

Q-STUDY No. 5

MARIANA: Paralegal/Administrative Assistant

“Breathing life into stagnant files.”

Mariana was a paralegal working for a century-old US law firm with offices in several countries. Over the decades as cases were finalized, relevant files and exhibits were dispatched to a storeroom in the home office where, as the need arose, they were sought out for review. This was an ongoing need that occurred more often than one might think.

At the time of her accomplishment, Mariana had been with the firm for several years. The firm, knowing the high quality of her work, assigned her the job of copying, digitizing, converting, and/or photographing all of the content that had become the ‘dead file’ storage center. The space required to house all this stuff had, over time, expanded to take up two floors of the firm’s corporate office tower.

Mariana was provided with a budget to hire a team of six temp workers and acquire the equipment needed to complete the project.

In one year, Mariana was able to hand over the keys to physical master files and provide the firm with successful digital access to all the files that lawyers, clerks, and secretaries had previously physically sought out, wasting valuable time and resources.

Mariana’s QTNT

During her research for this achievement, Mariana spoke with the firm’s CFO who provided her with an average (at the time) staff-hour rate of \$400 per hour. The CFO also told her that the company had seen approximately 300 staff hours saved weekly due to the efficiencies of her system. At the time of this accomplishment, Mariana’s annual salary was \$48,000. We now have enough information to determine Mariana’s QTNT for this one event.

The numbers we have to work with:

- **\$400 per staff-hour saved due to the benefits of online access to what had previously been physical files**
- **300 staff-hours weekly ‘returned’ to the firm**
- **\$400 savings x 300 staff-hours = \$120,000 in weekly savings**
- **\$120,000 x 52 weeks per year = \$6,240,000 per year in savings**

Total Savings = \$6,240,000
Mariana’s salary = \$48,000 = 130

Mariana’s QTNT for this year of performance = 130

From the firm's point of view, all costs would be taken into account to come up with their own cost/ savings benefit. But with the CFO having provided Mariana with an hourly benefit to the company, Mariana can be proud of her achievement and defend her QTNT as stated.

There are other wins associated with Mariana's work. Her manager(s) would have also recognized that she:

- Had the leadership skills necessary to manage a team of 6 temps. There is no question that she would have had to deal with the transitory nature of her staff and deal with the turnover and the necessary training involved to get each replacement up to speed.
- Was attentive to detail.
- Was knowledgeable of the lingo and legal cataloging.
- Was knowledgeable of the digital processes and the associated software.
- Made previously difficult to access archival data reliably retrievable.
- Created savings and the potential to generate new revenue due to the recovery of 15,600 work-hours (300 hrs/week x 52 weeks)
- Delivered outstanding value in return for her pay.

Here is how Mariana would recount this accomplishment when given the opportunity to speak about it.

"This project took one year and a team of six, temporary, full-time employees to complete. Besides managing the team, I was responsible for the digital transference of all paper and microfiche files, including the photography, identification, and storage of all physical evidence accumulated by the law firm over the decades.

Based on an average rate of \$400 per staff-hour (rate provided by CFO), I saved the firm \$120,000 per week (based on the reduction of an average of 300 staff-hours of weekly access to the historical files by staff x \$400) or \$6,240,000 annually (\$120,000 x 52 weeks). This project came in on time and budget."

Undoubtedly, she would be closely questioned over details such as the allotted budget, how much was spent on temps, equipment, software, IT support, implementation, etc. She would be asked about what difficulties or snags she encountered and how she resolved those problems, turning the bad and the ugly into gold.

