

PARALEGAL PIPELINE

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E-MAIL: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU HIT 'SEND'

BY: VICKI VOISIN, ACP

It's no secret that law firms are communicating more and more by e-mail. E-mail is fast, easy and spontaneous. In 1999 the American Bar Association Issued Opinion 99-413 stating that confidential communication by means of unencrypted e-mail aren't a breach of the duty of confidentiality because the mode of transmission affords a reasonable expectation of privacy. This opinion does not relieve attorneys and staff from their ethical obligations. Here are a few things you should give some thought to before you send your e-mail:

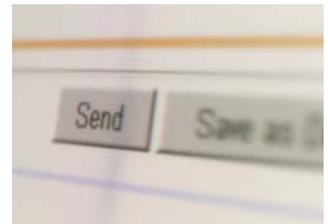
Do you have your client's permission to communicate by e-mail? Always be sure your client wants to receive e-mail from you. Some people check their mail so infrequently that sending a letter by US mail would be best. Others won't know how to download and review documents. It's best to have your client's permission in writing before you communicating by e-mail.

Does someone other than your client have access to their e-mail? Perhaps your

client shares the e-mail address with a co-worker or family member. If the family or co-worker receives the communication, confidential information may be disclosed.

Will a third party see the e-mail? E-mail containing privileged information between your firm and the client is fine so long as a third party does not receive the e-mail. The disclosure of privileged information to a third party waives the privilege. This is also a concern if your client is copying third parties with e-mail to your firm.

Does your e-mail include a statement that it's privileged? Every e-mail message, whether it's routine or contains privileged information, should include a statement that it is privileged and if the recipient receives it in error, her or she shouldn't read it and should inform the sender immediately. While this disclaimer can't prevent someone else from reading the message, it can help your firm make the case that the disclosure was inadvertent and that the communication should retain the privileged



status.

Are you using your personal e-mail account or your firm's account? The line between professional and private e-mail accounts is blurred. The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure allow the discovery of any material relevant to the claims of a party so long as the discovery appears to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence. It would be best if you didn't use your personal e-mail account to send business communications and vice versa. You do not want your personal e-mail account to be subject to discovery.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*“Anyone who has never
made a mistake has
never tried anything
new.”*

~ Albert Einstein

RESUME WRITING TIPS

When drafting a resume, the paralegal needs to focus on specific aspects of her abilities. He or she should highlight the skills and qualifications that relate exclusively to the field of law. Entry level applicants will want to place their educational background in the beginning of a resume, while those with a long work history should place the attention of their resume on experience rather than education. Please, please, please spell and grammar check your resume several times. Check for errors on a hard copy of your resume as well. Have a second set of eyes check- you can never check too many times for mistakes. As a paralegal, proofreading is imperative.

Do not send a potential employer a blunder riddled resume!

A paralegal needs to have a strong knowledge of the legal system and how it operates. When constructing your work experience you need to be very specific about the tasks that you have learned and use keywords when describing them. Include the most important duties you have been given. A resume that includes interviewing clients and drafting legal documents is more impressive than one that only includes maintaining the calendars and answering telephones.

There are several associations to which paralegals can belong. There are national affiliations such as

the National Federation of Paralegal Associations. There are also local associations like the Chester County Paralegal Association. Placing these associations prominently on your resume indicates that you have achieved some objectively measurable expertise or that you have met qualification standards that your competitors for the open position may not. Do not bury any affiliations in a section that contains other information, but rather set it off by itself so that it stands out even if you only belong to one.

WHAT'S NEW

- On Friday, May 9, 2014 the CCPA hosted a luncheon and CLE at the CCBA with Donna Huntermark from NFPA as our guest speaker. Donna presented the CLE seminar entitled "The Role of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations in the Paralegal Profession".
- On Saturday May 3, 2014 the Keystone Alliance of Paralegal Associations hosted the 2014 PA Summit on the Paralegal Profession at the Villanova University Conference Center. Four CLE credits were earned through various available seminars and a full breakfast and lunch was provided in a beautiful setting.
- On June 3, 2014, Governor Corbett signed a Proclamation declaring the week of July 21-25, 2014 as Paralegal Week and July 25, 2014 Paralegal Day. In honor of Paralegal Week, the Chester County Paralegal Association held a celebration on July 31, 2014 at the home of Maureen O'Hara.

5 STEPS TO CREATING AN IMPRESSIVE LINKEDIN PROFILE

Social media is an important tool for growing your career. Facebook and Twitter get a lot of attention. However, LinkedIn is a powerful tool for forming new connections and, perhaps finding new employment.

LinkedIn as the more professional version of Facebook. On LinkedIn you can post links and status updates, join groups, and "link up" with key players in your profession. It is also useful for networking.

Setting up a LinkedIn account is simple. Once it is done you need to work on your profile and that can be tedious. Instead of rushing to complete it all at one time, I suggest you work on one part at a time – perhaps 15 minutes a day until it is fin-

ished. Then you have to keep it updated -- more about that in No. 5 below.

Here are five simple steps to craft a LinkedIn profile that may be your secret to career success:

1. Do not skimp on details. If you have only a basic profile or (worse yet), one without a picture, you appear to be only a half-hearted user of LinkedIn.

Be sure to complete each section and use specific numbers you can to quantify your accomplishments. (Example: First Chair of the Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section of the State Bar of Michigan.)

If you want to change the order of your profile sec-

tion as you are editing your profile. For instance, if you are a recent graduate of a paralegal program, you will want to highlight your educational experience. If you have been in the profession for several years, you will want to feature your skills at the top of your profile.

2. Be sure there are no typos. Your typographical errors may be overlooked on more casual platforms like Facebook and Twitter. With LinkedIn, you will want to put your best professional foot forward. Use the spell check function and, if possible, have someone else check your profile for errors.

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*"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass...it's learning to dance in the rain."
~ Unknown*

E-MAIL: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU HIT 'SEND'

(Continued from Page 1)

Are you using 'reply to all'? Be careful! It is unethical to communicate with a person who is represented by an attorney. You often receive e-mail from attorneys who have also copied their client with the message. If you respond with 'reply to all' your message will go to the client and you are technically communicating with the represented person.

Are you responding to every e-mail on demand? E-mail's extreme emphasis on responsiveness may jeopardize a very important attribute of professional excellence: judgment. Good judgment implies informed and critical thinking that leads to the optimal resolution of difficult and complex problems.

This can't be rushed...but this is exactly what e-mail causes us to do. A snap answer may not be the best answer. Instead of shooting back an immediate reply, it might be best to respond that you understand the importance of the problem and will give it the time and attention it requires. If you do this, the client is getting a response but not an immediate answer.

Your challenge: Use e-mail with the same caution you would use with any communication. E-mail may seem impersonal and be more spontaneous. However, this doesn't relieve you and your firm of the ethical responsibilities of confidentiality, privilege, and good judgment. Get your client's permission to correspond by e-mail. Be sure your client understands the ramifications

of copying a third party with his or her messages. Be cautious when you choose the 'reply to all' function so that you do not communicate directly with a represented person. Resist the urge to shoot off quick responses to e-mail messages. Instead, take the time to use the good judgment the response deserves.

Vicki Voisin, also known as The Paralegal Mentor, publishes the bi-weekly ezine 'Strategies for Paralegals Seeking Excellence' where she offers tips for paralegals and others who want to create lasting success in their personal and professional lives. Get tips and information at no cost at:

www.paralegalmentor.com

"You have within you, right now, everything you need to deal with whatever the world can throw at you."

-Brian Tracy

NFPA ETHICS BOARD CHAIR & NEW MEMBER APPOINTMENT

By: Lisa B. Vessels, RP, CP, FRP
NFPA Vice President & Director of Positions and Issues
VPPI@PARALEGALS.ORG

I am happy to announce that I have appointed Raeann Bromark as the new chair of the Ethics Board. We also welcome a new member to replace Raeann's spot on the board: **Maureen O'Hara**. Please give them your support as you always do!

CCPA AND NFPA

Related to the appointment to the NFPA Ethics Board, Maureen O'Hara will be stepping down as Primary Representative from CCPA to NFPA.

And **Suzie Marker**, currently Secondary Representative, will step into the position of Primary Representative for the balance of the term through January 2015.

The position of Secondary Rep must be filled.

5 STEPS TO CREATING AN IMPRESSIVE LINKEDIN PROFILE

(Continued from Page 3)

The key to success on LinkedIn is being likable and professional at the same time. Save the celebrity gossip and LOL's for Facebook.

3. Utilize the skills section. Many LinkedIn users are not familiar with the skills section. However, people wanting to hire professionals with a certain skill set use this feature to find the right person instead of posting an ad.

For instance, if a law firm needs a litigation paralegal with experience using Trial Director, she can go to www.linkedin.com/skills and sort through profiles where Trial Director is listed as a skill instead of doing a more general search. Add your skills at www.linkedin.com/skills so prospects can find you easily.

4. Endorsements and recommendations. Endorsements are a fairly new feature on LinkedIn. People can easily endorse your

skills and expertise with only a few clicks. Often if you endorse someone and they know you, they will reciprocate.

Endorsements and recommendations are not the same.

Recommendations are more detailed than endorsements. These normally include a few sentences about why your colleague or vendor enjoyed working with you. A few genuine, well-written recommendations can really help build trust and provide proof for people who are considering hiring you.

Speed up the recommendation process by recommending a few of your connections.

5. Update frequently. Now for the hard-to-get-to part. Once your profile is created, be sure to keep it up to date by posting new career milestones, any awards you receive, offices you are elected to, etc.

Your status update can also include links to relevant articles or news about your employer. Set aside time once each week (at least once each month!) to review your profile and make appropriate updates.

My request to you: To keep your career moving forward, it is very important to be active on LinkedIn. This includes keeping your profile up to date, getting recommendations, and making frequent updates.

Implement LinkedIn to make new connections and strengthen relationships with existing connections. LinkedIn can also be a tool for looking for a job OR for someone looking for a new hire with your particular skills!

Vicki Voisin, also known as The Paralegal Mentor, publishes the bi-weekly ezine 'Strategies for Paralegals Seeking Excellence' where she offers tips for paralegals and others who want to create lasting success in their personal and professional lives. Get tips and information at no cost at:

www.paralegalmentor.com.



"I had to fire one of the new paralegals today because she's obviously smarter than I am."

2014-2015 PARALEGAL STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP

The CCPA received seven entries for the two \$500 scholarships for the 2014-2015 academic year. It is interesting to observe more men entering the profession and for the first time we have two gentlemen receiving the scholarships and no women.

The winners are: **Kristopher Nerl** - Villanova University Post-Baccalaureate evening Certificate program.

John Kutney-Pierce College Undergraduate program in Paralegal Studies.

Thank you to each of you for supporting the CCPA Scholarship program.

Thank you also to *Lynn Rohr*, *Jessica Stubblebine* and *Ellanna Ippolito* for volunteering to review the application packages.

We're on the web
chescoparalegal.org

The Chester County Paralegal Association, based in Chester County, Pennsylvania, was formed in 1992 with the objectives and purposes of promoting and maintaining high standards and ethics in the paralegal profession, of providing a forum for the exchange of information about the profession, of enhancing the role of paralegals in the legal community, and of encouraging the continuing legal education of paralegals.

The Chester County Paralegal Association is a member of the Keystone Alliance of Paralegal Associations and the National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc.

GUARDIANSHIP PROGRAM SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

BY FRANCINE FULTON

Chester County Orphans' Court is currently seeking volunteers to serve as its "eyes and ears" by visiting residents under guardianship to assure that they are receiving appropriate care.

As part of the legal process, the court appoints guardians for people who need assistance in making decisions about their daily lives due to serious physical and mental disabilities. "A guardian can be a family member, (a) friend or an agency," said Diane Mulhearn, program coordinator. "They are basically responsible for protecting the person under guardianship, managing their assets and arranging for their care that will adequately provide for their well-being."

The Hon. Katherine B.L. Platt, an administrative judge with the Orphans' Court, explained that once a guardian of the person is appointed, there is an ongoing obligation for those appointed to report to the court annually. However, the volume of open guardianships makes it impossible for the Orphans' Court judges to stay involved in each of the 400 or so cases that are open in the Chester County courts. "Our trained volunteers are the eyes and ears of the court and help us to be alert to and deal with issues of personal and fiscal safety for those whom we have (declared) incapacitated," she said.

Mulhearn said volunteers with

the program are of all ages and come from different backgrounds. "Some volunteers work full time, and a lot of their visits take place during the evening or on weekends.

They are looking to give back to the community and assist the court," she said. "We have attorneys that work with the program, (as well as) a physician, many social workers, nurses and educators (as volunteers). Our youngest volunteer is in her upper 20s, and volunteers go up to their 70s or 80s."

Mulhearn said every effort is made to accommodate the volunteers. "The beauty of the program is that it is so flexible. Some visitors want to work with the elderly. Others are more interested in working with the younger incapacitated individual," Mulhearn said. "Some are only interested in going to private homes; some are interested in only going to a nursing facility.

Their time is their own. They can take on as many cases as they want," she continued. "They make their own schedules. It's not like other volunteer positions that require a certain number of hours."

Volunteer visitors should be friendly, have common sense and objectivity, and have the ability to maintain confidentiality. "Volunteers must be good listeners, have good communication skills and, above all, be compassionate," Mulhearn said. "Volunteers have the support of court

personnel and other seasoned volunteers. The program has been in existence for 19 years, and our dedicated staff of volunteers has made it a success story."

A good indication that the Chester County Orphans' Court Guardianship program is a success is indicated by the words of Platt, who stated, "This program is a godsend to the people we serve and to the court. I, for one, sleep better at night knowing these committed volunteers are helping me and my fellow judges protect the people we serve." Additionally, Chester County is reportedly the only local county with a guardianship program at this time, but other counties are looking to start their own programs. "We've been contacted by a number of other counties who have heard about this program and know what a success it is," said Mulhearn.

Those interested in becoming part of the program are invited to take part in a training session that will be held on Tuesday, April 8, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Chester County Justice Center, 201 W. Market St., Suite 4100, West Chester. For more information or to request an application for the upcoming training, interested readers are asked to call Mulhearn at 610-344-5212.

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