

Attorney to Staff... Whaddya Mean You Missed the Deadline?

“Whaddya Mean You Missed the Deadline???” The dreaded question for all legal staffers whether you are a legal secretary, legal assistant or [paralegal](#). Missing the dreaded deadline could, in fact, cause you to lose your job.

I know, I know, the attorney is ultimately the one whom the local bar holds responsible for the work product. Very true. But while the attorney may get a reprimand or a “slap on the wrist” from the judge for missing a hearing date or from the local bar for missing a deadline, you could face termination from the job that supports your family.

Maybe for you, the expectation of tracking deadlines and being responsible for them is not “what you signed on for” when you agreed to take the job. Reality is, though, that the attorney absolutely needs a second set of eyes on the deadlines or hearing dates and those eyes are yours.

I’ve been asked in the past why I feel this is part of my responsibility.

In the beginning of my career, I wasn’t expected to track deadlines. The attorneys I worked for early in my career were not full-time litigators, so there weren’t a lot of dates to track. But after landing a job in the personal injury field, it was imperative that I monitor my cases very closely.

When my attorney called in, he wanted to know what was on the calendar for the week - what were the upcoming deadlines?

There is wonderful case management software out there that tracks deadlines beautifully, however, none of the attorneys I worked for would buy it.

So, what I developed was something called a “Case Status Chart”. This is simply a 4 column table with the following titles: “Client”, “Case Info”, “To Do” and “Deadlines”. For a free sample copy, simply visit my [paralegal](#) website at <http://www.AtTheBeachParalegal.com/blog/>, fill out the form in the upper right-hand corner entitled “Join Our Mailing List”.

It’s important for you, as a legal staffer, to take responsibility for tracking deadlines, hearing dates, etc. Be proactive. Get your head inside the case as if your life depended on it. Well, in fact, your working life may just depend on it.

One of the most fantastic benefits from using the Case Status Chart was that my personal stress level was reduced dramatically. Oh, and of course, my attorney’s.