



ABI



Association of British Investigators
Upholding Professional Values


An Introduction to Private Investigation

Author: Eric Shelmerdine M.A.B.I. W.A.D.

The Association of British Investigators, a non profit organisation representing both private and public sector investigators, provides in its National and International membership the credibility and due diligence of investigative service providers, otherwise absent in the sector.

With origins dating back to 1913, the Association of British Investigators has long been recognised as the premier professional body for investigation in the private sector working in the United Kingdom and beyond. Throughout its long history, The Association has worked hard to improve the standing and reputation of the investigative professional, sponsoring a number of landmark initiatives, including the lobbying of Parliament as long ago as the early 1950's for Statutory Control of the PI Industry.

It is no accident that The Association has long been regarded as the voice of the profession insisting as it does on carefully selecting each and every member. All applicants are stringently vetted and examined as to their knowledge, probity and ethics, and must comply with the Associations ethical principles and Bye Laws. Every member must be Notified with the Information Commissioner Office as a Data Controller, provide a recent clear Criminal Conviction Certificate at basic disclosure level and hold Professional Indemnity insurance cover. All of these mandatory requirements have to be maintained for continued membership.




The Association's professionalism and unique position was acknowledged by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency which granted The Association, exclusively within the sector, Approved Trade Association status. Other partnerships include public and law enforcements agencies.

The Association achieved further recognition with its endorsement by The Law Society of England & Wales and inclusion in the approved supplier scheme by The Law Society of Scotland.

After careful scrutiny, and with the support of two Government departments, it was accepted that only The Association provides the one-stop-shop for solicitors' risk mitigation when appointing an investigation agency. Winning the confidence of The Law Society follows a long, robust campaign of improvement to membership standards, accountability, reliability and probity.

Applications for membership and a directory of members are available at www.theABI.org.uk



PREFACE

The fact that you are reading this publication means that you are serious about considering professional investigation as a career.

This booklet is designed not only as a brief introduction and basic practical guideline into this fascinating industry, but also poses certain questions in an effort to help you decide if this really is the right career move for you personally.

Before you embark on any type of career, particularly as a 'Professional Investigator' and even more so in a self employed capacity, you will need to ask yourself a number of questions.

1. What made you consider this particular choice of career ?
2. Do you really understand the type of work this would involve ?
3. Have you spoken with anyone else who is already in this profession ?
4. Do you know what is involved in setting up a business for yourself ?
5. Can you afford to set up your own business ?
6. How many hours a week would you be expecting to work ?
7. Would you need a licence to operate ?
8. Are there any training courses available ?
9. How would you go about getting clients ?
10. How much competition are you likely to have ?

These questions and many others should be addressed if you are seriously considering becoming an investigator as failing to be realistic and honest with yourself at the outset, can result in you making the wrong decision and inevitably wasting your money.

Not everyone is suited to work in this type of profession or will feel comfortable with the lifestyle which comes with the job.

Our industry attracts people from all walks of life. Some think it's glamorous and exciting every day, just like it is in the movies and on TV and when they realise that is not the case, they have usually spent good money and will regret not doing their homework before embarking on a career which clearly was not for them from the start.



I WHAT MADE YOU CONSIDER THIS PARTICULAR CHOICE OF CAREER?

Is your perception of the job purely taken from what you have seen on TV, on the movies or read in fictional novels? If that is the case, you need to look beyond that image.

Whilst there may be the intriguing interesting cases which come along as more experience is gained and you establish a good working relationship with clients, the bulk of work carried out by the P.I. is often routine and sometimes mundane. We will expand on the actual type of work undertaken further in this volume. Routine basic work should be expected when first starting in the business and is not a bad thing as it teaches you to discipline yourself, master communication skills which are absolutely vital, and learn how to keep accurate records. This knowledge is invaluable as you progress to the more involved and complicated cases.

Are you considering a change after a career in the Police Service or the Armed Forces? Many make this move as they see it as a natural transition to utilise some of the skills they have already attained. If this is the case you should be aware that your working life will be completely different from hereon. More often than not you will be working alone with no more powers than Joe Public. You will be using your own initiative and cannot rely on any back up from colleagues.

The work will inevitably be of a civil and not a criminal nature, (although some experienced investigators do undertake criminal defence work, which again will be covered later), you will therefore need to know and adapt to the rules that apply in civil cases. The role of an investigator can be a lonely

one and you have to consider whether you would be happy in this working environment.

Are you simply looking for a career change as you have become bored or get little satisfaction from your present employment? Does the grass look greener for what you perceive as a private investigator? This booklet will perhaps give you an indication of the shade of green.

Have you been prompted by advertisements on how to buy into a P.I. franchise? There are several companies who offer this type of 'run your own business under our banner', and quite naturally they are made to look easy and attractive, promising a guaranteed income. Again look before you leap, try to speak to someone who has already taken the plunge and bought into the operation, as some are successful and worth considering. However, always be mindful, if it looks and sounds too good to be true, it very often is. (Further information on buying a franchise is dealt with in section 4).

Are you a graduating student looking for your very first career path? Unfortunately the conventional type avenues, which lead to the more normal modes of employment, don't exist for the investigation profession in the private sector. There are no doors marked 'this way' therefore you will need to do your own research. If it's possible, speak to people you may know in the legal profession or the insurance industry, as they will have

an insight into who and why they may employ investigators. This way you may even get to hear of vacancies for trainees, although the hard fact is that these opportunities will be few and far between.

Whichever walk of life you come from, and whether you are male or female, the right kind of person can make a success at being a professional investigator. However, you must think long and hard about whether the investigation profession is for you.





2 DO YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND THE TYPE OF WORK THIS WOULD INVOLVE?

Have you done any research or even tried to think yourself, who would employ an investigator and for what reasons? That is a logical way of discovering the type of work that is out there in the commercial world.

Probably the most obvious client is a law firm. Solicitors generate more work for more investigators in the private sector than any other profession. Why? Because solicitors act for many clients both individuals and commercial clients who come to them with their contentious legal problems. Debt related matters, family and matrimonial matters, business issues, the list is endless. Some solicitors specialise in criminal defence work. Every one of these areas can involve work for the appointed investigator.

One of the most common tasks would be to personally deliver court documents on behalf of the solicitor. This is known as 'process serving'. Once an individual or company has been personally served with the legal document, the 'process server' has to provide proof that the document has been delivered to the correct recipient and in the correct manner. This is done by means of a witness statement, certificate of service or affidavit as required by the instructing solicitor. The evidence of service details what was served, who was served, how, when and where. This type of litigation support work can often provide a steady, if not too lucrative, income.

Other work generated by law firms can be quite varied from tracing missing debtors, locating witnesses, taking statements from witnesses, pre trading enquiries, pre suing status enquiries, matrimonial surveillance, tracking down beneficiaries, personal injury work. It is impossible to list all

the likely tasks.

Insurance companies can be another good source of work. This is most likely to involve investigating claims for loss or theft, or preparing RTA (road traffic accident) plans. Some insurance companies deal with 'long-term work absenteeism' claims and 'personal injury' claims and may require surveillance on a person to see if they are capable of returning to work or if they are exaggerating their injury.

Private individuals will always make up a small proportion of any client base. Some may be looking for long lost relatives, or have been adopted as a child and now wish to find their birth parents.

One has to exercise caution and patience, with some individuals, whilst at the same time being respectful. However, you must be mindful that the task they wish you to perform does not require you to cross the bounds of legality when gathering information. You must also respect the data subject and the client's confidentiality and right to privacy. Unless there is justification, in cases where legal proceedings are in hand or contemplated, you probably will need to obtain the data subject's consent after tracing their whereabouts before reporting personal detail to the client. Always remember that the information clients impart can often be quite sensitive.

Criminal defence work has been referred to. This would almost certainly be placed with an experienced investigator and more than likely one with a Police background, as the gathering and presenting of evidence in a criminal court has to follow very strict legal guidelines. Many law firms employ their own in house retired Police Officer as their chosen investigator.





3 HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH ANYONE ELSE WHO IS ALREADY IN THIS PROFESSION?

Although this would be the common sense thing to do, this is not always easy, as some established investigators, by the pure nature of the profession, like to keep a low profile and some even prefer to keep their line of work secret from their friends and neighbours.

However, if you can manage to speak to a practising investigator who is perhaps not located in your immediate area and less likely to see you as competition, then this can often prove helpful when it comes to making your ultimate decision.

There are other advantages in making contact with established investigators, some of which will become apparent as you read further on.





4 DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS INVOLVED IN SETTING UP A BUSINESS FOR YOURSELF ?

If you are considering starting as a sole trader and this is your first venture into working for yourself, you would be well advised at some stage to engage the services of a professional accountant who will set out the records in respect of income and expenditure you will need to keep to deal with your bookkeeping and will prepare your annual accounts and tax returns etc.

You will need a reliable and affordable motor vehicle, nothing flashy. Ideally something which will easily blend into any situation and not too easily identifiable, a decent video and still camera, and in addition to the obvious mobile telephone etc. a dedicated telephone land line for business. Also the use of a computer with internet access, plus photocopying facilities.

Most of these commodities are likely to be already in your possession. However, the likes of photographic equipment etc. may need upgrading to a higher standard. You would then need to look upon your possessions as tools of your trade and as such, you must therefore ensure they are always in working order and are adequately covered by insurance.

So far we have concentrated on a person acting as a sole trader as this is the most common route into this industry. As a sole trader you should be aware that whilst there are advantages in this status, such as, you make all the decisions, you only need to register as self employed and pay a weekly National Insurance contribution and you do not have to file formal annual accounts, you are also solely responsible for business liabilities and if you are unable to pay them, your personal assets can be lost.

There are other legal structures within which you can operate your business as a professional investigator:

(a) A Limited Liability Company:

Setting up or forming a limited Company gives your business a certain amount of protection and separates you as an individual from your business. Unlike a sole trader this means that the business debts are the liability of the limited company and not you as an individual and therefore your personal assets cannot be taken to repay the business debt. However, banks and other lending establishments normally require the directors' personal guarantees when providing financial support, which then does make you personally liable if your business is unable to repay the bank loan.

Whilst the status of a limited company can mean there are certain tax and other advantages, it also imposes certain legal duties such as filing formal annual accounts on time which are held at Companies House and a version are open to public inspection.

Setting up a limited company is not an expensive exercise and ready made companies can be bought off the shelf via formation companies. An accountant or solicitor can carry out all the necessary preparation work on your behalf, if necessary.

**For more details visit: www.companies-house.gov.uk
and click on 'incorporating a company'**

(b) A Partnership:

Trading as a partnership does not provide the same type of protection as a limited company and in the event of a liability issue then all partners are jointly and personally liable and can have their personal assets seized.

A partnership is a business run by a number of joint owners from 2 persons to as many as 20, although a partnership of 2 is the most common. Many such arrangements are informal and rely on just a 'hand shake' and often the partners are other family members or friends. However, successful partnerships rely on long term compatibility and in that respect are comparable to a marriage, a 'business marriage'.

It is wise to consider having a formal partnership agreement in place as some partnerships fail because of differences of opinion or

misunderstandings which only surface after spending long hours together. In the absence of a formal agreement the Partnership Act 1890 applies.

The advantages of a partnership are that the financial start up costs are shared as well as the ultimate workload and burden of responsibility. A further advantage may be that one partner has skills in a particular business area such as administration, whilst others can bring different skills to the business. Also a partner can keep the business going whilst another is on holiday or unable to work because of illness.

(c) A Limited Liability Partnership (LLP):

A limited liability partnership has elements of a limited company and also elements of an ordinary partnership. An LLP is a partnership in which some or all the partners have a limited liability. In an LLP one partner is not liable for another partner's negligence or misconduct. This is an important difference from an unlimited partnership. In an LLP some partners have a form of liability similar to that of shareholders of a corporation.

In an LLP there is far less form filling and bureaucracy than with a limited company. As there are no formal share holdings, profits and even losses can be dealt with depending on the resulting financial circumstances the business finds itself in.

(d) A Franchise:

A franchise was referred to earlier and this is another way of getting into the investigation industry.

Buying into a franchise means you buy the right to benefit from the franchisor's brand or trading name. For your financial outlay you will receive advertising and marketing support, training to the company's level of operation and referral work, in addition to professional guidance by reference to the existing company's experienced operators.

Being part of a successful enterprise whilst still having a certain amount of independence, can look very attractive. However, the cost of some franchise arrangements are very expensive and some retain a proportion of the income you generate. You also have to comply with the company's methods and they may retain ultimate control.

By doing your own common sense research, you will soon discover if this is the route you feel best suited to and can afford, and if so, which particular franchise to look at more seriously.

As our industry is made up of many one man businesses, there will always be people who are preparing to retire. They will have established their own business reputation over many years and have a ready made client base. Some may consider taking in a newcomer with a view to ultimately taking over the business. This can be a great opportunity to gain practical experience from a mentor and at a proportion of the cost of starting alone.

Your chosen accountant will be the best person to advise you which is the most suitable trading status for you and will remind you that you are going into business to make money no matter how glamorous or exciting you may think this industry is.



5 CAN YOU AFFORD TO SET UP YOUR OWN BUSINESS ?

This of course will depend upon your present circumstances.

Some of you may be in the fortunate position of having an income from a pension courtesy of your previous employer, or have sufficient savings to finance your start up costs. However, there will be some who are looking at this move without those comforts. In those cases, it may be necessary to look to your bank for a small business start up loan. If this is the case, do not go in to your bank unprepared. You must be able to show some form of business plan. To do this you will have to firstly show you have done some research on your predicted expenditure, predicted income and predicted profit, and probably a forecast over a three year period. Not an easy thing to do when starting from scratch. However, you will be able to list your likely outgoings to cover the running and maintaining of your vehicle, telephone, postage, advertising/marketing costs etc. The most difficult at this point will be trying to predict an income and profit margin, as these are the unknown factors. That is where information from somebody else already in the profession is helpful, and can be quoted as an approximate guideline.

All banks have marketing leaflets/booklets specifically targeting people who are thinking of starting their own business. It is a good idea to pick up some of this material from different banks. This way you will be aware of how organised and prepared you will need to be when sitting across the desk from the bank manager.

You must expect a period where there will be no income at all, as you will be advertising and trying to attract clients (pointers on how best to do this are covered later). Therefore you must be realistic and build this into your business plan.

When considering overall costs, the obvious and most economical place to operate your business would be from your home. Most agencies start their business this way and progress to office premises only as and when the turnover grows. However, some are content to continue working from home for the convenience of running their family and domestic life in conjunction with their business.



6 HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK WOULD YOU BE EXPECTING TO WORK ?

If you are anticipating any kind of normal starting or finishing times, or regular 9 to 5 routine, then I suggest you don't waste your time by reading any more of this publication. Unsociable hours are part of the package whether you work from home or not.

Work is of a reactive nature. You would be responding to a client's needs, a client who has a problem and he/she is looking to you to resolve it, not next week but now. If you are not prepared to be accommodating, you can be sure your competitor will.

Depending on the nature of the case, you may have to be prepared to work late at night and early morning, sometimes all the way through.

If you have been used to a set working week with predictable working hours, then you must be prepared for this to change and your family and social life will also change. Be under no illusion, if you are a married person with children, your new career will have an effect on them also and you will need to discuss this at the outset as you have to work hard to make a successful business and to do so you will need the support and understanding of your family.

For the majority of the time you will be working alone; this will certainly be the case when first starting your new career. You may even have to spend time away from home. If you have come from a police or military background, or any conventional job involving others on a daily basis, you will no longer have the comfort of colleagues around you to seek help and support. This can be a lonely working life.

7 WOULD YOU NEED A LICENCE TO OPERATE ?

To date there have been no licensing requirements for conducting investigations in the UK private sector. This may seem strange considering the fact that several European countries have had licensing for many years, and most US States also have a licenced regime for investigators. According to the Home Office the position in the UK will change.

In 2001, the then Government created the regulatory mandate for the creation of the Security Industry Authority, SIA, www.the-sia.org.uk. The Private Security Industry Act received Royal Assent on 11th May 2001. This Act was intended to include the growing industry in private security in the UK in an accountable and trained regime. Up until that point there was no control over who could operate as a private security operative. The Act was also written to encompass a number of activities, which were considered to be on the fringe of private security, such as door supervisors (night club doormen), close protection, security consultants, and investigations in the private sector. This was the first time the term 'Private Investigator' received formal acknowledgement in Parliament; however, the term is not planned to be protected as it is the defined activity that the Act intends to regulate not the title of the job.

Each sector of the security industry was to have licensing phased in over a period of time. To achieve this, the SIA had to introduce vetting procedures, training criteria, operating standards etc. and also have in place a procedure to police licensing using Compliance Officers. The licensing of most sectors was achieved, however investigation was always way down the agenda and when the Coalition Government came into power in 2010, they very soon made sweeping changes and in October 2010 they decided to scrap 192 Quangos (Quasi Autonomous Non- Governmental Organisations) one of which was the SIA. However, following a public consultation the policy was altered. The Government felt that the SIA's functions should be reformed and a document was published on 20th November 2012 entitled 'Consultation on a Future Regulatory Regime for the Private Security Industry'. The proposal outlined in that document was that there should be a phased transition to a business regulation regime and a significant change to how individuals are licensed

In response to the recommendations to regulate investigations by the Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee, published in 2012, the then Home Secretary announced on the 31st July 2013 that private investigations will be regulated by the SIA newly formed industry led regime in the Autumn of 2014. As yet this has not come about.

The process to obtain a licence will require the SIA to conduct a fit and proper test, covering:

- Criminality and identity
- Competence standards (training & qualification)
- The right to work

The Home Secretary's announcement also followed the Government sponsored Inquiry into the role of the press and the police in the phone hacking scandal. Lord Justice Leveson was appointed as Chairman of the Judicial Inquiry and the hearings opened on 14th November 2011 at the Royal Courts of Justice. Witnesses from the press, senior Police Officers and prominent Members of Parliament were called to give evidence, including the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition. It was during this lengthy inquiry that the part private investigators may have played in the wider issues was raised. A number of representative and practitioners from the private investigation sector were called to provide detailed written followed by oral evidence at this public Inquiry including the President of the Association of British Investigators.

A Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry chaired by The Right Hon. Keith Vaz MP was also held to gather evidence specifically on the issue of Data Protection and the activities of private investigators when again evidence was given by witnesses from a broad section of the sector including The ABI President.

The Committee published its recommendations in July 2012, which formed the basis of The Home Secretary's announcement a year later.

On 29th November 2012 Lord Justice Leveson's lengthy report was issued, The cost of that Inquiry has been put by some as in the region of £5 million.

The Private Security Industry Act 2001 defines the licensable activities of private investigations.

According to the Act you will need an SIA licence if you are involved in any surveillance, inquiries or investigations that are carried out for the purposes of:

- obtaining information about a particular person or about the activities or whereabouts of a particular person; or
- obtaining information about the circumstances in which, or means by which, property has been lost or damaged.

Anyone involved in providing contracted private sector investigation services will require a licence. This includes employees, employers, managers, supervisors and directors* or partners of investigation companies. It is expected that investigation businesses will require the SIA Business Licence compliant with British Standards; for this purpose The British Standard Institution published in September 2013 a Code of Practice for the Provision of Investigative Services (BSI 02000).

According to the Act, and its later amendments certain activities are excluded, such as:

- activities exclusively for the purposes of market research;
- activities exclusively concerned with a credit check;
- professional activities of practising solicitors and barristers;
- professional activities of practising accountants;
- professional activities of journalists and broadcasters, and activities exclusively relating to obtaining information for journalists and broadcasters
- activities exclusively relating to reference to registers which are open to the public; registers or records to which a person has a right of access; and published works;
- activities carried out with the knowledge or consent of the subject of the investigation.

Penalties

The penalty for working as an unlicensed investigator will be:

- upon summary conviction at a Magistrate's Court, Sheriff Court or District Court, a maximum penalty of six months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £5,000.

The penalty for supplying unlicensed staff will be:

- upon summary conviction at a Magistrate's Court, Sheriff Court or District Court, a maximum penalty of six months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £5,000.
- upon conviction on indictment at Crown Court, High Court of Justiciary or Sheriff and jury trial, an unlimited fine and/or up to five years imprisonment.



8 ARE THERE ANY TRAINING COURSES AVAILABLE ?

Several distance learning or correspondence courses have emerged over recent years with many now incorporating on-line home study curriculum, however, one has to be very careful when choosing a training course of this nature as some are of little or no value at all, even if on completion of the course you are presented with an impressive looking certificate or diploma. Unless the qualification is a formally recognised one, approved by an awarding body, it is unlikely to have clients beating a path to your door. With licensing being stated by Government to become a requirement to open an investigation business, it is essential that any training course leads to a recognized qualification fit for this purpose.

For details of the ABI Academy training and qualifications please go to:
<http://www.theABI.org.uk>

There are a number of very good courses available which include practical as well as theoretical training. You will find that some providers specialise in specific skills, such as surveillance, tracing, witness statement taking, road traffic accident reporting etc. These are in the main aimed at the more established investigators who have already acquired the basic skills and wish to offer specialised services to their clients.

No training course exists which will teach you everything you need to know about being a successful investigator. If you decide to seek out any training, be absolutely sure you know what the course is all about and what you are getting for your money.

Most investigators operate as general practitioners, in other words, the work is so varied that whilst the basic rules will apply, there will be no off the shelf manual to refer to which covers every eventuality.

However, there is one publication, which can be referred to in the specific area of process serving. The serving of legal documents was explained earlier in paragraph 2. The Association of British Investigators publishes **‘The Process Servers Guide’**. This book is a complete guide to the practice rules which apply when dealing with every type of legal document and contains templates of all the required supporting affidavits, statements and certificates of service you will need to produce proof of service for the Court records.

Gathering information and evidence legally and correctly is vitally important, however if you cannot convey your findings to the client in a clear and professional way, the value of your work can be considerably diminished. Your written report is what the client will see and is what may be used in evidence. To a great degree you will be judged by the clarity and presentation of your report, so remember your report is also a marketing tool.

There is a skill to report writing, and another ABI publication entitled **A Guide to Report Writing** can be of great assistance in taking you through the disciplines required to produce an informative factual report.

For full details of all these publications go to **www.theABI.org.uk**



9 HOW WOULD YOU GO ABOUT GETTING CLIENTS?

As quoted earlier, solicitors generate a variety of work for the private investigator and this is a good place to start with an advertising exercise which will cost you only your own time.

Along with business cards etc. smartly designed, one sheet leaflets etc can be generated on your computer and you can hand deliver them to every law firm in your town. This can be done after business hours when there is less traffic and the offices are closed. The firm will almost certainly be using an investigator or enquiry agent to carry out their peripheral work but having an alternative will not be frowned upon as solicitors frequently need a job doing now which may simply be a matter of going to your local Court office to collect documents which need to be served 'today' and their regular man may not be available. This kind of opportunity will occur, but you will have to be patient. When it does, make the most of it by being smartly dressed, be businesslike and most of all, be efficient. The small jobs sometimes lead to the bigger assignments.

If you have an industrial area or trading estate in your town, repeat the exercise. Your marketing material will have to be tailored more towards commercial work but again this is a very cost-effective way of getting your name known.

Advertisements in your local newspaper are sometimes worthwhile. However, they do tend to attract individuals more than business clients and some people will turn out to be time wasters who have little else to do with their day and see it as a novelty to speak to advertisers offering novel services such as investigators.

People do still tend to turn to the Yellow Pages and this is worth considering. However, look who is already advertising. You will probably find there are several 'Detective Agencies' listed. Some will be from outside your area and just display an 0800 number and no address. Some will be long established, reputable agencies and it may be worth your while contacting the well known companies, as they may just be looking to outsource some of their work rather than take on full time staff; another possible source of income.

A website of course helps but this can be expensive and it would be wise to wait until you have some working experience under your belt, and

you have perhaps considered joining one of the professional bodies. This would be a positive step, as belonging to a recognised organisation not only adds credibility when displayed on a website and on your stationery and marketing material, but will also expose your business to all other members of the particular association and beyond if the association has its membership directory on their website. It will also undoubtedly lead to generating inter agency work between yourself and your fellow association members.

The best recognized and longest established association representing investigators and litigation support agents in the UK is:

The Association of British Investigators: www.theABI.org.uk

To conclude this section, experience has shown that the best way by far to promote your business is to prove your ability, efficiency and reliability. Word of mouth is worth far more than any marketing or advertising.

10 HOW MUCH COMPETITION ARE YOU LIKELY TO HAVE ?

Check your local Yellow Pages, remembering that some who place adverts will not have a physical presence in your town. They will provide just a contact number which will be answered elsewhere. Most people find comfort in seeing a local address when looking for any kind of tradesman.

Look on the internet for investigators within your locality. Look on the trade associations' websites and check for members in your town or just beyond. You will quickly get an idea of how much competition you would be facing.

Whilst the issue of competition should not be overlooked when making your decision, don't be put off by competition. Competition is healthy. It can sometimes lead to cooperation. Building up a good respectful relationship with a local competitor can develop into joint ventures. Two separate agencies can sometimes offer a client a more comprehensive service and as a result may secure an assignment where individually neither would be capable of undertaking the task. These kinds of liaisons sometimes even lead to business partnerships being formed.

For the right person, a career in investigation can be very satisfying. To know that you have solved, or helped to solve a problem is a great feeling. You will often feel like you are a social worker and will need patience and understanding. There will be times when the work is routine, but there will also be times of great intrigue and excitement. There will be times when you will be carrying out work on your own doorstep, but there could also be times when work takes you further afield, even to a different country.

Success in this profession is no different than any other; it lies in your own hands. Work hard, be prepared to learn from others and from your own mistakes and be completely honest with yourself and your clients. Build up a reputation for being reliable and the clients you acquire at the start will stay with you forever.

To summarise, *think* carefully before making a decision as to whether this is the career path you wish to follow.

If you decide it is, then *plan* carefully.

When you receive your first assignment, *prepare* carefully and when your work is done, *report* carefully. You will be judged on the care you take of your clients and the pride you take in your work.

GOOD LUCK IN MAKING THIS VERY IMPORTANT DECISION ABOUT YOUR FUTURE.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD INVESTIGATOR?

There are certainly some basic attributes, which make some investigators better equipped to do the job than others. You must remember an investigator has no preferential rights of access to information, no special privileges, no authority to demand cooperation from anyone (no equivalent to a police warrant card) The investigator in private practice has no more and no less rights than any other person. He must comply with all laws of the land just as any other person. We are all equal.

Occasionally certain situations can become confrontational, therefore it is important to have good people skills. Are you good a communicator? Do you have the ability to put people at their ease? Most importantly are you a good listener?

Do you have good computer skills? In these times of fast moving technology, IT competency is a great advantage as there are lots of on-line search facilities available which can be extremely helpful and can play a huge part in certain types of investigations.

It is virtually impossible to operate without a PC and also certain other items of equipment, such as a good still camera and camcorder. These items can often be already part of your hobby or even just family holiday items and will probably be sufficient to get you started, however as assignments increase and vary in requirement, it will be necessary to upgrade and add to these essential tools. There are lots of other skills which can be picked up along the way, sometimes by working with more experienced investigators, but those who already have the basic natural attributes referred to above will ease into the role far more smoothly.

DANGERS & PITFALLS

There are certain potential dangers you would need to be mindful of from the outset.

- Always get instructions in writing. If received by e-mail, insist on also having the client's full name, address and contact telephone details. Face to face meetings are ideal, but not always possible of course.
- Find out the client's objective, i.e. the reason he/she requires the information. Unfortunately not all private individual clients are completely truthful about their motives, for instance when wanting to trace someone, therefore you need to ensure you are not going to be party to some subsequent illegal or dubious activity. If in doubt, insist the instructions come from the client's solicitor.
- ALWAYS keep a record, including dates and times. Keep an exact copy of all reports sent, you may have to prove exactly what you did and exactly when you did it at some later date.
- Be sure any information you obtain can be seen and proven to have been obtained from public information records and legally obtainable sources etc. Any slight breach of The Data Protection and/or Human Rights regulations, as referred to earlier in this publication, could completely ruin and nullify all your hard work on a case and deem your

whole evidence inadmissible. A sure way to lose a client forever and your reputation will suffer accordingly.

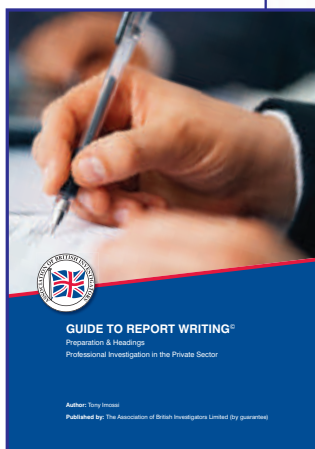
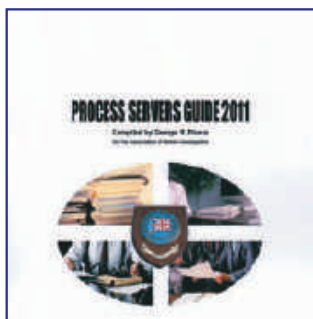
- Consider applying for membership of one of the recognised investigation associations, as you will learn from others who may have experienced some of the dangers and pitfalls referred to and can offer advice when in doubt.

**THE REST AS THEY SAY,
IS NOW UP TO YOU !**

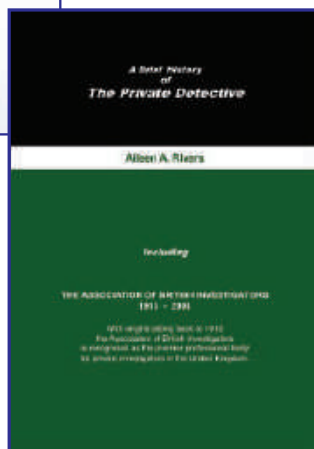


Other publications available from the Association of British Investigators Ltd are:

The Process Servers' Guide



Guide to Report Writing



A brief history of The Private Detective



Association of British Investigators

Brentano Suite, Catalyst House, Centennial Park, Elstree WD6 3SY

t: 020 8191 7500 **e:** secretariat@theABI.org.uk
www.theABI.org.uk

