

Advantages of Social Media Sites

Investigators need to be innovative when it comes to discovering information that might help a client. The norm might be to head straight for a pay data base to find criminal behavior on the other party in a court case. We have to keep our eyes and ears open all of the time and learn to think and work outside of that mundane box. The discovery of pertinent information can come from many different sources.

For instance, checking for Twitter, LinkedIn, Word press or Facebook accounts are simple places to start. Facebook, as annoying as it can be for many reasons might become an investigators best friend, especially when the client or opposition is a teen-ager or someone in their early twenties. Some of us can remember back when we were a bit younger and we lacked discretion and our emotional outbursts were not to be contained under any circumstances. No matter which generation, teen-agers have always known everything and rarely cared how they acted, good, bad or indifferent.

When you start your reading marathon on Facebook, you must go at it with patience and fortitude, the information won't pop out of a post yelling here I am. You also must follow through until you find something that could possibly be helpful in your case. We had a case where the opposition was a teenager who didn't delete arguments on Facebook, and certainly did not know how to contain themselves with their posts, even while some of their "friends" were encouraging them not to post certain things.

After looking through a few years of posts, hidden deep within several comments, don't forget to expand all of the comments, we found some good information for us to follow through on. Yes, it took time, and yes, it was a matter of checking out numerous other profiles on Facebook before all of the pieces fit, but the information finally came together. Think of it as the opposite of working a jigsaw puzzle. Instead of working the outer edges and moving inward, you start with that middle piece and work outward, then you find the pieces that meet and you put it all together.

You cannot rely on a simple gander at a few posts...you must read and decipher through a lot of muddled words until you uncover the key words that may help the pieces of information fall into place. If you keep looking, you just never know what you might find, and in this particular case, it was a Eureka moment. Due to a silly argument between so called Facebook "friends" we found that the accuser was actually accusing someone else of the same crime they had accused the client of committing.

It didn't stop there, the next step was to call the state and county court where this other accusation had taken place. With the correct paperwork and explanation of what we were needing to find, the other court was willing to help out with the information. There was one more key question for the county clerk before ending the call, and that was - did the accused have any filings – Lo and Behold, this person indeed recently had another case of alleging sexual assault, but as a minor, which was dismissed dismissed just prior to the case first found. Interestingly the accuser's charges were similar to the charges they were alleging in our current case. And here belongs a fitting quote by Sir Walter Scott..."Oh! What a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive".

This doesn't mean the case will change, but there is more of a possibility that there might be some changes now versus before taking the time to do all of those searches on Facebook. Also, as a heads up, do not ask any of the witnesses involved in a case if they have a Facebook account. Find out for yourself, you do not want to tip off anyone that you might be reading through their posts, some people do know how to delete messages, and then you would need a court order. If you can get the information you need without a court order, then all the better. Enjoy the search!

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