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the legal investigator

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The Truth About *Surveillance Systems* Reality vs. TV

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BUSINESS FOCUS | p.12

Get the scoop on building an ad hoc team at a moment's notice and find out why this ability is becoming imperative for survival in a competitive profession and economic environment.

CRIMINAL FOCUS | p.16

Knowing when to stop investigating can avoid causing problems for your client and the case. Find out how to analyze your case, advise your client, and save both the case and your agency's reputation.

NEWS/UPDATES | p.22

A backlog of 20,000 rape evidence kits on Texas police department evidence shelves are in the news. A senate bill may help pay the \$7M to \$11M price tag for processing and bring justice to victims.



by Dean Beers,
CLI, CCDI



From a business perspective, the ability to quickly create a case-specific ad hoc team means you no longer have to decline a case that doesn't match up with your particular investigative skills.



Legal investigators do not work alone. As sole practitioners or small firms, the ability to reach out and assemble a team on a moment's notice is not only beneficial, but becoming imperative to survive in a competitive profession and economic environment.



What the ad hoc investigation team is comprised of depends on the case. It can be as simple as retaining an investigator in another location to conduct interviews, take a photograph, shoot video or obtain local reports and records. Or it can grow to include multiple investigators in multiple locations; specialized asset or internet investigators; forensic experts and consultants; and laboratories. The case may require specialized knowledge of a geographic area, topic or operation.



Building your team begins before the case ever comes in. Networking through NALI, attending continuing education, reading and using industry-specific social media builds your Rolodex of people who you one day may need to call on to assist you in an investigation.

When you're networking, always ask yourself how this person may one day benefit you and your client. You're always interviewing everyone for a possible job. And, at the same time, offering your own set of unique skills to others.

Many legal investigators have focused on areas they have both an interest in and possess above-average knowledge and skill; perhaps subject matter expertise — certainly experienced proficiency.

Combining networking and technology, it becomes easy to involve investigators with that advanced knowledge. They can then be part of a core team — those you reach out to most often on your most frequent cases, or an ad hoc team that may work together only once — ever.



Building a team is a case management skill that is particularly important in complex cases. In the early stages, the legal investigator determines what components of the legal strategy and investigative process will require the assistance of more skilled and knowledgeable investigators for specific purposes. These need not be experts, but their specialized knowledge is recognized.

In a product liability case the investigative foundation is completed, witnesses are found and interviewed. Perhaps the primary investigator has no applicable knowledge of the product mechanics. Through networks, including the value of NALI, an investigator with the appropriate skills and knowledge can be found.

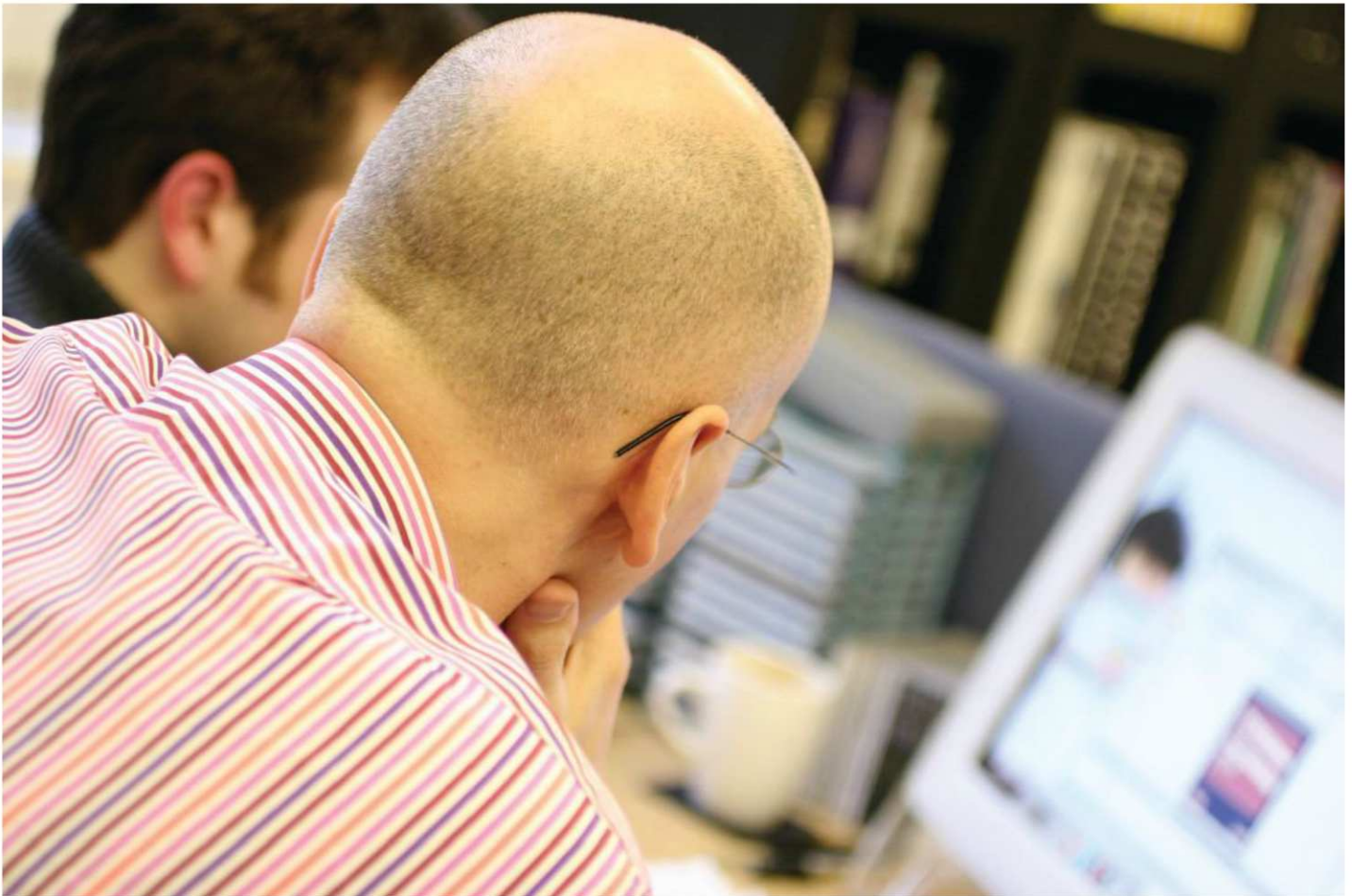
Questions are routinely posted to the NALI listserv requesting a tidbit of knowledge or the assistance in a specialized field — such as physical injury or tactical and personal combat, perhaps the protocols of person protection or assistance with a scene reconstruction. It is time to build on the network of learned peers and

construct an ad hoc team of exceptional legal investigators.

Technology has made it practical to quickly build and manage an ad hoc team and manage all the information the team produces. We can now send reports, photographs, videos and test results at the push of a button. In less

than a decade, sharing case materials required printing or saving to a medium, sending by express delivery and having a telephone conference. Now, a team of legal investigators, clients and experts can web conference and view the material concurrently; material sent with the push of a button in mere minutes. Technology has brought the concept of the advanced legal team to areas that may not have been previously possible.

“Having a core team and resources reduces the missed opportunities.”





From a business perspective, the ability to quickly create a case-specific ad hoc team means you no longer have to decline a case that doesn't match up with your particular investigative skills. Having a core team and resources reduces the missed opportunities. You can now tell your client that your team can take care of each of their needs. And, you can.

Dean A. Beers, CLI, CCDI is an expert in criminal defense homicide and civil equivocal death investigations. He is certified in Medicolegal Death Investigations and is a Colorado POST-certified instructor, and has served as a forensic autopsy assistant. He has lectured extensively and authored multiple articles, peer-reviewed white papers, and provided expert testimony on Protocols of Private Investigation, and Forensic Investigation of Injury Pattern Analysis, as well as consulted as a subject matter expert in Equivocal Death Analysis, Injury Causation, Time of Death, Crime Scene Analysis, Investigative Protocol, Evidence Protocol, and Forensic Photography. He is the author of Practical Methods for Legal Investigations: Concepts and Protocols in Civil and Criminal Cases, released by CRC Press in February 2011, and previously Professional Investigations: Individual Locates, Backgrounds and Assets & Liabilities. He founded his agency in 1987 and operates it with his wife Karen S. Beers, BSW, CCDI, with whom he codeveloped Death Investigation for Private Investigators online continuing education for 14 states.

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