

How about a 'slightly used' paralegal?

BY LINDA S. JEVAHIRIAN

One of the magical things about the paralegal field is how the experience spills over to related positions. Paralegal skills transfer easily to many opportunities in law firms, corporate legal departments, and other businesses. The result is overwhelmingly positive for the paralegals who experience profound career enhancement, and for the employers who achieve greater success through higher level employees.

Litigation

Insurance companies hire litigation paralegals for risk and claims management positions. Personal injury, products liability, medical malpractice and automobile negligence paralegals fit perfectly into these roles. The experiences they have with investigation, summarizing medical records, valuing lawsuits, assimilating discovery, preparing for and attending trials, interviewing witnesses, working with experts, and reading and digesting legal documents can be directly applied.

Litigation paralegals use numerous software programs for document management and trial presentation. They transition well into technology departments as managers, litigation support specialists,

THE LAWYER'S PARALEGAL

**Employing paralegals
 in alternative positions
 is a profitable opportunity.
 As their abilities become
 more dynamic, paralegals
 provide indispensable
 resources to more
 challenging positions
 in the workplace.**

and trainers. Outside the law firm, they are well-equipped to work in document management and exhibit preparation companies, and businesses that produce and support software.

After years of preparing and organizing document and record reviews, paralegals are ideally suited for corporate records management, a field that is becoming highly refined and technically challenging. Paralegals are trained to know where documents originate, what their present and future value is, how to preserve them, and how to create organization systems that allow their production timely and

efficiently.

Corporate

Highly valued corporate paralegals have been promoted to positions as assistant corporate secretary. One company promoted its corporate paralegal to a senior analyst for the Licensing and Joint Venture Administration Department. Utilities employ paralegals to attend public hearings and track legislation.

It is not unusual to find a paralegal in total charge of a company's immigration department. Attention to detail and applying rules and regulations is a large part of paralegal training. The process of moving domestic and foreign employees around the globe is an especially tedious one. Paralegals with some immigration practice can do this.

Real estate

Paralegals who have expertise in the commercial documentation and real estate area are employed as title review specialists, loan and mortgage closers, and lease negotiators. One law firm hires paralegals in its capital management group to process and close commercial loans.

Moreover, real estate management and land development companies use paralegals to work with cus-

tomers preparing and negotiating lease and sales documents, and real estate sales organizations hire paralegals to prepare and attend closings.

Contracts

Any company that negotiates contracts is eligible for a paralegal. One leasing company employs paralegals with real estate, corporate and contract experience to analyze and negotiate equipment leases. Paralegals draft, revise and negotiate contracts with customers world wide. Even the department manager is a former corporate and real estate paralegal who initially worked at a law firm.

Estate planning

Estate planning and probate paralegals make excellent trust administrators at banks and accounting firms. One paralegal who worked for a public administrator became self-employed processing guardianship cases for the courts. Funeral homes use paralegals to work out the details of probate administration and public notice for their clients.

Human resources

Corporations hire paralegals with pension experience to administer their employee benefit plans.

Human resource departments also hire paralegals with employment litigation experience to respond to EEOC claims. Paralegals with experience supervising are promoted to administrative and management positions.

Legal coordinator

In the absence of an in-house attorney, one company hired a paralegal to organize and process legal inquiries. The company did not have an immediate need for a full-time attorney, but required someone with a special knowledge to communicate with outside counsel, making sure matters were resolved properly.

Administrative law

Administrative law hearings can be done by non-licensed practitioners. The Social Security Administration is one example of a government agency where paralegals argue cases. One company employs an entire staff of paralegals who convert insurance-provided disability benefits to Social Security benefits.

Employing paralegals in alternative positions is a profitable opportunity. Paralegals have excellent writing, communication, organizational, analytical, problem-solving

and decision-making skills. As their abilities become more dynamic, paralegals provide indispensable resources to more challenging positions in the workplace.

Linda S. Jevahirian is the founder and president of Legal Search & Management, Inc., a specialty firm that provides temporary and permanent recruiting to firms and corporations interested in improving their practice through the use of legal assistants. Linda is a noted speaker, trainer and author. Her articles have appeared in numerous legal publications, including Michigan Lawyers Weekly, the Michigan Bar Journal, The National Law Journal and Legal Assistant Today.

Recently appointed as the vice chair of the Legal Assistants Committee of the Oakland County Bar Association, Linda remains active with the State Bar of Michigan Legal Assistants Section and the Paralegal Section of the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association. The Lawyer's Paralegal is a column established and written by Linda and is published bi-monthly by Michigan Lawyers Weekly. Permission for reprints is available. Linda can be reached at (248) 471-3443 or linda@legalsearchonline.net.



Legal Search & Management, Inc.

We Find the Stars