Well-known Ohio Paralegal Mindi Schaefer Discusses Her Long and Rewarding Career

Professional Overview

Mindi Schaefer serves as the Administrative and Paralegal Support Director for Poling Law in Columbus, Ohio. She is responsible for the management of the administrative and paralegal support staff in the office, which includes recruiting, training, professional development, productivity management, workflow coordination, marketing, continuing legal education, and the overall management of the Columbus office. Ms. Schaefer also analyzes promotional strategies and public relations for Poling Law including speaking engagements, pro bono opportunities, and sponsorship activities. She researches electronic and print media options for Poling Law to advertise and promote the firm. Additionally, Ms. Schaefer concentrates on website content management and social media implementation to maintain current and fresh firm content.

Ms. Schaefer participates in numerous litigation cases in the areas of business disputes, business planning, governmental entity liability, general liability, professional liability, medical malpractice, and dental malpractice. She handles all aspects of the legal process including file management, discovery, investigation, and trial preparation.

Prior to working at Poling Law, Ms. Schaefer served as a litigation assistant at Dyer, Garofalo, Mann & Schultz in Dayton, Ohio. She then served as a paralegal and team leader for the firm. Ms. Schaefer served as a legal assistant at Jenks, Pyper & Oxley, Co. in Dayton, Ohio. She also served as a paralegal at Reminger, Co., LPA in Columbus, Ohio.

Ms. Schaefer is a member of the Columbus Bar Association, Paralegal Association of Columbus Ohio, Ohio State Bar Association, National Federation of Paralegal Associations, American Alliance of Paralegals, Inc., Organization of Legal Professionals, Social Media Club of Columbus, Columbus Young Professionals, Miami Jacobs Career College Advisory Board, and she is a frequent educator with the Institute for Paralegal Education (based in Altoona, Wisconsin). She is also a Notary Public of Ohio.

Ms. Schaefer has been a featured author with the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio ("PACO"), Columbus Bar Friday Paper (affiliated with The Daily Reporter / Columbus Bar Association), and the National Paralegal Reporter (affiliated with the National Federation of Paralegal Associations), which concentrates on issues connected to trial preparation, mentoring, employment, PACO, and paralegals. She is also a frequent guest speaker at Columbus State Community College, ITT Technical Institute, Miami Jacobs Career College, Capital University Law School, and local area high schools focusing on entering the paralegal profession, the overall paralegal profession, as well as interviewing.

Over the years, Ms. Schaefer has been awarded with several distinctions. She is the recipient of the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio Outstanding Committee Chair from 2009 to 2010. Ms. Schaefer earned the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio Ten Year Paralegal Service Award in 2009 and she received the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio Outstanding Member from 2010 to 2011. She was awarded with the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio Paralegal of the Year from 2011 to 2012 and the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio Paralegal of the Year from 2012 to 2013. Ms. Schaefer was also awarded with the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio Fifteen Year Paralegal Service Award in 2014.

She was born in Greenville, Ohio and raised in Ansonia, Ohio. Ms. Schaefer received her Associates Degree of Applied Science in Legal Assisting from Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio. She earned her Bachelors Cum Laude in Political Science from Wright State
Ms. Schaefer has been married for almost fifteen years to her wonderful and supportive husband, Marcus. The couple has a hyper, excited dog named Chip who is a rescue dog they have had for a year and half. Ms. Schaefer is an avid reader who is currently reading Gary Chapman's *The 5 Love Languages* and John Maxwell's *5 Levels of Leadership* and *The 360° Leader*.

**Ms. Schaefer's Successful Career**

Why did she decide to specialize in this particular area? "After 15 years of being a paralegal and having various other leadership roles, I wanted to develop this new role in our firm to help facilitate the growth and productive of our other paralegals and administrative personnel. I am currently 60/40 - 60% paralegal work and 40% management work during the day."

Why did Ms. Schaefer decide to become a paralegal? "Honestly, when I was in high school and preparing to graduate I wanted to start a career quickly and not spend years upon years in school. As you can tell from my education, that thought changed over time. In the mid-90s, paralegal was the hot two year degree along with dental hygiene. I went the paralegal route."

What advice would she give to someone who's brand new to her position? "Brand new paralegals need to always work on their organizational skills, be up on the new hot technology trends in the legal field, and always, always be learning. Read books, attend CLEs, etc."

What information does Ms. Schaefer wish she had when starting out? "I wish I had more information about paralegal associations such as the one I am President of now (Paralegal Association of Central Ohio). When I was in paralegal school, I do not recall a big push or presence of the local association with my fellow students."

What does she think are the keys to becoming a successful paralegal? "Be organized. Never stop learning. Teach others. Pay it forward through mentoring. Never be afraid to ask questions. Know the legal technology world."

What does Ms. Schaefer think makes the difference between a good paralegal and a great paralegal? "You have those who go above and beyond and see this profession as a career and those who do the required work and see this profession as a job."

What's one of the things that she finds most challenging about her job? "Balancing work and home. Sometimes it is very hard to put the phone down, but you really need to make time for yourself and your loved ones to keep your sanity."

What would Ms. Schaefer say is the most important thing that she learned as a paralegal? "The justice system is not black and white. There is no set rulebook to follow every time."

What is the difference between her and other paralegals doing the same thing that she does? "I eat, breathe, and sleep my career. It is a main focus in my life and I take great pride in that. I love my career and I love helping others succeed in this profession."

What is the best part of Ms. Schaefer’s job? "Helping others succeed. I am successful when others around me are successful too."

What is her favorite part of her day as a paralegal? "5:30 p.m. when the phones go on night ring!"

What is Ms. Schaefer known for professionally? "Being super organized and heavily involved in PACO, our local association."

What does she think about the paralegal field in Ohio today? "It is continuing to grow. Jobs are posting more and more. I wish attorneys would better understand and properly utilize their paralegals more."
If Ms. Schaefer were not in this profession, what would she most probably be doing? "Teaching."

Where does she see herself in five years' time? "Doing what I'm doing now … managing."

What motivates Ms. Schaefer to be a paralegal every day? "Knowing that I am a part of something bigger and that my role truly does matter."

Mentoring Paralegals, Writing and Speaking Engagements, People Who Inspire Ms. Schaefer and Her Goals

Does Ms. Schaefer consider herself a mentor? "Absolutely. In fact, I created the mentoring program our paralegal association still uses today."

Will she continue her writing and speaking engagements? "Absolutely! In fact, I was just at Capital University Law School recently speaking to paralegal students at the end of their education."

Who inspires Ms. Schaefer? "The paralegals who have been in this field for 20 plus years and still love what they do."

Ms. Schaefer has accomplished a lot in her career. What's next for her? "Continuing to grow as a leader and really working hard to improve my leadership skills even more."

What to Expect When Working with Ms. Schaefer

Elizabeth Fuller, Paralegal at Standley Law Group, LLP, noted: "Mindi is an extremely organized, focused, and detail oriented individual. From day one it was very clear that she was the problem solver of the office. She is highly respected and very well regarded among her peers. Her patience, in depth knowledge of the law, and kind personality make her an outstanding teacher and lead paralegal."

Michelle Anderson, B.A., Legal Professional, acknowledged:

"As a Paralegal Extern at Poling Law, Mindi taught me what being a Paralegal involved. While I reported to Mindi for all my work, she allowed me to come up with ideas and use them in my work. I learned the work flow of a law office and was included in meetings to learn how to work as a team with other Paralegals.

Mindi, is an excellent teacher, mentor and colleague. It was a pleasure working with her."

Erin Krasen, CRP, Paralegal at Student Legal Services at The Ohio State University, stated:

"I met Mindi at my orientation for paralegal school. She battled the barriers of the Columbus Marathon on a Saturday to come speak to my class about PACO and the mentorship program that she herself began. I remember thinking how genuinely interested she was in helping new paralegals, and how much I wanted to learn from her. Fortunately, over the next four months she gave me the opportunity to do just that. As my mentor at Poling, Mindi taught me what the textbooks at school could not. Through her example I learned how to balance complex tasks, work efficiently, and maintain open lines of communication with all members of the firm. Mindi is a lifetime learner, a creative thinker, and a person who loves her job so much it is contagious. Her dedication and team attitude is incomparable. Because of all these qualities, I have no doubt that Mindi will continue to be successful in everything she undertakes. I consider myself incredibly fortunate and grateful to now be her colleague at Poling Law."

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