

The Law Office Post Pandemic (*sort of ...*)

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Published by PACO

November 2, 2021

March 2020 changed the landscape to say the least. The Stay-at-Home Order in Ohio came into the picture, COVID was here, and the world was changing. In our office, the Great Pivot of 2020 started. Overnight we needed to turn into a remote law firm ... fully and for real. The mad rush of figuring out who had access to what, you could work already remotely, who needed what programs, and what was the mail processing plan as it wasn't stopping began.

We had the technology ... but we weren't using it. Zoom! Hello! Zoom blew up. It was being used from Status Conferences to family dinner nights. It became and still remains the main player in this post pandemic time frame. We had to embrace it. Period.

I had attorneys who would NEVER embrace technology who became Zoom experts overnight to keep cases moving through Zoom depositions or Status Conferences. We had to pivot. They had to pivot. 2020 was the year of the pivot.

In March 2020 after we were alerted the Stay-at-Home Order was coming, our office went remote-*ish*. Because we had to process our incoming hard mail, we needed someone everyday to come in and process it. To accomplish this, we rotated our paralegals and they took turns doing so while continuing to work on their cases. They were only in the office to process mail and then finished their remainder of their days remotely at home.

Aside from mail, the only other thing that needed to be done in the office would be preparation of hard materials such as if any expert wanted hard copies of medical records in a case. The vast majority of tasks can be done remotely and through out 2020 pivot we learned this more and more. Whether we were connected via VPN access or SplashTop app access, everyone had a way to access the case files to keep working cases and moving cases along the best we could. Technology became our best friend or worst enemy on any given day. We needed it more than ever.

So, it is now November 2021, we are in the COVID vaccine era with some level of restrictions in Columbus still. The biggest and still in place pivot from the pandemic in our office is the working from home flexibility. We can still be as productive, if not more productive now, by continuing to work from home. This benefit of flexibility is huge in the legal world. As a paralegal with over 20 plus years in the legal world, I would have never thought working from home would ever be an option ... ever.

So, what does the office look like today ... using my office as an example, we came back into the office full-time at the beginning of June 2020. We did have some staff remain remote due to continued health concerns. Our office has always had the working from home option; however, before COVID, it was much stricter on when it could be used. After we came back, I believe the firm continued to pivot and accept the working from home option more as needed for the employees. During our stay-at-home time, our attorneys saw our staff can remain productive if not more productive without being in the office.

Flexibility in my office has always been a benefit that I treasured. Our working from home option helps with covering sick kids, water heater installations, car issues, etc. Our attorneys know the work will get done whether I'm sitting in my office or sitting at Honda Marysville waiting for the CRV's oil change to be done.

Pandemic to pivot with increased remote working and vast tech understanding ... the year was 2020.