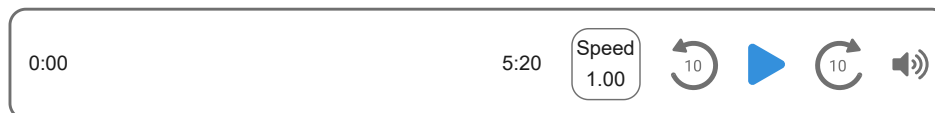


Cheri Nordstrom: Nine ways paralegals can use AI to aid attorneys at trial

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Most research on artificial intelligence focuses on general legal applications, but very little attention is devoted to how paralegals can use AI. Paralegals don't just prepare support materials; they transform the case into a sharper, more compelling presentation. This often-neglected but critical area, when applied correctly, will help the attorney shine at trial.

The end result is a commanding courtroom presence that juries don't just *see* but will *feel*. Here are nine trial-focused ways paralegals can use AI to make their attorneys and their cases stand out.

1. Turning mountains of records into instant, searchable intelligence

One of the biggest time-savers has been in reviewing and documenting medical records, employment files, deposition transcripts, police reports and other documents. The very first time I ever used Chat GPT was to review a large volume of medical records, and I couldn't believe how quickly it was able to assess the documents. I've also been able to use AI to help me create:

- Chronologies
- Detailed deposition summaries
- Lists of potential inconsistencies
- Key admissions
- Explanations of technical or medical terminology

2. Assisting with voir dire preparation

AI can help generate ideas for voir dire by analyzing case themes, verdict data and publicly available information. This may help identify:

- Potential juror attitudes
- Follow-up questions
- Areas where bias may exist

- Themes that could resonate with a jury panel

3. Creating case-winning timelines and visuals in minutes

Jurors tend to think in pictures. Rather than spending long hours on developing trial exhibits, paralegals can create polished timelines, annotated medical images, accident diagrams and simplified process explanations in a fraction of the time by using AI. These visuals make the attorney's opening clearer, the expert testimony more digestible and the closing argument more memorable. When the demonstratives look professional, the lawyer looks prepared and persuasive.

4. Developing witness preparation materials

I've found that preparing witnesses can be one of the most time-consuming and neglected aspects of trial preparation. AI can generate sample cross-examination questions based on case materials, including potential impeachment areas and likely lines of questioning from opposing counsel.

Paralegals also can incorporate structured witness-preparation methods, including the AI witness preparation model developed by Dr. Rodney Nordstrom and described in an article in the March 26 issue of this newspaper.

5. Identifying themes and patterns

AI can analyze the entire case file and identify recurring themes, contradictions and emotional anchors in minutes. Paralegals can use these insights to help attorneys refine opening statements, closing arguments, witness order and exhibit order.

One of the biggest advantages of using AI is crafting a clear and consistent case narrative that makes important information easier for jurors to understand and remember.

6. Assisting with demand packages and mediation briefs

AI can help organize and prioritize information used in settlement and mediation materials, including:

- Medical summaries
- Damages calculations
- Liability analysis
- Day-in-the life videos
- Comparable verdict research

This can reduce drafting time and allow attorneys to focus on strategy and negotiation.

7. Supporting expert witness preparation

Paralegals can use AI to summarize expert reports, compare opinions across experts and identify potential gaps or inconsistencies, as well as generate discussion points for preparation sessions. These tools can help legal teams prepare more effectively for expert depositions and trial testimony.

8. Organizing exhibits and trial materials

In my experience, a lot of time was being devoted to reviewing and assembling trial exhibits. AI-powered document management systems can help categorize and tag exhibits by issue, witness or subject matter in much less time. This makes it easier to quickly locate:

- Deposition excerpts
- Medical records
- Demonstrative exhibits
- Impeachment materials
- Chronologies

Effective organization can save valuable time both before and during trial.

9. Drafting first-pass motions, briefs and jury instructions

AI can produce structured first drafts of motions in limine, trial briefs and jury instructions. This dramatically accelerates the pretrial pleading phase and gives the trial team more time. That gives the attorney an opportunity to refine arguments rather than generate them from scratch.

The bottom line

Artificial intelligence is best viewed as a tool, not a replacement for the experience, judgment and attention to detail that skilled paralegals bring to every case. When used appropriately, AI can help paralegals manage information more efficiently and contribute to a stronger overall litigation strategy, making both the paralegal and attorney shine. •

Nordstrom has 25 years of experience as a paralegal.