

PERSPECTIVE

Volume 38, Issue 2

Fall 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kerry A. Mackey, CP



HAPPY FALL my fellow paralegals!! Well this year has been a very different year for all of us. Many of us have been faced with new challenges during this time. We have learned to evolve with what has been happening in the world. I hope the future will bring **positive** things for all of you.

As you are aware, we are unable to hold in person dinner meetings at this time. **PANJ** may have been quiet during this time but we have been working behind the scenes to make plans for our next term.

We normally start our new term with dinner meetings in September but now our meetings will be taking place via Cisco Webex for the foreseeable future. I know this will be a different experience versus our in person meetings but that does not mean that we cannot have a good time and network! We hope that you will join us on this new endeavor! We will

miss seeing everyone in person and will return to in person meetings when it is safe. Times have changed and we must change with it!

I am honored to be your President for the 2020-2021 term. I have big shoes to fill but I am always up for a challenge! I am looking forward to the upcoming year. My goal for the Association is to continue webinars each month to keep our paralegals engaged. I am working on getting new speakers lined up for our upcoming webinars. If you have a certain topic that you would like to learn more about, please let me know! We are always looking for new speakers and topics to share with our paralegals. I want to continue to run this Association with all of you in mind. The Association is here for you and we want to continue to help further your knowledge in the legal field as much as possible. I would like to offer time after each webinar for our paralegals to speak with one another. I want to make time to see how everyone is doing and see if anyone has any questions about the Association or just wants to chat. My goal is to be accessible to you during this time.

Over the summer, we held our first webinar hosted by Paralegal Bootcamp owner Ann Pearson. Ms. Pearson discussed the 7 Habits of the Indispensable Paralegal. The webinar was a great success and well attended. We would love to keep that up!

Since the Association is hosting virtual meetings for the first time this term, we ask that everyone please be patient. We know technology can sometimes not cooperate when we want or need it to but **TOGETHER** we can figure it out. **JUST ASK FOR HELP! DO NOT BE SHY!**

With all of our webinars, if you do not have a webcam or smart phone, you can still take part in the webinar by calling over the phone. I have some instructions on how to get set up for our webinars to better assist you.

Please note that you **do not** need a Webex account to join any of our webinars. You will be sent an email invitation with a link to join the meeting. That email will also include a phone number to call in for the webinar if you wish to take part over the phone.

If you would like to run a test run on how to join a Webex meeting, please visit <https://help.webex.com/en-us/nti2f6w/Webex-Meetings-Join-a-Test-Meeting>

Instructions on how to join Cisco Webex Meeting:

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2. If this is the first time you are joining a Webex meeting, the Webex app will automatically download.
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 - b. Click the installer file to install the app. If the app did not automatically download then click Download the app again.
3. Enter your name and email address, and click Next.
4. Enter the meeting password from your email invitation and click Next.
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 - b. Call In- You can use your phone for audio. Dial the phone number in the email invitation when the meeting starts.
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For further instructions on joining a Cisco Webex meeting, please check out the link below:

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PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS for The **2020 NJ Paralegal Virtual Convention** on October 16, 2020. As the date gets closer, attendee and vendor information will be available at:

www.njparalegalconvention.com

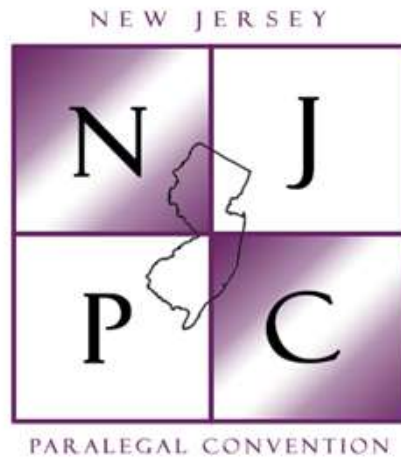
How can the Association further serve our fellow paralegals? All suggestions are welcome! Send ideas and comments to Info@NJPara.org. We are always interested in learning about new topics that may interest our paralegals.

Do you have a guest speaker in mind for a future webinar? Please send their name and contact information to Info@NJPara.org.

If you wish to contribute to upcoming editions of Perspective, please submit your pieces for review to Info@NJPara.org.

If you know a vendor who may be interested in advertising their product/service in the Perspective or at an upcoming dinner meeting, have the vendor contact Info@NJPara.org.

DISCLAIMER: The *Perspective* is a newsletter designed to report news and/or opinions of interest to PANJ members. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author, not the *Perspective* Editor nor the PANJ Executive Board. Publication herein does not imply endorsement in any manner. No information contained herein is intended nor should it be construed as legal advice. All articles presented herein are with permission of the author. Inclusion and editing of material is at the sole discretion of the Editor. You received this email as a privilege of your membership in the Paralegal Association of New Jersey and opted in at www.NJPara.org.



SAVE THE DATE!

October 16, 2020

www.NJParalegalConvention.com

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A Message from the *Perspective* Editor

Fellow PANJ members and like-minded readers, I write this message to you in the hopes that this note finds you well. Aren't you tired of reading that at the end of every work e-mail? I wanted to quickly remind everyone that being well comes in many forms and as such, I believe this issue of *Perspective* will come as a welcome relief. In the Fall edition, you will find a wide range of articles, which will hopefully ease the furloughed paralegal or expand opportunities for new paralegal graduates. Turn the pages to read wonderful pieces ranging from a well-known legal recruiter on what paralegals can expect in the Fall job pool, wisdom from a freelance paralegal who has been operating her business for nearly forty years, and a bonus interview with entrepreneur and paralegal aficionado Ann Pearson. If you were unable to attend her “7 *Habits of the Indispensable Paralegal*” webinar, an informative recap of the same is ahead. Also included in this issue is recognition for a perpetual PANJ member, JoAnne Haffeman. You might recognize her in your inbox when it's time to renew your membership.

The forthcoming articles are a breath of fresh air to me in a time when breathing has become labored. Personally, I have learned so much during these past couple of months arranging the *Perspective* this term. I am confident that this issue will generate more awareness as to how paralegals can survive during this unprecedented time (que: “be well”). Please reach out to me if you have any comments or would like to write for the *Perspective*.

Stay healthy,

Jessica E. Resnick

Newsletter@NJPara.org



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Interview with Ann Pearson

of

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- ❖ How did you start as a paralegal? What made you choose the profession?

Like many paralegals, I feel like the paralegal profession chose me. I was actually on a path towards law school. I thought I wanted to be an attorney. In my last semester of college, my adviser mentioned he was friends with the office manager of a local law firm, and he inquired if they had any openings. My adviser thought it would be a great experience for me before going to law school. Two weeks later, I was working as a paralegal at that law firm. I enjoyed being a paralegal so much that I decided not to go on to law school. It was the best decision I ever made.

- ❖ If you could go back in time and change one thing from your first year as a paralegal, what would you change?

I would have stayed away from the negativity and gossip. I was young, and I wanted to fit in at the firm. I would join a small group of people every day for lunch and coffee breaks. That group gossiped about everyone and spoke harshly about attorneys and firm management. So much so that it swayed my opinion about a job that I previously had enjoyed. It wasn't until I left there that I realized how much other people's negative opinions could shape your own.

- ❖ What were the best skills ("indispensable traits") that you used throughout your career? Could you pick 3-5 to highlight?

Only 3 – 5? I could do an entire interview on just this one question! I'll keep it to the top 3 for now and suggest that paralegals read some of the [Paralegal Boot Camp's](#) blog articles for more. I write about that topic frequently.

Being a problem-solver is definitely at the top of that list. I think that one trait is responsible for how far I was able to take my paralegal career. As part of the [Paralegal Boot Camp](#) courses, I will frequently reach out to attorneys around the country and ask them, “what makes you want to work with this paralegal over another paralegal?” Every one of them said that their “Rockstar Paralegal” is a problem-solver. The paralegal either solves the problem for the attorney, or they come to the attorney with a proposed solution instead of just reporting a problem.

Next on that list would be that I always understood that I was responsible for how far I wanted to take my career. I never had a manager come into my office and ask me if I wanted to do more substantive work or if I wanted to take on a management role or if I wanted to know how to get a bigger bonus. I went out and took actions that would keep leading me to bigger and better career opportunities.

Third, I learned early on that attorneys are not the grammar police. Early in my career, I thought when the attorney was signing a pleading, letter, or other work product, that they were doing a full proofread and double-check of the entire document. They’re not doing that. They are reviewing the final draft for the substance to see if it conveys the legal argument they’re trying to make. They are not checking to see if the case caption has the correct parties, case number, formatting, etc.

- ❖ What would you recommend to seasoned paralegals, who have been doing this job for over twenty years, how they can improve their career?

I think when you pass the twenty-year mark, it’s more about doing work that you still find challenging and rewarding than improving your career. Sometimes that might mean that you take your years of experience and share it with others, which can be just as rewarding as doing the work yourself. It might be at your current place of employment training the new paralegals or teaching part-time at your local paralegal school. To others, it might be working on pro bono matters in other practice areas or transferring your skills to another profession. That’s what is so great about being in the paralegal profession. I know so many paralegals who spent 20+ years working as a paralegal in a law firm and then turned that experience into an entirely new career.

- ❖ Have you heard any comments from law firm administrators about how they would like paralegals to be educated?

They want more skills-based education to reduce the on-the-job training time when hiring new paralegals. It’s too bad that most paralegal certificate program directors don’t reach out to their local law firm management and ask that question when they’re developing next year’s curriculum. I think we’d all like to see paralegal certificate programs that had specialty certificates in some of the top practice areas. For example, if a student knows they want to be a litigation paralegal, after they complete their core classes, offer an additional semester of litigation-specific courses that allow the student to learn the actual skills that they will need on the job.

- ❖ I believe you mentioned in your webinar that you managed paralegals. How did you balance 50 paralegals while doing your own work, and be a paralegal leader in your office?

In my role as a paralegal manager, I did not have a billable hour quota to meet. Instead, they wanted me to focus on my role as a manager and how to make it a successful paralegal program. I was lucky enough to report to a managing partner who understood the value that a successful paralegal program can bring to a law firm, and he wanted to make sure that I focused on that, rather than whether or not I met a billable hour quota.

- ❖ How did you apply your paralegal skills to open your own business and how did you apply the same as an entrepreneur?

I think one of the many things that I took with me when I started my own business was the skill of quickly becoming the subject matter expert in a particular specialty area. I remember when I moved from complex commercial litigation over to construction litigation. It all seemed so foreign to me at the beginning. Until it wasn't anymore and I could tell you what the typical PSI range was for concrete foundations versus concrete footings.

When I first started [The Paralegal Boot Camp](#), I knew what I wanted to do – provide skills-based training to paralegals after they had their paralegal certificate. What I didn't know was how to do that in an online setting. I didn't know how to develop online learning management systems and all that goes into it. And I definitely didn't know much about eCommerce and sales. That's where those paralegal research skills kicked in.

- ❖ What do you look for on a paralegal resume? Or what is the one thing that sticks out to an attorney on a paralegal's resume? Possibly, you could provide words that would appear in a "Boolean search" on an optimal paralegal resume.

My advice would be to search for a paralegal position that you are interested in and read the job posting in great detail. Then go to the employer's website to see if they have any additional information on the position. Make a list of every skill or trait they are looking for in that paralegal position. Then, compare those words to the words you have in your resume under each position. They don't need to be exactly the same, but they should be close. The same goes for your LinkedIn profile. That's why I always advise paralegals to get their resume done first. Then copy and paste that content into your LinkedIn profile. The first thing a hiring manager or recruiter does after they get your job application is to search LinkedIn for you. If you don't have a LinkedIn profile, that's a red flag. It doesn't eliminate you from further review, but it hurts your job search.

THANK YOU ANN PEARSON – WE HOPE TO WORK WITH YOU AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE!

7 Habits of an Indispensable Paralegal

By: Jennifer Negro

Do you wonder how to be the best of the best? What can make excel in your career? How to effectively do your job? Questions like these are prevalent to any paralegal, legal assistant, secretary or whatever your position may be. We are all aiming for one goal to succeed. That is what Anne Pearson of Paralegal Bootcamp discussed at the Paralegal Association of New Jersey's first virtual seminar on July 28th, 2020 in "7 Habits of an Indispensable Paralegal." This informative seminar answered those very questions and provided concrete steps on how to be a strong paralegal. So, what are those seven steps?

Step 1 – Be Proactive! Try to stay ahead and be anticipatory, change orientated and self-initiated. Attorneys like individuals who can think on their feet and think ahead to anticipate and prevent any issue that may occur. Don't just wait to be told what to do.

Step 2 - Own your career! Your career is yours and you are responsible for it. Take charge and do not wait for someone to take charge of it for you. As stated in the webinar "the driving force of a career must come from the individual." Refresh your skills, try new things, market yourself, develop business relationships, etc., but remember you oversee your career. If you want to get ahead, you must be proactive and cannot sit and wait for it to come to you.

Step 3 – Be the Problem Solver! Find the solution. Remember being a kid in school and doing a current events review, you had to answer the five W's – who, what, where, when and why. Now taking that approach figure out the solution to the problem. Come up with answers to fix the problem which in turn means be the one to solve the problem. Do not wait for the solution. This in turn ties into being proactive and allows you to be efficient.

Step 4 – Master the Technology! Technology is ever changing, and it is important to keep up with the changes. Every practice area has specific technology to assist with that field. Know your practice-specific technology, including "the benefits and risks associated with relevant technology." Be the go-to person on your team to answer those specific technology questions. Learn and demonstrate that you know the technology inside and out. Knowing said practice - specific technology gives you an advantage and a vital skill set to add to your resume and most important make your job more efficient, which in turn will show that you are taking charge of your own career.

Step 5 – Do Excellent Work! We are all human and make mistakes, but we have to try to minimize those mistakes and provide an excellent output of work. A project management concept that was spoken of was DIRFT which is Do It Right the First Time. Have a quality control process in place to give an error proof product and have a last-touch mindset. The attorneys are not the grammar police but we as paralegals must ensure that those simple misspellings, etc. are correct.

Step 6 – Manage your Time! This is essential for all paralegals. Managing your time enables you to be more productive. Time is valuable but remember that multi-tasking does not increase productivity. As noted in the seminar, to increase productivity, track your productivity. Do you eat better when you track your diet? This same concept can be applied to our jobs. Tracking enables us to work more efficiently and manage our time. Remember the Ivy Lee Method – write your task list for the day. Focus only on each task one at a time and check off when you complete with each task.

Step 7 – Keep Educating Yourself! Stay ahead of the others and always try to learn new things. Stay ahead of updates within your area of expertise. Do one “sharpen the saw” activity each month, which is one activity each month to allow you to enhance your skills. Enhancing your skills also helps you in owning your career and being proactive.

Each of these steps can link together and provide a step by step approach to being not only an indispensable paralegal, but also a successfully marketable paralegal. This legal market can be tough but having these seven steps at your fingertips will help demonstrate you as a positive candidate and will help you master your field.

While I wish the presentation was in person to be able to see all one hundred plus attendees, it was nice to be able to do a seminar to essentially “keep educating ourselves.” In this crazy time, we are in, I hope that everyone enjoyed the seminar just as much I did and I look forward to attending more seminars, whether they are virtual or in-person. Thank you, Ann, for a keeping us informed and educated.



Jennifer is a Senior Paralegal/Manager specializing in real estate law at the Sanchez Law Firm in Union County, New Jersey. Jennifer is a Trustee at Large for the Paralegal Association of New Jersey and a member of NALA. She recently became a member of the Paralegal Special Committee of the New Jersey State Bar Association.

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Member Spotlight



JoAnne Haffeman
Membership Committee
johaff@gmail.com

Q: How long have you been a member of PANJ?

A: I joined PANJ (then the Legal Assistants Association of New Jersey) in probably December 1997. Kandi Moncelisi, ACP and a paralegal from Porzio, sorry I don't recall his name, came to speak at my intern class at Montclair State and afterward I filled out the application, had my advisor sign and mailed it in.

I really didn't participate for a while but then there was a special meeting regarding the Kestin Report the proposed licensure scheme contained in the report near where I worked. This was a big issue at the time and I figured I'd better go and find out what was happening. I attended the meeting, Kandi came over to greet me and I asked if could help with anything. The rest as they say was history.

Q: Why did you decide to join the Association?

A: As I will explain a little bit more later, I was a legal editor for about 15 years before I applied to the post BA certificate program at Montclair State. There was no professional association as such for editors and I always felt that it would have been very helpful to attend meeting with my contemporaries and discuss issues, problems, etc. that we were experiencing. That's the one thing that I most enjoy about being a member of PANJ. Not only at dinner meetings but anytime you are given a task or assignment you've never done before, you have an entire membership that you can consult with to find guidance and assistance with whatever issue is confronting you.

Q: What's a helpful tip for someone in our industry?

A: Stay up to date on what's going on, attend as many seminars and presentations as possible and learn as much as you can, not only in your area of law but others as well.

You may find another area may be more suited to your skills and interests. And, of course, join your local professional association.

Q: Why did you decide to go into the legal field?

A: Wow – this will be long answer. My dad was an incredible American History teacher, which he taught for over 30 years. I guess I inherited his interest not only in history but politics and law. In fact my undergraduate degree is in Social Studies Education but when I graduated teaching jobs were scarce. So I went another path and worked a bunch of different jobs. However, a colleague I worked with in the late 1970s was taking the NYU Paralegal course, which at the time was the gold standard. This kind of piqued my interest but I was just getting married and setting up house and so I didn't look into it at that time.

When I hit 30 I started thinking about where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. The thing I have always loved doing the most was reading so I applied to a legal publishing house, where I worked for almost ten years. I worked my way up to editor and really enjoyed what I was going.

We had an in-house book writing department and a position opened for a book writer for our case digests. Basically, this was going through relevant federal cases and writing a synopsis of the case. Since I was editing a few of those books I felt I could do the writing as well. I applied for the opening but didn't get the position basically because I didn't have any legal training. So I began looking into obtaining my paralegal certificate at NYU. I had discussed taking a leave of absence and taking the course full time with my manager but before I was able to apply my husband was laid off and I received two promotions and a couple of nice raises so I again I had to put this on the back burner.

I started freelancing in 1992 and after finishing my last project I finally decided to go for it. I decided to temp while pursuing a Post-BA certificate at Montclair State. I was lucky to get a couple of long-term temp assignments and completed the program in two years. I did pretty well in the program but in all honesty a lot of what was taught in the intro classes was stuff I used to do at work.

That was almost 23 years ago and I am now retired.

If I might, I would also like say being a recipient of the NALA Affiliate Award was a surprise and an honor, though I'm not really sure I deserve it. My only goal was to serve the membership of the Association and to help promote and further the legal profession in New Jersey.

**THE PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW
JERSEY WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW
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NALA NEWS

August 2020

Elections were held during the NALA Conference @ Home, and the following persons were elected :

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Bismarck, North Dakota

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Bridget M. Sturh ACP

I mentioned the following items in my last NALA News, but they are worth repeating:

- **NALA Affiliate Member Discount:** Starting July 15, 2020, NALA will be providing to NALA Affiliate members a 25% discount on NALA's yearly membership. NALA's \$154 yearly membership is available to PANJ members for \$115.50. Additionally, included in NALA's annual membership is an \$80 gift certificate to be used towards CLE, the Conference and certain items in their store. So, immediately the \$115.50 is reduced to \$35.50! Melissa Hamilton, ACP, NALA's President, said the value of NALA's membership exceeds its cost. The value includes:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▪ \$80 Gift Certificate | ▪ Discounted CLE |
| ▪ \$35 Facts and Findings | ▪ Job Bank/Contract Work |
| ▪ \$79 Compensation and Utilization Survey | ▪ Affinity Discounts |
| ▪ \$350 in free webinars | ▪ Employer discount for multiple employees joining |

- **Extension of Recertification Dates and Exam Dates:** Recertification and testing dates have been extended due to Covid. NALA has sent emails, but the extensions are as follows:

- Recertification completion dates between March 31 and June 30, 2020 have been extended to September 30
- CP Exam Knowledge portion completion dates set to expire between March 31 and June 30, 2020 have been extended to September 30
- CP Exam Skills portion of the exam for the April and July testing windows have been extended to the October testing window

If an exam applicant has difficulty meeting these deadlines, contact NALA to discuss your situation.

Examination Information

The Skills Exam testing window is October 1 to 31.

The Knowledge Exam is administered all year long. PSI opened some centers. Check out their website for availability in your area: <https://www.psionline.com/closures>. If you're having difficulty finding a testing center, your workplace may be eligible. Contact NALA @ testing@NALA.org.

When you purchase the NALA CP Practice Exam, included in the purchase is NALA's new Practice Exam App which is available for one year from purchase.

NALA Commons

Log in to your NALA account to access. It's very informative!



Christine A. Principe, is a Certified Paralegal. She has been a paralegal for 34 years assisting attorneys in a variety of practice areas including commercial litigation, mortgage and tax lien foreclosures, and estate administration. Currently, she is in the complex commercial litigation department at Sills Cummis & Gross, P.C. Christine is a PANJ Board Member and NALA Liaison. She is also a Board Member of NJ Paralegal Convention. Christine can be reached at: NALALiaison@NJPara.org

MINUTES OF THE PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

The Executive Board of the Paralegal Association of New Jersey convened on September 9, 2020 at 6:38 p.m. via Webex in light of COVID.

In attendance were Kerry Mackey (President), Jennifer Ciaburri (Recording Secretary), Carol Snyder (Treasurer), Jennifer Smith (Trustee), Sarah Robinson (Vice-President), JoAnne Haffeman (Trustee), Melissa Acosta (Trustee), Melissa Canella (Trustee), Jennifer Negro (Trustee), Jessica Resnick (Trustee), Nyree Benitez (Trustee). Absent were Michelle Mando (Corresponding Secretary), Christine Principe, CP (NALA Liaison), Melissa Acosta (Trustee), and Melissa Canella (Trustee)

I. MINUTES

The minutes from the June 2020 meeting were reviewed and approved.

II. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership report was reviewed and approved.

- Added 12 new members
- 33 renewals
- Members are taking a little longer to pay in light of COVID.

III. NETWORKING EVENTS/PROGRAM PLANNING

- Looking into charging for Webex seminars. Possible \$5.00 for non-members and free for members
- Seminars will have people ask questions in the chat box and speaker will answer at the end.
- Seminars will be recorded and can be shared.
- Reaching out to 2019-20 speakers who didn't get to present to see if they are willing to present virtually-November.
- October is convention.

IV. TREASURER'S REPORT AND BUDGET

- Budget was reviewed and approved without changes.
- Budget will be reviewed and possibly revised in January based on COVID.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

- NALA Virtual Convention—was pre-recorded presentation. All went well. Had an app for the entire convention. Had over 900 registrations.
- Newsletter—possibly printing for convention bags. Will be done by October 1.
- Webex-one year contract, unlimited meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm.

Respectfully submitted,

PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

Jennifer Ciaburri, Recording Secretary

Membership Report

Regular Members	99
Associate Members	28
Student Members	12
Sustaining Members	10
Honorary/Lifetime Members	7
<u>TOTAL ACTIVE MEMBERS</u>	156



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† Indicates if Available Dates calendar is activated

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I am a Freelance Paralegal – How I Got Here

By: Dorothy Secol, CLA

I am a freelance paralegal, sometimes referred to as independent paralegal or virtual paralegal. In any case, whatever our nomenclature, we work independently under the supervision of an attorney. Many freelance paralegals work out of their homes, or as in my case, out of an independent office.

I started my career as a freelance paralegal in 1981, back in the covered wagon days. This was at the time in which there were very few independent paralegals. Attorneys were still saying, "paralegal, what's a paralegal?" When I opened my office, I was investigated by the local bar association who was sure I was practicing law. Back then, lawyers were still grappling with the term "paralegal," let alone a "freelance paralegal." We were questioned, investigated and finally in 1990, the State Supreme Court Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law issued an opinion that the use of a freelance paralegal constituted the unauthorized practice of law. Our attorneys petitioned for a stay of the Opinion which was granted. In 1992, the State Supreme Court held there was no distinguishable difference between an in-house paralegal and a freelance paralegal as long as they worked under the supervision of an attorney. In re Opinion 24 of the Committee on Unauthorized Practice of Law, 128 N.J. 114 (1992). This allowed us to go about our business of practicing as freelance paralegals.

Over the years, I have worked for sole practitioners, small firms and occasionally large firms in specific areas of law, such as a quiet title procedure or mortgage or tax sale foreclosures. Larger firms usually have ample staff and only need your services if someone is on extended leave and need a particular area of substantive law on a temporary basis. I have clients that I work for on a daily basis and others on an "as needs" basis.

My areas of expertise are:

Real Estate: I handle the file from beginning to end just as if I were in the office. I deal with the attorney's client throughout the file. The attorney tells their client that their real estate paralegal will be contacting them. When the closing is scheduled, my file goes to the attorney for the closing.

Estate Administration - Same as above from beginning to end. I meet with and communicate with the client's attorney throughout, I handle all the paperwork involved in gathering the assets and liabilities, prepare the inheritance and estate tax returns, and federal returns, if necessary.

Research and Writing: I may be asked to prepare a summary judgment motion with a brief, or prepare a brief in response to litigation. I review the documents, do the research and prepare the moving pleadings. Everything then goes to the attorney for editing, approval, etc. I also prepare and file appellate briefs.

Personal Injury, Corporate Mortgage Foreclosure Tax Sale Certificate Foreclosure- all handled as if I were in the office. Everything I prepare goes to the attorney for approval, editing and finalizing. I discuss with the attorney what they are looking for, what needs to be accomplished and go from there.

As you might infer from this text, in order to truly practice as a freelance paralegal, you should have many years of experience before going out on your own. You will be expected to deliver a finished product ready for filing or in the case of real estate, for closing. In estate administration, you must be familiar with the rules and statutes governing this area of law and in particular the inheritance tax and estate tax regulations.

My original marketing consisted of ads placed in Bar Association newsletters, mailing flyers and appearing at every Bar function to be "seen," to get my name out there. I joined the Bar Association and participated in the Real Estate-Probate Section, and the Foreclosure section. I attended ICLE seminars, and gave seminars, "to be seen." The best marketing tool, however, turned out to be a monthly newsletter emailed to a large number of attorneys, including my clients and potential clients. The newsletter was informative as to new rules, info on specific areas of law and general information interesting and important to my clients. For examples, you can visit my website, <http://www.dorothysecolcla.com> and look at some of the newsletters.

Many of my clients send me work on a monthly basis. For new clients, I have a retainer that I send them. The retainer sets forth the work that will be performed, my hourly rate, the fact that I will be reimbursed for expenses, if necessary, and that I will check for conflicts. The retainer also states that the work that will be performed will be of the highest standard. The retainer is signed by the client and by me. I bill monthly and itemize my work to the attorney. I do bill real estate closings on a flat fee basis. I am paid by the attorney for my work, not by the attorney's client. As a "sole proprietor," I receive a 1099 from the attorneys to file with my income tax return.

I chose to operate my business as a "sole proprietor," rather than forming a corporation, or an LLC. I did not want to have to spend time in completing forms on a yearly basis or having to file a separate tax return if I incorporated or if I formed an LLC. That was my personal choice. Today, many "sole proprietors" have the option of filing individually or forming a corporation or LLC to protect themselves from liability. There are taxes and yearly fees that come with the formation of a corporation or LLC. I have employed paralegals and secretaries over the years and of course, have filed payroll returns and have had to keep records and file returns for my employees. The form of business ownership is a subject to discuss with one's accountant to determine how you will proceed.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work for attorneys in other states. Most of the time it was related to New Jersey practice, however, I have worked for attorneys in Pennsylvania, where the estate practice is similar to ours and for attorneys in Florida, and Texas. I have even done research for an attorney in the U.K. In working for attorneys in other states, if you are not dealing with New Jersey practice, you must be very careful you are familiar with statutes, rules of the other states.

The most challenging aspect of being a freelance paralegal is that you are business person, not just a paralegal. You are running a business and with that comes all the responsibility of making that business successful. You are responsible for marketing, advertising, maintaining an office, ordering supplies, maintaining office equipment, paying your bills, hiring help, dealing with payroll taxes, if necessary. You must also be very careful to keep up with all rule changes, new statutes and statutes that are repealed. You are the bottom line. There is no one else responsible for your work product.

Being a freelance paralegal has been challenging and stressful, but I wouldn't change a thing that I have done. It is also been very rewarding. I have grown personally; I have learned to master the business world and the art of marketing. I have met amazing people who have helped me along the way. It has been quite a journey. I was told it couldn't be done and I have done it.



Dorothy Secol, CLA has worked in the legal profession for over 45 years and has been a freelance paralegal since 1982. She maintains an office in Allenhurst, New Jersey, doing business as Dorothy Secol, CLA. Dorothy is a graduate of Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey.

Ms. Secol is a member of the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) and received her CLA status in 1978. In addition, she is a former trustee of the Central Jersey Paralegal Association and a former Vice-President and trustee of Legal Assistants Association of New Jersey. She is also an associate member of the New Jersey State Bar Association and a former Co-Chair of that Committee. She is also a member of the Real Property and Probate Section and the Foreclosure Committee. Ms. Secol serves on the Paralegal Advisory Boards of Brookdale Community College and Ocean County College and is a mediator for the Ocean Township, Allenhurst and Deal Municipal Courts appointed by the New Jersey Superior Court.

*Ms. Secol is the author of *Starting and Managing Your Own Business: A Freelancing Guide for Paralegals*, published by Aspen Publishing Co. and has written articles for the *New Jersey Law Journal*, and *New Jersey Lawyer*. In addition, Ms. Secol was a petitioner in the case of *In re Opinion 24 of the Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law*, 128 N.J. 114 (1992). The case validated the fact that there is no distinguishable difference between an in-house and freelance paralegal working under the direct supervision of an attorney.*

Ms. Secol has presented seminars on real estate procedure, probate procedure and law office management as well as how to set up a business as a freelance paralegal.



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Hiring in the New Normal

By: Jonathan Friedman

Since March, our world has completely changed. As the Managing Director of Friedman Williams, one of the many topics I have constantly been talking about is “Hiring Strategies in the New Normal”, and how we continue to move forward and adapt to our new surroundings.

Our team is seeing improvements in the hiring market and we fully expect a strong end of the year. Over the past few months I have spoken with Chief Operating Officers, Chief HR Officers and other CXO’s across the country, and I have found that firms are making important adjustments to adapt to the new realities of hiring.

As a brief summary on Friedman Williams, our firm provides Full-Time Direct Hire, Contract and Temporary staffing geared towards Law Firms nationally. We handle recruiting for all Administrative departments, and we have continued to grow during our 17 years in business with a team of 25 recruiters. The areas we handle are:

- Information Technology
- Accounting & Finance
- Business Development & Legal Marketing:
- Paralegal and Administrative Support
- Human Resources
- Attorney Staffing

Friedman Williams was selected as the 1st place winner in both the **New York Law Journal** and the **New Jersey Law Journal** 2020 Best of Surveys for the category “Legal Staffing Provider” and in the National Law Journal / DC Legal Times as the 1st place winner for the category of “National Staffing Agency”.

Why Hire Now?

This is a great question and one that many firms are debating across the country. Some firms are aggressively hiring talented professionals, while other firms are hesitant to onboard anyone while the majority of their staff are still working exclusively from home. Firms located in major metropolitan cities are concerned about employees traveling on mass transit, while suburban locations allow the comfort of driving to the office and parking your own car. However, since working from home has been going so well, why rush back to the office?

The past 6 months surrounding COVID have been a devastating time for many, however when we look back at this period of time, we’ll have realized we have uncovered silver linings in the workspace. Here are a few things we have learned:

- 1) Employees are now able to work from anywhere assuming the proper technology is in place.
- 2) Employers can hire the best talent anywhere in the country, no longer tied to someone with a short commute to the office. Better talent is available for open jobs when companies are focusing on the “best qualified candidate”, not just the person who lives nearby.
- 3) Employers can offer staff a well-rounded work/life balance which in turn will allow the staff to be more dedicated to the company.
- 4) Working from home allows staff the ability to offer more time to your employer and employees will offer stronger commitment to the firm and partners.
- 5) Working from home and offering flexible schedules will provide the employees the opportunity to attend important events during the day, such as a child’s school show, without having to take PTO.

With all these positives, come some negatives, and over time they will need to be addressed:

- 1) Limited in-person team comradery and socialization in the office.
- 2) Not being able to separate work from home, and many people have a hard time ending the day and feel like they always need to be working.

- 3) Less opportunity to be physically around the partners and firm leadership. Sometimes it can be harder to “separate yourself” from others when you do not have time opportunity to build in-person relationships.
- 4) Limited opportunity to have casual lunch meetings, after work drinks, in-person networking events. Video meetings are very successful and valuable, but they do not bring the same value when building relationships.

The competition for top level talent is going to be fierce over the next 6-12 months. Forward thinking companies are going to have a major advantage. Demand will be greater than the supply. The “best” candidates will be greater than the number of candidates interested or available for a new position. As many firms have gone through furloughs, downsizing, and salary reductions, employees are questioning their job security and may start considering a new opportunity. Expect top candidates to see a lot of attention. It is going to be (and already is) a “candidates’ market” and law firms are going to compete with each other harder than ever for the best candidates.

As firms are hiring new talent, they are also evaluating their current staff. Management is deciding how quickly the firm needs to replace staff that were downsized or furloughed, or if they even need to be replaced at all. Over the past 6 months, most of the “cuts” have been rightsizing, not so much downsizing. Firms are using COVID and the current economic conditions to make changes that potentially should have been done in prior years.

If you are a paralegal and you have been cut or furloughed, try to not panic. As per a blog post from the American Bar Association written by Sally Dahlquist, J.D. and Alicia L. Shelton, Esq. they say “paralegal positions are expected to emerge in a variety of areas, including: bankruptcy, mortgage foreclosure, business failures, contract and medical compliance issues, unemployment claims, family law matters, housing and eviction, debtor-creditor cases, and criminal, civil and social justice issues.” Paralegals are essential to law firms and as such, there will be many firms looking to add additional paralegals. If you have recently been cut, here are few tips to help look for a new job:

- 1) Edit and clean up your resume. Consistent formatting of titles, companies, dates and bullet points throughout the resume is key. This will allow the hiring manager to quickly scan for salient information while also viewing you as an organized, professional candidate.
- 2) Reach out to your network. Now is the time to send a message to your professional connections on LinkedIn.
- 3) Get in touch with a recruiter you trust. Working with an agency will give you a leg up because they have a direct relationship with hiring managers. Friedman Williams has a team of dedicated recruiters who solely work on paralegal positions. Our team can offer you career counseling, interview techniques, and resume writing services. As stated in bullet one, a clean and concise resume can really make you stand out.

Overall, 2020 has turned the working world as we know it upside down. The silver lining in all of this is management and staff have an opportunity to collaborate together and accomplish their goals while pioneering the new business world.



Jonathan Friedman is the Managing Director of Friedman Williams.

Founded in 2003, Jonathan is the driving force behind the firm's unique corporate culture of ethics, stability and customer service within the staffing industry. Jonathan's keen understanding of the marketplace and an appreciation of the time and budget constraints facing his clients has enabled him to strategically direct the recruiting team that spans six divisions: Information Technology, Accounting & Finance, Administrative Support, Creative Services, Business Development & Marketing and Human Resources.

Jonathan focuses on building strategic business partnerships and has developed lasting relationships with business of all sizes with diverse needs and strategies. He regularly attends industry and client-based events and conferences as networking is a key component of Jonathan's work strategy.

Candidates and clients have described Jonathan in the following manner: "no one works harder than Jon Friedman...he is also one of the most honest and fair people you can work with;" "he and his team have proven to be the best... I have worked with — bar none;" "Jonathan and his colleagues are top notch. They have assisted me with finding employment repeatedly and have done so with the utmost in care and respect."

Prior to founding the firm, Jonathan started his career in recruiting by working for an international staffing firm in the mid-1990s. He graduated from Ithaca College with a BS in Management and Marketing.

Jonathan enjoys coaching his children's soccer and basketball teams.

<https://friedmanwilliams.com/jonathan-friedman-managing-director/>
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Sources:

"The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Paralegal Employment and Education"

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/blog/blog_5/

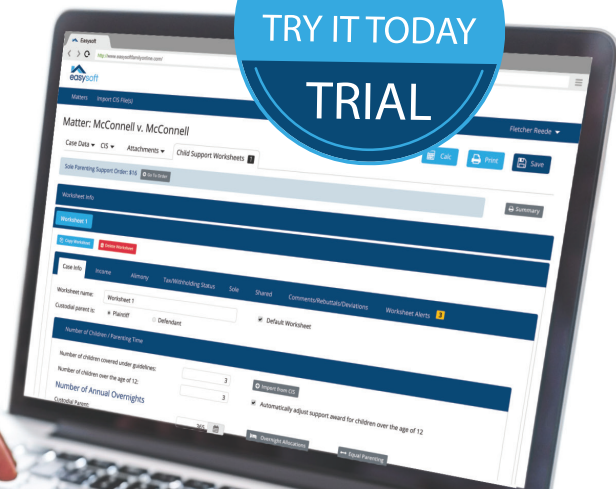


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