



February, 2003

The Oregon Investigator

Volume XIII, Issue 2

A Journal of the Oregon Association of Licensed Investigators

Presidents' Letter

Dear Members:

On December 31, 2002, president Stuart Steinberg retired leaving six (6) months of his term as president for me to complete.

As your new president I have very little time to accomplish a lot and will be asking many of you to help me in areas where you have the expertise. I have already been doing this and truly appreciate your willing-

ness to jump right in and lend a hand.

Elections for the new Board will be Friday afternoon, June 6, 2003, at Mt. Bachelor Resort at our annual membership meeting. Saturday, June 7th, 2003, will be an OALI all day seminar, same location.

There were several vacant positions on the OALI Board and Advisory committees when I took the reins on Janu-

ary 1, 2003. The OALI Board had its



first meeting January 17, 2003, in Salem, Oregon. At that Board meeting I

OALI Regional Meeting Update

On December 16, 2002 the NW Region 8, held their meeting in Hillsboro, OR.

NW Region 8 represents Washington, Co-

lumbia and Clatsop counties in the State.

The meeting was open to all OALI members. Other attendee's included individuals who

have been licensed through the Oregon Board of Investigators and looking to join a Professional Association. There were a few individuals looking at

Inside this issue:

<i>Presidents letter</i>	1-4
<i>Regional meeting review</i>	1,4-5
<i>Is your client a stalker? An article</i>	6-9
<i>Professionalism, an article</i>	11-13
<i>Board Meeting minutes</i>	14-17
<i>Spring Seminar</i>	18
<i>Back Cover</i>	22

Special points of interest:

- Presidents letter to members
- Article by Grace Castle
- Article by Robert Scott
- Board Meeting minutes
- Coming events, seminars
- OALI member elected president of OPA, pg. 10
- Article by Roy Miller, Pg. 20-21

Presidents' Letter, continued from page 1

appointed Greg Parson to the position of Vice President and Rick Templeton to the position of Membership Director.

Greg has already planned the March and June Seminars with only a few details for the June Seminar to be completed. I think you will be very happy with the work Greg has done on these Seminars.

Rick Templeton, the new Membership Director said he is real excited about taking over the Membership Director duties. Rick missed the June 17th Board meeting because he had just returned from Europe the day before and was catching up with jet lag and office work.

Both of these gentlemen will do an excellent job for OALI. If you don't know Greg or Rick, take advantage of a break during the March 15, 2003, OALI Seminar at Spirit Mountain and introduce yourself.

The week following the Board meeting I appointed Ted Tolliver to the

position of Executive Director. I also appointed Charles E Farrington Jr. to the position of Sgt at Arms, Ted Tolliver's vacated position.

The OALI website has been updated with the changes on the Board and Advisory Committees.

DRIVEN, our website host is changing servers and hopes to provide OALI with better dependability and an easier way to make changes to our on-line searchable database.

Weekly contacts from OALI members and non-members via the website and calls from persons looking for an appropriate investigator, come to me via the website.

OALI also has a 24-hour toll-free referral line for our members. A person calls in looking for an investigator, the 24-hour operators refer your names on a rotating basis. We get a daily report regarding any calls they received in the previous 24 hour period. Many days there are no calls to the toll-free number but one or two days a week the report tells us about a caller, what they want and the referral names given to the caller. Ted Tolliver has been asking for input from investigators who may have received work through the telephone referral service. If you received work through



“The OALI website has been updated with the changes on the Board and Advisory Committees”



Presidents' Letter, cont.

the referral service, let Ted know, he will be reporting to the Board at the next Board meeting in March. We want to know if the money we are spending on this service is helping provide our members with work.

Now is the time to start thinking about who you want to be on the 2003-2004 OALI Board. Shelley Radmer, OALI secretary, will be gathering nominations for positions on the June ballot. Shelley will also be assembling the text for constitutional changes. If you have a constitutional change you want on the June ballot, send it to Shelley via e-mail. The format for your change should include the original text including the Article number and the text re-written with the change highlighted in bold or bracket text to be removed. Contact Shelley if you have questions about that. Dave Vollbrecht, OALI Treasurer is planning to publish new OALI Directories.

You will receive your new directory in the mail. Dave will also post the Directory to the OALI website in the "members only" area so you can print the directory in 8 ½ x 11 format with larger type size. You can 3-hole punch the larger pages and keep them in the office in a ringed binder while

leaving the paperback format in your briefcase to take outside the office.

Dave orders extra copies of the Directory for members to give to businesses in the field who may need the services of an OALI member. I was surprised when I did this, (sent directories to attorneys), I including my business card clipped to the front, rather than use the directory to call someone else, they called me. Free advertising! Another OALI membership benefit! Contact Dave if you want extra copies of the Directory.

Our Regional Directors are quite busy these days planning for and holding Regional meetings. Our Regional Directors are contacting non-members and making them know they are welcome to join OALI, some have never heard of OALI or the many benefits of membership. I cannot stress to you enough the importance of joining an association and becoming active in the association.

The benefits I have personally received are great. I am saving money on E&O Insurance, members remember my name and recommend me for jobs they cannot do for whatever reason and it's a lot of fun to be in a position where investigators are comfortable introducing themselves to me.

Will Ray pointed out that the Oregon Board of Investigator CE rules may require us to change the name of Regional meetings to Regional Seminars because of a 2 CE limit on certain types of meetings that are listed in the new CE rules. Will is working on possible new wording in the OBI CE rules to



"If you have a constitutional change you want on the June ballot, send it to Shelley via e-mail."



Presidents' Letter, cont.

fix the confusion.

Lastly, I want to welcome our many new members over the last several years. Welcome, get involved and take advantage of your membership in OALI. It will be good for your business and good for OALI.

Sincerely,
Patricia A. Vollbrecht
President OALI



OALI Meeting, continued from page 1

becoming licensed in the field of Private Investigations as well.

The meeting had around 40 attendees and the Association received 3 new memberships. Attendees were able to receive 3 hours of general Continuing Education Credits at no charge.

Outside of the chance to Network and meet other professionals in the industry, we had two very interesting topics with excellent guest speakers.

Jacqueline A. Joseph, CDE of, Accurate Document Examiners, Co. Presented, "From Suspicion to Testimony: How the Document Examiner Can Assist You" Ms. Joseph gave excellent information and insight to looking at criminal handwriting, Disguised handwriting and even our own handwriting. She discussed the areas of fraud, embezzlement, graffiti and suspicious documents of different types. Our group really enjoyed her enthusiasm and getting us involved in her demonstrations and discussions.

Contact Jacqueline: (503) 227-3411. www.jjhandwriting.com

Tom Baird Chairperson, for the OBI Continuing Education Committee, and committee members, **Patrick Higgins** and **Gary Crowe**, gave the Association an insight as to the new changes being considered for the licensing requirement that may take into effect at the next legislative session. There was a lot of discussion as this is always a hot topic. Tom, Patrick and Gary did a great job being in the hot seat in presenting the How, What and Why in the new recommen-

"Get involved and take advantage of your membership in OALI. It will be good for your business and good for OALI."



dations the committee will present to the OBI for the new CE requirements. For updated information contact the OBI: (503) 731-4359.

I would like to thank all of the attendee's who were able to come, the guest speakers and OALI board members that gave their support behind the scenes, Vice President Patricia Vollbrecht, Treasure David Vollbrecht and Past OALI President Cynthia Hamilton. Thank you.

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“For updated information contact the OBI: (503) 731-4359.”



Is Your Client a Stalker? by Robert Scott, P.I.

Completing an assignment to the satisfaction of a client is a goal of all private investigators. This means providing clear, unambiguous, verified information that you're willing to rest your reputation on. In the case of a locate, on a good day, it means that you've found the missing person and reported his or her whereabouts to your client.

And then two days later things go terribly wrong when you open the newspaper to find the missing person has been murdered – by your client. This scenario is every thinking PI's worst nightmare. It also justifiably arouses the ire of privacy activists and politicians who seek to curtail our access to information. They don't know or don't care that private investigators derail a thousand stalkers for every one that they unknowingly aid. These success stories, by their nature, don't often make the newspapers because there is no dead body and therefore no news to

report. Now with the emergence of the Internet, many private investigators know even less about their clients. Any member of the public can now go online with a credit card and obtain home, work or unpublished phone information about someone while undergoing little or no scrutiny. That's just what Liam Youens, age 21, did last fall before he murdered Amy Boyer, age 20, outside the dental office where she worked in Nashua, New Hampshire.

After the shooting, police investigators uncovered a diary, web site and other evidence showing that Youens, a loner with few friends, had had a secret crush on Amy since junior high. Later, he began purchasing information about her from online detective agencies and put up a macabre web site detailing his dark obsession and plans to carry out the murder. According to documents recovered by the Nashua police, Youens paid Florida private investigation agency Docusearch.com \$109 to find out the address of the dental office where Amy worked. Over the next five weeks, Youens made several dry runs at the location, scouting Amy Boyer. On October 15, Amy left work at 4:30 in the afternoon and got into her car. Without warning, Youens suddenly appeared in his own car, pulling up next to Amy's 1990 Honda Accord. Youens shouted out her name. When she looked up, he fired 15 hollow-point rounds from a 9mm Glock into her. Both of her arms were shattered and she was struck fatally in the head. Youens then stuck the muzzle of the gun into his own mouth and ended his own short, miserable life. Amy Boyer's work address wasn't the only information Youens obtained about her from online agencies – but it was apparently the last. Previously he purchased a variety of basic public record searches, such as real property ownership lookups, as well as SSN traces, from both Docusearch and other online information providers. If one didn't know the context of the



“They don't know or don't care that private investigators derail a thousand stalkers for every one that they unknowingly aid.”



Stalker? Continued from page 6

data, it would seem routine and unremarkable. But a closer review of the documents shows chilling indicators of the young stalker's plan. He used a taunting AKA for his e-mail address, "JohnnDoe." The password he chose for his Docusearch account was "amyb." What was unknown to the companies that were selling him this information was that Youens had a prior domestic violence conviction and was displaying Amy's personal information on his web site alongside a rambling narrative detailing his intention of murdering her. On his web site, Youens expressed amazement at what could be obtained at the Internet Information Bazaar, stating, "It's actually obscene what you can find out about a person ..."

When I telephoned Docusearch owner Daniel Cohn, he refused to comment on the advice of his attorney. The Boca Raton based Docusearch was also recently featured on the cover of Forbes magazine (November, 1999) in a cover story entitled "The End of Privacy." The article featured the 41 year-old Cohn as he took up a challenge from one of the magazine's reporters to investigate him and provide as much information

about his financial and personal life as possible. In the article, Cohn made it clear he could live up to the firm's motto, "No more secrets."

Although private investigation agencies involved in scenarios like this may have civil (and certainly moral) liability, they have in all likelihood breached no criminal laws. Yet, how could any intelligent person describe their involvement as anything other than reckless? But if they won't control themselves, how can they be controlled? State licensing agencies won't revoke their licenses because no laws have been broken. And even if they did, these rogues would simply operate as unlicensed "information brokers." And make no mistake about it, both politicians and the public are aware of this issue. Vice President Gore visited with the family of Amy at the time. The tragedy was also the subject of a 20/20 segment on the ABC television network and other news programs. Just recently I was a guest on a radio talk show and the very first

question a caller asked was, "How do you know stalkers aren't using your service?" The caller hung up before I had the chance to inquire why she was asking this. Had she heard of Amy? Or perhaps she still remembered Rebecca Schaeffer, the young actress who was murdered by a detective-aided stalker in Hollywood several years back.

Regardless, there are things that responsible investigators can and must do about this problem. You see, while we can't control others, we can control ourselves and by adopting a few simple rules for yourself and your agency, you'll make certain that you will never be misused by a



"When she looked up, he fired 15 hollow-point rounds from a 9mm Glock into her. "



Stalker? Cont.

stalker or other criminal.

Establish a "Know Your Customer" Rule

The banking industry has been subject to a "Know Your Customer" rule for many years. In their case, it's to prevent their services from being misused for money laundering and other financial crimes. For private investigators it means: If you don't absolutely know who your client is and what his or her true intentions are, you don't provide him or her with information that could be used to harm another human being.

For missing person cases, this means that when a person is located, his or her location is not reported to the client. Rather, the investigator must either contact the located person and request their permission to release their location to the client, or the investigator can simply pass a letter from the client to the found party. Of course this safeguard only applies to clients who you're unsure of. It wouldn't apply to the law firm you do locates for, or the collection agency you do skip traces for, or the insur-

ance company you find and interview witnesses for. It would apply to the new client who's looking for an ex-wife, or an old girlfriend, or classmate. My experience has been that legitimate clients have no problem with this procedure. In fact, they often see it as a sign that they are dealing with a reputable and ethical investigative firm. Now, will you lose some business from time to time because of this policy? Without a doubt. Is that a cheap price to pay for having a clear conscience and not being the unwitting accessory to a murder or other crime? You bet – it'll be the best bargain you ever made. If you do need to turn your back on a customer who doesn't meet this standard, it's also vitally important to NOT explain why. By explaining why, you will only educate him on how to trick the next P.I. he calls out of the phone book. Rather, simply explain, "Our firm has a privacy standard that this assignment does not meet."

Use Investigator-Only Information Brokers

The Internet is littered with information brokers who will sell anything to anyone. You can help clean up this litter by not patronizing these businesses. There are a number of great information brokers who wouldn't dream of putting up a web site that solicits business from the public. Why not show your displeasure with these sell-anything-to-anyone information brokers by taking your business elsewhere? If they're selling sensitive data to Joe Stalker off the street, don't even consider using



"And even if they did, these rogues would simply operate as unlicensed "information brokers."



Stalker? Cont.

them. What would be the impact on these companies if we all adopted such a position? Who knows – but at least we won't be lining their pockets while they're making our lives miserable.

The Gatekeepers

Data kills when it's in the wrong hands. As private investigators, we're the gatekeepers of private information and as such we hold the lives and well-being of other people in our hands. This is a responsibility that we must prove ourselves worthy of or there will be more Rebecca Schaeffer's and Amy Boyers. Won't you do your part in making sure that no more names are added to this list?

Robert Scott is a Los Angeles-based private investigator and author of "The Investigator's Little Black Book 3". Visit his website at www.crime.com. This article was originally published in P.I. Magazine.



“If you don't absolutely know who your client is and what his or her true intentions are, you don't provide him or her with information that could be used to harm another human being.”



OALI Member elected President of OPA

Congratulations are in order for one of our own...

Barbara Baughman, who became a licensed investigator last year, as well as a member of OALI, has been a paralegal for about the last 30 years. Well known and respected in her first field of endeavor, Barbara has been elected president of the Oregon Paralegal Association for 2003.

This is a great honor for Barbara, and for our association as well. As Barbara has pointed out to several members, the investigative knowledge of paralegals is generally very impressive and they are our "investigative brethren" in many ways.



"The Internet is littered with information brokers who will sell anything to anyone."



Repeat After Me: *Professional* By Grace Elting Castle, CLI®

It's all a matter of words. I love working with words, and with other people who enjoy working with words. I am especially fascinated with identifying those powerful words that can either destroy, or severely damage, the good works that we do. I enjoy sharing that discovery with other investigators, while bringing to light the words that we can use to build an image of respectability and professionalism.

Yes, there's that word again---*professionalism*. We hear it a lot these days. Sometimes it is preceded by the words "lack of," and sometimes it's used in conjunction with an award of honor being presented to one of our own, or to entitle a new book, such as Kitty Hailey has just published.¹ It's the focus of all the magazines, newsletters and educational seminars that we read and attend.

But, as we all strive toward that elusive Mecca dubbed "professionalism," let's think about what our own words may be doing to tarnish that image.

The dictionary that I prefer to use lists the word *professionalism* as meaning:

"Professional standards the skill, competence or character expected of a member of a highly trained profession."²

Ah...just the image we seek to portray.

So, what words are we using in our everyday descriptions of ourselves in forums, news releases, newsletters, journals, websites, ads, and letters to legislators--- "the investigative industry," and the "investigative community."

My dictionary describes industry as:

"(1) large scale production organized economic activity connected with the production, manufacture, or construction of a particular product or range of products. **(2) Widespread activity** an activity that many people are involved in, especially one that has become excessively commercialized or standardized..."³

Is this what we are? Does this word portray to the world that we are professionals?

We all know what a "community" is. Yes, we want to work together, and we do become like family as we become better acquainted through our work, networking at seminars and conferences, and through publishing newsletters, journals, books, and magazines. But, is "community" synonymous in the public mind



"Yes, there's that word again---*professionalism*"



Professional, continued from page 11.

with “professional”?

We hear and read of the legal *profession*, and the medical *profession*. Despite lawyer jokes and complaints about bad doctors, we automatically say those words, rather than calling them an *industry* or *community*. Try calling your favorite attorney-client tomorrow morning and opening with, “So, how is it going in the legal industry?” Or perhaps, just as your doctor is about to perform a possibly painful procedure, shouting out, “Ah, and how are you doing in the medical *industry*?” I didn’t think so! No one doubts that *profession* is the accepted descriptor in these situations.

I suggest that if we want the world to begin to take seriously our work, and our contribution to the justice system, we have to first do that ourselves! To explain our pride in, and commitment to, what we do, we must throw out “industry” and “community” as adjectives to describe our work. We must remember to say, and write, investigative *profession*.

To begin the reversal of misunderstanding of our role as professional investigators, I’m officially declaring “industry” and “community” to be words not to be included in my writing, my conversations, or my explanations of what investigators do!

I’m hoping that each investigator, and each investigative association, will take time to consider these points, and to seriously work toward using only “our *profession*.”

The following tips may help individual investigators help to change the image of our profession:

1. Always proofread your written materials. Use the “find and replace” feature on your word processing program to search for “industry” and “community” to see if they should be replaced by *profession*.
1. Suggest that your association amend its by-laws to encourage use of the word “*profession*” rather than “industry” or “community” as descriptors.
1. Be careful to use “*profession*” when speaking to a media representative, or when appearing on a radio or television program.
1. Replace any instances of “industry” or “community” on your firm’s web-



“Professional standards the skill, competence or character expected of a member of a highly trained profession.”



Professional, cont.

site, promotional materials, and advertising, with “*profession.*”

1. Suggest that your own association newsletter reprint this article, (giving appropriate credit to the author, to encourage the use of “*profession.*”

Endnotes:

¹ Hailey, Kitty, CLI®, *The Professional Investigator, A compilation of articles, essays and forms.* Writers Club Press, Lincoln, NE. © Kitty Hailey. Contact: Kittycli@aol.com.

² *Encarta World English Dictionary*; St. Martin’s Press, New York ©1999. Pg. 1436

³ *Encarta World English Dictionary*; St. Martin’s Press, New York ©1999. Pg. 919

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Grace Elting Castle, CLI, is a past president and current member of OALI. She is the editor/publisher of Clues online—the original online newsletter for professional investigators™, and editor of PI Magazine, the journal of professional investigators. She may be contacted in Eugene, Oregon at gecastle@cluesonline.com.



“I’m hoping that each investigator, and each investigative association, will take time to consider these points”





Board Meeting Minutes

Dear OALI Members:

Following are the minutes of the January 17 Board of Directors Meeting. Treasurer Dave Vollbrecht will be posting the Treasurer's Report to the website.



OREGON ASSOCIATION
OF
LICENSED INVESTIGATORS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2003
DENNY'S RESTAURANT
SALEM, OREGON

PRESENT

Greg Parson
Paige Van Laningham
Ted Tolliver
Pat Higgins
Michael Padilla
Jeff Nussman
Denise Johnson
David Vollbrecht
Patricia Vollbrecht
Shelley Radmer

ALSO PRESENT

Ralph Radmer
Cal Penewit

Grace Elting Castle, CLI, is a past president and current member of OALI.

President Patricia Vollbrecht called the meeting to order at 11:15 AM

OLD BUSINESS

Ted Tolliver moved for approval of the minutes of the last Board Meeting.
Michael Padilla seconded and the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Treasurer's Report
Treasurer David Vollbrecht presented the Treasurer's report. Copy attached.



Board Meeting Minutes, cont.

During the term for which Patricia Vollbrecht is President and David Vollbrecht is Treasurer, the vice president, in addition to the president, will sign off on the Treasurer's monthly report.

Registered Agent

President Vollbrecht will ask Karen Zorn, who is our counsel, to also act as our registered agent, if she will do it pro bono.

Forum

After discussion, the consensus of the Board was to leave the Forum as it is now. Shelley Radmer so moved and Denise Johnson seconded. The motion carried.

March Seminar

Fees for the March Seminar will be based on cost to put it on.

June Seminar Speaker

We are looking for someone to speak on FOIA (Freedom of Information Act).

Vacant Positions

President Vollbrecht made the following appointments:

Vice President Greg Parson
Membership Director Rick Templeton
Executive Director Vacant

Greg Parson's appointment will leave District 8 vacant. He will look for a replacement.

In regard to finding a lobbyist, President Vollbrecht will try to locate Frank Beardon, formerly of CIS, and see what he is currently doing.

Membership Discounts for Multiple Investigator Firms

The consensus of the Board was to not offer multiple investigator firm discounts.

OTLA Membership

The cost of OTLA (Oregon Trial Lawyers Association) membership is \$250 per year. Since it is under the \$300 limit for the president's discretionary funds, President Vollbrecht will decide whether or not to join OTLA.



“President Vollbrecht will ask Karen Zorn, who is our counsel, to also act as our registered agent, if she will do it pro bono.”



Board Meeting Minutes, cont.

Referral Line

Ted Tolliver will post a message to the membership to find out who has received referrals from the referral line.

Scholarships

It was the consensus of the Board not to offer scholarships.

Constitutional Changes

President Vollbrecht pointed out that any proposals for constitutional changes must be in by March 1st in order to have time to print and publish them. Paige VanLaningham will propose that term limits for the Treasurer be abolished.

2003 Board Positions

President Vollbrecht encouraged everyone to be thinking of nominees for 2003 Board positions. The goal is to have multiple nominees for each office.

OBI Educational Session

The OBI has asked OALI to provide educational sessions. The Board felt this was already being accomplished by regional meetings.

Membership Brochure

Dave Vollbrecht showed the Board a membership brochure he has developed. The Board decided that it should be included in mailings for the seminars. We will also ask the OBI to put one in with their mailings.

Regional Meetings

Regional meetings need to be planned at least two weeks in advance so they can be advertised.

Specialties in Membership Directory

President Vollbrecht pointed out that the lists of specialties of some members in the membership directory were quite long, however the Board decided not to impose any restrictions on amount of specialties that can be listed.

President Vollbrecht adjourned the meeting at 1:15 PM.



“Paige VanLaningham will propose that term limits for the Treasurer be abolished.”





Board Meeting Minutes, cont.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelley Radmer, Secretary

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“The Board decided not to impose any restrictions on amount of specialties that can be listed.”



March 15 Seminar, OALI Meeting

On Saturday, March 15, 2003, at Spirit Mountain Casino, in Grande Ronde, OALI will be holding its' spring seminar. The seminar is good for 6.5 CE credits, and lasts from 8:30 AM to 5:00PM.

The cost is \$55 (\$70 for non-members). This includes seminar materials, continental breakfast, and refreshments. The seminar will be videotaped, and that will be available at a future date.

To register make checks payable to OALI, PO Box 2705 Portland OR 97208. Please include your name, business name, address, phone, and email address. If paying by credit card please include your number, name as it appears on the card and the expiration date.

The speakers will include:

- 1) Tom Kinberg, the director of the Salem Forensics Laboratory, OSP. Tom brings over sixteen years of Law Enforcement experience in the area of latent print processing and comparison, as well as crime scene processing.
- 2) Paula Barran, a repeat speaker, back by popular demand. Ms Barran is a lawyer who practices labor and employment law. She has written extensively on employment and management law and is a nationally known speaker. She will help explain the FCRA and how to stay in compliance.
- 3) Robert Townsend CLI, a 20 year veteran of investigations and a nationally known lobbyist for NALI. He is known as a tenacious, issue focused, thorough, knowledgeable, result oriented, resourceful, skilled trial preparer, and trial investigator.
- 4) Daniel Gatti, an Oregon attorney, well known to many of us, is a specialist in serious personal injury cases, sexual abuse, medical negligence, as well as class action insurance cases.



“Everyone is welcome all Investigators licensed, those not required to be licensed, and trainees all are welcome.”





February 2003

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	



Don't Let the Process Control You

By Roy Miller, M.M., M.C.R.M., C.R.J.

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Ever go on a surveillance?

Probably a silly question. Most investigators have at some point in time, and many do it routinely. When you're about to go out on a surveillance assignment, do you know exactly how much and what kind of film you are going to take, how many and which cameras you need, how you are going to approach the project, what additional resources (i.e., people, vehicles) you will use, how long the project is likely to take, etc. etc.?

If you spend time running around trying to figure this out for each case, you're really not that unusual. But if you go through this process for each surveillance case, you're also really not that efficient and, in reality, you really don't have a "process." Or, more precisely, the process becomes the job itself, and it controls you.

To take your career to a sustained level of high performance, you need to systematize massive areas of each assignment you take on. Otherwise you are using your brain power, your energy and, most importantly, your time, just to accomplish relatively simple organizational

tasks.

I've heard it said that "A failure to plan is a plan to fail." I completely agree. This is true in many aspects of your life, and absolutely true in every aspect of operating your investigative business. Because as you establish your processes, your systems, and begin to regularly use them, the results will be a seamless procedure that enables you to focus on and respond to, the specifics of each case, rather than on the business of running the investigation.

The Process of Establishing Processes

Let's stick with the surveillance example for a moment, although, as we will see, processes can and should apply to many aspects of operating an investigation business. The first time you go on a surveillance, you are not going to know half the stuff you need. But what you want to do is to look for patterns within the job and establish a checklist of everything you could possibly ever need: high-speed or low-speed film; black and white or color; van or car; a variety of clothes in case you need to follow on foot in several locations and change your appearance; additional people; phones or walkie-talkies; food and beverages; etc.

Let's say your initial list contains 20 items. Then, on surveillance, you think of item number 21. Immediately add it to your list. Don't give yourself the opportunity to forget it and not have it next time. You can also talk to other investigators and learn from their experiences. All the time you are creating a master list that you can go through each time you are hired for a surveillance, and it is this list, this process, which literally lays the foundation for you to do the job easier the next time.

It is an absolute necessity that your list be a printed list, not just something in your head. It makes it both real and easier to use. Even after you reach the point where you think you have a complete list – or process – it is important that you review it at least annually (preferably semi-annually) to make sure it is still complete and current.

Again and Again

Compounding the problem of not having a process is the reality that most investigators



"I've heard it said that "A failure to plan is a plan to fail."



Process, continued

handle a wide variety of cases. While this may be a necessity at the start of operating your own agency, as you are fueled by the fire of making your own way and making ends meet, and even at times throughout your business, it is not the best way to operate. (We'll explore the topic of specialization in a future article.)

But the key point is: develop your precise process for each type of case. It is bad enough to be floundering about everything you need to handle one particular type of case. You cannot afford to be swimming in a lack of processes when you handle a wide variety of cases. You will surely drown.

Furthermore, establishing processes manifests itself in all aspects of your business. Take billing, for example. I know of people who spend all day on Saturday just to generate three invoices. They spend time recalculating how many hours they spent on this, and how many minutes they spent on that, and whether or not they can bill for the time it took them to write an interim report. Instead, they should have a system in place that they use throughout the investigation that allows them to almost instantly generate these numbers. Then plug the numbers

and details into your process, print and seal the envelopes, and go play some golf.

Your investigative career is an evolutionary process. You will always be developing new skills, adding new technology. And that's as it should be. Consider Sam Spade. Years ago he was a successful gumshoe. As such, the techniques, equipment and personnel handling all have to change in order for him to succeed in today's market. The manual typewriter – can you imagine starting a business with that? Or the way he talked to his secretary – “Sweet Heart” – in today's reality that's begging for a civil suit.

So right now is the time to make a commitment to establish processes for yourself for all key aspects of your investigative business. You'll be more efficient, be able to devote yourself more energetically toward the relevant details of each investigation, save time and make more money.



“Your investigative career is an evolutionary process. You will always be developing new skills, adding new technology”



Caption describing picture or graphic.

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Editor's Corner

I hope that this newsletter will be both interesting and informative to our members.

I really have to thank Grace Castle for submitting her article on Professionalism. Ms. Castle is the editor of the prestigious PI magazine and an internationally known investigator. She has Oregon roots and has not forgotten us here.

I would also like to thank Robert Scott for making his previously published article on stalker clients available to us to publish. In light of recent events it serves as a good reminder to us all as to finding out who our prospective clients are, and what they really want with the information we provide.

I would also like to thank the members of our board who continue to work toward improving our association. Patricia Vollbrecht, Greg Parson, and Shelly Radmer all submitted articles for the good of the order so that we would have a newsletter to publish.

I would really like to encourage anyone who is willing to write an article...to do so. Please submit them to me and I will review it.

On another subject, I would like to encourage everyone in our membership to give some thought to our future, and the future of OALI. In June we will be asked to elect new officers to help guide us through some tough times. Each of us has to give some thought to who

should be elected and who will be. We need to ensure that we continue our traditions and elect good qualified people. Give it some thought and submit nominations to Shelly Radmer. Take care and nominate some good, intelligent, and ethical candidates!

Thank you.

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