

Paralegal - Do You Have What It Takes?

As job opportunities in many professions continue to be downsized and outsourced in the new global economy, the paralegal field has continued to grow in stature and importance along with the job opportunities.

Sounds great for anyone who's interested in a career as a paralegal but regardless of the opportunities if you're not cut out for the work, it's of little importance. As a result, if you've been contemplating a paralegal career you may want to ask yourself if you've got what it takes to be a top notch paralegal.

To help you along in your self evaluation I've listed some of the top characteristics you'll need to excel in this challenging, rewarding and in demand profession.

People Skills

In today's workplace, most professions require the ability to work well with others and working as a paralegal is no different. Although research is a big part of the job and I'll go into that aspect of the job next, you will also be required to work with a wide variety of people. As a paralegal you are the liaison between the client and the lawyer for many duties. For instance, you may be asked to take statements from clients and then assist in directing their concerns and questions to the lawyer.

Research, Research, Research

The bottom line with research is that if you don't like it, you should run away from this career as fast as you can. You must love and excel at research if you want succeed as a paralegal. In addition, you need to be the kind of individual who can think outside the box in order to find the hidden facts that will help the cases you are assigned to research. Today, much of your research can be done online via the internet but good old fashioned research at the county courthouse or scrolling through old newspapers on microfiche down at the public library.

Self Starter

Are you a self starter with the ability to work at a high level with limited supervision? If you are the type of person who requires a boss standing over your shoulder "cracking the whip" pushing you to get busy and meet deadlines you may want to reconsider becoming a paralegal. Most attorneys and other business owners you may be working for simply do not have the time to be following the progress of your work on an ongoing basis. They will give you a task and then expect you to meet your deadline.

Pressure and More Pressure

All jobs have pressure but some pressure is more real because it's backed by a real world deadline that doesn't move and must be met. The type of work paralegals do usually falls into the category of work that needs to be completed on time because there's a deadline to meet. On that note, you need to be aware that as you are doing research and gathering information, facts may pop up on occasion that change the entire course of your research and then you may be forced to start anew, from a completely new angle. Therefore, you must have the ability to handle deadlines, adapt on a moments notice and be able to handle it all without getting frustrated or you'll burn out.

Organization

Because all the research you do can either make or break a case you must be able to organize all that information into a usable, user friendly format that anyone can use and understand. This is vital because you'll be required to present your research to lawyers or case workers or to whomever and if they are confused the consequences could be disastrous.

That's it - arguably the top five qualities any highly skilled, competent paralegal needs to survive and thrive. Do you have what it takes? Be honest and if you do - congratulations, because with the right training your future should be bright.

If the allure of a paralegal career is calling you, check out the links below.

About the Author

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