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## CALENDAR



**NFPA's Joint Conference** will be held on March 21-23, 2014 at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, Mass.

## Save the Date



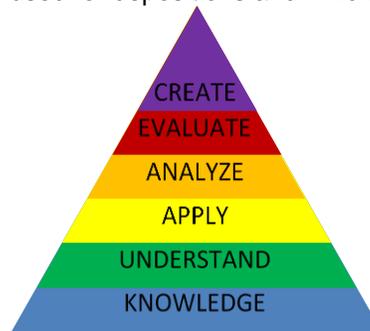
NFPA celebrates 40 years. 2014 NFPA Annual Convention is in Dallas, Texas. Registration begins July 1, 2014. [NFPA Website](#).

## Mastering Core Job Skills to Become A Paralegal that Stands Out in a Crowd.

By Amy Stanton, Paralegal with Sola & Lang, Seattle, WA

Just as you wouldn't call someone a pianist who couldn't find middle C on the keyboard, you wouldn't call someone a paralegal who didn't have basic knowledge about the legal system and its terminology. Equally as fundamental to a paralegal are the skills identified by Elaine Pappas in last month's newsletter: punctuality, organization, clear communication, and technological know-how. However, the intent of this article is to challenge ourselves to think beyond the fundamentals and work toward becoming exceptional at what we do. I believe an exceptional paralegal has a greater chance of securing a highly sought after position in today's competitive market.

Professional growth can be gained by attending any of the many excellent CLE's currently available to legal professionals; however budgetary concerns and workloads may place limits on how many seminars one can attend and how often. If that's the case, there's still hope! You can find opportunities for development in the many tasks you handle on a daily basis. How so? Take a look at those tasks and challenge yourself to approach them in increasingly sophisticated ways. For example, your work product from a document review may start out as a simple index, allowing you and your co-workers to locate documents by date, title and author. A more sophisticated review might transform that index into a matrix showing how particular documents relate to key issues, which documents could be used for depositions and which are going to serve as the foundation of a case.



**Bloom's Taxonomy for Higher Order Thinking<sup>1</sup>** provides a useful framework for development. The three lowest levels in this taxonomy correspond to skills needed for competency.

- **Knowledge** (memorizing). For example, you can list the three branches of government and can provide the definition of *res ipsa loquitur*.

- **Comprehension** (interpreting or paraphrasing). E.g., you read a statute or rule and can explain its general meaning to a colleague in your own words.
- **Application** (problem solving, applying information). E.g., you are able to calculate the deadline for the response to interrogatories after reading Federal Rules 6 and 33.

The next three levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of thinking will help you stand out in the crowd of legal professionals. As you work on a task, consider how you can employ some of these higher level thinking skills.

- **Analyzing** involves separating information into its component parts.

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**Article Suggestions?  
New ideas?**



Please send information to Suzanne Sitter, NFPA Editorial Coordinator [editorial@paralegals.org](mailto:editorial@paralegals.org)

**NFPA Joint Conference**

**March 21-23, 2014 in Boston, Massachusetts**

**Regulation, Certification Ambassadors, and Leadership**

Is paralegal regulation a hot topic in your state or local association? Do you need new ideas for your local association's leadership? Does your Certification Ambassador need information to help your members get prepared to take one of NFPA's paralegal certification programs? If you answered yes to any one of these questions, then the 2014 NFPA Joint Conference is the place for you! Join NFPA leaders at Bunker Hill Community College on March 21-23, 2014 in Boston's historic Charlestown.

Join NFPA at one of their most well-loved events for three full days of conferences, plus the invaluable networking with your peers to exchange ideas, all for a low price of \$35.00 per day for NFPA members (non-members may register only for the Regulation Conference at a price of \$75.00) which includes continental breakfast and breaks. Lunch is available each day for just \$11.00 more.

The Massachusetts Paralegal Association, the host of this year's Joint Conference, is planning a social event on Saturday night at Faneuil Hall which you will not want to miss! NFPA has also made plans for a "no-host" dinner on Friday night for additional networking time. [Register today!](#)

NFPA negotiated a wonderful rate for hotel rooms near the Conference site. The [Holiday Inn Boston-Bunker Hill](#) is \$109 per night, with free WiFi, complimentary parking, and shuttle service within 3 miles of the hotel. [Reserve](#) your room by March 7<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Vessels, RP, CP, FRP at [vppi@paralegals.org](mailto:vppi@paralegals.org).

**Guiding the Paralegal Profession**

**NFPA® Joint Conference**  
**Boston 2014** ◆ **March 21-23**  
**Bunker Hill Community College**

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Mastering Core Job Skills to Become a Paralegal that Stands Out in a Crowd... (continued from page 1)

One analytical task paralegals can take on is objective document coding, i.e. identification of title, date, author and recipient of each document.

- **Evaluating** involves making qualitative and quantitative judgments according to set standards. More experienced paralegals may be asked to do subjective document coding. Among other things, this involves identifying key issues, marking hot documents and selecting potential deposition exhibits. Another example of evaluative work is drafting a privilege log. This task involves determining whether or not documents are protected by the work product doctrine and/or the attorney client privilege.
- **Creating** requires original thinking. Writing anything is a creative skill. Paralegals may draft complaints, declarations and discovery requests. Paralegals can also find creative opportunities in designing demonstrative exhibits for trials and other hearings.

Even when a paralegal and an attorney are both thinking in sophisticated ways, they will inevitably approach matters differently. While paralegals have a general understanding of statutes and case law, they do not analyze them in the manner that the attorneys do. Instead, they develop an in-depth knowledge of discovery materials, which they use to create an evidence-based portrait of the case.

Attorneys, on the other hand, typically have a “big picture” understanding of what’s been produced. They start out by evaluating how statutes, regulations and case law apply to key issues and call upon the paralegal to pull out exemplary exhibits for their arguments.

Thinking in more sophisticated ways does not mean doing the work of an attorney. It does mean that less of your time may be spent on administrative matters and more on substantive legal work. It means you may be bringing greater value to the legal team and increasing your own satisfaction in a job well done.

Amy Stanton is a paralegal located in Seattle, Washington with 14 years of experience in complex and class action litigation in the areas of product liability, consumer protection, and securities fraud. She took an excellent two year Paralegal Studies course at the University of Washington and is a member of WSPA and NFPA.

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloom%27s\\_taxonomy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloom%27s_taxonomy)