

# Highlights from NALA's Professional Identity Project Webinar

On January 17, 2013, NALA (National Association of Legal Assistants) hosted a free webinar for paralegal students, recent graduates, and those beginning a paralegal job search. Speakers for the program were Tulsa paralegals, Elizabeth H. Nellis, ACP, and Beverly Pace, ACP.

In case you missed it, here is some of their good advice:

## Starting Out as a Paralegal

Don't be discouraged if you don't start out in your dream job, but, at the same time, know yourself well and don't accept the wrong position for you.

Age is not as much of an issue in the legal profession. No matter what your age, the best paralegals are *responsible*, *reliable* and *respectable* (the Three R's).

Volunteering is a great way to strengthen and develop skills that can be highlighted on a resume or in an interview.

Become affiliated a local paralegal organization that has a job bank and monthly luncheons. Monthly luncheon meetings are the best place to find jobs, network, and make contacts for future projects. [MPA has you covered!]

Get your certification - NCCP, CP, ACP, etc. Having the right certification can level the playing field against another job applicant who has more experience but no credentials.

## Nailing the Interview Process

If you have a Facebook page, clean it up before you apply for a job.

Plan out ahead of time what you will say about yourself (qualities, strengths, interests), have a strategy, and PRACTICE what you will say in the mirror or with friends and family.

Relax during the interview.

Listen to the question that is asked, take a moment to understand the question and organize your thoughts, and then answer the question.

Try to focus on your cumulative life experiences, not on your lack of legal experience.

At the end of the interview, ask the interviewer what he/she most appreciated about the prior paralegal who held the position.

## Once You Are Employed

Dress for the job you *want*. Seek out consignment stores for great deals on suits and work attire.

Never annoy the support staff! This counsel applies to the law firm/company where you work as well as the local courthouse, etc. Your relations with support staff will make or break you as a paralegal.

Have the mindset of being indispensable to the attorney(s) you work for: assess their personality, how they like to work, and how they think. See the case files through their mind.

Keep the attorney on track and organized.

Document everything you do with a file and NEVER hide a mistake you make with a file. Instead, acknowledge the mistake and go to your attorney with a solution about how to fix it.

Stay away from office politics and gossip. Try to get along with everyone.

## Resources

The American Bar Association (ABA) website has a resource page for paralegals:

[http://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/resources/benefits\\_of\\_aba\\_membership.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/paralegals/resources/benefits_of_aba_membership.html)

Check out the NALA website for news and resources for paralegals: <http://www.nala.org>