



The Secret to Success – Set a Goal and Achieve It

By Ruth Schaub, PP, PLS-SC



A few weeks ago I learned that some friends, with whom I have spent time on a weekly basis over the past 18 months, had achieved a career goal they set nearly two years ago. They obtained their professional paralegal certifications—their third certifications in as many examinations. They each had a long list of initials to use after their names: ALP, PLS, and PP.

Their journey began in the spring of 2014, right after one of our chapter members had been installed as NALS of Michigan President. Our chapter set a goal of obtaining the NALS of Michigan Glenna Spellacy Certification Award while our chapter member was state president. Four members agreed to study for certification. A study group was organized for the ALP exam. For several months they met over the lunch hour and after work reviewing basic legal terminology, substantive law, and ethics. As the weather grew warm they came to my office after work once a week to study grammar. As we wore out *The Gregg's Reference Manual*, I became impressed at how prepared they were for each study session. Each has an excellent grasp on complicated grammar rules and I was not surprised when the exam results arrived and they all passed.

After a brief break my new friends returned to my office after hours on our regular study day. One of the new ALPs chose to take a break but was replaced by another member who wanted to earn her PLS certification. With multiple years of experience each, ethics and professional judgment were clear to them. When we began studying citations, two of them had experience working on federal court cases and another had a paralegal degree which was clearly evident. Fortunately, accounting was my strong suit, as these concepts were completely foreign to this otherwise advanced group. We studied through the holidays and multiple northern Michigan snowstorms. Each week they arrived prepared

and hungry to learn. Occasional emails among study group members showed their pride in their newly earned certification as each was using ALP after her name.

As we trudged through each test section, I was amazed at the knowledge these students possessed. Their commitment to achieve certification was impressive. Each week they came prepared for the subject to be covered. They had always read the materials to be covered and completed the mock exam or homework in spite of hectic full time employment, children, civic commitments, or second jobs. A few weeks before the exam one member unexpectedly lost her father. In spite of her grief she returned to the study group within days of the funeral. It was apparent how difficult it was for her to focus in spite of her efforts. It was understandable when the exam results arrived in April and everyone had passed, except for our grieving friend.

The three new PLSs rested for the remainder of April and May, but in June 2015 we were back together. This time we were joined by a member who had obtained her PLS in 1995. In spite of only having to sit for section 4 of the PP exam, each substantive law section we studied seemed to be more intense than the last. The new bankruptcy law confused us all and required multiple sessions to cover. Agency law was a blur. Litigation and civil law was easier for these experienced litigators. One student was a real estate and estate planning expert. Two worked in family law and another had experience in patent and trademark law. Each member was able to share her field of law knowledge with the others and explained her legal strengths to her study partners. We took a week off for a local festival that brought hundreds of thousands of tourists to our town in July and another week for a devastating windstorm in August that left most of northern Michigan without power for nearly a week due to thousands of downed trees. Each time we resumed, it was apparent they had used their time off to focus on their areas of weakness.

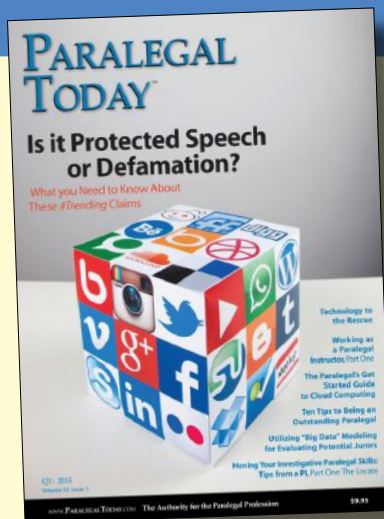
The morning of the exam each arrived early with a large cup of coffee and multiple sharp pencils. Each somberly handed in her exam with skepticism. The weeks seemed to drag on waiting for results. One by one I received emails from each of the four stating that they had passed. Their hard work and dedication to achieve their career goal of obtaining certification paid off. One of those studying was rewarded by obtaining a coveted job with the Friend of the Court. She was told that part of the reason she was given the job was they were confident she would do whatever it took to learn the job based on her dedication to earn certification.

In 18 months our chapter gained 4 ALPs, 3 PLSs, and 4 PPs and several other members have decided to study for the PLS exam. We won the Glenna Spellacy Award in 2015 and expect to win again in 2016. I had the pleasure to watch members of my chapter transform into confident, certified legal professionals and I know beyond a shadow of a doubt how incredibly smart they are. But the

best thing is that I have gained new friends for life thanks to Jennifer, Jessica, Karen, Maureen, and Vickie setting career goals and achieving them.

Ruth M. Schaub, PP, PLS-SC, obtained an AIC (Associates in Claims) from the Insurance Institute of America. She is employed as the Executive Assistant in the Advancement Department at Interlochen Center for the Arts for the Vice President and Corporate Counsel. Ruth was a finalist for the 2016 NALS Award of Excellence. She served NALS as a PLSEI instructor in the early 1990s and was presented a NALS Award of Excellence in 2005. She was on the NALS Certifying Board for three years, serving as Certifying Board Chair, and has been a member of the NALS Editorial Committee for the past seven years. She led two presentations in Tulsa at Professional Development Conferences. Ruth was NALS of Michigan President in 2008-2009 and currently serves as NALS of Michigan Certification Chair. She has held nearly every local office at least once and served on numerous committees. She was named GTALP Legal Professional of the Year in 1996. Ruth was also named the 2014 GTALP Legal Professional of the Year. The best decision she ever made was to attend a chapter meeting in 1987. That evening changed her life forever, both professionally and personally. She now has an entire Association of true, lifelong friends. She believes NALS members are strong, wise, driven, and brave and she adores her "NALS Pals."

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