

Paralegal Support Services as Referral Sources

By Kris L. Canaday, Freelance Paralegal

Paralegals, especially paralegal support providers, are one of attorneys' top referral sources.

When I worked in private practice, I knew the attorneys in the office where I worked, but could really only speak to the abilities of the attorneys I worked with directly. In a general practice firm, I knew we had certain attorneys that worked in certain areas of law more than others did. That was it though. If someone asked me who I recommended as an attorney in a certain area of law, my ability to respond was sorely limited.

When I worked in-house, I not only had the opportunity to work closely with my in-house attorneys, but attorneys in our other offices, as well as outside counsel and counsel from around the state (and sometimes beyond) who represented related-interest parties. In this capacity, it was pretty easy to get a feel for which attorneys stood out from the rest. Working with so many attorneys, in one capacity or another, was a great experience because it broadened my horizons so much. Knowing so many attorneys and seeing how each of them approached their work made it easier to make recommendations.

Now, as a freelance paralegal providing paralegal services to many attorneys and practices, and having the opportunity to meet and get to know so many attorneys in so many places and areas of law, it's wonderful! Unfortunately, fulfillment of my attorney network is still a work in progress because someone just asked for a social security/special needs attorney and I had no name to offer them. That's frustrating because the family needs the help and I know there's an attorney somewhere out there who could do them justice.

Nevertheless, I love being able to meet and get to know so many attorneys in so many practice fields. Not too long ago I spoke by chance with an attorney who impressed me so much that the conversation left me wanting to learn more about his practice; I'd really like the ability to recommend him. Coffee or lunch is a great way to learn more about someone's practice; hopefully that opportunity will present itself. (Yep, he made a great impression.)

The moral of the story? **Don't underestimate the value and strength of paralegals, especially freelance paralegals, as referral sources.** The paralegals in your network don't have to work in the same practice area. From personal experience, I can tell you:

1. People ask me for attorney recommendations as soon as they find out I'm a paralegal.

2. As a freelance paralegal, it's not uncommon for me to get calls from people who don't understand I can't do work for them. The first thing they ask when I tell them I can't help is, "Do you know an attorney who can?" Aha!

Get to know your paralegals and take the time to connect and establish relationships with freelance paralegals. Next to attorneys in other practice areas, [freelance] paralegals are one of *the* best referral sources for attorneys.

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