

I recently met with a client of mine over coffee to catch up on what's new at her firm. I laughed when at one point she told me that being a litigation paralegal is a lot like "herding cats". This prompted me to ask her what is it about her job that makes things more difficult than they probably should be. "Where do I begin?" was her quick response. After listening and taking some notes, I've done my best to summarize what may be the top three common woes for litigation paralegals and legal assistants, and some possible solutions.

### **Time Management**

**The problem:** Time is one of the biggest challenges of working as a litigation paralegal. There never seems to be enough of it! When there are so many cases waiting for attention, you can't just skim over things to save time. Every piece of paper must be read, understood and responded to and that takes a lot of time. In addition to the quantity of work, every task has a deadline and it's usually sooner than later.

**The solution:** When it comes to trial exhibits, work with the attorney(s) to get decisions from them early on so that the process is not so chaotic. This includes scheduling video depositions, gathering materials for exhibit boards, getting approval for edits and synchs, and determining the number of copies you need of audio, video, and print materials. Determine as early as possible how the attorneys want their exhibits organized, and how the judge prefers them. Pre-order tabs, binders, and file folders. Alert your litigation support vendor about the upcoming job so they can allocate the necessary resources. Be sure to include the case name and any specific instructions.

### **Rising Costs**

**The problem:** The cost of litigation is extremely high (Duh!) and every paralegal and legal assistant hears the same message from their attorney at some point during the matter "The client doesn't want to spend a lot of money, but get it done." Therein lies the conundrum - getting what you need done quickly, correctly, and still at a good price. With the large number of variables that go into a case, it's important to figure out where you can "trim the fat".

**The solution:** Single point litigation support vendors offer an excellent way to shave costs. They provide most (if not all) of the services that you may need to create trial exhibits as well as jury / witness consulting and equipment rental. By ordering multiple services from one vendor, you may be able to get a "package deal" which allows you to receive some of the services at a discounted rate. Additionally, services such as video conferencing and webcasting can be used to avoid time and travel expenses.

### **Managing Stress**

**The problem:** Paralegals and legal assistants handle lion's share of research, drafting, organizing, and preparation of materials for a case. The attorney may also rely on you to deal with the client or carrier in addition to your other tasks. As trial draws closer, the pressure mounts. This in turn can cause you to make mistakes, which can then cause even greater stress.

**The solution:** Further utilize the resources you have available to you to decrease your workload. For example, it may take you 5 hours to create a power point presentation, but only takes a vendor's trial graphics specialist 2 hours. Additionally, if you bill out to your client at \$100 per hour, but the specialist charges \$200 per hour; then you've not only saved yourself 5 hours of work, but \$100 to the client.

Choosing to work with a multi-service vendor and utilizing a significant number of their services can eliminate the stress of moving your materials from one vendor to the next.

### Biography

Justin Roodman is a Business Development Executive for Litigation Support for Prolumina. Prolumina is a single-point litigation support and consulting firm servicing Seattle and clients nationwide. Prolumina specializes in all aspects of litigation support including: video depositions, duplication, synching, editing, scanning, document copying, e-discovery, trial graphics, jury consulting, and equipment rental. More information can be found at <http://www.prolumina.net>

\*\*\* This article may not be reprinted or re-published in any way unless the Biography section remains intact. All rights reserved.