

In new article series, business attorney K Todd Wallace reviews the working relationship of attorneys with Paralegals

The Paralegal occupation has evolved into a critical component of the modern law office, but technology and the economy are producing changes.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, UNITED STATES, November 29, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In our ever-changing economy, Paralegals are gradually taking on more and more tasks that in the past were handled exclusively by Attorneys. The beneficiaries of this evolution are primarily the clients themselves, notes business litigation attorney [K. Todd Wallace](#), Esq. in his recent article series. The complete articles will be published on the blog of [Mr. Wallace](#) at <https://ktoddwallaceblog.blogspot.com/>



K. Todd Wallace, Attorney in New Orleans, Louisiana

The occupation of the Paralegal (or Legal Assistant) has evolved into a critical component to the make-up of the modern law office. Today, most law firms and businesses with legal departments could not function without them. In fact, it seems that Paralegals already handle most of the day-to-day routine legal support, including gathering information from clients. However, there have been some dramatic changes since the 1990s due to the fact that the number of attorneys has increased significantly, and at the same time the rise of personal computers and the Internet has changed the way Attorneys and Paralegals work. In fact, the economic pressure is on to transfer more and more legal work assignments to Paralegal to keep a law firm or other business competitive.

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K. Todd Wallace, Attorney in New Orleans

This four-part article reviews how Paralegals are used in a law office or business setting today, how work assignments are divided up between Attorneys and Paralegals, and what ethical requirements apply. In adapting to today's economic reality, the likely beneficiary of the emerging trends is the client.

The Basic Paralegal-Attorney Work Relationship

The general job description for Paralegals may seem rather mundane: “Assist lawyers by investigating facts, preparing legal documents, or researching legal precedent. Conduct research to support a legal proceeding, to formulate a defense, or to initiate legal action.” (see O*NET, below). In fact, as discussed below, it is a hands-on job of increasing importance as law firms and businesses are under pressure to reduce costs in a competitive economy.

According to O*NET, a Paralegal's work assignments may include:

- * Prepare affidavits or other documents, such as legal correspondence, and organize and maintain documents in paper or electronic filing system.
 - * Prepare legal documents, including briefs, pleadings, appeals, wills, contracts, and real estate closing statements.
 - * Prepare for trial by performing tasks such as organizing exhibits.
 - * Investigate facts and law of cases and search pertinent sources, such as public records and internet sources, to determine causes of action and to prepare cases.
 - * Meet with clients and other professionals to discuss details of case.
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Further, Paralegal work involves now requires extensive use of Technology Skills, such as

- * Analytical or scientific software — Office software; LexisNexis, CourtLink Strategic Profiles; Uniscribe; Wilson's Computer Applications RealEasy Appraisals
- * Data base user interface and query software — Data entry software; Microsoft Access; Relativity e-Discovery; TrialWorks
- * Desktop publishing software — Digital contract software; Microsoft Publisher; ProForce Paralegal Pro-Pack; Sure Will Writer
- * Document management software — Adobe Systems Adobe Acrobat; CaseSoft DepPrep; PDF Snake Easy Bates; Summation Blaze
- * Information retrieval or search software — American LegalNet USCourtForms; LexisNexis; Thomson West FindLaw; Westlaw Real Property Deed

Detailed Work Activities involve:

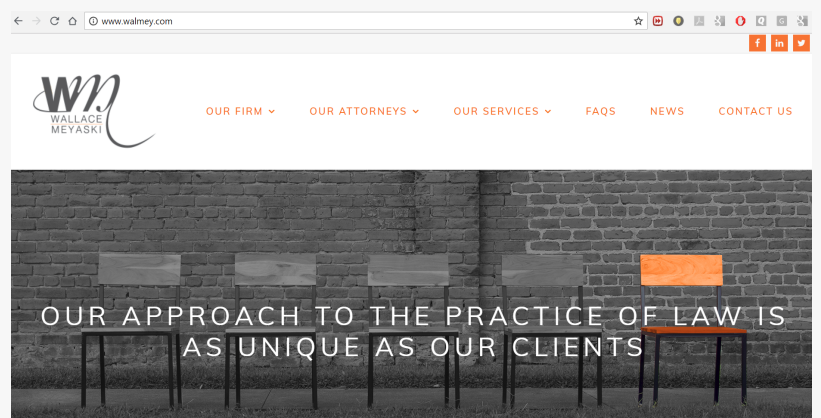
- * Maintain the order of legal documents.
- * Prepare legal documents.
- * Research relevant legal materials to aid decision making.
- * Confer with court staff to clarify information.
- * Meet with individuals involved in legal processes to provide information and clarify issues.

Source: O*NET

The reality today is that a large part of client interactions is handled by Paralegals, such as gathering necessary information, drafting forms, applications and pleadings, and providing answers to questions about the contents of the client file and missing documents. Thus, Paralegal work is not quite as mundane as it appears from the O*NET description. In fact, most of the colorful day-to-day client interactions are presumably handled by Paralegals (subject to ethical rules as discussed below).



Office of the law firm Wallace Meyaski (K Todd Wallace)



Website of Law Firm Wallace Meyaski, K. Todd Wallace

One thing has continued unchanged; Paralegals provide essential support to Attorneys, as well as assist in the production and delivery of legal services to the modern client. This “go between client and attorney” career began to develop in the late 1960's when law firms and individual law practitioners sought ways to not only to improve efficiency, but also to reduce costs and expenses – expenses that could be passed along to the client over the course of legal representation. Still, the beneficiary has been the Client because such support work is billed at a much lower rate, and Paralegals tend to be much more accessible than Attorneys with their hectic, deadline-driven schedule. Thus, there is a benefit to both the law firm and the client - Paralegals are able and qualified to perform many services that reduce Attorney time spent on a particular legal matter, thus again resulting in a lower cost to the client. The use of Paralegal services also greatly improves case efficiency and accuracy as the Attorney is now free to spend more time on the more vital aspects of the client’s case. In many cases, work is prepared or drafted by a Paralegal and then reviewed and finalized by an Attorney. This process in many instances provides “a second set of eyes” to check the work product. However, there are ethical restrictions so that the Paralegal does not dispense legal advice and acts like an attorney, even though the boundaries are becoming blurry, explains Mr. Wallace.

The complete articles will be published on the blog of Mr. Wallace at <https://ktoddwallaceblog.blogspot.com/>

About K Todd Wallace

[Kenneth Todd Wallace](#) is an attorney and founding partner of the law firm Wallace Meyaski LLC. He has nearly 20 years of experience in the legal and business professions with established excellence in trial advocacy, negotiation, strategic and initiative planning, employment law compliance, government relations, mergers and acquisitions, and team building.

References:

Law Firm Website: <http://www.walmey.com/our-attorneys/k-todd-wallace/>

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