

PERSPECTIVE

Volume 41, Issue 3

Winter Edition

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kerry A. Mackey, CP

I hope everyone is staying warm this Winter! **PANJ** has held some interesting webinars this Winter and we have more exciting meetings to come!



In December, we had John Bermingham, Esq. give us the first portion of a presentation regarding Constitutional and State Court Cases that deal with ethical issues outside of the law. Mr. Bermingham was a fantastic guest speaker and I am excited that he will be back in March for the second portion of his presentation. If you were unable to attend his first presentation and would like a copy, please email me at info@njpara.org to obtain a copy of the recording. We are offering the recording at a discounted rate of \$5.00. If you plan on attending the March meeting, I highly recommend purchasing his first presentation.

Then in January we were thrilled to have Marissa J. Moran, J.D. and Former Magistrate Judge Ron Hedges to give us a presentation on General Artificial Intelligence in law practice. Ms. Moran and Judge Hedges discussed GAI with regard to the ethical and professional responsibilities of paralegals and attorneys when using such tools. Artificial Intelligence has become a huge part of life and this was a very insightful presentation with regard to the legal field.

When this year started off, I wanted to think of February as a month of self-improvement which is why **PANJ** started the month with a presentation from a licensed psychologist to give us ways to deal with stress. Dr. Robert Pasahow provided us with strategies to decrease and resolve stressful situations. Being a paralegal can be a TOUGH job and sometimes a little reminder about how to deal with stressful situations can be helpful and help recenter us.

Then on February 22nd we will have a **PANJ** Open House at Delicious Heights in Berkeley Heights. We will be hosting a causal get together to meet **PANJ** Board Members as well as

other members and non-members. We will be there to have discussions about work, life or the paralegal profession, etc. **PANJ** wants to have a causal meeting with some yummy food and drinks and get to know our members! This will be a great way to meet fellow paralegals in a casual setting. Samantha Brillantino is providing us with a short presentation regarding resume writing and how to make your LinkedIn profile stand out. She will also be able to answer questions regarding getting that dream paralegal job and how you can achieve that goal! This is a **FREE** event. Complimentary light fare will be served and there will be a cash bar. I hope to see you there!

PANJ is always looking for new topics and guest speakers. If you have an area of law that you would like to learn more about, please email me at info@njpara.org.

I would like to take an opportunity to mention that in the past **PANJ** had taken pride in offering our meetings at different locations throughout parts of New Jersey but unfortunately due to rising costs since the pandemic we have had to reevaluate our budget. In the future we may have more of our meetings at a select few spots in order to keep costs down for those that attend. **BUT** we are still looking for locations to hold future meetings. If you have a suggestion for a meeting location, please let us know!

PANJ is always looking for new topics and presenters. If there is a topic that you like to learn more about, please email us!

The Association is open to suggestions for improvement. **PANJ** seeks to promote regulated high-level educational standards and uniform practice guidelines for paralegals throughout New Jersey. **PANJ** also provides helpful resources to new and experienced paralegals and promotes the education of the public for the advancement and improvement of the profession. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our Association, please let us know! We want to hear from you. Please reach out to us and let us know what you think. You can email us at Info@NJPara.org.

What are ways the Association can further serve its members and the paralegal profession? All suggestions are welcome! Send ideas and comments to Info@NJPara.org.

If you wish to contribute to upcoming editions of Perspective, please submit your pieces for review to Info@NJPara.org.

If you know a vendor who may be interested in advertising their product/service in the Perspective or at an upcoming webinar meeting, have the vendor contact Info@NJPara.org.

DISCLAIMER: The *Perspective* is a newsletter designed to report news and/or opinions of interest to PANJ members. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author, not the *Perspective* Editor nor the PANJ Executive Board. Publication herein does not imply endorsement in any manner. No information contained herein is intended nor should it be construed as legal advice. All articles presented herein are with permission of the author. Inclusion and editing of material is at the sole discretion of the Editor.



SAVE THE DATES!
UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS

[Tuesday, March 5, 2024](#)

Guest Speaker: John A. Bermingham, Esq.
Topic: Second Portion of the Ethics and Law
Presentation
Location: Cisco Webex Webinar

[Thursday, April 25, 2024](#)

Guest Speaker: Nicole A. Kobis, Esq.
Topic: Family Law
Location:
Lindabury, McCormick, Estabrook & Cooper, P.C.

[Tuesday, May 21, 2024](#)

Guest Speaker: Clarence Barry-Austin, Esq.
Topic: Personal Injury Litigation
Location: Montclair State University
Steno will be sponsoring this event!



The Paralegal Association of New Jersey made a charitable donation in the amount of \$250.00 to the Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation. The mission of the Foundation is to provide financial assistance and comfort to breast cancer patients and their families. Receiving a diagnosis of breast cancer is daunting in itself, but when combined with the economic hardships that many patients encounter due to out-of-pocket expenses, income loss, or lack of adequate insurance, it can create a negative impact on a patient's ability to place emphasis on regaining their health. The Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation seeks to alleviate some of these burdens, providing financial support directly to breast cancer patients who are encountering financial setbacks, and empowers patients with hope and encouragement as they journey through their treatment and recovery process. The Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation is a local foundation with a national reach! PANJ was proud to support this foundation. For more information regarding The Christina S. Walsh Breast Cancer Foundation visit: christinaswalshbcf.org.





The **Paralegal Association of New Jersey** made a charitable donation in the amount of \$275.00 to the campaign to support January Derby's battle through Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).



The PANJ Executive Board extends their best wishes to the Derby family during this difficult time.

To learn more about this campaign, go to: <https://www.givesendgo.com/supportforJan>.



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“SO, YOU WANNA BE A ROCKSTAR...”

By: Kimberly Molinelli, Paralegal

Blume, Forte, Fried, Zerres & Molinari, PC

Member, Paralegal Association of New Jersey and NJSBA Paralegal Special Committee

It is indisputable that paralegals are the backbone of the firms we work for. The glue that holds the team together. The right arm of the attorney we support. Paralegals bring high value to any work environment, and the job is reciprocally rewarding. Attorneys and clients alike often gush about how much they appreciate how hard the paralegal worked on a file. However, not all paralegals are created equal. We all know that one paralegal who seems like there's nothing she/he cannot do and just kills it on the job, giving us pause to reflect on our own capabilities and wonder... *how do I elevate to rockstar status?*

I truly believe that the line of demarcation between paralegal and rockstar lies in the soft skills. The most important of these skills are, high motivation for learning, mastery of communication skills, being proactive and taking initiative, and resilience. These are the four can't-do-without essentials necessary to really rock it on the job.

First, we need to view ourselves as perpetual students, always motivated to learn. Our learning did not stop on graduation day, and we don't know it all. Do you get excited at the opportunity to take on a new responsibility or skill that may challenge you, or to work on a new type of case that you have not worked with before? Do you keep current on changes to Court Rules and case law relevant to the field you work in? The most interesting thing about law is that it changes every day. If you are on the NJSBA email list, you receive daily updates on new published opinions, articles on what the Supreme Court is doing, and notification when there are proposed Court Rule changes. There is ample opportunity to stay abreast of what's new, and you should take advantage of it.

Part of being a perpetual student with a mind open to learning, is accepting feedback willingly from the perspective that criticism is essential to growth. And the cornerstone of positive feedback and constructive criticism is effective communication. Our attorneys are not mind readers, and frankly, sometimes they can be quite bad at communicating. You may need to initiate the conversation to create opportunities to learn. If you feel you are being passed up for new responsibilities and more interesting work, you need to advocate for yourself. If you feel you are not getting enough feedback to know if you are mastering a new skill or responsibility appropriately, you need to ask for it. It may feel a bit awkward, maybe your attorney is not the most approachable type, but you need to do it anyway. That is how learning happens. Don't deprive yourself.

Of course, communication is easier when you have an alliance established with your attorney and the other staff. Are you an all-in teammate with a positive, can-do attitude? Or, do you only function within the constraints of your scheduled hours and the specific job description given when you were hired? Which one do you think your attorney and other staff will more readily trust and want to work with? Let's talk about personal investment. Do you engage positively with those around you and leave the impression that you are a person who cares about

people both personally and professionally? Espousing these positive attitudes will create a bond, foster communication, and let those around you know that you are a team player.

When talking about initiative, this is more than simply offering to help with tasks beyond the normal course of duty. For certain, the willingness to do more than just your job is an amazing quality in a paralegal. But even better is a paralegal who is tuned in enough to recognize when a particularly difficult or voluminous project is looming on the near horizon, and gets ahead of it without being asked. I cannot think of anything more valuable to an attorney than when a paralegal can say reassuringly and confidently, “I got this!” and start laying the groundwork for what needs to get done. If you can master this, your value increases exponentially.

Finally, I think developing a certain “toughness” is crucial for a paralegal. This does not mean being rude or arrogant, or pushy. It means being resilient, and having thick skin. It means being able to bounce back when a plan gets derailed. The job is not easy. The days consist of long periods of sustained mental focus on often complex subject matters. Clients can be difficult and emotional. Attorneys can be demanding. There are deadlines lurking at every turn. The work piles up, and the phones go crazy. It is important that we not let it rattle us. Our attorney and teammates should see us as a source of strength and resilience, so that they feel confident in our abilities.

There are myriad other ways to perfect your craft and develop as a professional, all of which are meaningful and add value to you as a paralegal. However, if you can hone these four soft skills and be motivated to learn, be a skilled communicator, be proactive, and exhibit strength, you will be the rockstar paralegal you want to be, and become the coveted paralegal that everybody wants to work with.



Kimberly Molinelli is a Paralegal at the law offices of Blume, Forte, Fried, Zerres, & Molinari in Chatham, New Jersey, where she works with automobile, premises liability, and medical malpractice matters.

Kim has over 30 years of legal experience working with certified civil trial attorneys, which also includes commercial and consumer fraud litigation, and class action matters. Kim has been a guest lecturer at Seton Hall Law School on Ecourts filing procedures. She was a speaker at the May 2023 New Jersey State Bar Convention, and served as a panelist for the November 2023 NJ ICLE seminar, *Prepping for Success at Trial with a Paralegal*. Kim recently contributed to the October 2023 *New Jersey Lawyer*, with her article “Have You Considered Adding a Paralegal to Your Team?” She is a member of both the New Jersey State Bar Association Paralegal Special Committee, and the Paralegal Association of New Jersey.

Kim began her legal career as a legal secretary following graduation from high school, and has since held various supervisory and managerial roles throughout her career. She is currently enrolled in Raritan Valley College’s paralegal studies undergraduate degree program, and expects to graduate next May.



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- On-Demand webinar: <https://nala.org/courses/odwcpsskillexrev-preparing-for-the-cp-skills-exam-using-the-irac-method/>



Christine A. Principe, CP is a Certified Paralegal. She has been a paralegal for 37 years assisting attorneys in a variety of practice areas including commercial litigation, mortgage and tax lien foreclosures, and estate administration. Currently, she is in the complex commercial litigation department at Sills Cummis & Gross, P.C. Christine is a PANJ Board Member and NALA Liaison. She is also a Board Member of NJ Paralegal Convention. Christine can be reached at: NALALiaison@NJPara.org; cprin1216paralegal@outlook.com.



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A LOOK INTO THE
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AI AND THE LEGAL PROFESSIONAL OF TOMORROW



TOPICS

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

&

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE FOR LEGAL
APPLICATIONS

Would you believe me if I told you that this article was produced in the same amount of time it takes you to snap your fingers? Perhaps we aren't there yet but this reality is around the corner.

With the growing accessibility and popularity of AI programs for business and recreational purposes, professionals in the legal field would be well advised to explore all the possibilities that these technologies can create. If you were under the impression that you would be reading a “doom and gloom” article about the dangers of AI, this isn't the article for you, instead I would recommend The Wachowskis 1999 classic film “The Matrix” to satiate those fears. What I hope to do here is promote the methods in which you as a legal professional can use AI to help augment and enhance your capabilities ten-fold. We will be looking into the brighter side of AI and welcoming technological advancement. Any AI/GAI programs used in the making of this article will be credited in the resource section, this is not an endorsement of any specific AI products but rather, an exploration of their potential.

Before moving forward, definitions are in order, “**Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is the term used to describe how computers can perform tasks normally viewed as requiring human intelligence, such as recognizing speech and objects, making decisions based on data, and translating languages. AI mimics certain operations of the human mind. It is a branch of computer science that focuses on creating intelligent machines that can think and act like humans. AI has been used to solve complex problems and make predictions with minimal human input. **Generative AI (GAI)** is a subset of artificial intelligence that uses algorithms to generate new data from existing massive data sources. The data sources primarily come from the Internet. GAI can be used to create text, images, music, and other forms of media. (Donahue, 2019).”

A distinction does exist between AI/GAI programs and rudimentary automated machines, the latter of which has been used for decades in a plethora of businesses. The contrast may easily be summed up with the following example, an automated machine in a factory will be charged with the task of securing 10,000 screws in hundreds of vehicles a day, while an AI program in the same factory



is tasked with inspecting the quality of the work turned out by the automated machine with unparalleled consistency and may likely be able to predict at which point the (former) machine will need to be replaced to maintain an ideal output. Keeping with this example, eventually, AI programs may reach the point where they will also be able to provide their human supervisors in accounting, management and even the foreman, a concise and unique summary as to why a replacement unit must be ordered. If Predictive AI for automotive inspections already exist, “which is useful for detecting battery dents or rust spots” (Hogan, 2023) just imagine what the future will bring.

The Paralegal Association of New Jersey (PANJ) recently invited members and guests alike the opportunity to explore AI and GAI topics with the discussion led by Marissa J. Moran, J.D., and Former Magistrate Judge Ron Hedges. A theme that held throughout the discussion was the fact there is minimal case law on AI/GAI and governance of these new software programs is lagging. Additionally, lawyers are required to be technologically competent to properly serve their clients and grasping the concepts of AI/GAI software will likely become the rule and not the exception. Further, AI and GAI are here to stay, just as legal research methods transformed following the dawn of the internet and online search engines in the 70's, we are once again approaching a revolutionary period in law.

Recently, GAI has made the bigger splash in the legal space. From promotional materials highlighting software that can produce a transcript and summarize a deposition in seconds to news stories of lawyers being penalized for using similar programs to conduct “research” and accidentally citing non-existent case law to support their arguments. Suffice it to say, GAI is only as good as the individual or group utilizing it. GAI, when used appropriately, can assist in the drafting of documents effortlessly, conduct legal research inhumanely fast, perform document/contract review and even respond to online reviews, saving the user significant effort and irreplaceable time. GAI provides an opportunity to trim repetitive and monotonous aspects out of our daily tasks, which in turn can provide us more freedom to address complex problems and elevate our skills in other areas.

Astute professionals will be wary of the privacy and ethical concerns surrounding GAI capabilities, especially programs that exist on open-source platforms. Alarming news continues to spread as AI deepfake technology demonstrates the potential for users to spread misinformation and even current GAI applications bring into question how future copyright laws will be influenced. As legal professionals we are entrusted with the most sensitive client information. Since the dawn of the practice of law and through every technological advancement since its inception, the duty to protect privileged information has not changed. A high level of diligence will be required for future AI/GAI users moving



forward and attorney supervision is a key element of the process.

A call to action has been placed by legal groups urging the courts and lawyers to put safeguards in place to mitigate the dangers of AI and GAI. The American Bar Association has adopted multiple resolutions relating to AI, in attempts to address growing concerns. However, with the speed of these technologies, seemingly increasing by the day, it is becoming clearer that the responsibility may fall on you, the legal professional, to discover how to best incorporate AI/GAI to best serve your client. Alternatively, if you chose to not utilize the software, it remains in your best interest to stay informed on what new software enters the market and legal sphere.

Whenever AI/GAI is discussed in a legal groups and settings, too often is the discussion limited to applications that are tailored-made for law firms. Legal programs that search case law, summarize depositions, condense legalize, generate basic legal letters, etc. I implore you to explore AI/GAI for accounting, marketing, hospitality, recreation and more. Oftentimes, those who work in law will often find themselves aiding clients in matters that would not exactly be defined as “legal services”. Wouldn’t it be a better decision to delegate a non-legal service to AI/GAI? If your client needs to fly in for trial, perhaps you can implement an AI/GAI tool that will assist in finding the optimal flight within the client’s budget while it also coordinates the nearest hotel to the courthouse and drafts basic logistical instructions for the client. Meanwhile, as the AI tool coordinates your client’s travel itinerary, you are better spent using the day in preparation for Trial. The benefits of AI/GAI are not in the replacement of people but rather, the augmentation of what people can do with the finite amount of time they have.

A younger breed of legal professionals will be entering the field in the coming years, brought up being taught how to best utilize AI and what pitfalls to avoid because the advancement of society will inevitably call for it as a requirement. While safeguards and other advanced screening tools will improve to capture AI usage in order to secure the integrity of an author’s book, artist’s picture, and an attorney’s argument. The truth is, investments in learning these technologies is paramount, without taking the time to learn how to harness AI/GAI, one risks being at a disadvantage, especially if they are confronted with an adversary who excels in utilizing these programs. Aside from your doctor, you would be hard pressed to find anyone who felt that the old school method of physically running to the courthouse to file paperwork is advantageous over the modern day ability to upload the same document with the click of a button, perhaps now is the time to once again embrace change in order to better prepare for what is to come in the not-too-distant future.

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- <https://jolt.law.harvard.edu/digest/a-primer-on-using-artificial-intelligence-in-the-legal-profession>
- Mata v. Avianca, Inc., No. 22-cv-1461, 2023 WL 3696209 (PKC) (S.D.N.Y. June 22, 2023)
- Special thanks to PANJ and Marissa J. Moran, J.D., and Former Magistrate Judge Ron Hedges
- https://www.photonics.com/Articles/AI_Aids_Automotive_Manufacturing_Inspection/a69244



John Vizcaya graduated from Rutgers University with a B.A. degree in 2015. He is currently a paralegal/case manager at Rebenack, Aronow & Mascolo, LLP, a law firm which specializes in personal injury law. He has spent his young career helping clients injured in car accidents, truck accidents, factory explosions, trip/slip and falls and medical malpractice claims. He is an active New Jersey Notary Public and a member of the New Jersey State Bar Association.

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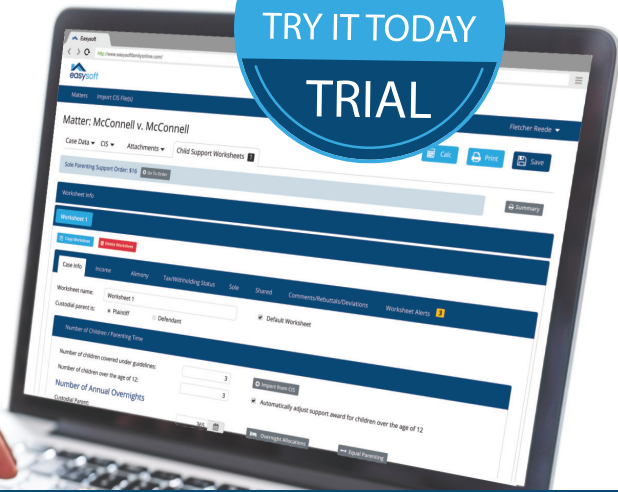


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