



Donna M. Profeta: Paralegal

[By Charisse Dengler]

As a realtor, Donna M. Profeta decided to enroll in a paralegal course in order to further her career in real estate. However, now a proud graduate of Washington Online Learning Institute (WOLI), she is not only using her paralegal education in her career as a realtor, but she also has big plans to open her own legal document-preparation business.

"Having the ability to analyze contracts and how to prepare them is of great value to me. Also, realtors sometimes find themselves in situations involving probate and estate law. Other times, issues involving divorce come into play. Through my paralegal program, I have a deeper understanding of the complexities of each of these areas. My education greatly supplements the level of service I can provide my real estate clients."

Upon graduation, however, Profeta began to mull the idea of using her paralegal education in a more hands-on way, and she came up with the idea of creating a business that would help people understand the process of preparing and filing legal documents.

"I have been researching the idea [of starting my own business] for a long time now," she continued. "I am entrepreneurial in spirit, and the idea of working for myself suits my personality best."

Profeta is currently in the planning stages of founding her business, a business that will prepare legal documents that can be filed without an attorney, such as wills, uncontested divorces, and real estate contracts. She's also considering helping people with the process of filing the documents as an extended service to her clients.

"I wanted to be a credentialed paralegal so that I would be able to understand the types of issues and questions that arise in this business," she said.

Profeta describes herself as a highly independent person and said the ability to be self-motivated in her work is something that led her to consider starting her own business.

"One of the benefits of owning my own business is not having to deal with someone else's work style," she said. "I have no problems staying focused on any tasks at hand; and I am extremely thorough, but in my own way. I would not appreciate an attorney breathing down my neck, micromanaging me."

"I understand the liability attached to each attorney; I understand the concept of vicarious liability," she said. "I know this is the responsibility assigned to each attorney working with a paralegal. However, I found the concept of a franchised business so much more appealing to me in that I have much more latitude in the workplace."

When asked why she didn't go on to become an attorney herself, Profeta answered that she's working on it.

"Becoming an attorney in my own right may in fact be the next step for me after trying my hand at being a business owner," she said.

In addition to an established career in real estate and paralegal training, Profeta also has a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and a Master of Science degree in School Counseling. After completing WOLI's paralegal education program online, she is an enthusiastic fan of both the school and online education.

"I can say with certainty, given my long educational resume, [that] the education delivered by the professors at WOLI was stellar," she said. "It was comprehensive. Not a stone was unturned. You exit this program feeling quite capable."

"Online education is an especially good choice for paralegal students because the information is delivered in an efficient manner," she said. "Having the ease and the convenience of the Internet allows the student much more flexibility without rigid schedules or boundaries. The education moves with you; and with the advent of Wi-Fi hotspots, and mobile PCs, there is no reason not to pursue higher learning."

She said graduating from WOLI's paralegal program was one of the highlights of her career.

"The overwhelming sense of accomplishment you feel when you finish makes you realize you have the knowledge and the power to support people with some of the most important decisions of their lives," she said.

Profeta is currently involved in WOLI's Alumni Mentor Program, a program designed to make sure that students in WOLI's paralegal program have access to everything they need to succeed. Each mentor is assigned a new paralegal student and is responsible for answering any questions and helping with any concerns the student may have.



"It is a great way to give back, to 'pay it forward,' in return for all the support and attention I was given when I was a student," she said.

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Washington Online Learning Institute
www.woli.com

WOLI Paralegal Program Application
www.woli.com/servlet/com.woli.oam.OAMApplicationFull

Tips on Starting a Business
sbinfocanada.about.com/cs/startup/a/10startingtips.htm