

Implementation, communication, and delivery of paralegal support services

By Kris L. Canaday, Freelance Paralegal

If you're familiar with [Paralegal Support 101](#), you know that I keep it separate from my business, [Integrative Legal Support](#). I do so because I want [Paralegal Support 101](#) to serve strictly as a free knowledgebase for attorneys, law firms, and legal departments.

Today, I'm going to change that up some, but for good reason. Here's why: I recently found some information that I shared with a group a couple of years ago. Basically they had asked, "Can you explain in detail how it works when you work with a freelance paralegal or paralegal service?" As I read through the information I had provided, I realized that every law firm and attorney who calls about services asks some variant of the same question. They want to know, in detail, how we'll work with them.

So, I thought this more detailed explanation might benefit many attorneys, law firms, and legal departments who are struggling to answer that question themselves before deciding to seek out paralegal services. Obviously, every paralegal service is going to work a little differently, but hopefully general observations can be taken from here and applied broadly.

The short answer to, "How does it work?" is that it depends on you and your practice.

Assignments

When it comes to assigning work, we usually receive inquiries by phone or email. I personally discuss the matter with the supervising attorney by phone or in person (if local). Once I perform my due diligence and we clear conflicts, we receive the information necessary to do the work. How the information is received depends on the nature of the task. We may receive information via email, fax, secure document sharing, mail, remote access, or in person if it's local.

Billing

We are very conscientious when it comes to tracking and billing time. We offer alternative fee arrangements, including flat rates, hourly rates, retainers, blocks, and packages. The goal is to provide options to suit any need and seamlessly integrate with the attorney's existing practice. (Essentially, you want to **look for a freelance paralegal or paralegal service that's going to make your life easy by having a system that works for you.**)

When we bill hourly, we don't bill in quarter-hour or even six-minute intervals. We bill our attorneys only for the services we actually provide; for us, that means billing by the minute

through the use of a time-tracker. The timer is started or stopped each time we begin or stop work, even if to grab a cup of coffee.

We bill at the end of a project or monthly if the project is on-going or we're providing regular paralegal support. We include detailed time sheets for each attorney-client matter so that the attorney has a detailed report of our work that can then be rebilled to their clients, in whole or in part, at their own paralegal billing rate. Some attorneys will even have the paralegal log in to the attorney's billing system to enter time for a project.

Supervision

Communication is the key to any successful relationship. It's also the key to proper attorney supervision. We require open and regular communication with all of our attorneys and firms. Basically, we agree to ask questions if we're unclear on an assignment and the attorney must agree to be available to answer questions that might arise. Delegating to a freelance paralegal or paralegal service might feel challenging when the attorney can't simply pop in to see how the assignment is progressing.

Our goal is to provide ongoing communication during the project or assignment so that the attorney never wonders what's going on. I may email or call with questions or email regular status updates. We also have an "open phone" policy, so the attorney is always free to check in and say, "Hi! How are things going?" just to know that I really am here. With our secure collaboration system, it's easy to see where a project is at in the process, chat instantly, send a quick message about an assignment, or add a new one.

As an attorney, you're required to provide proper supervision. **Communication is the key, so it's essential that you're able to communicate well with your freelance paralegal and that your paralegal service has established communication policies.**

Delivery of Work Product

Delivery, as with implementation, depends largely on the project or assignment. For security, I avoid email delivery as much as possible, especially with final work product. Depending on the nature of the work, the result may be confidential or privileged and so it should be delivered via secure document sharing or other secure method. However, delivery also depends on the attorney's comfort level and technological savvy. If the attorney is more comfortable with mail or personal delivery (if local), then that's what we'll do. If I'm working via remote access, then the final product is already there. We also have the ability to conduct an instant or scheduled meeting and transmit documents during the meeting.

In short, there are many options for every situation. The decision will be determined largely by the attorney or firm's preferences, but **your paralegal service should have secure delivery options available to you as well.**

Confidentiality and Security – Systems in General

I once said that certain aspects of the support that freelance paralegals, virtual paralegals, and paralegal services provide (such as secure document sharing) tend to be common practice. However, I've found that not everyone takes security and confidentiality to the level we do. Although we always defer to using our attorneys and law firms' preferred systems, if I find that they have security issues, I'll first advise the law firm of those issues and offer alternate solutions, including the use of our secure collaboration system. I'll also work with them to implement new systems in their practice if that's their goal. If security and confidentiality are important to your firm or practice and you're thinking about utilizing a freelance paralegal or paralegal service, you'll be interested in these articles: [Finding a **Freelance Paralegal That's Right For You**](#) and [Five questions to ask a freelance paralegal or paralegal support service](#).

Conclusion

As you can see, there are many, many options available for implementation, communication, and delivery of paralegal support services. Many of these practices are common workplace practices. That is, the way we work with you isn't any different than the way you work now. The goal is to make outsourcing a positive and productive experience for the law firm and its attorneys, and so the process will vary from one firm to another. We make it a point to adopt and integrate your existing practices and preferences so that there's no learning curve for your firm or practice; the process is as seamless as possible. That's what you should look for when you're looking for a freelance paralegal, virtual paralegal, or paralegal service.

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