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How to Attract a High-Performance Paralegal (And Filter Out the Rest)

A Hiring Guide for Law Firms
That Refuse to Settle



At some point, every firm reaches the stage where hiring a paralegal is the only way to keep up with the work coming in. The question isn't whether or not you could benefit from having support – it's how to find someone that will step up to the plate the same way that you do.

That means hiring isn't about filling a role. It's about bringing someone onto your team who cares about your cases, respects deadlines, and takes pride in their work. The right person will free up your time and help your firm operate at a higher level – the wrong person can do just the opposite.

If your goal is to attract a candidate who takes ownership of their work (not just someone looking for the next place that will hire them) the way you write your job ad and structure the hiring process matters more than you think.

In this guide, we'll walk through how to structure your posting, refine your wording, and interview in a way that highlights candidates who are ready to contribute to your firm from day one.



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1. Structuring a Job Ad That Attracts the Right Candidates

Structuring a paralegal ad doesn't have to be complicated – but it does need to be clear.

1 Identify the Task List

To start, identify the tasks you need handled. Are you overwhelmed with billing? Legal research? Filing? Client communication?

List the core areas where support would make the biggest difference in your day-to-day workflows.

2 Clarify the Role

Beyond just listing tasks, you'll also want to clarify whether the role is drafting-heavy, client-facing, deadline-driven, or administrative.

3 Define Success

Then, take it one step further. **Consider defining what success will look like once someone is in the role.** Where should this person be in 60 days? In 90 days? What should they be able to manage independently? What would make you confident that you made the right hire?



These metrics aren't just for you to measure success by – having clear expectations in your job ad tends to attract candidates who are confident in their abilities and comfortable being held to higher standards. By the same token, vague expectations tend to result in less exceptional results.

4 Note Your Software

Be sure to mention what software they'll need experience and proficiency with. Increasingly, high-value paralegals understand how to use AI to maximize productivity, not replace brain power.

5 Include Hours & Compensation

The next core section of your ad should mention the days and hours you'll need the paralegal to be in-office, as well as the compensation offered. Transparency builds trust and helps serious candidates assess whether the role aligns with their goals.

6 Provide a Test

Finally consider including a brief, practical exercise as part of the application process. Resumes don't tell you how someone performs under pressure. A small assignment can reveal how someone thinks, organizes information, and approaches real-world tasks. Candidates who are genuinely invested in doing strong work are rarely deterred by reasonable screening steps.



2. The Language That Draws In (and Filters Out) Strong Applicants

When describing your needs in the office, specificity is your best tool – so clearly state the type of law you practice and the volume or pace of your work.

1. **Make sure to put your practice area front and center.** Family law is quite different from business law, and experience doesn't always transfer seamlessly across practice areas.
2. **Describe the level of independence you'll need from your paralegal, and be transparent about office culture.** Is your firm fast-paced? Say so. Are deadlines tight and frequent? Mention this. You'll be able to quickly weed out applicants who can't handle the pace simply by stating these things.
3. **Don't use vague language when describing compensation.** Avoid vague phrases like “competitive pay” or force a prospective hire to guess. The clearer you are, the more trust you'll build with qualified, serious applicants.

Our rule of thumb? Your wording should reflect the type of team member you hope to bring into your firm: organized, accountable, proactive, and steady under pressure.



3. How to Position Your Firm on Indeed and LinkedIn

Indeed and LinkedIn are both strong places to seek a paralegal, but their cultures and norms differ to serve slightly different audiences. Here's how to optimize your ad for both platforms.

On Indeed, applicants tend to scan job ads quickly and will keep scrolling if the description is too long.

So...

- Keep your posting concise
- Use bullet points where appropriate
- Avoid lengthy narratives

On this platform, you'll do well to make the role easy to understand at a glance. Want to include more context? You can link to a longer posting on your firm's site under a "Careers" tab for those who want more information.

On LinkedIn, there's more room to elaborate. Because many LinkedIn users are there to connect (and may not be actively job hunting) you can speak more toward your firm's values, long-term goals, and professional standards.

This allows you to present more than just a list of responsibilities – you can paint a picture of what it means to work with your firm. That picture is especially helpful if you're looking for someone who aligns with both the technical requirements of the role and your firm's culture.



4. Interview Questions That Reveal Ownership and Initiative

Once applications start coming in, the interview process is your opportunity to evaluate people beyond their credentials on the page.

You want to get a clear picture of what this applicant brings to the table. The best way to do this? Remember that open-ended questions tend to provide more meaningful insight than simple yes-or-no responses.

Here are some of the top questions to ask anyone you're considering...

- “Walk me through how you track deadlines. What system do you use to stay organized?”
- “Tell me about a time you found a mistake before it became a larger issue. How did you resolve the situation?”
- “If you're managing multiple active cases, how do you decide what gets done first?”
- “How would you handle a situation where a client is upset and the attorney on their case isn't available to talk?”

Listen carefully to the level of detail in their answers. Candidates who think and speak in terms of systems, accountability, and risk prevention often perform better over time than those who provide surface-level responses in the interview process.

As you proceed through the interview, make sure to notice their **presence** and **attitude**. While interviews naturally tend to make people more formal, note how composed, confident, and attentive the candidate is while they're answering your questions. An ideal applicant will show calm competence and take the conversation seriously.



5. Eight Practical Steps for a Stronger Hiring Process

In summary, follow these eight steps to attract a high-performance paralegal:

1. Be specific about the type of law you practice.
2. Clearly describe the workload and pace.
3. Clarify the key responsibilities (drafting, client intake, billing, etc.) and desired outcomes.
4. Explain what success should look like after 60 and 90 days.
5. Mention the software and systems your firm uses.
6. Be transparent about working hours and compensation range.
7. Include a brief, practical exercise in your application process.
8. Ask interview questions that reveal organization, initiative, and accountability.

The right person for your firm is out there – and they're more likely to find your firm when the job ad you post reflects that they're the perfect fit.



6. Your Secret Weapon For The Perfect Hire

Hiring the right person takes time. Even with the perfect job ad, the process of sorting through resumes, scheduling interviews, and talking to potential candidates can take weeks.

For some firms, that investment makes sense. For others, the process of getting help on board itself puts another strain on an already maxed-out schedule.

If you'd prefer to hand off the hiring process without sacrificing the quality of your legal support, DocketWorks can help.

We use these same tools to find and deliver accredited International Licensed Attorneys (ILAs) who understand accountability, legal procedure, and the importance of ownership from day one.

Each of our International Licensed Attorneys (ILAs) operate at a paralegal level and are trained on your state laws, practice area, and preferred systems before they begin working with you.

Because these professionals already understand legal procedure, accountability, and ownership, onboarding is faster and oversight is lighter than with a traditional hire – all at a significantly lower cost.

If you'd like to explore whether this approach could support your firm's growth, [click here](#) to schedule a brief, no-pressure conversation with our team.

We're happy to answer your questions and help you evaluate whether this is the right fit for your practice.

Either way, we wish you luck in finding the right person for your team!