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**CRIMINALISTICS:
The New Frontier
for Private
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**CRIMINAL
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PI MAGAZINE'S TOP PIS OF 2022



CRIMINALISTICS:

The New Frontier for Private Investigators

BY ANTHONY LUIZZO and JOHN GASPAR

As follow-up to our November/December 2020 article “Forensics Role in the Investigative Process”: *PI Magazine*, this article shines a bright spotlight on career opportunities in criminalistics. Taking a page from security scripture, “success is akin to an assembly line – seek and you shall find.” To succeed in business, investigative firms need fresh revenue streams to remain viable. Adding criminalistic specialties is one way to appeal to a broader client base, whilst deepening and

strengthening company profits. This article offers several suggestions on where to begin your company’s journey to this new financial frontier.

Seeing that no one person can be an expert in all fields, it’s important to establish strategic relationships with entities that offer the expertise needed to help bring home the bacon. To assist in finding criminalistic expertise, one important place to begin your search is to reach out to the Forensic Science College.⁴ The college website offers a wealth of information to help in your search. The college defines crimi-

nalistics as the art and science of evaluating physical evidence from crime scenes. Moreover, they further break down how criminalists ply their trade such as examining fingerprints, hair, fibers, skin, blood and more. Another good source of information is the U.S. Department of Justice website⁵. The U.S. Department of Justice defines forensic science investigation as examining and analyzing evidence from crime scenes and elsewhere to develop objective findings that will assist in the investigation and prosecution of miscreants or absolve the innocent from suspicion. Careers in this new criminological arena caught our nation’s undivided

attention when television shows like NCIS, Law & Order, Criminal Minds, and Forensic Files turned many Americans into amateur investigative sleuths. Today, careers in this field are more popular than ever before.

Looking back to the 20th century, fingerprints, suspect shadowing, photograph taking, and eyewitness observation were the central tools used by law enforcement and private gumshoes in the war on criminality. As the 21st century dawned, DNA opened a whole new world of crime-fighting strategy. As former president Dwight D. Eisenhower is credited with opening America to highway travel, forensic science is today credited with helping criminologists solve crimes that most likely would never have been solved employing yesterday's tools.

Google lists the following 8 common jobs one can pursue within the forensic field⁶:

- Fingerprint analyst
- Evidence technician
- Forensic science technician
- Forensic analyst
- Forensics manager
- Forensic investigator
- Forensic accountant
- Forensic engineer

A June 9, 2021, article in "Elawtalk"⁷, whilst speaking on careers in criminalistics, lists the following jobs to pursue if one is looking for a criminal justice career but does not wish to go into law enforcement. These jobs include:

- **Blood-spatter analyst** – not for the squeamish and involves collecting and analyzing blood left at a crime scene. Technologists examine blood droplets, weapon types, and trajectory patterns, etc.
- **Ballistics expert** – collection and examination of evidence related to trajectory, distance, angle, tool markings, and cartridge markings
- **Fingerprint technician** – collect and compare fingerprint evidence, reconstruct events, perform crime scene dusting
- **Crime scene technician** – aka crime scene investigators responsible for evidence collection, analyzing data, crime scene photographing
- **Forensic toxicologist** – responsible for toxin identification (drugs, alcohol, poison, gasses, etc.). A forensic toxicologist's work combines chemistry, biology, and pharmacology evaluations. Oftentimes these specialists work on cases involving car crashes, overdoses, sports investigations – performance-enhancing drugs, and crimes involving intoxicated parties, poisonings, etc.
- **Forensic pathologist** – commonly referred to as medical examiners and perform autopsies.

WHO EMPLOYS CRIMINALISTIC SPECIALISTS?

According to a June 8, 2021, article "What is Criminalistics and why study it?" featured in Forensics College - Forensic Education Blog⁸ whilst speaking on employment in an October 2017 BLS report predicted that forensic technician jobs would increase by 17% in the decade preceding 2026. It is important to note that this would be double the average for all occupations nationally. When these experts go out into private practice, they become an important resource to tap into.

Another important resource and the biggest employer of criminalists is city, state and federal government. Some of the agencies include:

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Environmental Protection Administration (EPA)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Medical Examiners/ Coroners
- Military
- Police departments
- U.S. Customs
- Educational entities
- Private corporations
- Crime laboratories

Many of these organizations maintain a database of experts who are available on a contractual basis. Private investigative firms should reach out to these organizations when a specialized forensics-related investigative opportunity knocks on the company's door. Beyond hiring outside expertise, should the firm wish to train one of its own employees, the following organizations offer specialized forensic related continuing education:

- American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS)
- American Board of Criminalistics (ABC)
- American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI)
- California Criminalistics Institute (CCI)
- International Crime Scene Investigators Association (ICSIA)
- Journal of Forensic Pathology
- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (www.acfe.org).

LOOKING BACK TO YESTERDAY FOR TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES

As Moses is often considered the first computer savvy human who downloaded the 10 Commandments - some common jobs that most investigative firms commonly perform, but are rarely termed forensic services include:

CAMERA AND VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

For years gumshoe PIs have followed, photographed & interviewed targets to obtain information. Early on, the box camera, SLR camera and Polaroid camera were their only options. Moreover, film was expensive so many firms performed their own black and white developing. Many sleuths took local college classes to learn how to develop, enlarge, and create detail enhancement in the photo lab. Today, we have new innovative technology in our hands; the cell phone and internet technologies are at our beck and call. In addition to camera utilization, video canvassing for both overt and covert situations are being used to gather and depict human behavior. In essence, a snapshot or video of a target's daily movements and/or lifestyle is used in a wide variety of cases including but not limited to:

- Industrial theft & pilferage
- Retail theft
- Patent violations
- Non-compete violations
- Product fraud
- Domestic relations cases
- Insurance claims
- Worker's compensation
- Employee theft
- Employee safety
- Business security
- Home security
- Access control
- Package delivery
- Conveyance security
- Check on elderly and children
- Monitor vacation homes
- Death investigations
 - Wrongful death cases
 - Defense
 - Reclassification of suicide to homicide

It is important to note that investigative advocates using surveillance technologies should always be mindful of federal and state laws and thoroughly do their research. Notwithstanding, each situation is unique and needs to be researched.^{9,10}

BACKGROUND SCREENING

Yesterday doing background checks was considered illegal. In a 2014 article authored by one of the authors of this article, "Background Checks: A Diagnostic Tool to Decipher Deception" recounted that a FY 2000 survey by the Society for Human Resource Management found that only 61% of hiring managers conducted background screenings as compared to a 2013 article featured in *Background Investigator Magazine* revealing that 92% of employers routinely ran background checks. Obviously, this

sea change has opened quite a market for private investigative firms to perform background screenings. Looking deeper into background screening, one of the authors of this article was featured on a syndicated TV show 48-hour segment that provided a forum to discuss background search: individual rights vs society's right to know.¹¹

FORENSIC CRIME SCENE PROCESSING CRIMINAL & CIVIL APPLICATIONS

Forensic crime scene processing is a viable option to verifying whether someone was at a location. Crime scenes contain physical evidence that can be valuable in an investigation. Trained CSI technicians can process the scene for evidence such as: fingerprints, footprints, impression evidence, trace evidence DNA, etc. Another lucrative endeavor for investigators is handling matrimonial case criminalistics – normally associated with partner infidelity. This area of specialty might include forensically testing garments for traces of semen, drugs and/or other substances. Recently one of the authors of this article was working on a case where a truck may have been involved in a homicide involving possible drugs. Court permission was received to process the crime scene, the

vehicle tested presumptive positive for cocaine, which was sent to a laboratory for full analysis. Looking deeper into the role of investigative criminalistics, micro particles from the vehicle floorboard and rug, particulates, and residue consistent with GSR (gunshot residue) was also sent to the laboratory for analysis. (This was helpful in showing motive and state of mind of the persons of interest.)

OFFICE THEFTS

Companies do not like the optics of having investigators and/or police at their place of business hunting for dishonesty. One way that forensics plays a role in office thievery is covertly marking vulnerable inventory items with UV crayon (date and time evidence) and tracking those items via UV light spectrum tracking. Dishonest thieves are caught when their hands light-up like a Christmas tree.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Again, turning our attention to the Forensics College, whilst discussing crime solving techniques, which lists the 10 most modern forensic science technologies:

1. Laser ablation inductively coupled plasma

mass spectrometry – matching the smallest shards of glass found in clothing, ascertaining bullet direction and force of impact, weapon types

2. Alternative light photography – helps medical professionals ascertain physical patient damage before it is visible
3. High-speed ballistics photography – using high-speed cameras to ascertain how bullet holes, gunshot wounds and glass shattering is created
4. Video Spectral Comparator 2000 – finding obscure hidden writing, determine paper quality and lift indented writings
5. Digital surveillance for Xbox device – allows visual access to hidden files on X box hard drives
6. 3D forensic facial reconstruction – extrapolates a physical reconstructive appearance from real life human remains
7. DNA sequencer – allows analysis of old bones or teeth whilst generating unique DNA patterns
8. Forensic carbon-14 dating – helps identify age of unknown remains
9. Magnetic fingerprinting and automated fingerprint identification (AFIS) – immediate comparison of fingerprints to database files at the crime scene
10. Link analysis software for forensic accountants – helps highlight and track strange financial activity streams¹²

LET US CALL A SPADE A SPADE

Smart marketing makes money! The standard investigative services mentioned above should be marketed as forensic services. This would immediately raise the stature of the firm and put it in the AAA league.

CONCLUSION

As crime fighting strategy is drastically changing minute by minute, investigative firms would be wise to jump on the fast-moving Criminalistics bullet train and begin riding the galloping horse named “smart marketing strategy” and showcase their forensic investigative services. Many larger investigative firms have made the adjustment and have added seasoned forensic experts to their team. Smaller investigative firms that may not have the financial wherewithal to hire their very own expert should consider establishing strategic alliances with organizations herein listed. The pay as you go philosophy does work, especially for smaller firms. Smaller investigative firms would be wise to *NOT* wait for their ship to come in to dock – they should swim to meet it! *As Walt Disney was quoted as saying “The way to get started is to quit talking and start doing!”* **PI**

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