

Helpful Attorney-to-Paralegal Translations

By Michelle Kass, CP*

How many times have you found yourself and your attorneys “not on the same page”, on a “different wave length” or “not in sync”? Well, communication problems can be a thing of the past using this handy attorney-to-paralegal translation chart.

Attorney says

Attorney means

Yes

No

Good morning

Well look what the cat dragged in

Can you come to my office?

You're in trouble

Can you close the door behind you?

You're in a lot of trouble

It's fine

It's not

Are you in the middle of something?

I need you to start on this immediately

I'm underwater here

Can you go pick up lunch for me?

Whenever you have time

Now

Sorry to bother you

Unknown – this has never been said by an attorney

This is a good first draft

I'm going to change every word of this

That's not quite what I said

That's exactly what I said, I was wrong but I won't admit it

Thanks

For doing your job

This is a priority

To me only, and it's a false deadline

Enjoy your vacation

You're dead to me

How was your vacation?

My hatred for you knows no limits

How was your weekend?

Tell me as quickly as possible so I can ask you to do something

| | |
|---|---|
| You did a very thorough job | You took way too long |
| My fault | Your fault |
| I wasn't clear | Your comprehension skills are lacking |
| Can you make these changes for me? | I either have the document checked out or set to private |
| When you're done with lunch | Now |
| I really appreciate all of your help | For doing your job |
| Is your current project pressing? | Unless it's for a partner, put it on the back burner |
| Can we talk about this later? | Go back to your office and figure it out yourself |
| This shouldn't take you long | This is going to take you 2-3 times longer to do than I think it will, but you need to only bill what I estimate |
| Are you almost done? | What in the *#%!*\$ is taking you so long??? |
| We | You do all the work, I'll take the credit |
| This needs to be filed today | I'll be giving you this at 4:50pm so you can compile the exhibits, proofread it, finalize it, make some last minute changes I'll send you at 4:59pm and then file it by 5pm |
| What time are you leaving tonight? | Whatever time you say, you'll be staying later than that |
| Can you finish this before you go home? | I won't be reading this until tomorrow afternoon at the earliest. |
| Does that make sense? | If you say no, I will think much, much less of you |
| What do you think? | If I want your opinion I'll give it to you |

I don't understand what happened here Even if this mistake is mine, you are going to be
blamed

I'm open to suggestions But in the end you'll do it my way

You're a rock star! For at least the next five minutes

Good night Must be nice to be hourly

*Paralegal since 1993, spirit broken in 2001, officially burned-out July 2007. To all baby paralegals,
please don't let these ramblings discourage you—this is a great job 90% of the time.