



THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF PARALEGALS, INC.

Advancing the Paralegal Profession
by Focusing on the Individual Paralegal



THE ALLIANCE ECHO

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Debbie Repass RP

It seems like the older I get, the faster time flies! It is hard to believe that a year has passed since I became President of the American Alliance.

The New Year is a great time to look back over the previous twelve months and reflect on our successes and disappointments. It is also a time to look forward and plan for the coming year using what we have learned in the hope that we can make the next twelve months even better.

I believe 2005 will go down as a pivotal year for the American Alliance. It was the year that it successfully launched the certification program, redesigned its website, and received validation from the members and presenters on the quality of its advanced level educational seminars.

The certification program will stand the test of time and will continue to receive recognition from other professional organizations. Be sure to visit the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Paralegals website at

<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/paralegals/lawyers.html#3>). Click on the American

Alliance Certified Paralegal (ACCP) under "**What is a certified paralegal?**"

The American Alliance website was busy last year with 386,252 hits from Canada, Australia, Netherlands, Hungary, Malaysia, Germany, Japan, Italy, Norway, Mexico, and Thailand, with the certification page being the most frequently viewed. This year is also off to a great start with 28,562 website hits so far in January and, again, the most visited page being the one relating to certification.

Visits were made to the American Alliance site via: the American Association for Paralegal Education, the American Bar Association, Blackstone Career Institute, Kaplan University, Legal Assistant Today, National Federation of Paralegal Associations, the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio, Paralegals-Paralegal.Com (Carole Bruno's website), Villa Julie College, and the Wisconsin Paralegal Association.

If you like to write articles or have articles you have written and would like to submit them to *The Alliance Echo* for publication, contact Karen Ray at secretary@aapipara.org.

It was also good to see that many people looked at the two articles written by Deborah McKinney, RP, AACP and Carolyn Saenz, AACP, entitled "[How to Hire A Quality Paralegal](#)" and "[Do Paralegals Need to be Certified?](#)" If any of our readers have articles that they would like to be considered for placement on the American Alliance's website, please send them to me at president@aapipara.org.

Mark your calendar for October 13-14, 2006 and start planning now to attend this year's annual education seminar and meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. You don't want to miss seminars where the presenters say the participants are "a well-informed, intelligent group ... which meant he would really have to be on his toes throughout the presentation" or "After going to your website and reviewing the bios of your board, I had to revise my presentation." The presenters understood they were presenting to experienced paralegals, and it showed.

After all the successes, it is time to review some disappointments, including lack of member participation. The American Alliance continues to reach out to paralegals across the country in the hope that it will increase membership in areas where paralegals do not have access to other organizations. With your help, the American Alliance will succeed even more, and increase the number of services that it can offer to its members. I ask you to consider making increased participation in the American Alliance your commitment for 2006.

The American Alliance continues to face resistance from some of the local and national paralegal associations as it relates to its certification program. As you are all aware, our certification program is based on standards set by the Department of Labor, and standards which many law firms already require of its paralegals. The American Alliance's certification program requires that the applicants have post-high school education in paralegal studies in

addition to experience. For those paralegals whose education does not meet that requirement, more stringent standards have been set in that the applicant must have a bachelor's degree and more paralegal experience. Only after these standards are met, will paralegals be granted the AACP certification. The American Alliance does not subject the applicants to proprietary exams, but again uses guidelines from the Department of Labor. Most law firms do not require that paralegals have a four-year degree in paralegal studies, since so few programs are offered. Many require a baccalaureate degree and paralegal experience. So, why not make application for your AACP so that you can "show the world" that you are well-educated, have vast experience, and are highly qualified in the legal profession!

Member participation and outside resistance are linked. With your increased participation, the board can better market the American Alliance and the certification program.

Looking ahead, in 2006, I would like to see the American Alliance build on the foundation laid last year. Working together, I know we can do this.

2006 Annual Meeting and CLE Seminar

This year our annual CLE seminar and annual meeting will be held in Cincinnati, OH on October 13 and 14.

Stay tuned for more details as they become available.

Don't forget to mark your calendars!

The Paralegal’s Resume – Writing Tips

By Estelle Winsett of Counsel on Call

You only get one chance to make a first impression when you send your resume to a firm or corporation. Therefore, take the time to ensure that your resume doesn’t end up at the bottom of the stack. Before sending your resume out, review the following *DO*’s and *DON’T*’s.

DO research the job for which you are applying and tailor your resume to that particular job. For example, your high school job working at T.C.B.Y. is probably not relevant to your paralegal skills.

DO print your resume on high quality white or off-white paper. Bright colored paper will get attention but not the kind of attention that you want.

DO proofread your resume for misspelled words and grammatical errors. Always use spell-check. Get family and friends to review your resume as well for any typos or grammatical errors. Paralegal resumes which contain typos go in the “round file”.

DO make sure your resume is easily readable.

DO provide dates of employment, including the month and year for the start and end dates.

DO provide dates and degrees obtained from each educational institute you attended.

DON’T mail your resume to every ad in the Sunday paper, especially if you are not even remotely qualified for the position.

DON’T use small fonts. Keep the font at least at a 10 point.

DON’T get personal. Personal information, such as your marital status, age, race, family or hobbies is interesting but not relevant to your legal skills.

DON’T provide too much or not enough white space.

DON’T use wordy or rambling language. Make your statements clear and concise. The KISS principle applies (Keep It Simple Sweetie).

DON’T list reasons for leaving prior employment. This information can be explained in an interview.

It is important to take the time to prepare a professional resume. It tells the employer that you will take the time to make the employer look good. It also shows an attention to detail and overall professionalism. It can make the difference as to whether or not you get an interview, and a job!

Interview Process

Your resume has accomplished what you wanted it to – you now have a job interview! The following interview tips are from the Department of Labor’s website.

Job Interview Tips

An interview gives you the opportunity to showcase your qualifications to an employer, so it pays to be well prepared. The following information provides some helpful hints.

Preparation:

- Learn about the organization.
- Have a specific job or jobs in mind.
- Review your qualifications for the job.
- Prepare answers to broad questions about yourself.

- Review your résumé.
- Practice an interview with a friend or relative.
- Arrive before the scheduled time of your interview.

Personal appearance:

- Be well groomed.
- Dress appropriately.
- Do not chew gum or smoke.

The interview:

- Relax and answer each question concisely.
- Respond promptly.
- Use good manners.
- Learn the name of your interviewer and greet him or her with a firm handshake.

Use proper English—avoid slang.

Be cooperative and enthusiastic.

Use body language to show interest.

Ask questions about the position and the organization, but avoid questions whose answers can easily be found on the company Web site. Also avoid asking questions about salary and benefits unless a job offer is made.

Thank the interviewer when you leave and, as a follow-up, in writing.

Test (if employer gives one):

- Listen closely to instructions.
- Read each question carefully.
- Write legibly and clearly.

- Budget your time wisely and don't dwell on one question.

Information to bring to an interview:

- Social Security card.
- Government-issued identification (driver's license).
- Résumé. Although not all employers require applicants to bring a résumé, you should be able to furnish the interviewer information about your education, training, and previous employment.
- References. Employers typically require three references. Get permission before using anyone as a reference. Make sure that they will give you a good reference. Try to avoid using relatives as references.
- Transcripts. Employers may require an official copy of transcripts to verify grades, coursework, dates of attendance, and highest grade completed or degree awarded.

Evaluating a Job Offer

Once you receive a job offer, you are faced with a difficult decision and must evaluate the offer carefully. Fortunately, most organizations will not expect you to accept or reject an offer immediately.

There are many issues to consider when assessing a job offer. Will the organization be a good place to work? Will the job be interesting? Are there opportunities for advancement? Is the salary fair? Does the employer offer good benefits? If you have not already figured out exactly what you want, the following discussion may help you to develop a set of criteria for judging job offers, whether you are starting a career, reentering the labor force after a long absence, or planning a career change.

The organization. Background information on an organization can help you to decide whether it is a good place for you to work. Factors to consider include the organization's business or activity, financial condition, age, size, and location.

You generally can get background information on an organization, particularly a large organization, on its Internet site or by telephoning its public relations office. A public company's annual report to the stockholders tells about its corporate philosophy, history, products or services, goals, and financial status. Most government agencies can furnish reports that describe their programs and missions. Press releases, company newsletters or magazines, and recruitment brochures also can be useful. Ask the organization for any other items that might interest a prospective employee. If possible, speak to current or former employees of the organization.

Background information on the organization may be available at your public or school library. If you cannot get an annual report, check the library for reference directories that may provide basic facts about the company, such as earnings, products and services, and number of employees. Some directories widely available in libraries either in print or as online databases include:

Dun & Bradstreet's Million Dollar Directory

Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations

*Mergent's Industrial Review
(formerly Moody's Industrial Manual)*

Thomas Register of American Manufacturers

Ward's Business Directory

Stories about an organization in magazines and newspapers can tell a great deal about its successes, failures, and plans for the future. You can identify articles on a

company by looking under its name in periodical or computerized indexes in libraries. However, it probably will not be useful to look back more than 2 or 3 years.

The library also may have government publications that present projections of growth for the industry in which the organization is classified. Long-term projections of employment and output for detailed industries, covering the entire U.S. economy, are developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and revised every 2 years. See the November 2005 *Monthly Labor Review* for the most recent projections, covering the 2004-14 period, on the Internet at: <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/mlrhome.htm>. Trade magazines also may include articles on the trends for specific industries.

Career centers at colleges and universities often have information on employers that is not available in libraries. Ask a career center representative how to find out about a particular organization.

Does the organization's business or activity match your own interests and beliefs?

It is easier to apply yourself to the work if you are enthusiastic about what the organization does.

How will the size of the organization affect you?

Large firms generally offer a greater variety of training programs and career paths, more managerial levels for advancement, and better employee benefits than do small firms. Large employers also may have more advanced technologies. However, many jobs in large firms tend to be highly specialized.

Jobs in small firms may offer broader authority and responsibility, a closer working relationship with top management, and a chance to clearly see your contribution to the success of the organization.

Should you work for a relatively new organization or one that is well established?

New businesses have a high failure rate, but for many people, the excitement of helping to create a company and the potential for sharing in its success more than offset the risk of job loss. However, it may be just as exciting and rewarding to work for a young firm that already has a foothold on success.

Does it make a difference if the company is private or public?

An individual or a family may control a privately owned company and key jobs may be reserved for relatives and friends. A board of directors responsible to the stockholders controls a publicly owned company and key jobs usually are open to anyone.

Is the organization in an industry with favorable long-term prospects?

The most successful firms tend to be in industries that are growing rapidly.

Nature of the job. Even if everything else about the job is attractive, you will be unhappy if you dislike the day-to-day work. Determining in advance whether you will like the work may be difficult. However, the more you find out about the job before accepting or rejecting the offer, the more likely you are to make the right choice. Actually working in the industry and, if possible, for the company would provide considerable insight. You can gain work experience through part-time, temporary, or summer jobs, or through internship or work-study programs while in school, all of which can lead to permanent job offers.

Where is the job located?

If the job is in another section of the country, you need to consider the cost of living, the availability of housing and transportation, and the quality of educational and recreational facilities in that section of the country. Even if the job location is in your area, you should consider the time and expense of commuting.

Does the work match your interests and make good use of your skills?

The duties and responsibilities of the job should be explained in enough detail to answer this question.

How important is the job in this company?

An explanation of where you fit in the organization and how you are supposed to contribute to its overall objectives should give you an idea of the job's importance.

Are you comfortable with the hours?

Most jobs involve regular hours—for example, 40 hours a week, during the day, Monday through Friday. Other jobs require night, weekend, or holiday work. In addition, some jobs routinely require overtime to meet deadlines or sales or production goals, or to better serve customers. Consider the effect that the work hours will have on your personal life.

How long do most people who enter this job stay with the company?

High turnover can mean dissatisfaction with the nature of the work or something else about the job.

Opportunities offered by employers. A good job offers you opportunities to learn new skills, increase your earnings, and rise to positions of greater authority, responsibility, and prestige. A lack of opportunities can dampen interest in the work and result in frustration and boredom.

The company should have a training plan for you. What valuable new skills does the company plan to teach you?

The employer should give you some idea of promotion possibilities within the organization. What is the next step on the career ladder? If you have to wait for a job to become vacant before you can be promoted, how long does this usually take? When opportunities for advancement do arise, will you compete with applicants from outside the company? Can you apply for jobs for which you qualify elsewhere within

the organization, or is mobility within the firm limited?

Salaries and benefits. Wait for the employer to introduce these subjects. Some companies will not talk about pay until they have decided to hire you. In order to know if their offer is reasonable, you need a rough estimate of what the job should pay. You may have to go to several sources for this information. Try to find family, friends, or acquaintances who recently were hired in similar jobs. Ask your teachers and the staff in placement offices about starting pay for graduates with your qualifications. Help-wanted ads in newspapers sometimes give salary ranges for similar positions. Check the library or your school's career center for salary surveys such as those conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers or various professional associations.

If you are considering the salary and benefits for a job in another geographic area, make allowances for differences in the cost of living, which may be significantly higher in a large metropolitan area than in a smaller city, town, or rural area.

You also should learn the organization's policy regarding overtime. Depending on the job, you may or may not be exempt from laws requiring the employer to compensate you for overtime. Find out how many hours you will be expected to work each week and whether you receive overtime pay or compensatory time off for working more than the specified number of hours in a week.

Also take into account that the starting salary is just that—the start. Your salary should be reviewed on a regular basis; many organizations do it every year. How much can you expect to earn after 1, 2, or 3 or more years? An employer cannot be specific about the amount of pay if it includes commissions and bonuses.

Benefits also can add a lot to your base pay, but they vary widely. Find out exactly

what the benefit package includes and how much of the cost you must bear.

Other links of interest on the interview process can be found at:

http://content.monster.com/jobinfo/interview/interview_planner/

www.career.fsu.edu/ccis/guides/inter-skills.html.

www.career.fsu.edu/ccis/guides/inter-skills.html.

<http://interview.monster.com/archives/attheinterview/>

<http://content.monster.com/jobinfo/interview/sweat/>

<http://www.roberthalfinance.com/InterviewDosAndDonts.jsessionid=DYvtxr2P3y7bDydQlvXLQC3TP8w3IQBjZ40Xt5DhnfNzpk9bsVGQ!-950700661!-1130369357#Dos>

Welcome New Members

- Nicole Beaufait, Delaware
- Thomas Donoho, Illinois
- Tara Kim Eberhart, Virginia
- Jane Garvin, Tennessee
- Victoria Denise Relf, Alabama
- Dorothy Schoenung, Ohio
- Amanda Warren, Illinois

Congratulations To Our Newest AACP's!

- Vanessa Beam, AACP
- Nancy Lee Mancuso, AACP
- Jose Pedro Santos Sanchez, AACP

Interesting Facts About Our AACP

On January 1, 2005, the American Alliance of Paralegals, Inc. rolled out our American Alliance Certification Program. The following are some interesting facts about the program during the year it has been in existence:

- 22 AACP's
- 17 with Bachelor's Degrees
- One with a Bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies
- 1 Masters Degree
- 14 Paralegal Certificates/Associate Degrees

States with AACP's

Arizona
 Florida
 Illinois
 Ohio
 South Carolina
 Massachusetts
 Missouri
 New Jersey
 Pennsylvania
 Virginia
 West Virginia
 Wisconsin

Important Dates To Remember:

- February 9-10, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Salt Lake City, Utah*
- February 27-28, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Chicago, IL*
- March 16, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, San Francisco, CA*
- March 30-31, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Los Angeles, CA*
- March 30-April 1, 2006 – Equal Justice Conference, Philadelphia, PA

- March 30-April 1, 2006 – AAFPE Regional Conference, Bloomington, MN
- March 30-April 1, 2006 – AAFPE Regional Conference, Portland, OR
- March 30-April 1, 2006 – AAFPE Regional Conference, White Plains, NY
- April 6-8, 2006 – AAFPE Regional Conference, Greenville, SC
- April 7-8, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Orlando, FL*
- April 29, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Newport Beach, CA*
- May 4-7, 2006 – NFPA Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL
- May 11-12, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Minneapolis, MN*
- June 15-16, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Houston, TX*
- June 22-23, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Phoenix, AZ*
- July 26-29, 2006 – NALA Annual Convention, Tampa, FL
- July 27-28, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Washington, D.C.*
- October 4-5, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, Philadelphia, PA*
- October 11-14, 2006 – AAFPE Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA?
- October 19-20, 2006 – The Paralegal SuperConference, San Francisco, CA*

*Paralegal SuperConferences are sponsored by Estrin Careers.

◆ If you have any important dates you want to add to our newsletter, please forward them to kray@gtxinc.com or secretary@aapipara.org.

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