In preparing to write this book, I experienced quite a bit of anxiety about what
should be included in *Law Office Management for Paralegals*. As a lawyer since
1981 I know quite a bit about law offices; as a professor in the business division
of a community college since 1989, I know a fair amount about management; as
the coordinator of an ABA-approved paralegal program for 20 years, I know quite
a bit about paralegals. But what is the essential combination of this knowledge
and experience that should be taught in a law office management course? I started
at the website of the American Association for Paralegal Education and found
that the organization categorizes core paralegal competencies into nine classifica-
tions: Critical Thinking Skills; Organizational Skills; General Communications
Skills; Legal Research Skills; Legal Writing Skills; Computer Skills, Interviewing
and Investigation Skills; Knowledge of the Paralegal Profession and Ethical
Obligations; and Law Office Management Skills. The description of Law Office
Management Skills reads as follows:

Basic knowledge of the fundamentals of law office management and organization
is essential to the entry-level paralegal. This knowledge can be presented through a
stand-alone course or as part of the general program curriculum. Paralegal educa-
tion programs should be able to demonstrate that their graduates can:

1. Identify and explain basic principles of management;
2. Explain issues relating to employment and promotion of paralegals;
3. Identify and describe the different types of law offices including organiza-
tion, management and personnel structure;
4. Identify and explain the different management, administrative and support
roles performed by lawyers and non-lawyers in the law office;
5. Describe law office billing practices, accounting systems and methods used
for determining cost of legal services;
6. Understand administrative systems used in law practice, including client
relation systems, conflict management, personnel, docket/calendaring sys-
tems, billing systems and risk management systems; and
7. Explain the role of technology in the management and administration of
the law office.

I knew that my book could easily cover those essential seven competencies, but I thought it could do much more. I have studied paralegal program curriculum for years, in connection with developing the program I direct and in connection with visiting other programs seeking ABA approval or re-approval. I know that most paralegal programs have separate Legal Research and Legal Writing classes but many do not have separate classes in Critical Thinking, Organization, General Communication, Management Concepts, Computers and Technology, or Ethics. These skills are so important that they should be incorporated into every class and students should be able to identify and quantify what they are learning, not only to build their confidence, but to enable them to describe what distinguishes them from persons with no formal education in the field. I have, therefore, included assignments related to these competencies throughout the book. The assignments are crucial because they enable students and teachers alike to assess the students’ learning.

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