [8 tips for working with a difficult boss](#).

I’m talking about those common complaints that I hear from paralegals who enjoy their career but get frustrated that they’re not getting work that is challenging enough, or they’re watching the attorney give the good work to the secretary instead of them.

This is about someone you work for who maybe doesn’t know the best way to delegate work. Most likely, no one has ever taught them how to delegate effectively. Maybe they don’t know the best way to give constructive criticism or positive feedback. Those are things that most people, attorneys included, aren’t usually born with. It’s something learned.

So ask yourself, what is it that I need in terms of management skills from my attorney? What's most important to you is going to be different than what's most important to your colleague sitting down the hall. For example, if you're the type who needs more detailed instructions so that you can get it right the first time – tell them that. I'm the type who likes to get it right the first time, and I'm sometimes hesitant to bother you by asking too many questions. For this assignment, can we try doing things a little differently?

That brings me to the actionable strategy for this one – tell them or show them how you want to be treated. Don't just go back to your office and stew over things or go home and complain to your significant other – or worse – complain to your colleagues.

I've seen it so much in the last 30 years, and you know what, I was probably guilty of that early in my career. But when I look back on those first few years, I realize that starting your career in your early 20s, fresh out of school, most of your interpersonal skills are carried over from school. But as adults working in the legal profession, there are better ways to handle conflicts with your boss than complaining to your best friend at work.

Instead, have open and honest communication with the person. It doesn't always change things, but I can tell you what's not going to change things...gossiping to the paralegal down the hall about it. Don't just take my word for it; read what this paralegal has learned in her 43 years of paralegal practice working with attorneys. I know there are several other best practices when working with attorneys.

Are you a paralegal looking to advance in your skills and knowledge? Check out these great paralegal boot camp courses written by our very own board member Mary Mayer!

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Paralegal Boot Camp is online courses training for Paralegals to fast-track their Paralegal career.

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I am an Advanced Certified Paralegal in Criminal Litigation and have a passion to help Paralegals succeed in their careers. If you are interested in a course (or two), please visit my Affiliate Homepage at <https://paralegal-bootcamp.thinkific.com/?ref=65e22a>

You can also click on the particular course link noted below. I'm here to help you, so if you have any questions, please reach out to me at paralegalsrock65@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing about your successes! Mary Katherine Mayer, ACP.

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☐ Meet or exceed your billable hour requirement this year

☐ Spend less time drafting time entries

☐ Do more work in less time

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Board Meeting

The next APA Board meeting will be held on **Tuesday, August 2, at 5:45 p.m.** via Zoom. Contact board@azparalegal.org for more information. All are welcome to attend.

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