

## 6 Tips For Hiring a Paralegal

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Paralegals are the backbone of many law firms. Without the support of a paralegal, lawyers can become overloaded with non-billable work that neither brings in revenue nor fuels future growth.

Whether you need a paralegal full-time or you're looking for help on an as-needed basis, continue reading to find out more about how to hire a [paralegal](#).

### What Is a Paralegal?

A [paralegal](#) is a [legal assistant](#) who performs administrative and support tasks for lawyers. They may be general or work in specialty areas, may be employed in the public or private sector, and may take on in-house or client-facing tasks, depending on the needs of the firm.

### What Are a Paralegal's Job Responsibilities?

Paralegals act as support staff to assist lawyers in a firm with tasks like [client communication](#), drafting letters and memos, conducting [legal research](#), and more. Essentially, they handle a lot of the non-billable work to make your firm more efficient.

The role of a paralegal varies from firm to firm, but one of their core strengths is their versatility. Paralegals may be general or more specialized, so you can find a paralegal that's ideally suited for your firm.

Here are the types of paralegals:

- **Practice area paralegals:** These paralegals have experience in specific practice areas
- **Specialists:** These paralegals can offer assistance and legal support to lawyers and judges
- **Generalists:** These paralegals have a wide range of knowledge
- **Outsourced:** These paralegals can assist on an as-needed basis — think remote or freelance

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# Why Should My Firm Hire a Paralegal?

Virtually every firm can benefit from a paralegal on staff. Here are some benefits of having a paralegal:

## Save Time and Money

Paralegals can take on legal administrative work and non-billable tasks to make your law firm more efficient. With a paralegal handling these tasks, lawyers are free to focus on billable work and business initiatives.

## Increase Efficiency

Lawyers have to balance billable hours with administrative work to keep a firm running, but billable hours are what bring revenue to the firm. Having a paralegal supports economies of scale and helps your law firm run more efficiently.

## Cost-Effective

Hiring a paralegal may seem like an added expense, but it's cheaper than hiring more lawyers. Paralegals handle a lot of the non-billable work that lawyers often do, allowing them to maximize their time with revenue-driving activities.

## Specialized Skills

Legal research and administrative tasks are time-consuming but essential to running a firm. Though [law firm software](#) can help you streamline these processes at your firm, having a paralegal to tackle some of the burdens goes a long way. Some paralegals have specialized knowledge that can support your law firm as well, such as practice area expertise.

## Sample Interview Questions to Hire a Paralegal

The interview is an opportunity to assess a paralegal candidate's skills and see if they're the right fit for your firm. Here are some questions to ask:

- Why do you want to be a paralegal?
- Why do you want to work at this firm?
- Are you planning to apply to law school in the future?
- What areas of law are you most interested in?
- How do you deal with frustrated or demanding clients?
- How do you stay focused when you're doing repetitive work?
- How do you stay current on legal and regulatory changes?
- Do you have experience with law practice management software?

## 6 Steps to Hire a Paralegal

Ready to bring a paralegal into your firm? Here's how:

### 1. Assess Your Firm's Needs

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Before you can look for paralegal candidates, you need to determine what your firm needs. How would a paralegal most benefit you? Do you need one paralegal with a general skill set or someone with specialized knowledge in your practice area? Does your firm's size and client base require someone with a lot of experience, or would an entry-level paralegal be sufficient?

## **2. Understand the Types of Paralegals and What They Can Do**

Once you know what your firm needs, you can consider the types of paralegals and how they can help your firm. For many firms, a generalist paralegal is most useful, but law firms in specialized practice areas may benefit from a paralegal with similar knowledge.

## **3. Seek Referrals**

One of the best ways to find a paralegal is by leveraging your existing network. Talk to other attorneys in your area to find recommendations for paralegal candidates that would be a good fit for your firm.

## **4. Create the Job Posting**

When you're ready to recruit, draft a job description and post it to job boards. Here are some tips for an attractive job description:

- Be clear about the type of paralegal you're looking for and their responsibilities
- Provide details and clear instructions for how to apply for the job
- Share and post your job where paralegals are likely to see it, such as legal industry job boards and paralegal associations
- Share your job listing within your network to encourage references and referrals

## **5. Conduct Interviews**

Once you have a pool of candidates, narrow them down by qualifications like:

- Experience level
- Education level
- Certifications, if applicable

Keep in mind that post-secondary education is not required for a paralegal, so consider whether it's better to have a candidate with more experience or specialization than a bachelor's degree. Some states do require certification for paralegals, so be sure to check your local jurisdiction.

When you have your list narrowed down, you can begin scheduling interviews. Phone interviews are a good way to get a clear picture of the candidates and their experience, then you can schedule a second in-person or virtual interview.

## **6. Consider Outsourcing**

If you don't require full-time paralegal assistance, an [outsourced](#) virtual paralegal can help you complete non-billable work as needed. The skills and requirements are similar to on-staff paralegals, but you can enlist the help of paralegals as your law firm demands.

Working with a remote paralegal requires secure and efficient processes, however, such as [cloud-based legal case management software](#) that allows you to collaborate and communicate with remote teams.

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