

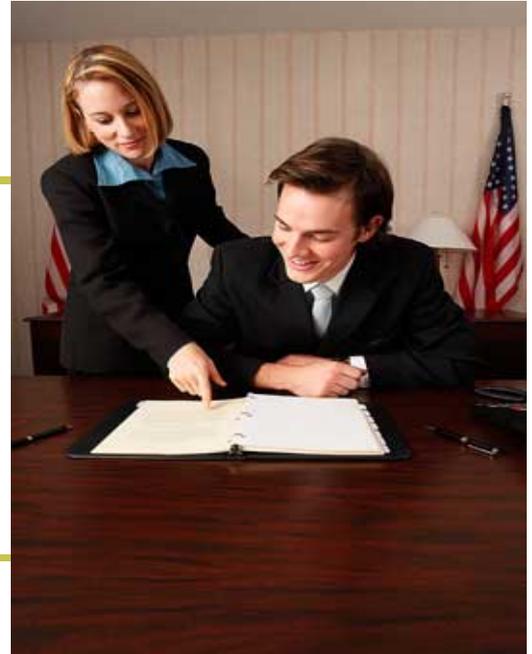
## How Hard is it for a Paralegal to Land a Job at a Good Law Firm?

We asked attorneys and legal staff members throughout the country how hard it is for a paralegal to land a job at a good law firm. Several individuals weighed in on our question and provided excellent advice. We hope you enjoy their responses as much as we did.

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It is extremely difficult for new paralegals to obtain employment at small to mid-size firms who do not have the time to train them. Schools are training legal assistants very poorly. That is why I created my own [paralegal training course](#) on Udemy.

-Dr. Shawn Council, Esquire, LPD  
Attorney at Law  
Doctorate of Law & Policy  
[www.shawncouncil.com](http://www.shawncouncil.com)



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If a paralegal presents well (physically and dresses well) and displays a knowledge of the subject matter (such as litigation), it is not too hard to land a job, especially if the salary request is low enough to allow the attorney to 'make money' from the spread (the amount paid to the paralegal vs. what the large firm can bill the client for his/her services). The keys--look the part, display proper knowledge, and do not ask for too much money. If they perform, they will be handsomely rewarded by a large firm.

M. Drew Siegel  
Law Offices of M. Drew Siegel & Associates  
[www.drewsiegel.com](http://www.drewsiegel.com)

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'Paralegal jobs at good law firms' don't open up very often. Once a firm retains a good paralegal, they have to invest a lot of time, energy and money into their indoctrination into the firm. It's not until the 'fit' is established that the paralegal begins to provide true benefit to the firm. This investment results in very low turnover, hence making it more difficult to land that sort of job.

Gary Crews, PLLC  
<http://garycrewslaw.com/>

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We work on leadership and careers at 70% of Boston's largest twenty law firms:

'NEVER SAY IMPOSSIBLE BUT.....'

ALL professional service firms have a built-in 'us' versus 'them' culture. In law, it is the partners versus the associates; the lawyers versus the non-lawyers. In health care it is the M.D.s versus the administrators. In higher education it is the faculty versus the administration.

This is just a natural if dysfunctional characteristic of professional service firms.

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If you have been a paralegal at one firm, it will be almost impossible for partners to view you as anything but a paralegal.

A dramatic 'break' between your past and your present may help ensure your future.

Example: stopping work and going to law school full time and applying to another law firm. Going to law school in the evening is not dramatic enough. Leaving your job and working at a government regulatory agency for 2-3 years and then reapplying as an attorney from a regulatory agency (not a paralegal).

-Laurence J. Stybel, Ed.D.  
Executive in Residence  
Management & Entrepreneurship Department  
Sawyer Business School  
Suffolk University  
[www.stybelpeabody.com](http://www.stybelpeabody.com)

I'm a co-founding partner of Luftman, Heck and Associates, a law firm headquartered in Columbus, Ohio.

I currently have three paralegals working within the criminal department. If a paralegal is interviewing with me, there are always a few things that I look for that have made them stand out. First, do your research. Make sure you have gone to the law firm's website if they have one and know a little bit about its background. Second, for me, enthusiasm for the particular area of law is a great way to set yourself apart. It has to be genuine though. The paralegals I have hired demonstrated to me during the interview and after that they like criminal defense law and that they are interested in learning more about the process (as opposed to just coming to work to get a paycheck). My practice is fortunately so busy that it requires an 'all in' mentality. That starts with me and is demonstrated by my associate attorneys daily. I am fortunate that my paralegals demonstrate this as well and that capacity was demonstrated beginning in their initial interview.

-Ben Benjamin L. Luftman, Esq.  
Luftman, Heck & Associates, LLP  
<http://www.columbuscriminalattorney.com/>

Most large firms promote from within, so you may be limited to an entry-level paralegal position. Extensive work experience, along with using your professional connections as references will give you the best chance.

-Scott Grabel  
Grabel & Associates  
<http://www.michigan-drug-attorney.com/scott-grabel.html>

Quality paralegals are always valuable assets to law firms. Most law firms need paralegals who have great organizational and people skills and who are willing to work hard. Attorneys need people they can count on. Quality paralegals act as case organizers as well as liaisons with the clients. I think that for [paralegals who can demonstrate these qualities](#), that jobs are readily available. Of course, that is also dependent on the salary that is being asked for.

In this day and age, there are plenty of folks who went to law school that don't have lawyer jobs and so they are doing paralegal work. As a result, if a paralegal prices their services too high, then they run the risk of someone hiring an attorney instead. I don't think it depends

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on the size of the firm, as often small firms will utilize more paralegals than young lawyers. It depends a lot on the type of practice.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of these important traits. If you develop them along with a solid foundation of legal principals, you should be able to find work as a paralegal.

- Sean Domnick is the managing partner at Domnick & Shevin, PL in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. Sean has considerable jury trial experience and demonstrated knowledge of the law. He served as lead counsel in several class actions against the insurance industry and recently earned a verdict of \$30.6 million on behalf of a brain-injured client. Several of his cases have attracted local, state, and national attention. Sean was born in Miami and raised in Florida. He is an experienced trial attorney seeking justice for clients who have suffered injury due to the negligence of others. He represents clients in personal injury cases involving wrongful death, medical malpractice, nursing home abuse, and product liability. He has earned Florida Bar Board Certification, the highest level of recognition by The Florida Bar for the competency and experience of a civil trial lawyer. Sean is profiled in The Best Lawyers in America in both personal injury and medical malpractice. He is listed in Florida Trend magazine's "Legal Elite" listed by Florida Monthly as one of the state's top lawyers, and is recognized by Super Lawyer Magazine as a "Florida Super Lawyer."

<http://www.acallforjustice.com/>

I have been a paralegal since 1997. I'm a Florida Registered Paralegal with The Florida Bar and an Advanced Certified Paralegal with NALA. I also run a website called Linda's Paralegal Resources (<http://www.miamifrp.com>), which provides paralegals with job opportunities, career assistance, resources, continuing education, and much more. I am also the creator of the Paralegals Navigating Perilous Waters Cruise Event, an annual paralegal education and networking cruise which draws hundreds of people together for a unique tropical vacation career experience.

I think it is very difficult for a paralegal to land a job at a good law firm in today's environment. Law firms are looking for not only that special trifecta of practical experience, formal education and paralegal certification, but they also want [someone who can do it all](#). There are as many job descriptions for paralegals as there are firms that hire them. Firms want paralegals who are dedicated and hard working, but also creative and savvy. They also want to ensure that a paralegal isn't the 'this isn't my job' type. Paralegals are an integral part of the team, working side by side with attorneys, doing whatever it takes to get the job done. Paralegals need to be creative when actively job searching in order to set themselves apart from the potentially hundreds of other paralegals applying for the same job. One way they can do this is by ensuring a professional and active presence on LinkedIn. Another is to get involved with local bar associations, even those that don't officially allow paralegal members.

-Linda McGrath-Cruz, ACP FRP, founder of Linda's Paralegal Resources and The Paralegals Navigating Perilous Waters Cruise Event.