

Organization Methodology – An Argument for Increased Sharing

By Samantha Angel, FRP

A law firm lives and dies by its calendar. Court hearings, filing deadlines, client meetings, and attorney vacations must be accounted for and planned around. Paralegals are often in charge of calendaring for their attorney (or attorneys) making organization a crucial element of our toolkit for success. The question becomes: How do we, as paralegals, keep disparate pieces of information together in a cohesive, comprehensible manner? Moreover, does one method work for everyone?

As a child, I remember watching my father meticulously detail his work phone calls, meetings, and travel appointments in a black agenda that lived in his briefcase. He called it his “diary” because it organized each element his busy life contained. From airline flights to my music recitals, his diary helped him manage the challenges of work and home life. Perhaps subconsciously,



during high school I began keeping a diary in an identical fashion to my father's, managing homework assignments, extracurricular activities, and school holidays. This habit has followed me ever since, and I largely credit “The Diary Method” with my success as a paralegal.

Why does this method work? This method works for one critical reason - it is adaptable. Regardless of the type of trigger mechanisms you use, The Diary Method can be adjusted

to work for your style. Each person is different and relies on different triggers to remember significant data points. For some, colors are helpful, while others associate letters with tasks more readily than colors. The simple act of writing down a deadline helps solidify the date in my mind. Eventually, simply writing a deadline evolved into color-coded notations, each color corresponding to a substantive matter type. Now, a brief glance at my diary page tells me both the due date and substance of a matter through color recognition.

Increased reliance on technology in the workplace has not diminished the value of The Diary Method. Rather, I believe it has increased the value of a paper and pen organizational style. Computers crash, phone applications delete data, and meticulously entered information disappears forever. Unless my

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diary is lost, I have no fear of my diary data disappearing overnight. Instead, the diary acts as a physical backup of all computerized data.

Paralegals juggle deadlines, meetings, teleconferences, and just about every aspect of life at a law firm. The nature of our work demands organization at a high level to avoid things falling through the proverbial cracks. The Diary Method is my personal means of staying on track. It has proven its worth to me over many years and in various situations. I believe my father would be proud.

This method, however, is not set in stone. Interactions with attorneys over the years have adjusted my method and increased its effectiveness in relation to my specific attorneys' mannerisms. The beauty of organizational methodology is its fluid nature, allowing it to adapt and

evolve over time to suit the changing needs of each paralegal and law firm. It is this adaptability and fluidity which brought me to write on this subject.

Organizational methods are as varied as paralegals themselves, changing and growing as their careers progress. Communicating successful organizational methods between paralegals can enhance our sense of camaraderie and increase our value to a firm. Paralegals are proud to be problem solvers and trusted members of the legal team. Problem solving is aided through effective use of time management and organizational methods.

In addition to our continuing legal education requirements as Florida Registered Paralegals, informal discussions on organizational methods and techniques can expand our legal toolkit while fostering connections within the paralegal community. While one organizational method may work for me, but not for you, the discussion itself opens a dialogue for

professional enhancement and skill sharing. An organizational method one paralegal may swear by may not occur to another paralegal. Sharing these methods with each other not only broadens our horizons but brings us closer together as professionals.



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