



IAPI NEWSLETTER

IOWA ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

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President's Message By Delbert King

Your elected board and appointed regional

directors have had two meetings since our conference and I am happy to report that things are going along very well in the planning of our next conference. The 2009 conference will be held July 23 and 24 at the Holiday Inn, 4800 Merle Hay Road, Urbandale. It is never too early to call and reserve your rooms. Be sure to mention you are attending the IAPI conference for special room rates.

Our next board meeting will be held on Friday, February 13, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the conference site. As always, all members are invited to attend.

There has been some discussion about not being able to obtain Iowa drivers license photos by e-mail. This issue has been brought to the attention of Iowa Inter Active and the Iowa DOT. Iowa Inter Active can do nothing about the situation unless the Iowa DOT allows them to. So far, the DOT has not been receptive. There is not much the IAPI can do to rectify the problem. Some of the board members are going to contact their state elected officials and at least bring this to their attention. If you know a state senator or representative, give them a call or drop them a note to see if they can help.

Jeff Marlin, our editor, has asked that any member who wants, can submit an article about themselves to be printed in our newsletter.

What's Inside...

Page 2	IAPI Officers, Advertising
Page 4	Article "Marketing in a Recession"
Page 5	NCISS Information
Page 6-7	Article "Selling your PI Business"
Page 8-10	Article "Investigative Myths..."
Page 11	Article "Why offer Process Serving"
Page 12	PI Profile - Delbert King
Page 12-13	PI Buzz
Page 14	New IAPI Members, Merlin Info.

Advertisers

Page 3	Merlin
Page 14	Legal Technology Services
Page 15	PI Magazine
Page 15	NCISS
Page 16	IRB Search
Page 16	BRB Publications

IAPI Web Advertisers

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Marketing in a Recession? YES!

Is the current tough market the right time to be slashing your advertising budget? Not if you want your business to survive the economic downturn and lay the groundwork to thrive when the economy improves! Tough times may actually provide us our best opportunity to reach out to our customers with little or no competition because so many of our competitors are doing just the opposite of that in an attempt to save money.

During good times everyone has the money (and bravery) to seek out clients, creating an atmosphere of extreme competition where reaching the consumer with your message proves to be exceedingly difficult. NOW is the time to have faith in your product or service, to reach out to your customers and to secure your success now and into the future. And there are easy and cost effective ways of doing so.

There are some simple things that you can do. Everyone knows about the internet, but not everyone knows the free ways to get exposure on the internet. You can write an article about your industry, or a product, and submit it to one of the many sites that accept them. At the end of your article, you mention your business and have a link to your website. Each site has it's guidelines on how the articles are to be written, so make sure to follow them. This will help establish you as a leader in your industry as long as the information you share is helpful and not self-promoting.

Guerilla marketing is great in slow time. Have some flyers or postcards made. One of your employees or friends can design it or you can find an affordable place to do it for you. During your slow time, have your employees go to a busy area and hand them out. Now you are putting your message directly into the hands of prospective customers. Make sure you have an attractive offer that will entice people to visit your business. Obviously, this is mainly for businesses with a store front, but you can do guerilla marketing online as well.

Guerilla marketing is done differently online. With blogs and social networking sites, there are opportunities to market your business in a different setting. You can create blogs and check the response you get from each entry which can help you check what the market is interested in at any given time. Or you can find blogs that have an issue that your company can help with. Respond to the blog with your company information. You can set up an account with a social networking site, giving more information about your business and connecting to other businesses to network and exchanges leads.

Cross promote with other businesses, in other ways. If you're feeling the pinch of the economy, most likely other businesses in your area/industry are feeling it as well. Find other businesses that don't compete with yours and see about exchanging some flyers or a banner promoting each other's business. Or if your business is online, do a link exchange with other businesses. Do not over due the link exchange or Google may lower your organic search results. Be selective in who you work with both online and in the brick and mortar world.

Press Releases can be a very effective way to bring attention to your business. If you have something that impacts the community, then you can have someone write a press release for you. If you hire someone to do it for you, make sure they know how to write and distribute it. Again, remember the topic must be something that impacts the community and not just a self-serving piece promoting your business.

These are just some of the ideas that will help your business grow in any economy. There are plenty of marketing options out there. You just need to find the ones that work for you.

About the Author: Rob Bedell is an expert in the media industry and has worked in the industry for over 15 years. He has worked with some of the largest media companies in the world, Tribune and Knight-Ridder, as well as helping restructure and rebuild other companies in the Los Angeles, CA Metropolitan area. He now owns a marketing company that helps small to medium sized business, making sure that their marketing pays them back. www.bedellmediaconsulting.com.

NCISS' POSITION ON HANDLING LOCATE REQUESTS

"A member shall, prior to providing a person any personally identifying or location information of an individual, conduct appropriate due diligence to ensure that the person has a legitimate business or legal interest in obtaining that information. When such due diligence is not possible or appropriate, or if the person appears to not have a legal or business interest, the person shall be informed that their contact information will be provided to the subject they are seeking and the personal identifying information of the subject they are seeking will only be provided to the person if that party consents."

NCISS IS YOUR VOICE IN WASHINGTON D.C.

Second Amendment

June 2008 – NCISS, along with several other state investigative and security associations, joined forces to file an “industry” amicus brief in support of the security guard Dick Heller’s claim before The Supreme Court of the United States, District of Columbia, et al. The U. S. Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2008 that Americans have a right to own guns for self-defense and hunting, the justices' first major pronouncement on gun rights in U.S. history. The court's 5-4 ruling struck down the District of Columbia's 32-year-old ban on handguns as incompatible with gun rights under the Second Amendment.

Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)

As amended in 1996, the FCRA required employers to obtain permission from a subject-employee to investigate that employee. If adverse action was taken against that employee, the employer was then required to provide that same investigative report to the employee. NCISS’s diligent work successfully effected change to correct the unintended consequences in the FCRA affecting workplace investigations.

Drivers Privacy Protection Act (DPPA)

The DPPA was the first time the term “private investigator” was mentioned in federal law. It left it up to the individual states to determine whether private investigators were to be a “legitimate business exemption”. NCISS stalwarts Bruce Hulme and Ed McClain testified and helped draft the DPPA language.

Social Security Numbers

Currently bills are pending before the U. S. Congress and Senate to remove the social security number as a unique identifier. Similar language to the current bills has been introduced the last several years and we anticipate it will be introduced again. So far, NCISS has been successful in staving off this restrictive action.

Pretext

NCISS is protecting your right to use pretexts, a recognized investigative tool for lawful purposes. Without continual monitoring privacy advocates and Congress will seek to ban the use of any pretense which would then undermine undercover investigations, shopping services and various means of locating individuals.

NCISS is the sole nationwide organization dedicated to advancing and protecting interests of contract private security practitioners and professional private investigators. The business interests of NCISS members encompass the employment of more than 600,000 private investigators, private security personnel, including security officers, “private police” and other private sector protection professionals. NCISS speaks up for you in Washington, D. C.

Monitoring legislation has become a matter of survival. Don’t let Congress take away the tools of your trade! Be part of the organization that stands up for you.

Join NCISS.

Posted September 30
by ServeNow.com Staff

How to prepare your process serving or PI business for sale or acquisition.

Lately it seems like more and more companies are appearing out of nowhere to provide legal services on a regional or national level. However, these companies did not start covering large areas overnight. Many of these brands have been built through carefully planned acquisitions – or one company buying at least half the assets of another company. If your exit strategy or retirement plan includes selling your business, there are several things you can do to prepare your company for sale.

Realize Your Worth

First of all, recognize your value. Identify strategic advantages you have over local competition that would be of interest to potential buyers. What makes you stand out? Are you known for being able to complete the toughest jobs that no one else can? Perhaps your customer service has a reputation for being impeccable. Recognize and emphasize your company's strengths. By setting yourself apart from the local competition, you increase your value. Once you know your strengths, think of how these would help someone acquiring you. Know the goals of potential buyers and determine how your company would help them meet these objectives. Focus on increasing your value to potential buyers by being able to meet a need they already have.

It is not just important to recognize your strengths, but also your weaknesses. Once you determine what your weaknesses are, develop a strategy to improve upon them. Also determine how being acquired can turn your weaknesses into strengths. Perhaps you simply do not have the man power to handle the amount of work you are offered a month. By showing a potential buyer how your already quality business would improve under an acquisition, you once again increase your value.

Get Your Name Out

Once you have identified what makes you unique and why that is valuable, market yourself. Join local, state and national associations for your industry. Attend their meetings and conferences to meet other people within your industry and begin to network. Prepare an "elevator speech," two to three minutes of talking points on what your company does and what sets you apart. Don't be afraid to talk to people. They are at networking events to do just that – network. Follow up afterward with important contacts you made and work to establish and maintain business relationships within your industry. Making yourself and your company known in your industry puts you on the radar of potential buyers that might want to expand. Do not limit yourself to simply networking in person. Join online professional networking sites such as [LinkedIn](#) or industry specific message boards such as Yahoo! Groups for [process servers](#) or [private investigators](#) to further make yourself known in your industry.

Make sure you network locally as well. Join your Chamber of Commerce or attend networking events geared towards the legal communities. Many universities sponsor events that are open to the community, including alumni and networking events. Spend a couple of days going by attorneys' offices and introducing your company to the legal support staff – they are the ones who normally decide which process servers and private investigators to hire. If there's one company that most people tend to use, introduce yourself to the owner of that company. Develop local professional relationships and brand yourself to increase name recognition.

Be Ready From the Inside Out

Remember that name recognition means nothing without having a good reputation. Having a good local reputation will make your company more attractive to potential buyers. To develop a good reputation, you need to consistently provide two things: quality work and exceptional customer service. When you are a smaller company, it is easier to provide quality customer service based on the personal relationships you have been cultivating. Make sure you have a well-trained, competent friendly staff that can run your business in a way that you find satisfactory, even when you are not around. Realize that once a company is acquired it is customary for the previous owner to stay with the new company for a specified period of time. After that, it is vital that your staff is able to continue running the company in a way that would make you proud. Strong employees and qualified managers are essential during this transition. Robert Hild, CEO of Axzas Legal Support Provider, seconds this. He warns “the price [of sale] will be heavily discounted and [it will be] very difficult to sell if the business is too dependent on the owner.” Make sure you prepare an employee handbook that outlines already-written and unwritten expectations of your employees.

Once you have developed a name for yourself, be sure that your company is internally ready to be bought. These preparations will ideally begin a year in advance. It is vital that you have your records and your finances in order. Have a clear understanding of the profit margin of your company, and know how much the company is monetarily worth. Don't forget to include assets such as buildings, vehicles, or equipment. Hild recommends removing any unnecessary expenses (including ineffective employees) to maximize revenue before sale. Maintain detailed financial records, and be sure to keep them for at least seven years (The IRS has [more information](#) about keeping and saving financial records). While seven years may seem like a long time, it is important to be able to provide a prospective buyer a full financial history. Don't just organize your financial records. Also create reports based off these records that show company growth and projected growth. Make it easy for prospective buyers to see what they would get by buying your company. In addition to creating and maintaining detailed financial records, you also need to keep detailed records of current jobs. It is also important to maintain an archive of completed jobs. Keep these records at least as long as you are keeping the financial records that are associated with them. As with financial records, create reports showing company growth and projected growth. Having organized records and detailed reports of both current and past jobs will make it easier for a large company to see how successful your company actually is. It will also make it easier for a potential buyer to actually take over the management aspect of your business if a sale goes through.

Jimmie Mesis, editor of PI Magazine, is familiar with both sides of the acquisition process. Mesis stresses that, “[w]hen people invest in buying a company, they want to buy a business, not a job!” Make sure that your company will continue to run as a quality business, without creating a slew of new work for potential buyers.

Another way to internally prepare your company for acquisition is to make sure you are up to date technologically. Have a professional and maintained website. Use software programs designed for businesses to track your current jobs, keep your books, and organize your records. Make sure that the way your business is run will either integrate nicely with other methods or is easily replicated.

Know Your “No”

Before you sell your company, it is important to know what your company is worth. Many factors go into determining the value of a company and the value to a buyer. The obvious factors include your total gross revenue, your total expenses, and the assets included in the sale. As mentioned earlier, factors that are not so obvious include how well the office runs without you, the company's reputation, and the quality and effectiveness of your website. Know your “No Number,” or the absolute lowest price for which you are willing to sell your company. Be prepared to say “No” to any offer lower than your “No Number.” On the same note, have an “Absolutely Number.” This is the price (or above) that you are absolutely willing to sell your company for. Once you have determined what these numbers are, keep them to yourself! Revealing these numbers to potential buyers can derail the negotiation process.

With hard work and a little luck, a potential buyer will see the value of acquiring your company. In the meantime, continue to grow your business and establish your name and reputation. Who knows? Maybe in the end you will find yourself starting to acquire businesses of your own.

Investigative Myths, Legends and Half-Truths
vs.
THE TOTALITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES

By
Terry W. Duncan, CFI, SCLA, AIC, FCLA, President
Central States Fire Investigations, Inc.

Before we begin this subject, a little of my background in insurance investigation in general and fire investigation in particular, would seem appropriate to assist the reader in understanding my views regarding these matters.

I worked nine years in a city police department, doing investigations, traffic, dog calls and just about everything else there was to do as a police officer in a town of eight thousand.

I then went to work for an insurance company in central Iowa and investigated fire, theft and explosion losses for eight years. This job included origin and cause, as well as what is considered "SIU" work, the courthouse and financial checks, etc.

During a restructure of the company, I moved to the Home Office and learned property claims and coverage issues as the law interprets them. I worked in this position for another seven years, leaving to return to fire investigation.

After a short stint with a private vendor, I organized my own investigation company. These are the experiences that affect my views on fire investigation and insurance investigation in general. I also worked five years for another Iowa based insurance carrier conducting fire and explosion investigation, as well as casualty claims and theft losses. Now let's get to the topic of this paper.

The longer I am involved in the fire investigation field, the more I hear new theories and witness the "debunking" of the old. I am all for change. Learning from past mistakes is one of the ways we avoid repeating them, though history doesn't always reflect this learning experience.

When I read trade magazines, I am taken with all of the heated arguments between "scientists" such as electrical and mechanical engineers and chemists. The "hottest" arguments seem to revolve monotonously around the "true" meaning of electrical arcing, Auger wire bead analysis, wire "sleeving", concrete spalling and the relative merits of using trained dogs for accelerant detection and mechanical "sniffers" for the same purpose.

Before we deal with each of these subjects, let me assure you of what I am NOT:

I am NOT a chemist. I am Not an electrical engineer. I am NOT a mechanical engineer.

So what am I doing writing an article that will be read by such educated professionals as referenced above? I am writing to state what I believe many fire investigators and experienced claims adjusters see, feel and encounter on a daily basis, that are not graduates of one or more of the disciplines listed.

There have been recent arguments as to whether fire investigation is "junk science" or some type of "voodoo". There has even been a recent federal court ruling that (if I am interpreting it correctly), would require the fire investigator to testify only to those events or occurrences that he or she can tie to a specific, validated, scientific test.

On the surface, this sounds great. Finally, we'll be rid of those people calling themselves investigators that aren't scientists themselves, or are not aware of every scientific test that might pertain to a fire investigation and the ultimate determination of origin and cause.

Just imagine! There will be no more guessing or arguments of opposing experts because the case is made up of only proven, scientific fact! And the best part is yet to come! Rarely would an insurer need to hire their own expert. Since the two experts would be using only tried and true scientific tests and facts in their testimony as to the origin and cause of the loss and since they subscribe to the same tried and true scientific facts, there is no point to argue. What a time and money-saver!

Of course, scientists and engineers of various disciplines will not agree. They will disagree on the "interpretation" of the evidence at the fire scene. How then, are engineers any different than your ordinary fire investigator?

Engineers have earned one or more degrees in a particular specialty. An engineer should be used for that specialty only. Allowing the average engineer to give opinions outside their area of expertise, or base all or most of their conclusions on one or two "facts" within their area of expertise is asking for trouble.

No competent fire investigator would take one piece of evidence from most fire scenes and base all of their origin and cause conclusions on that limited information.

This brings me to the point where we can talk about the "myths" of fire investigation.

Let's deal with electrical arcing evidence and Auger wire bead analysis. Proponents of the bead analysis theory believe that the chemical contents of a copper wire bead at the time the copper melts and forms the bead, can provide the fire investigator with a "snapshot" picture of what the environment was like around the bead at the time it melted. If this is true, it then follows that one could tell whether the bead was formed prior to fire development in the area and was thus the cause of the fire, or whether the arcing that caused the bead was also the cause of the fire.

This is a prime example of looking at only one small piece of evidence to reach the ultimate conclusion as to what caused the fire or where it originated.

Since I am not an engineer, I can not pass judgment on those who believe in this theory. Neither can I say that it works. What I can say is that arcing of wires in a fire scene can be indicative of the direction of fire travel and may be evidence of where the fire originated, **IF OTHER EVIDENCE AT THE SCENE SUPPORTS SUCH A CONCLUSION**. The other potential evidence includes burn patterns, ventilation, other wire damage, circuit protection, the type of wire and whether it was in metal conduit, etc. This list is nearly endless. Maybe we begin to see why the first tenet of fire investigation should be: **Thou shall examine all of the circumstances of the loss and physical evidence at the loss site prior to rendering an opinion as to the origin and cause of the loss.**

Fire investigators are a lot like other people, they tend to feel that "if it walks like a duck, it quacks like a duck", well, you know the rest. Most of the time, this method of analysis works fine. However, fire scenes are rarely that simple. There are too many variables acting on each other, at the same time, to simplify evidence in this manner.

Let's look at concrete spalling for example. (Spalling is an eruption of the surface of the concrete, as in chipping the surface.) For many years, fire investigators believed concrete spalling was likely evidence of the presence of liquid accelerant, and hence possibly an incendiary fire.

Not long ago, it was decided that this theory should be "debunked". The baby was thrown out with the bath water. That's the problem with "debunking". Once "debunked", there never seems to be any middle ground. Scientists could not duplicate in the lab, circumstances under which a liquid accelerant visibly caused spalling. No "legitimate" fire investigator would now use concrete spalling as one indicator of the presence of liquid accelerant.

I have a different view as you can imagine. I am extremely skeptical of comparing laboratory tests to the environment of a fire scene. Again, there are so many variables involved in the typical fire that it is unlikely that anyone could duplicate that environment precisely. The "debunkers" would say that the replication was close enough and there have been many tests. These same scientists would say to you in a different setting, that duplication or replication is never "close enough". It must be exact to have scientific validity. Thank God Jonas Saulk never said to his lab assistants "close enough" when he was developing the polio vaccine, or that none of the Space Shuttle pilots heard their engineers say during lift-off, "oh well, that's close enough"! You get the drift.

What can and should be said about concrete spalling is that there are many environments that can be conducive to concrete spalling. Spraying cold water from a fire hose on hot concrete can cause it to spall. Salts and other chemicals cause spalling. Radiant heat from a fire on the interior of a metal building can cause the aggregate to expand at different rates, causing spalling. The same radiant heat can raise the temperature of the concrete to the point that the moisture in the concrete turns to steam and spalls the surface of the concrete.

Rather than subscribe to a particular theory, I tend to view the remnants of the scene and the associated damage. If the concrete spalling is present only in doorways and leads from one entrance door to another, I give it close scrutiny. What would cause the concrete to spall in such a peculiar manner, while leaving the remainder of the concrete pad (that was exposed to the same heat and extinguishment efforts) undamaged? A very good question, that! I've never heard or read it explained by any of the "debunkers".

One possible explanation is that a path is worn in the concrete between the doors, thus making the surface of the concrete in that area more susceptible to spalling. The investigator must then find out the age of the building, its history of usage, and whether there is any reason to believe a footpath was worn in the floor. Is there any other spalling in the area or in other parts of the building?

Remember that the **totality of the circumstances** must be examined before rendering an opinion as to the origin and cause of the fire. It's simply too easy to accept that liquid accelerant can not cause concrete spalling. You've all been to a fire where there were motor vehicles in the garage. Didn't you find concrete spalling under the gas tank area?

Once again, the "debunkers" would say that this isn't the same as using gasoline as an accelerant at a fire scene. After all, there is a continuous supply of gas flowing from the tank for an extended period of time. To this, I would use the "debunkers" own theory against them. The reason liquid accelerant is not evidence of concrete spalling is that the vapors from the liquid burn, and not the liquid. The fire is then on the surface of the pool of accelerant and the liquid accelerant acts as an insulator to the concrete. If this is so, then concrete under gas tanks should not be spalled, since the area is so protected by the volume of gasoline!

Anyone that has worked a fire scene where petroleum products were stored can see that the petroleum products do cause the concrete to spall. Whether due to accelerant, concrete spalling depends on many factors that have not been duplicated in a laboratory setting. These factors would include radiant heat in the specific area of the accelerant, age and porosity of the concrete, usage of the concrete, the type of construction surrounding the concrete, the type of crust or finish of the concrete during construction, the type of aggregate used in the concrete, etc. The list is not all-inclusive.

And finally, if you believe that the liquid pool of accelerant on the concrete surface continues to insulate the concrete from high temperatures, then you could try a test of your own. **I do not recommend this test. It can be dangerous and cause burns to your hands.** The reason I mention it is that while filling a Zippo-type lighter, I inadvertently spilled lighter fluid on my hand. As a fool would do, I figured the fluid had evaporated and it was safe to light the lighter. I was surprised to find that the fuel had not evaporated. It didn't burn me so I put a little in the palm of my hand. I ignited it. It didn't burn me, at least at ignition. As the fuel vapor continued to burn, and the liquid was nearly consumed, my hand was burned significantly. An experiment performed in a different manner is recommended!

Imagine pouring this type of fuel on porous concrete and allowing it to soak in for a minute or two while other preparations are being made. Then a trailer is ignited and the liquid that has not been soaked up by the concrete vaporizes and burns. The more of the liquid burned, the hotter the concrete will get. Remember the gas tank?

Perhaps this is the reason that while using various laboratories, my success rate for finding accelerant in concrete samples is about 50%!

Concrete is usually very porous, unless it has been sealed. It retains the accelerant longer than wood or most other products. Please keep in mind that I did not take these samples where widespread spalling had occurred, nor did I take samples in areas where accelerant was known to be stored or used on a regular basis.

I remove samples from what I term "pattern spalling". Pattern spalling is just as I spoke of earlier. Widespread spalling is not present, the spalled area(s) seem to form a logical pattern between entrances and exits, there is no storage or usage of such accelerant near the area, and the totality of the circumstances surrounding the fire scene evidence and the circumstances surrounding the fire in general did not support accidental spalling of the concrete.

Well, enough about spalling. The next "partially debunked" theory is that "sleeving" of the insulation on a wire conductor is evidence that the wire heated independently of the fire surrounding it, probably due to an overload. Sleeving is generally understood to mean that the insulation moves freely up and down the wire, indicating that the conductor was hot and separated from the insulation.

This theory is so dependent on a variety of factors that it is next to useless. See, once in a while I do agree with someone else!

Whether sleeving occurs is dependent on the following: type of conductor, the type of insulation, the location of the conductor at the time of the fire, evidence of an excessive load that would create heat through the conductor, the type and size of the circuit protection devices or the lack of them and the intensity of the fire where the conductor was located.

Some of the older wiring with paper inside and outer composition insulation sleeves easily. As a matter of fact, one can pull the wire out of the insulation whether there has been any fire or not!

Sleeving, in my opinion, is rarely proof in and of itself that the conductor was overheated and caused the fire. Again, the totality of the circumstances must be taken into consideration.

We come now to the more recent phenomena of accelerant sniffing canines. I absolutely believe that dogs can be trained to find a variety of odors. These include drug residue, bomb materials, and dead bodies and live ones. They certainly can be trained to find petroleum based liquid accelerant.

However, the investigator and claims personnel must realize as most dog handlers do, that the dog is used as one part of the investigation. Simply because a dog finds a lab-verified accelerant does not mean that there isn't a perfectly rational reason the accelerant material should be located in that area.

In addition, personnel should be aware that not all dogs are trained on all accelerant types. It would be nearly impossible to do so. What if an arsonist used an accelerant the dog was not trained on? The investigator would then be forced to use all of the circumstances and evidence to determine the origin and cause of the fire. This is what he or she should be doing anyway.

Just as there are differences in the levels of competency among investigators and engineers, there are the same types of differences in the dog trainer, handler and the dog. Make sure you are using a "veteran". Use the evidence the dog gives you as one part of the total evidence needed to determine the origin and cause of the fire. I own and use an accelerant detection K-9.

As for electronic "sniffers", I have used several brands and I have found that those using a dual sensor arrangement are more discriminating against the contamination found at most fire scenes. Once again, they should only be used as a tool to find the best place to take a sample. If it doesn't "hit", this should not be the sole determinate that there was no accelerant present. Look to the burn patterns and other evidence and circumstances to verify the cause of loss.

The electronic devices look nice at the scene, but have less value than a good shovel and broom for finding the cause of a fire.

Lastly, there are no quick fixes or easy ways out of working a fire scene to a successful conclusion. I define a successful conclusion as "finding the true cause of the fire using all of the evidence available".

The "debunkers" serve a useful purpose as well. They cause us to constantly re-examine our methods and beliefs.

Please remember. Most important is taking in all of the information in order to reach your conclusion. If you have done so, you've done the best job anyone can do.

Why Offer Process Serving?

There's a movement in investigation toward incorporating process serving into investigation businesses and for good reason. According to a poll in the PInow.com Yahoo! Group, 94 percent of investigators are also process servers. The benefits of adding this service are numerous. You can become a one-stop-shop for your existing customers, expand your business and gain revenue during slow periods.

Become a One-Stop-Shop

As an investigator, you are already serving the customers who are in need of process servers. Offer them a full suite of legal support or investigative services, to ensure you aren't leaving money on the table. If you have an established customer base, your clients already trust you and know that you are reliable. Don't let someone else garner their additional business.

If you are not offering process serving, you may not be serving all of your clients' needs. Not only can you save clients time by offering multiple services, but you are making their lives simpler by having to work with one less vendor. This is a win-win situation for both you and your clients.

Use Process Serving to Grow your PI Business

Process serving is a great way to get your foot in the door with law firms, corporations and other prospective clients that may also need investigators. It is much easier to ask a potential client for a \$60 process service job than asking thousands for an investigation retainer. Once you have shown your competence with service of process and earned the clients' trust, you can upsell your bigger ticket investigation services. Not only can process serving help you acquire more clients, it is quite common for a serve to turn into a investigation case if the subject is avoiding service and the client wants the person served at any cost. Cases like this may require a skip trace, surveillance and plenty of due diligence.

Gain Revenue During Slow Periods

Lately, the media outlets have been flaunting the "R" word. Each has a different outlook on when a recession is coming, how long it will last and what you can do to be ready. One constant in the economic future is that the legal process must go on. This includes service of process, which will always need to be rendered. Some may even say that process serving may be "recession-proof."

Increased litigation due to bankruptcy, foreclosures and debt collection will make process serving in high demand during economic downturns.

Additionally, when the investigation side of your business is slow, process serving is a great way to keep your investigators busy. Process serving can provide consistent, ongoing monthly revenue. You already have many of the skills necessary to succeed in process serving, and the potential clients at your fingertips. If you are able to build a network of trusted servers, you can increase your business immensely.

By positioning yourself as a "one-stop-shop" for lawyers and other legal professionals you can expand your business and gain revenue during slow months. Adding process service to your investigation business can have a tremendous impact on your bottom line. To get started, you should contact your state to learn about the licensing requirements. Most states do not have stringent requirements to serve process.

Posted August 20
by ServeNow.com Staff

Delbert L. King Profile
King & Associates, LLC

Prior to starting my business I served as a police officer in Urbandale and my hometown of Centerville for 34 years. During my career in Urbandale I served as both the Uniform Patrol Commander and the Criminal Investigations Commander. I retired in 2002 and decided to open my own PI business. I specialize in criminal defense cases but also do civil cases as well in addition to process serving. My passion in my off hours has always been messing around with old classic cars. My wife and I recently became "empty nesters" when our youngest of 4 children went off to college. We like to travel when time permits. I have served the Iowa Association of Private Investigators as Secretary, Vice President and currently as President since becoming a member in 2002. I find it refreshing to work with the dedicated office holders of this association. They are a very dedicated group of people. I would like to see more members get involved in this wonderful organization.

PI BUZZ

~ University Campus Crime Maps ~

If you subscribe to PI *buzz* Alert you may have seen the link I included to [UCrime](#), a crime information mapping site of recent crime incidents at universities. Search by address or date (2008 only) to see reported crimes plotted on a map, with icons distinguishing the type of incident. No names are listed and it's not clear what the source is for the data, but this may still be useful if you need a snapshot of the criminal activity on any one of about 100 schools.

A site that may be a sister site, [SpotCrime](#) provides the same type of interactive mapping for cities and counties.

There are also crime logs and mapping of crimes at the Web sites of universities, university public safety departments and newspapers. The Morehead State University Police Web site has logs of incidents to 2004. This Texas college newspaper has put together a map of campus crimes, while this major daily paper only shows crimes perpetrated in the surrounding community in which students of the University at Albany were involved. A site calling itself UMichCrime gets data from the University Of Michigan Department Of Public Safety then plots it on a map. Most of the data on these sites are not retained for more than a few years; the Case Western Reserve crime mapping is an exception, extending to 2000. The Boulder Police Department at the University of Colorado plots recent crime incidents on an interactive map.

Find more campus crime maps searching for the words or phrases in the URL: crimemap, map or crime. If you don't have a specific school in mind try variations on a search query: inurl:crimemap site:edu or campus inurl:map intitle:crime.

<http://ucrime.com/>

<http://www.spotcrime.com/>

~ Find Records of Disciplined Attorneys ~

Attorney disciplinary records are organized on the state level and, if online, are usually found at the state bar or state court. The court division that is responsible for investigating attorney misconduct may be called “Office of Disciplinary Counsel”, “Disciplinary Board” or “Disciplinary Commission”. And that’s just one of the many reasons why you should subscribe to a public records directory. [CourtPort](#) is one that’s tailored for the legal community.

A [directory of lawyer disciplinary agencies](#) can be found at the American Bar Association site. Some of these links go to the bar association’s home page, because that state doesn’t have lawyer discipline records online. Or, in the case of the Alaska Bar Association, the search page is buried and the disciplinary actions are mixed with the general member directory.

The Arizona Bar separates discipline reports by year. If I knew whether the lawyer was disciplined and the year this site would be sufficient. With that annoyance in mind, I developed a Google custom [search engine of disciplined attorneys](#). This enables you to search, for example, the Arizona Bar Association records for all years. Also, search across multiple states at once — helpful if you don’t know the state in which the disciplinary action may have occurred. I include several sites that index appellate and Supreme Court records, which may make the results too cluttered, but will catch some cases related to attorney misconduct claims that aren’t at the state sites.

Not all states are included. Many don’t have directories that could be configured to work with another search engine. Let me know if you find a way to search the excluded sites.

<http://courtport.com/>

<http://www.abanet.org/cpr/regulation/scpd/disciplinary.html>

<http://pibuzz.com/disciplined-attorneys>

PI buzz (<http://pibuzz.com>) is a free webzine of tips, links, news and research guides to assist the information professional and private investigator, and businesses and attorneys, on topics ranging from database searching, business background, to privacy and public records. Free registration is available at the site. Tamara Thompson and Rosemarie Mesis are the editors and primary writers for PI buzz.

Tamara Thompson is a well-known investigator, speaker and blogger who is recognized for her expertise in Internet data gathering, genealogical tracing, witness background development and locating people. Before starting PI buzz, Tamara operated the blog PI News Link.

Rosemarie Mesis has been conducting private investigations for the last 8 years specializing in locating people, especially custodial kidnapping victims. “Roe” is also the co-owner and Publisher of PI Magazine, the largest trade publication for private investigators and law enforcement detectives in the USA.

I-API is pleased to welcome these new members to our Association

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Specialty: Surveillance

Terry Duncan (Associate)

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Owatonna MN 55060

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Specialty: Fire Fraud

MERLIN INTRODUCES “MERLIN WIZDOM”

Free online video tutorials

KALISPELL, MT – September 15, 2008 – Merlin Information Services, a leading provider of solutions for finding people, businesses, and assets, has announced release of its newest online training tool, *Merlin Wisdom*. These free video tutorials are offered throughout Merlin’s website, designed to help customers get the most value out of Merlin’s products.

Merlin’s Russell Bokor, who heads up Merlin’s online training, says, “We know this is a technical industry—our goal is to make it as easy as possible to use Merlin’s products and do the very best job at supporting our customers’ business needs.” Links to *Merlin Wisdom* are in relevant locations throughout Merlin’s website. Unlike other providers who offer scheduled training webinars, Merlin’s customers can play and pause the tutorials at their convenience and watch them an unlimited number of times. “The average length of a video tutorial is just three and a half minutes, and includes audio explanations and sample searches,” continued Bokor. “Our goal was to respect our customers’ busy schedules by offering convenient, on demand and relevant training. We think we’ve achieved that with *Merlin Wisdom*.”

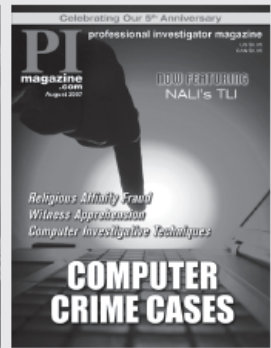
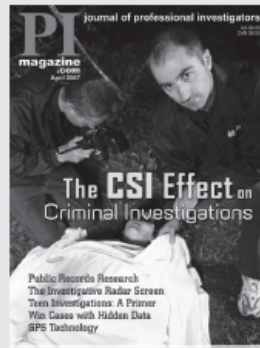
For more information about Merlin Information Services, visit Merlin’s website at www.merlindata.com or call 800-367-6646.

Legal Technology Services, Inc and Sheila A. Lacy MBA, MS, BS will be hosting training on:

- What Makes a Good Investigator
- What Makes a Good Investigation
- How to Interview Juveniles
- Criminal Investigations

October 23, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. training cost is \$80.00. Register online at www.ltsia.com or call (515) 276-9889. Registration deadline is October 15, 2008.

Other training sessions during September and October include Excel, Office 2007, Word, Power Point, Outlook, Computer Basics, What to purchase, maintain, and how to protect your computer. Training will be held at 2900 Justin Dr. Suite A, Urbandale, Iowa 50322. For dates and cost please visit us online at www.ltsia.com or call (515) 276-9889.



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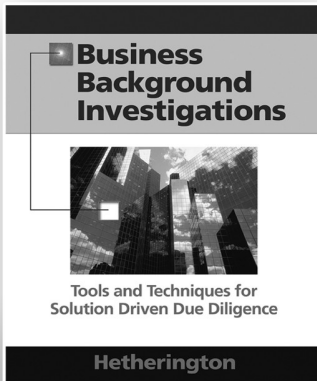
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