

PARALEGALS CONNECT

Fourth Quarter * **DECEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER** * Volume No. 10



Thank You to our Affiliate Partners
who are committed to providing
superior services to our Paralegal Community!

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*“Our Groups are accelerating Paralegals, Future Paralegals, and Future Attorneys Worldwide”
Currently, our groups have approximately 23,600+ combined active members worldwide.*

WHAT IS PARALEGALS CONNECT?

***“Our Groups are
Accelerating Paralegals,
Future Paralegals, and
Future Attorneys
Worldwide”***

Paralegals Connect was established in 2013 and we have grown significantly since that time. We now have five groups which are all dedicated to providing valuable information and support to succeed in the legal industry. Our groups provide support at every stage of your paralegal career.

Currently, our groups have approximately **23,600+ combined active members worldwide**. We have become the largest paralegal networking group worldwide!



Paralegals Connect (Main Group)

www.Facebook.com/Groups/ParalegalsConnect

Our first and largest group created for paralegals and paralegals-in-the-making to interact with other paralegals worldwide and provide valuable information to succeed in the paralegal industry.

Paralegals Connect: Employment Board

www.Facebook.com/Groups/PCEmploymentBoard

A group designed for those seeking legal employment or internships, and for those seeking to hire legal professionals for their firm.

Virtual/Freelance Paralegals Connect

www.Facebook.com/Groups/Virtual.FreelanceParalegalsConnect

A group designed for Virtual and/or Freelance Paralegals and those intending to break free of their 8-5 to go out on their own.

Paralegals Connect: Study Group

www.Facebook.com/Groups/ParalegalsConnectStudyGroup

A group created for those attending a paralegal school or studying for a Paralegal Certification Exam where you can post questions about your legal studies.

LSAT Connect

www.Facebook.com/Groups/LSATConnect

A group designed for those studying for the Law School Admission Test.

Paralegals Connect: Instagram

www.Instagram.com/ParalegalsConnect

#ParalegalsConnect

Paralegals Connect: Twitter

<https://Twitter.com/ParalegalsCnnct>

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Paralegals Connect: Facebook Page

www.Facebook.com/pg/ParalegalsConnect

MEET OUR ADMINS

These are the busy women behind the scenes of Paralegals Connect. We work hard to make these professional, successful groups, and create ideas to help paralegals, future paralegals, and future attorneys become a legal success!



Crystal Cornett

Crystal@ParalegalsConnect.com

Founder of Paralegals Connect. Crystal has been a Paralegal since 2004. She earned her first Paralegal Certificate from University of Houston in March 2006.

Crystal received the degree of Associate of Applied Science from Center for Advanced Legal Studies and her second Paralegal Certificate in 2010. She is a member of the Lambda Epsilon Chi National Honor Society for Paralegal / Legal Assistant Studies (LEX).

Crystal has practiced in Family Law, Elder Law, Probate Law, Guardianships, Health Law, Social Security, and heavy litigation in Intellectual Property and Bankruptcy.

Crystal currently practices residential and commercial Real Estate and Property Law in Houston, Texas.

Crystal also serves on the Paralegal Advisory Committee (PAC) for Center for Advanced Legal Studies.



Eunice Colón

Eunice@ParalegalsConnect.com

Eunice Colón has been a paralegal since early 2003. Eunice has been residing in Houston, Texas where she earned a Bachelor's in Psychology and Spanish from the University of Houston.

Eunice is currently preparing to take the LSAT Exam and achieve her goal to attend law school and become an attorney. She is currently a twelve-year paralegal for one of Houston's best Real Estate and Commercial Litigation Firms.

Aside of preparing to take the LSAT Exam, Eunice owns and runs a small handmade jewelry and jewelry supply online business. She has acquired extensive knowledge in the creation of Facebook Groups and various other marketing projects including websites. Eunice's ability to multitask together with her ability to think and operate in English and Spanish has opened many doors and continues to be a great asset in her professional growth.

MEET OUR AFFILIATES

We would like to thank our Affiliate partners because they make it possible to print and distribute our Newsletter to our members and various paralegal schools and large firms throughout the U.S.

Becoming an Affiliate with our groups offers worldwide visibility to approximately **23,600+ combined group members** in the legal industry.

**Only Affiliates are permitted to advertise within our Groups.*



Paralegals Connect is always looking for Affiliates that can offer our paralegals, legal assistants, future paralegals, and future attorneys the skills and services to help them succeed in their legal careers. We strive to provide information to the latest resources, education, and cost-effective opportunities that will enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of our members.

To become an Affiliate with Paralegals Connect, please contact Crystal@ParalegalsConnect.com for additional information or visit www.ParalegalsConnect.com/Become-an-Affiliate.html

Center for Advanced Legal Studies

Center for Advanced Legal Studies was founded in 1987 to provide education and training for those seeking to enter the legal profession as a paralegal. The **Paralegal Certificate** program provides students with essential paralegal skills and includes courses such as Introduction to Law and Ethics, Legal Research and Writing, Interviewing and Investigation, Corporate and Business Law, Civil Procedure, Computers and the Law, Family Law and Personal Injury. Students can choose from on-campus morning or Saturday courses, or attend 100% online.



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www.CobblestoneSoftware.com/Paralegals

Law Quill Academy

Annette Choti is President of Law Quill, a Legal Marketing Agency focusing on small and solo law firms. After graduating from law school 20 years ago and working for the federal government, she transitioned into digital marketing for attorneys. She has written over 3 million words of online legal content for hundreds of law firms throughout the United States and Canada. She is proud to help small and solo law firms increase their digital footprint and online visibility to gain more clients. She has been honored to have nationally published works in USA Today, Market Watch, and on The Today Show online.

Law Quill partners with paralegals in two different ways:

Law Quill Academy recently launched and provides amazing courses that will help paralegals increase their skill sets around SEO and writing content for law firm websites! www.LawQuill.Thinkific.com

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PROServerCENTER

95% of process servers say they want more clients, but 85% feel they do not have the right tools to do so.

The Process Server Center is a legal professional organization whose mission is to set a national standard for the process service industry in the United States. The organization's approach provides specific, actionable solutions to both process servers and law office managers through:

Development of relevant training: Online programs brought to you by the experts in nationwide process service management help process servers, paralegals, and legal assistants eliminate hassles in process service.

Administration of PROServerLIST: the first nationwide exclusive Directory for Certified and Pre-Screened Process Servers. Built on the foundation of more than 100,000 successfully completed service of process, PROServerLIST connects government agencies and legal professionals directly to its online directory of Pre-Screened and Certified Process Servers in order to improve the legal support services experience for both legal clients and process servers.



www.theProcessServerCenter.com

The Paralegal Writer

Jackie Van Dyke, Certified Paralegal and owner of **The Paralegal Writer**, inspires best writing practices and confidence in legal writing communication. She is a faculty member in the Paralegal Studies Program at The George Washington University and a member of NALA's Continuing Education Council. She has numerous published articles in NALA's **FACTS & FINDINGS – THE PARALEGAL MAGAZINE**, NFPA's **NATIONAL PARALEGAL REPORTER**, and the Paralegals Connect Newsletter. Jackie's passion is to help paralegals at all levels with persuasive memo writing, precise legal citations, and improved grammar and punctuation.

The Paralegal Writer offers a quarterly email course, "Memo Writing Using IRAC," to prepare applicants taking the NALA Skills Exam.

The Paralegal Writer recently launched the "Legal Scribble Sessions" – a five-week email course focused on writing general correspondence, demand and status letters, emails, along with grammar and punctuation exercises.

Email your questions to jvandykeparalegalwriter@gmail.com.

Join the Facebook Group at

www.Facebook.com/Groups/ParalegalsWrite



Learn more about Jackie at

www.TheParalegalWriter.com

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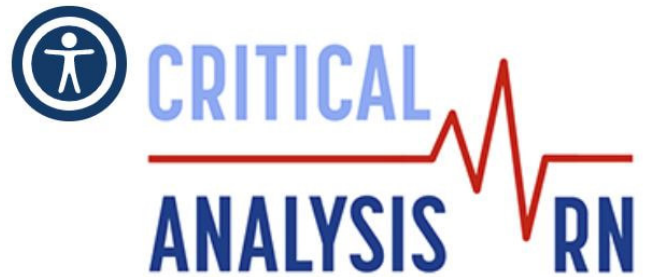
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<https://CriticalAnalysisRN.com>

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Competencies as Currency – How to Get Employers to Show You the Money

By: Tami Riggs



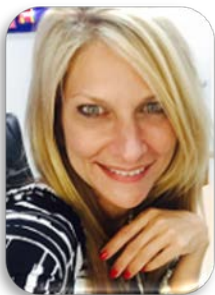
Certificates and degrees will go far to establish your credibility. Having qualifications demonstrates that you can contribute and add value to an organization through training and education. However, employers are not just seeking candidates with credentials. Verifiable skills are a major currency for hiring and advancement.

Here are 6 ways you can show a potential employer that you are “skilled up” and able to integrate and add value to a professional environment.

1. **Highlight Literacy and Communication.** Literacy is more than reading and writing. Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, and compute using written, printed, and digital materials in varying contexts. Can you analyze critical messages, in various forms, and leverage them for persuasive communication? Being literate involves a subset of other skills that includes grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, formatting, typing, handwriting, speaking with intention, active listening, self-reflection, accepting feedback, and being able to formulate solutions and make informed decisions.
2. **Demonstrate Digital Proficiency.** Show that you can leverage technology. Specific technical skills include the ability to use common office equipment, peripheral devices, and other accessories. Knowledge of computer operating systems, word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software, social media platforms, internet search engines, email, cloud-based apps, and video conferencing are also integral to the function and performance of most organizations.
3. **Provide Evidence of Achievements and Work Ethic.** Request short statements and letters from previous managers, coworkers, colleagues, professors, internship sponsors, mentors, or people you volunteer for who can attest to your accomplishments and other intangible qualities such as punctuality, self-motivation, and the ability to meet deadlines. Build strong references and create a portfolio of work with examples, such as test results, presentations, reports, and videos.
4. **Boast Equivalent Experience.** This could include successfully completing an internship, training, certification, or advanced degree. Be able to discuss practical and specific skills acquired from these programs which will enable you to easily transition into a position.
5. **Know the Industry Outlook and Forecast.** Read books and articles, listen to podcasts, and participate in online forums, seminars, and meetups. Follow expert blogs on LinkedIn and other social outlets. Stay up to date on the latest news and current trends. Your ability to assess and evaluate market conditions will give you a competitive advantage.
6. **Network and Collaborate.** Participate in industry projects and organizations. Professional memberships offer development opportunities and connections with others in your field and enhance your career profile. Consistent and active involvement shows that you are committed to your profession and participating in its advancement. *Employers like this.*

Employers are eager for candidates who are “skilled up” and who will consistently deliver more than is required or expected – candidates who are adaptable to change, collaborate well in teams, manage time to align with priorities, and communicate effectively. Capabilities are the new career currency. Having them and proving them will increase the value you represent to a potential employer and positively impact your chances for recruitment and promotion.

Center for Advanced Legal Studies can help you earn your degree and begin your career as a paralegal. We offer programs and curriculum delivered by experienced attorneys who have a passion for teaching. A full range of academic and student services is available, and placement assistance is provided to our graduates as they enter the legal profession. For details on our paralegal education programs and class start dates, visit paralegal.edu.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Tami Riggs is Director of Outreach and Career Services at Center for Advanced Legal Studies in Houston, Texas. She has an extensive and varied professional background that spans criminal justice, paralegal education, and international school marketing and communication. Her career has been guided by a focus on developing strategic partnerships that facilitate school growth and student opportunity. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Texas State University. Connect with **Tami** on LinkedIn.

Are You Marketing Your Freelance Business Correctly?

By: Holly A. Sheriff, MSLS
On behalf of Best Virtual Paralegal LLC



THE FIRST QUESTION

This article is for educational purposes only. This article should not be a substitute for competent licensed professional advice such as a lawyer, CPA, or doctor. It is not intended to apply to any one person's situation.

Many paralegals are trying to escape the chains that bind them to the traditional paralegal role. While starting a freelance business is exciting there is a lot of planning that can come with it, aside from making sure you have the skills and gathering all the legal documents. Often, I hear from clients eager to start their freelance businesses, yet they are disinterested in paying for my knowledge and expertise. And worst yet they are disinterested in taking the time to learn how to market themselves as a freelance paralegal ("freelancers", "virtual paralegal", "independent paralegal", "self-employed").

Marketing yourself as a freelance paralegal is different than seeking traditional employment. Knowing the differences is essential to a freelancer's success. Gone are the days, of traditional word of mouth. With everyone working remotely and teams scattered law firm leadership struggles to stay connected with their teams. This struggle is amplified when you work as a freelance paralegal. Most seasoned freelance paralegals try to bridge this gap by providing excellent services and follow-ups. Sometimes this works and sometimes it does not work. Clients will come and go. Some clients will take the time to connect. Some clients will be open to form lasting relationships and connections with their freelance paralegals. Other clients will not bother. Then are a select group of clients, who understand but still do not make the time. It is this gap in strong everyday connections, which makes marketing so important to the overall success to the paralegal's business.

The first question I ask clients is "Are you marketing your freelance business correctly?" Before you freak out let me explain. Time and time again I see many freelance paralegals offering services to the public.

Usually this is wrong and should be avoided at all costs. The largest part of marketing is knowing how to relay the appropriate message to your ideal client. This can be difficult for paralegals who have no formal marketing training or education.

The first step in marketing any new business or venture concept is conducting research into who can use the service. This is especially important for freelance paralegals. Before a freelance paralegal takes his or her first assignment, he or she might research what types of services, he or she can offer in the jurisdictions chosen as his or her sales territory. There are five (5) key organizations, which may contain vital information:

- State Bar Association(s);
- State (Attorney) Ethics Board(s);
- Federal (Paralegal) Ethics Board(s);
- Federal and Local Paralegal Association(s); and
- the American Bar Association.

Some jurisdictions have clearly defined the practice of law and the unauthorized practice of law ("UPL") others do not. Various State Bar Associations have rendered ethics opinions, which explain whether the attorneys within their State may use the services of a self-employed paralegal.

The more a freelance knows about how his or her own jurisdiction defines or does not define UPL, the practice of law, and the role of a freelance paralegal the best his or her marketing efforts with perform. Marketing is hard enough to do. Do not complicate it by marketing the wrong services to the wrong people. Not every customer is your customer. The first step to any marketing campaign is understanding your market and developing a strategy that speaks to the right people.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

For over 20 years, Holly A. Sheriff, ASPS, BBA, MSLS has been a noteworthy leader and pioneer in the freelance paralegal industry. Mrs. Sheriff's services help attorneys, paralegals, and freelance paralegals succeed in their efforts of balancing business ownership and meeting the demands of the legal profession. Contact Holly at (717) 747.3588 | [Email](#)



Pursue your interest in law and become a paralegal.

Center for Advanced Legal Studies (CALs) is a private, nationally accredited paralegal college. Established in 1987, our focus is providing exceptional paralegal education to our students and dedicated career services for our graduates.



Specialized Paralegal Training

"100 percent of our resources are devoted to paralegal education and training."

What is a Paralegal?

- + Paralegals and legal assistants perform a variety of tasks to support lawyers, including maintaining and organizing files, conducting legal research, investigating the facts of a case, interviewing clients and witnesses, and drafting documents to file with the court.
- + Paralegals and legal assistants are found in all types of organizations, but most work for law firms, corporate legal departments, or government agencies.

Your Success is Our Priority

- + Courses are designed to educate and prepare graduates for gainful employment.
- + Practicing attorneys and experienced paralegals teach law specialty courses.
- + Financial Aid is available for those who qualify. (**FAFSA School Code: 026047**)

Attend Class Online or On Campus

- + **Online** - Attend your paralegal program in a highly interactive online classroom where students can see and speak with their professor and classmates in real-time. Attend classes on your computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet. We bring the classroom to you.
- + **On Campus** - If a classroom setting is your preference, we've got you covered. Classroom instruction provides traditional in-person lecture and increased opportunity for teamwork and collaboration. Weekday and Saturday classes are available.

Secure Employment after Graduation

- + **Career Services** - We offer a multitude of services to help graduates begin their careers.
- + **Resume Review** - Professional guidance in preparing your resume.
- + **Employer Connections** - Leverage our relationship with hundreds of law firms and employers.
- + **Externships Available** - Gain real world experience before you graduate.

Accreditation, Memberships & Associations

 Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges



Council on Occupational Education¹



Higher Education Coordinating Board



Texas Workforce Commission



Texas Veterans Commission

 American Association for Paralegal Education



National Federation of Paralegal Associations



National Association of Legal Assistants



Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas

¹ Council on Occupational Education, 7840 Roswell Road, Building 300, Suite 325, Atlanta, GA 30350, Telephone: 770-396-3898 / FAX: 770-396-3790, www.council.org

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\$9,300

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Civil Procedure
Computers and the Law

+ 2 Electives chosen from

Personal Injury*
Family Law*
Intellectual Property
Real Estate

* Recommended for those continuing on to AAS Degree Paralegal Program



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Our Paralegal Degree Program includes all 24 semester hours completed in the **Paralegal Certificate** program plus an additional 18 to 21 semester hours of law specialty courses. These electives provide students with the opportunity to study some of the most interesting and exciting areas of law.

This program meets or exceeds the law specialty requirements suggested by state and national paralegal authorities.

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Corporate and Business Law
Civil Procedure
Computers and the Law
Personal Injury
Family Law

General Education

English Composition I
English Composition II
General Psychology
American Government I
Introduction to Speech Communication
Anatomy & Physiology I

Advanced Electives

+ 6 Electives including Externship (7 w/o Externship)
Wills, Trusts and Probate
Criminal Law and Procedure
Real Estate
Intellectual Property
Immigration Law
E-Discovery
Advanced Civil Procedure
Advanced Research and Writing
Oil and Gas Law
Externship

Other Requirements: Business Math

Paralegal Dos and Don'ts—Be Aware of UPL

By: Denise M. Blassak

We have all heard about it. The subject that can make any legal professional cringe. The **unauthorized practice of law**, UPL for short. Paralegals and other non-lawyers are wise to keep their minds and eyes open. They should be cautious and aware of occupational limitations. The consequences for UPL can be anything from a civil lawsuit, to industry exile, or criminal punishment. Below are a few 'Do's and Don'ts'—to get you thinking.

DO check if there are UPL statutes or rules in your state. If there are any, review them. (Code of Alabama § 25-5-527; R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-27-12; Tex. Penal Code § 38.123; to name three.)

DO NOT remain silent when someone mistakenly infers you are an attorney, a lawyer, an associate, an advisor, an advocate, a counselor at law, or the like, or labels you as one. When you know of the error, it would be wise to correct the individual who made it.

DO identify yourself by your appropriate title, i.e., paralegal, **IF** you qualify as such. Review your state's laws to be sure. Some states have rather generic laws regarding paralegals, while other states are more specific. (See California Bus. & Prof. Code §§ 6450-6456; New Mexico Rules Annotated, Rule Set 20, specifically 20-101 through 20-115; and others.)

DO NOT be hasty with administrative law cases. Carefully review the law in your area, *beyond* statutes allowing appearances by non-lawyers (i.e. "duly authorized agents"). (See 19 Del. C. § 3373, sub. (a) ["counsel or other duly authorized agent"]; Michigan Comp. Laws Serv. § 421.31 ["counsel or other duly authorized agent"]; S.C. Code § 41-39-30 ["attorney or other duly authorized agent"].) Case law and administrative rules or regulations may clarify which sector has the most authority in these matters—the legislature, the administrative agency, or the judiciary.

DO have your attorney review your work, everything from drafted pleadings to drafted appellate briefs and more. Attorneys must supervise the assignments they delegate to you. The level of supervision they exercise may depend on various factors, including the facts and complexity of their client's matter, and your level of paralegal experience.

DO NOT prepare forms, on your own, for others, unless you have attained a related license in your state. Only a few states have expanded the paralegal role in certain areas of law. (Arizona Licensed Legal Advocates Pilot; Minnesota Legal Paraprofessional Pilot; Utah Licensed Paralegal Practitioner Pilot; and Washington Limited License Legal Technician.)

DO review advisory opinions from the local or state bar, court committee or board. These opinions offer guidance and are instructive, even though they may not be binding. (State Bar of Arizona UPL Advisory Opinion 2006-03 [attorneys employing paralegals/certified legal document preparers]; District of Columbia Court of Appeals Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law Opinion 22-2017 [be cautious with job titles]; Supreme Court of Ohio Board of Commissioners on Grievances and Discipline Opinion 2002-4 [depositions and paralegals]; to name a few.)



DO NOT give legal advice or even hint at it. If need be, remind your attorney's clients that you cannot advise them. Consider a related footer or footnote when you communicate with a client in writing. While there is a difference between legal advice and legal information, be cautious with how you share information.¹

Be proactive and do your homework. While your attorneys should be well versed in what is appropriate for you, and what is not, do not presume they know all paralegal restrictions. Take the initiative to protect yourself, and your career.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Denise M. Blassak is a juvenile dependency paralegal, a newsletter author, and a San Diego Paralegal Association member. She has over 15 years of experience with research, motions, and appellate writing. Her education is ongoing and includes her ABA approved bachelor's paralegal degree from Winona State University. Off hours, Denise enjoys DIY travel, eclectic music, and cultural events—at least pre-COVID. You can reach her at southernncaparalegal@gmail.com



¹<https://www.legalmatch.com/law-library/article/legal-advice-vs-legal-information.html> [as of Oct. 1, 2020].

PARALEGALS IN BUSINESS HELPING OTHER PARALEGALS

Do you suffer from failure to launch?

Do you want to launch a profitable paralegal business?

But Don't Know How?



YOU KNOW

- You have a great idea!
- You want to be your own boss!
- You love being a paralegal!
- You want to work from home.

You know you want to
become a
Virtual Paralegal!

But there's problems!

- Where do you begin?
- How do you get clients?
- What the heck is a business plan?

- Do you need a business plan?
- How do you set prices?
- What is marketing ?
- Who is your ideal client?
- How do you create a website?

Or maybe you've already launched a business but you are plagued by :

- **PROCRASTINATION** because you lack the clarity on **HOW** to find great paying clients.
- **OVERWHELMED** with all the information out there teaching you **WHAT** to do that you stay stuck.

PERFECTIONISM that everything has to be perfect **BEFORE** you can launch. (Truthfully, it could simply be a symptom of fear or wavering confidence).

TOO MANY IDEAS so you bounce from one idea to another idea so your vision of your business gets lost?

If you continue getting "ready" to get ready, and stay stuck, your business will never get launched, your ideas won't be heard, and no one will get to experience your gifts!

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Invest in Yourself!

By: Jackie Van Dyke, CP®



As we continue to navigate our way through the COVID-19 pandemic and year-end is upon us, it is a great time to invest in yourself and strengthen your legal writing skills. Begin 2021 with a renewed confidence in your ability to write effectively and powerfully.

Perhaps you have been a paralegal for some time and find yourself bored with the same responsibilities and daily tasks. Maybe you have been working from home amidst family multi-tasking and unexpected chaos. This may be the time to prepare for a change and a new perspective. Strengthening your writing skills may be just what you need to take the next step toward a different job or even a management role.

As a seasoned paralegal, 2020 may have left you feeling as though you want to make an entirely different move. Consider a career change. Consider a move to a new city or state. Strong writing skills are transferrable to so many industries and may help you negotiate for what you want in 2021.

For paralegal students, the time is now to create a timeline and specific goals for attaining the position you have dreamed of for months. Persuasive writing, along with proper grammar and punctuation, can influence a prospective employer. Learning to write with confidence makes resume writing less painful. Mastering the art of writing a succinct memo will prepare you for accomplishing the prestigious honor of certification offered by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA).

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As your legal writing coach, I will offer best practices, encouragement, detailed feedback, and helpful tips. I will hold you accountable to practice writing while I empower you to create confident written communication. You will be challenged to expand your critical thinking skills. Get the results you want by learning to write strategically, focusing on word choice, and implementing concise sentence structure. Together, we will work on upleveling your writing skills!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jackie Van Dyke, CP®, is a freelance-independent paralegal, entrepreneur and owner of [The Paralegal Writer](http://TheParalegalWriter.com), and a paralegal studies professor at The George Washington University where she teaches advanced legal writing and litigation. She is the author of numerous articles published in NALA's *Facts & Findings - The Paralegal Magazine* and is a member of NALA's Continuing Education Council. Jackie has also written previous articles for the Paralegals Connect Newsletter and the National Federation of Paralegal Associations magazine, *The Reporter*. She is currently working on an advanced writing course planned for the Paralegal Boot Camp in 2021.



A Broken Umbrella Handle

Working for Lawyers When You Have a Disability

By: Holly A. Sheriff, MSLS
On behalf Best Virtual Paralegal LLC



The legal profession is one of the most stressful, fast paced industries in the United States. Dina Roth Port, of Rocket Matter, reports, “Lawyers are 3.6 times as likely to be depressed as people in other jobs, while the landmark 2016 American Bar Association and Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation study found that 28 percent of licensed, employed lawyers suffer with depression. The study also discovered that 19 percent of lawyers have symptoms of anxiety and 21 percent are problem drinkers”, (PORT, 2018). If this is what happens to lawyers, what happens to paralegals? No one talks about the effects on paralegals. And we won’t be discussing it here either. Port’s statistic merely to illustrates paralegals work in a high stress, fast paced, everything-is-on-fire industry.

Paralegals are an extension of lawyers; we’re the handle and lawyers are the umbrella. When you think of an umbrella, what do you see? Do you see the canopy first or do you see the handle? And what if the handle were missing? Could the umbrella keep everything dry and in working order? Maybe or maybe not. Now, thinking of an umbrella again, what if the canopy worked great. The handle was strong, sturdy, and looked like a normal, everyday umbrella handle. That’s until you try using it to open the canopy. It is only then you realize the perfect handle may not always connect correctly with the canopy. You push the release button, and 9 times out of 10 ... nothing happens. It either can’t or won’t open, then you find yourself giving it a little jiggle to make it respond. The canopy finally opens - as it should.

That’s exactly what it’s like being a paralegal with a movement disorder namely, right-side hemiplegia cerebral palsy (“CP”) and working with lawyers; everything is backwards, broken, and a struggle; but only if you allow it to overwhelm you.

Right-side hemiplegia cerebral palsy is defined by the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP), as “a paralysis or weakness on one side of the body. Cerebral palsy is a broad term referring to abnormalities of motor control or movement of the body caused by an injury to a person’ brain” (UCP, n.d.). It is worth noting, CP can affect people differently to different degrees. No two patients with CP are alike. Similarly, to no two paralegals are alike.

I am often quoted as saying, “I have a rare button allergy,” because as I age, I can’t button my own shirts to save my life.” It literally can take me two hours or more to button my pink flamingo, boyfriend-style work pajamas. Wiggling my toes in the sand is another thing I can’t do. Running sucks. Okay, so I did win first place in the 1500-meter run of the 1983/1984 Special Olympics in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, at Rice Elementary. But what isn’t public knowledge is I was the only registered racer, and it took me the entire day. Apparently, there wasn’t anything that could be modified enough for me participate. If memory serves, they didn’t modify the 1500-meter run, either. But, there I was running a long way, in a circle, by myself. Somehow, the school thought that would be better than me sitting in the stands with my parents.

However, I do have a first-place ribbon for something that is humanly impossible for me to do. I cannot run. I never want to run - not then and not now. If you see me running, you better run too because that means zombie lawyers are chasing me. Me running is an awkward series of unfortunate movements that are either too stiff or too loose. It is truly painful ... painful to watch and even more painful to do. So, if you asked me, “What is CP?” I’d tell you, “CP is a thief.” It steals small motor skills. Is it stealing if the person never had the ability in the first place? It’s deep life questions, like this one, that can take us down a rabbit hole of no return. But I digress, I would be lying if I said, I never wondered what it would be like to be a normal perfect paralegal. A shiny, sturdy, functioning umbrella handle that opens the canopy every time, without fail, Then I wake up and laugh.

No one is a perfect paralegal, no one is a perfect lawyer. There are no perfect umbrellas with perfectly functioning handles in this world. The only different between me and other paralegals, without a rare button allergy, is my so called “disability”. It forced me to adapt to my surroundings and adapt my skills to fit my physical abilities. For example, I learned to type with one hand versus two hands. Technically, I know how to type with both hands because my parents made me do it, just to prove I shouldn’t try to be normal ... because I’m not.

Typing with one hand is less painful, faster, and my preferred method. Last time I checked, I typed between 85 and 95 WPM with one hand, depending upon what I am typing, of course. When I type with two hands, it's awkward and very painful, because I am going against nature. Sort of like me trying to run. My right hand was not designed to move in the manner used for typing. Two-handed typing reduces my speed to a pitiful 24 to 32 WPM. Typing with two hands is reserved for the rare occasions an abled bodied person is watching me. It freaks people out to see a presumably normal looking person type with one hand while her other hand just sits there doing absolutely nothing, except cause a great deal of unnecessary frustration. Last I checked, I was not a Barbie, my useless right hand won't come off. Trust me, it won't come off. I've asked plenty of doctors during my lifetime and they all agree, I need to keep the impostor, which to you resembles a perfectly fine arm and hand – until I try to type a legal brief. My typing speed would probably increase if I didn't have to contend with a useless hand.

Arguably, able-bodied people see my disability as a bigger challenge to overcome, than I do. The majority of able-bodied people I meet for the first time only see the ankle-foot orthosis brace (AFO), cane, walker, or electronic wheelchair, I use to adapt to my surroundings. Because to look at me without those devices, you can't tell I am a freak of nature. More alarming is the number of able-bodied people who have accused me of being drunk on the job, because of the speech and posture impairments that my CP can cause when I am overly tired. To be frank, I don't take extra time to disguise the fact I am not "normal." Yes, people with disabilities often try to conceal their disability from the able-bodied world. Ironically, it's to avoid freaking out able-bodied people.

When I was a child, my father would lovingly call me "gimp" or "gimpy" to help me adjust to the unjust and cruel school yard taunts. It was a nickname like princess or sweet pea, just more accurate.

CP gives me the awesome capacity to lose my balance while standing completely still on two legs (not moving). As a result, when I am not using a wheelchair, I am prone to hugging the floor, without warning. Please don't say, "I do that too," "I can trip over my feet and hug the floor, too, Holly." I know able-bodied people are prone to the same balance issues, on occasion. But there is a difference in our brains.

My brain can't send the signals needed to my muscles and limbs to make small, smooth motor skill moves. I can't do it no matter how many times I try. Ten times out of 10, I am going to fall over while standing still, fall walking to the coffee pot, or my all-time favorite, trip over my own toes because my right leg didn't receive all the message from my brain to lift my foot up high enough to avoid going splat! face first on the floor. Yet, I know exactly what I want to do, my body, physically can't do it.



My Dad understood the challenges CP would cause me. Powerless to fix it, he taught me to try anything once.

Don't sweat it if my body failed me - adapt and move along. By the time, I started grammar school, I didn't notice the name calling, because I was already calling myself gimp. I embraced my physical limits. As a result, I was everyone's friend and happy every day despite the reality that I wasn't normal, and no one picked me first for dodge ball or tag.

Realistically, I wouldn't have picked me either. Who wants a gimp who can't dodge or run to be on their team? Years after school, as my paralegal business continued to grow, Dad started calling me "[the] Gimpy Paralegal™". My Dad's hippie ways developed one of my company's best trademarks. [The] Gimpy Paralegal™ was born from politically incorrect humor. Yet, I use [the] Gimpy Paralegal™ to raise awareness for causes like CP and other disabilities in the workforce. Before creating [the] Gimpy Paralegal, people referred to me as "that paralegal with cerebral palsy," which, by the way, is more offensive to me than "gimp" ever was.

Again, see what I did there? I took a negative concept and flipped it on its ear. Isn't that what paralegals do? We look for different interpretations of case law to fit the legal matters that affect our clients – we adapt findings and facts to fit issues for attorney review.

I have spent my entire life adapting to an able-bodied world. Logically, it only made sense that I picked the one profession where I would get paid to help other people adapt, modify, and adjust laws to help them pursue life, liberty, and justice.

It is not always easy being a paralegal, with or without a disability. I suppose, it's not always easy being an umbrella handle either. It can be extremely daunting if you're a broken umbrella handle. Don't sweat the things you can't control. I had no say in being born with CP. I learned to adapt and when I hit brick walls, I learned new adaptable skills. Learn to adapt to your surroundings by being yourself, know your limits, learn to work with them to the extent it appears to others that you don't have limits.

If preparing pleadings isn't your jam, but you excel at research, adjust your surroundings and your skills. Become an expert researcher and find tips, hacks, and technology to help you learn to draft better pleadings. If you're a slow typist, practice to improve your skills. Don't make excuses about why you can't type until you've tried typing with one hand while your other hand just hangs there.

Dina Roth Port is absolutely correct, many lawyers suffer from anxiety and depression and some are closet drinkers. I am sure paralegals also suffer from these same health issues and challenges. Yet, no one talks about paralegals suffering from these emotional illnesses. I can only assume this is because generally, paralegals are taught by lawyers to adapt positively and quickly to the changes in moods, emotions, and pressures that come along with working with lawyers.

Ironically, throughout my career, I have been taught valuable skills that have armed me with positive tactics to avoid falling victim to alcoholism, stress, anxiety, and depression by many lawyers who struggle with these very issues. Their invaluable lessons helped me adapt and form a sought-after solution-driven business aimed at reducing the likelihood my supervising attorneys become Betty Ford statistics.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Holly A. Sheriff, MSLS is a renowned, award-winning litigation paralegal, entrepreneur, motivational speaker, and paralegal business coach. She has dedicated her 30-year career to helping attorneys, paralegals, and legal professionals realize their greatness and panic less during the process.

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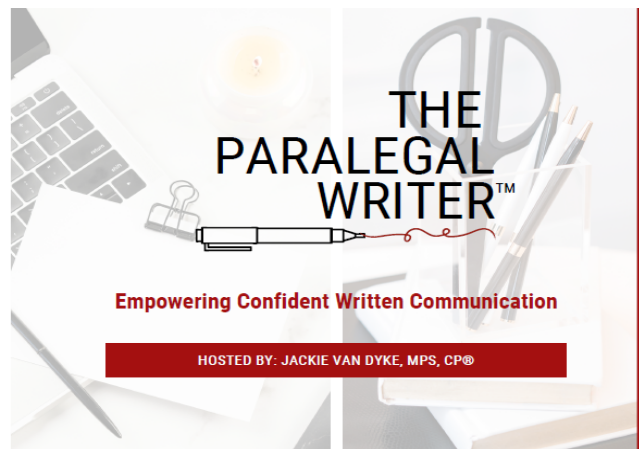
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Jackie is a certified paralegal, course content creator, and paralegal studies professor wanting to help you succeed!



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Get to Know Loio

By: Team Loio - www.Loio.com

Hi everyone! 🙌

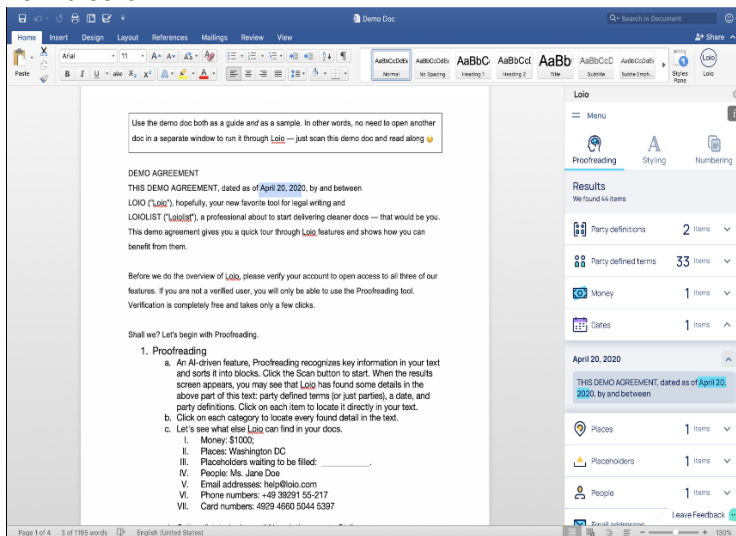
We are Loio, a new Microsoft Word add-in for everybody who works with legal documents. We have just released our add-in and now invite everybody to try it out for free and to give their sincere feedback. Loio aspires to be a modern, people-friendly tool that will not require you to go anywhere outside Microsoft Word — because we know how overwhelmed paralegals' workload can be.

So, let us introduce ourselves by answering a couple of FAQs:

What does Loio do?

Loio is a tool for reviewing, editing, and drafting legal documents. As you open it as a side screen while working in Word, you can scan the doc with 3 tools: Proofreading (we're in the middle of renaming it to Highlights), Styling, and Numbering.

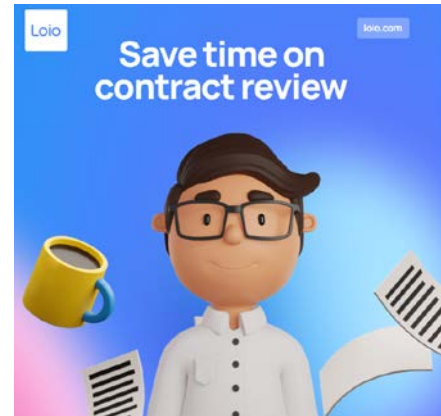
- **Proofreading / Highlights** scans your text and locates key information for your easy review. Here is a screenshot of how it looks:



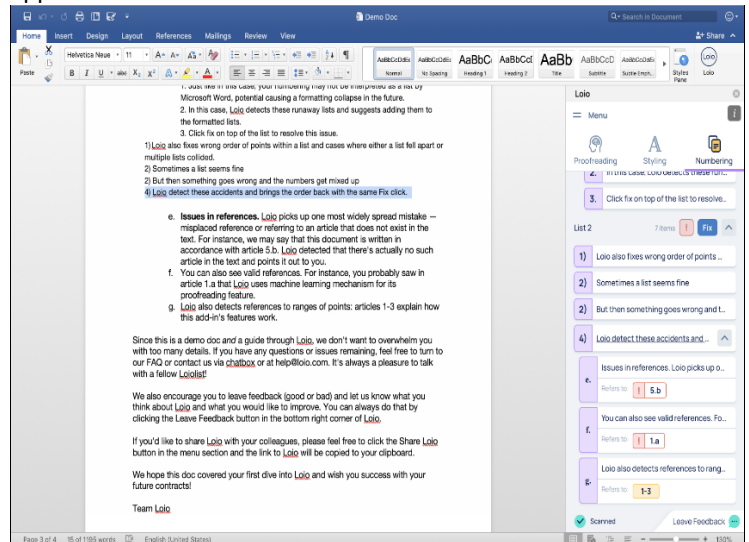
Now, is Loio free?

For now, yes. We give each new user a 3-month free trial to hear the feedback and to understand how we can improve the product. We're planning to introduce paid plans at the beginning of 2021 and are still figuring out how it's going to work. Do not worry, we will not upgrade free accounts to paid plans automatically and we will definitely let you know once there are any updates.

For more information, visit our website loio.com and read in detail about our features or follow detailed installation guides.



- **Styling** gives you a clear overview of formatting styles that appear in your document and allows you to quickly re-style big chunks of text right within the add-in screen.
- **Numbering** scans lists in your text, detect mistakes, and offers to fix them. It also shows where each cross-reference appears. Here is how it looks:



Okay, How can I try it?

Easy. Open your Word, go to Insert → Add-ins → Store. Then search for Loio Contract Assistant and click Install. The whole installation and authorization process will not take more than a few minutes, and we also do not collect any personal information apart from your email. After you have installed the add-in — voila!

We're excited to hear feedback from paralegals and other legal professionals, so please don't be shy!

Cheers! -Team Loio www.Loio.com

This Newsletter was made possible by the Affiliates of Paralegals Connect. Thank you!

We also want to thank our writers who contributed to make our Newsletter a success.

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