



IAPI NEWSLETTER

IOWA ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

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June 2011



I can't believe it's almost that time again. How exciting. We are in the final phase of putting together the 2011 annual conference and we look forward to meeting all the new association members and seeing all the old friends. Networking is a big part of our industry and the growth of your business. Being able to network with other licensed investigators is crucial for referral services and marketing your own company in Iowa and the surrounding areas. IAPI is pleased to offer the annual conference to meet your educational needs as well as networking with fellow peers in the industry. It's always a pleasure discussing tricks of the trade, business enhancement techniques, legislative pros and cons and meeting new friends. If you have never been to an IAPI Conference, it's time to get on board and see what you have been missing.

The Iowa Association of Private Investigators boards' objective is to make your IAPI membership the most important professional investment you will make this, and every year. When you join IAPI you are investing in your business, your profession and yourself.

You can get on the association website and sign up for the conference as well as check out the latest newsletters, board minutes and much more. Please remember it is important to stay at the host hotel during the conference time, in efforts to keep costs down for future conferences. The association gets a credit for filling rooms that help offset some of the conference costs. If you have any questions regarding the association, the profession, board meetings or the upcoming conference feel free to contact any of the Board Officers or the Board of Directors for your area. Any of us will be happy to answer your questions.

In closing, I look forward to seeing you in July and as always thank you for being a member of the Iowa Association of Private Investigators.

Regards, Your President

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PInow.com Investigation News

Former Officer Conducted Illegal Searches in Database

AKRON, OH — Former Akron Police Sgt. Gary Webb has admitted to illegally using databases intended for law enforcement. Webb was conducting private investigations about parental residences for Copley-Fairlawn City Schools when he illegally used the database to access family license plate information. Webb has resigned from the police department and has been given six months probation after pleading guilty to the charges.

In-Home Infidelity More Likely to End In Divorce

NEW YORK, NY — Private investigators handling infidelity cases know that adultery can take place anywhere: workplaces, hotels, and other locations are popular spots for PI surveillance work. However, a new study suggests that where adultery takes place can also be an indication of how likely a couple is to head for the divorce courts. According to The New York Times, adultery that takes place within the marital home is rare, but when it happens, it is more likely to lead to divorce. A New York Times poll found that more than half of 500 polled people claimed that a marriage could not survive if infidelity took place in the marriage bed. Less than a third of respondents claimed that a marriage would not survive adultery outside the home.

New Online System Lets Public Check on Private Investigators

SALEM, OR – The “Information and Records for Investigators and Security” (IRIS) has been rolled out by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training in Oregon, allowing people to check credentials of private investigators and other security professionals online. People will be able to use the online system to ensure that private investigators and security professionals have met criminal background check requirements, training requirements, and licensing requirements.

New Bill Might Affect Police Officers’ Private Investigation Work

PHOENIX, AZ – Senate Bill 1020 has been introduced. If passed, the new law would not allow reserve and active police officers to work concurrently as private investigators. The bill was introduced after Tolleson police Commander Wayne Booher was found to be offering his services as a private investigator on duty. Some private investigators and experts also support the bill, noting that police officers who work both for the public and as private investigators may face conflicts of interest.

More Evidence of the Power of Social Networking for Private Investigators

ST. LOUIS, MO — The use of social networking sites such as Facebook by private investigators has been well-established, but it seems that every week more new stories emerge about the dangers of online identities. This past week, a Missouri student uncovered that his science teacher, Tere Meyers, used to work in the porn industry. The Parkway School District which hired Meyers does conduct criminal background checks on new instructors but since Meyers did not do anything illegal the district’s private investigators did not find any red flags. It was a student relying on social networking who found the details. Meyers has since resigned from the job. Private investigators and other experts who use social networking sites to conduct cases have repeatedly warned the public that any information sent electronically can easily resurface decades later, meaning that a youthful mistake can affect someone’s career and job prospects for a lifetime.

Social Media Expert Offers Skip Tracing Tips for Private Investigators

Modern-day [private investigators](#) have more tools at their fingertips than ever before. Where they used to have to comb through phone books and interview neighbors, colleagues, ex-lovers, friends and family to track someone down, now they may need only log in to Facebook or Twitter.

They don't even have to be in the same city, state or country as the person they're tracking. A private investigator with a smart phone can theoretically run skip traces on subjects in Minnesota from a sunny beach in Hawaii.

"People have developed this habit of logging in and checking in with Facebook or Twitter or Yelp," said Lanie James, a social media specialist with Chesapeake Energy in Oklahoma. "They're leaving a trail of digital bread crumbs without even knowing it."

James spoke to a group of Oklahoma private investigators recently about how they can use and exploit social media in their businesses. She explained to the investigators how [skip tracing via social media](#) is happening all over and the tools are very effective. People have opened so much of their lives up to the general public that it's very hard for them to hide these days.

Police, lawyers and employers have all been using social media to dig into the history and character of subjects as well as to discover their whereabouts.

The Jackson Police Department in Jackson Hole, Wyo., used YouTube and Facebook to find two foreign bandits who stole the state and national flags while they were at half-staff to honor a local fallen soldier in 2009. They posted a video of the theft online, where it was distributed via Facebook, and the two men were identified. Then through Facebook messages, authorities got the flags returned from overseas with notes of apology.

James said she knows of investigators who have been able catch clients' spouses cheating by following their digital breadcrumbs. Many social media outlets now include geotracking software that allows members to sign in at different establishments such as bowling alleys, bars and restaurants. Letting friends know where you are via social media sites has become trendy and a lot of establishments offer incentives including prize drawings for doing it.

"It becomes so instinctual, such a habit for people to check in," she said, "that they don't even think about whether they're where they said they would be or not. People share just so unconsciously."

Because social media tools can be extraordinarily useful to private investigators, James emphasizes the importance of knowing how to use the tools. Her advice:

1. Have a smart phone

“Having a smart phone is a must,” James said. “You can’t do this without the right equipment.”

A smart phone allows the private investigator to get immediate updates from subjects. If the investigator has a Twitter account, he or she can sign up to have the subject’s updates pop up instantly. People tend to tweet about what they’re doing or where they are, which makes following or finding a subject easier on the fly.

2. Understand the demographics social media sites attract

There are hundreds of thousands of social networking sites out there. Many are niche sites that only certain people will belong to, for example NASCAR fans or online gamers, James said. But those people are probably most likely to surface on those sites first.

Then there is the mainstream. Members of Generation X are the most likely to be on Twitter, according to statistics, James said, though the younger Millennial Generation is starting to pick it up as well. Older people are very unlikely to be on MySpace, James said.

“But if you’re tracking Grandma,” she added, “you should know that Grandma is the single fastest-growing demographic on Facebook.”

Just as investigators have always had to judge their subjects and develop their tactics around that person’s character and habits, they will have to judge which social media outlets best suit their subjects.

3. Have your own accounts

While it’s not commonly allowed or accepted on the sites, it could be advised to open fake accounts, James said.

She said it goes against her values in most cases to create a fake online persona, but has proved useful and may be required in some cases. There is information on the social media sites that is only available to members. Once you have an account, you’ll have access to a lot of information, James said.

“People just don’t pay attention to their privacy settings,” she said.

And people tend to share a tremendous amount of personal information on their social media sites. A lot of people include their addresses, cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses on their unprotected information pages. “For some people, they see there’s a field there and they think they have to fill it in,” she said.

4. Know how to use the technology

While the subjects investigators are tracing may not bother to familiarize themselves with privacy settings, the investigators should. They need to know how the technology works so they can find and exploit the loopholes in order to get information.

“They can really figure out how all of that works by spending some time with their own accounts,” James said. “They just have to mess around with the different settings and take the time.”

5. Keep up with the times

James recommends that investigators follow blogs like Mashable.com to get the latest news about what’s happening in the social media world.

6. Use social media to promote your business

While Facebook, Yelp, Twitter, MySpace and LinkedIn are useful skip tracing tools, they are also powerful marketing tools. Once you log off of your stealth accounts, log into your business accounts and let the world know what you do and how well you do it. Share your business information and let clients “friend” you and vouch for your effectiveness, James said.

Social media has permeated James’ life. She said she’s careful about what she shares online and has been able to manipulate the content that pops up on Google searches when she types her name in so that she’s the one who shows up first and so that the most positive information is at the top.

She studies and writes and even tweets about social media and its many uses.

“I’m just a nosey person by nature,” James said. “So, I’ve always been really fascinated by all the applications there are for this information.”

Amanda H. Miller is a staff writer for PInow.com.

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Facebook a top cause of relationship trouble, say US lawyers

Social networking site becoming primary source of evidence in divorce proceedings and custody battles, lawyers say.

When Facebook gets involved, relationships can quickly fall apart as Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gaddafi have discovered. But dictatorships are not the only ties being dissolved by social networking sites: now Facebook is increasingly being blamed for undermining American marriages. Even though the rate of divorce in the US has remained largely stable in recent years, American divorce lawyers and academics have joined Middle East analysts in picking out Facebook as a leading cause of relationship trouble, with American lawyers now demanding to see their clients' Facebook pages as a matter of course before the start of proceedings. "We're coming across it more and more. One spouse connects online with someone they knew from school. The person is emotionally available and they start communicating through Facebook," said Dr Steven Kimmons, a clinical psychologist and marriage counselor at Loyola University Medical Centre near Chicago.

Yet while the US media has been quick to trumpet any evidence of Facebook as the country's leading marriage-wrecker, the truth is "It's complicated," as the site's relationship status would have it. A 2010 survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) found that four out of five lawyers reported an increasing number of divorce cases citing evidence derived from social networking sites in the past five years, with Facebook being the market leader. Two-thirds of the lawyers surveyed said that Facebook was the "primary source" of evidence in divorce proceedings, while MySpace with 15% and Twitter with 5% lagged far behind. Those statistics included not just evidence of infidelity but other legal battles, such as child custody cases in which parents deny using illicit drugs but boast of smoking marijuana on their Facebook pages.

Photographs harvested from social networking sites including those posted by friends or colleagues on their own pages are a particularly rich source of damning evidence, according to divorce lawyers. "This sort of evidence has gone from nothing to a large percentage of my cases coming in," Linda Lea Vicken, a member of the divorce lawyers' group from South Dakota, told the Associated Press. Marlene Eskind Moses, president of the AAML, said the openness and sharing of social networking sites left their users' public and private lives more exposed. "If you publicly post any contradictions to previously made statements and promises, an estranged spouse will certainly be one of the first people to notice and make use of that evidence," said Moses.

Statistics for January from online analysts Nielsen showed 135 million people in the US visiting Facebook during the month □ nearly 70% of the country's internet users. On average, users spent more than seven hours a month visiting the site, far longer than the less than half an hour spent on visits to Amazon or the average of two hours and 15 minutes on Google, America's most popular web destination.

The overall rate of divorce, however, appears to be unaffected by the advent of social networking. The most recent published data □ from 2009 □ shows the overall divorce rate declining, slightly more slowly than the shrinking percentage of Americans who get married every year.

A spokesperson for Facebook said: "It's ridiculous to suggest that Facebook leads to divorce. Whether you're breaking up or just getting together, Facebook is just a way to communicate, like letters, phone calls and emails. Facebook doesn't cause divorces, people do." But given its popularity, it is little wonder that negotiating "Facebook divorce" status updates has become another unhappy event for failed romances, over when to launch the site's broken-heart icon out into the glare of the world's news feed.

Source of Information

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/mar/08/facebook-us-divorces>

How Private Investigators Can Use Written Reports As A Marketing Tool

posted by Plnow.com Staff | March 16th, 2011

Professional report writing is a skill that can be a killer for some private investigators. It must be composed only of facts and not contain wording that can be misleading or require interpretation. Our everyday conversations contain words that have an implied meaning other than the intended factual meanings.

The value of your report can be dramatically damaged unless extreme care is taken to ensure accuracy. A substantive error can be very damaging to your reputation. In an assault, if the actions of the perpetrator are erroneously attributed to the victim, everything else in the report is suspect.

Poor English or grammar is a reputation killer. Improper capitalization and punctuation are, unfortunately, a common error in many reports.

In the era of modern computers with a spell-check feature, there is no excuse for misspelled words or typographical errors. Such errors clearly demonstrate carelessness and apathy. The use of a spell-check feature does not guarantee accuracy. How many ways can you spell the liquid substance that comes from the sky that have the same pronunciation? While you meant to say "the rain came at an inopportune time," spell-check may not identify an error if you used the words "rein" or "reign."

The best written report can be easily destroyed by dirt and extraneous markings on the pages. Keep your coffee cup away from your printer!

A well-written report is an example of your work that will be seen by many people for many different purposes. It signals to all the quality of your work. The highest quality work with a poorly written report will always be viewed as poor quality work.

State things clearly and directly. You are compensated for the quality of your investigative effort - not for the number of words in your report. Brevity with completeness and clarity are the keys to a well-written report.

Do not speculate or guess. You have been tasked to determine facts and provide accurate data. Anyone can guess and speculate! Why spend money for an investigation just to have someone else do what you can do: Guess!

Don't use boilerplate language. Boilerplate language indicates that all situations have common facts that can be expressed in terms that do not differentiate your situation from all others. Each situation is different and should be described in terms unique to the situation.

Avoid absolute words - "always" and "never." It is the rare situation where absolute words can be used without being subject to question. Before using these words, make sure you can justify their use.

Make sure the report is not vague, equivocal, or uncertain. Any report should be factual and specific in detail. If for some reason there is justification for using vague or uncertain terminology, the reasons should be spelled out in your report.

Avoid emphatic language, exclamation points, bold face, italics, and capital letters to emphasize findings or conclusions. Unnecessary emphasis within a report can indicate your personal opinions, bias, and prejudices when your role as an investigator is to simply collect factual data and let others make their own judgment.

Use the active voice - "John hit Joe," not "Joe was hit by John." This shows assertiveness and that you are comfortable with the information you have developed. The active voice is strong as opposed to passive and weak.

Use precise (specific, clear cut) language. This is another indicator of your confidence in the work produced and reduces the probability of others misunderstanding the facts.

Define technical terms and language. You can never assume that the reader will be familiar with technical terminology. The excessive use of unfamiliar technical terminology confuses the reader and may lead to an assumption that the writer is attempting to display his technical knowledge and belittle the reader - the person who is paying for the report.

Avoid evidence of bias. Nothing will call your report into question quicker than evidence of bias. You have been retained to report facts and not express your personal opinion through apparent biases in your report.

Use confident language - not hedge words - "it seems," "could," "apparently," or "I believe." Failure to use confident language may appear to the reader that you question some of the information being presented as facts.

Use objective (unbiased) language and avoid subjective (prejudiced) characterizations. You cannot be impartial when you use wording such as "Joe Smith, the perpetrator" in your report. Remember you do not provide legal advice. You provide facts and let the reader arrive at their own conclusions.

Avoid commenting on the credibility of witnesses. This is another example of inserting your opinions into the data and not letting the reader evaluate the source of your information. In some cases, this could lead to legal difficulties for the writer.

Ensure internal consistency. Make sure that if "Smith shot Jones" at the beginning of your report that it does not change to "Jones shot Smith" or "Smith shot Johnson" in latter parts of the report. This could be embarrassing at the least and devastating to your reputation at the extreme.

REPORT "NO-NO'S"

Never use the words "legal" or "legally." Remember you are an investigator and not an attorney, unless you have a law degree, and then be careful.

"Draft": When you annotate a report with this title, it announces to others that there are other versions of this report. They will be reviewed for consistency between the reports and you may be required to explain the differences.

"Probable," "substantially," or "possible" are ambiguous words. These words may show that you are not sure of the information contained in your report and should be avoided except in very rare circumstances.

"Obviously" or "clearly" are patronizing, condescending and presumptive words. To many it would indicate that you question the reader's ability to recognize obvious facts. Insulted clients do not return for additional insults.

"Appears," "presumably," "supposedly," "is said," or "evidently" imply uncertainty. This is another example of letting others know that you do not have complete confidence in the information in your report. If information is questionable, state that fact in clear cut language.

"He," "she," "it" or "they": These words are confusing and uncertain as to identity. It is better to use proper names such as "Mr. Jones" or "Mrs. Smith" to reduce misunderstanding.

Royal "we": One person is writing the report and "we" suggests more than one report writer. Using "we" to attribute success as a combination of individual collaborative efforts is commendable but not acceptable when writing a report that you will be signing.

"Complete," "thorough," meticulous," and "exhaustive": These words are self-serving and hold the investigator to extremely high standards. During the review of your report, other ideas and investigative leads may be identified, thus bringing your "exhaustive" report into question.

Report writing skills are extremely important to your professional and personal reputation. When you do things correctly your reputation will remain intact. If you do things incorrectly, it may cost you clients.

Bill Blake has more than 50 years of experience as a private investigator and corporate security manager. He is a member of Intellenet and a guest contributor to the PInow.com Weekly News Round-up.

Effective Customer Service for Process Servers

From ServeNow.com

If you ask an experienced [process server](#), chances are that he or she will tell you not all clients are created equal. Some pro se clients require constant hand-holding during the process service process, while others – such as debt collection companies – want to pay next to nothing for assignments. Performing service of process for one client type may require much more patience, effort or communication than another. For many process servers, working with various types of clients is not a big deal, but it can become a problem when process servers begin treating some client types better than others.

As an example of one type of client receiving unequal treatment compared to others, NAPPS Administrator Gary Crowe highlighted instances where a process server sends a job to another process server. He said he hears too often of cases where the assigning process server calls to check on the status of a service of process job, and the assignee becomes defensive – more so than if they were contacted by a law firm or other type of client. Because the process server is dealing with another process server (the customer), that person sometimes feels free to hang up on the caller or to use profanity in e-mails and phone calls. Crowe said this unprofessional attitude has led to some process servers being treated as “second-class clients” by their peers.

Despite the fact that some types of clients might pay more or be easier to work with than others, the cornerstone to running a quality process service business is giving equally great customer service to every customer. Keep reading for a closer look at the more common process server client types and how you can treat each one as a first-class client.

Types of Clients

The customer base of process servers is filled with a variety of client types, and each type presents unique challenges and requirements. If you’re dedicated to providing high-quality customer service, one of your first goals should be to ensure that each client receives equal treatment no matter who they are. Below, we have included a brief description of some common client types along with any special considerations they may have.

Large Clients

Large clients often provide a steady flow of business for your process servers. They typically include debt collection agencies, law firms and government agencies. The high volume of assignments from these clients mean that the rate charged per assignment is less. Clients that dole out high-volume work to process servers are usually more hands-off than smaller clients because of the sheer number of papers being served.

Referral jobs from other process servers

Another source of process service assignments comes from outside businesses [hiring local process servers](#). When one process service company receives an assignment in an outside area, that company can send the job to a more localized company. In this case, the original process server becomes the client of the local server. As Crowe pointed out, it sometimes happens that the assigning company forgets to display the same professionalism to their colleagues as they do other clients.

Pro se clients

Pro se clients, or customers who are representing themselves, are a less frequent source of work for process servers. These clients may require more time-consuming attention since they are not familiar with service of process, and they are more likely to frequently call process servers with questions. Because these cases can become more involved than assignments from large organizations, some process servers choose to raise the price accordingly.

Three ways to better deal with clients

Dealing with clients is a skill that comes naturally for some and that can take years of practice for others. If you apply these business practices on a daily basis, your client interactions will be more enjoyable for both the process server and the client:

1. Be there for your customers

Be consistently available for your customers by phone or e-mail during business hours. You might not always look forward to speaking with certain clients, but making yourself available to your customers is highly important to them. Using professional phone and e-mail etiquette is also something you and your associates should do with every client.

2. Manage clients' expectations

One way to pave the way for a smooth service of process job is to provide as much information to the client before you get started on their assignment.

For pro se clients, ServeNow.com CEO and co-founder Adam Camras suggests faxing or e-mailing a sheet outlining expectations such as when the papers will first be attempted, how the client will be notified and how they can check on status. This will mitigate unnecessary calls and e-mail from private parties.

3. Make process server customer service training a priority

Everyone in your process service company needs to be on the same page regarding how to treat customers. Process servers should be able to listen to the client's complaints, respond calmly and professionally, and work with the client to come up with a definitive solution. At his process service company, Crowe said they train employees on an ongoing basis to interact positively with customers. They also have established guidelines governing client interactions, as well as hold regular meetings to discuss the topic.

Conclusion

In the Internet age, word can spread quickly if your clients aren't satisfied. If you want to maintain a sparkling reputation and be the business that is always the first referred, you need to show customers that you respect them and value their business. The easiest way to ensure that every one of your clients is satisfied is to just remember that they are all paying customers, and they have chosen you above your competitors to carry out their assignment. As Kate Zabriskie, founder of Business Training Works, Inc., said, "Although your customers won't love you if you give bad service, your competitors will."

To learn more about becoming a member of ServeNow.com's trusted network of process servers, contact us online or call (877) 737-8366

Data Breach Legislation Active

Recent reports of significant data breaches have grabbed the attention of Congress. The Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade held a hearing today to review recent losses of data by Sony and Epsilon.

The Subcommittee's Chair, Mary Bono Mack (R-CA) declared that it was time for Congress to act on legislation to impose federal requirement to protect personal data.

Congressman Bobby Rush (D-IL) also reintroduced HR 1707, the "Data Accountability and Trust Act". Last year that bill passed the House, but died in the Senate. A staff briefing memo prepared for the hearing indicated that she is considering introducing her own bill.

NCISS objected to two major provisions of Representative Rush's bill last Congress. We oppose the overbroad definition of data broker and language that would limit the use of "pretexting" to obtain personal information.

NCISS will continue to keep you informed about this legislation as we work with Congress to protect your access to critical information. But more than that, we will be asking for your help as these bills move through the legislative process.

Keeping the profession informed,

Jimmie Mesis

NCISS Legislative Chairman

NCISS

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IAPI is pleased to welcome these new members to our Association

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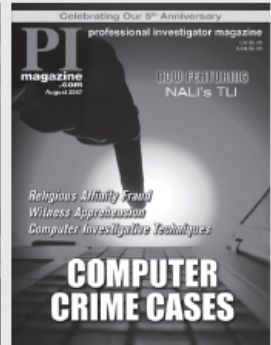
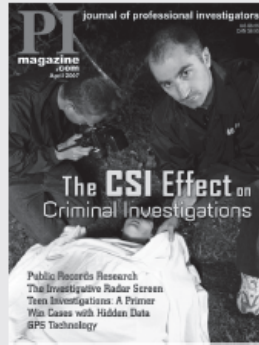
Email: brian@ntegra.com

Our next board meeting and the last one prior to our upcoming annual conference will be:

**June 17th, 2011 at 10:00 AM
Holiday Inn in Des Moines.**

Everyone is welcome to attend to see what happens within our association and/or to express their views on any association matter.

Hope to see everyone at the conference!



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