



THE Connection

Official Newsletter of the Georgia Association of Professional Private Investigators, Inc.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The Next
GAPPI Atlanta
Chapter Meeting
March 8, 2011
at Ryan's Restaurant
705 Jimmy Carter Blvd.
Norcross
(770) 840-9096

Networking and lunch from
11:30 a.m.—12:00 noon
Meeting from
12:00 noon—1 p.m.

The cost is \$15.00 for GAPPI
members

\$20 for non-members
(includes lunch and beverage)

Students and potential members are
always welcome.

“We look forward to seeing
you all there!

10 Tips for Private Investigators to Increase Cash Flow

By Scott B. Fulmer

Cash is king. Let's face it: The most difficult aspect of being a self-employed private investigator is cash flow (or the lack thereof). It affects payroll and many other areas of your business. In the long run it can make or break you. Given the condition of the present economy everything must be done to increase cash flow. There are numerous strategies, techniques and fancy theories regarding how to do so. I'll leave those to the folks with MBAs. Instead, let's look at 10 simple tips that you can quickly put into practice to help increase your cash flow.

1. Show me the money! Email your invoice: If you haven't been emailing your invoices to clients, start doing so today. Why drop them in the mail and wait two or three days for the U.S. Postal Service to deliver the invoice? In fact, most accounting software such as QuickBooks will do this for you. This will increase cash flow by helping you to be paid quicker.

2. Pour the wine and cut those checks! When does your client's company cut checks? Don't be afraid to ask him. Is it once a week? Is it every Monday and Wednesday? If so, make sure you time your report and invoice delivery about a day or two beforehand. It doesn't necessarily mean your check will go out the day they cut checks but you've just increased the odds of that happening. Pay special attention to federal holidays, days the company may be closed or when your client may be leaving for vacation. Most folks will cut checks and take care of business beforehand. Look ahead and be prepared. When you get a new client ask him how long it takes to process an invoice and pay you. Knowing this information will help you manage your cash flow and keep enough money in the pipeline.

3. Always (and I mean ALWAYS) get paid up front: I am talking specifically about first-time clients and all domestic clients. With these types of clients I follow something I call the “Jay J. Armes* Rule.” I always get paid up front. I offer a free consultation, however when I decide to take the case I don't even lift my pinky finger until I am paid a full retainer up front. This is especially important with domestic clients. If you conduct an investigation for a domestic client that is not resolved in the manner in which they expected (and you did NOT get a retainer up front), you

2011 Officers

President
Roy Wilkinson

Vice President
Pamela Griggs

Secretary
Ted Viator

Treasurer
Tracy Steele

Board Members:

Willis Craig

Michael Barker

John Roberson

Immediate Past President
Glenn Christian

will find that their willingness to pay you has decreased considerably in inverse proportion and with the same intensity to how excited they were to have originally hired you. Translation: You ain't getting paid. Always get paid up front.

* For those of you who don't know, Jay J. Armes is considered by many to be the most successful private investigator in the business. This is one of his personal rules of doing business.

4. TAT: Minimize your final report turnaround time: How long does it take from the time you complete an investigation to the time your client has the final report and video in his hands? Do you hand-deliver the final report? Is it available online within 48 hours? You must minimize the time it takes from when you complete an investigation to when the client receives the report and invoice.

5. Do not pay your employees every two weeks: As I previously mentioned, one of the most difficult aspects of a small business is making payroll. I pay my employees on the 1st and the 16th of each month, rather than every two weeks as other companies do. When you pay on the 1st and 16th of each month you must make payroll twice a month. If you pay every other Friday there will be a few months during the year where you'll need to make payroll three times in the same month.

6. I'll gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today: Would you be willing to trade \$600 or more for \$80 every week? You may already be doing so. Are you a one-person operation? Are you doing the work, marketing, reports, videos and invoices? Are you convinced you can't afford to hire someone to do the reports and video? If so, you'd better think again. The fact is you can't afford *not* to. If you are spending 8 to 10 hours a week or more typing reports and processing video, that's 8 to 10 hours a week that you could be working an investigation or finding a new client. That's 40 hours a month and 480 hours a year! Why not pay someone part-time to take care of the reports and video (to your high standards, of course). It's better to pay them to handle that work so you can conduct an investigation or find a new client.

7. How do you know when a lawyer is lying? His lips are moving: We love lawyers. However, unless you have an established business relationship with an attorney you'll need to take some precautions before doing business with them. You'll need a written client agreement and you'll need to know beforehand whether your fee will be paid by the attorney or by his client. Your client agreement should stipulate that your invoice is due upon receipt and is not determined by whether or not the case is going to trial, the case is settled, the case is settled in your favor, the client drops the case, etc. If you don't answer these questions before you begin the

investigation it'll be a cold day in hell before you get paid!

8. **Friends and family discount 20%:** Charity begins at home. You wouldn't expect a doctor to perform a surgery for free or a real estate agent to find and close on your house for free. You better be willing to charge your own mother for work you do. I can't fill my gas tank with "favors" nor can I feed my children with "but I'm your sister!" I do offer friends and family a 20% discount but I still expect them to pay for my services. You want to give back? Donate a percentage of your profits to a charity. Oh, and remember tip #3. Get your friends and family to pay you up front. Always!

9. **Do you offer a blue light special?** Offer discounts to clients who pay up front or who pay promptly (you decide what "promptly" means).

10. **Make more sales!** It's as simple as that. Continue building your business by adding more clients and making more sales. Increase your cash flow by consistently driving money through the pipeline.

As I mentioned, there are literally hundreds of ways to increase your cash flow. Hopefully these 10 simple tips will make a positive impact on your business.

Scott B. Fulmer wrote this article for PInow.com, which is a trusted network of local, pre-screened private investigators. Fulmer is a private investigator, writer, speaker and President and CEO of Scott B. Fulmer Investigations, LLC, based in San Antonio, TX. He is available to speak to your group, seminar or conference. You may contact him at scott@scottbfulmerinvestigations.com. To learn more about PInow.com, visit www.PInow.com.

Learning Shop USA

Online Continuing Education Courses

Courses for 2 CEUs	\$40
Courses for 4 CEUs	\$65
Courses for 8 CEUs	\$125

Certificates sent in seconds

See Catalog at www.learningshopusa.com

Contact us at admin@learningshopusa.com

Turbo-Market Your Private Investigator Business in 2011

By Colleen Collins

There are numerous marketing tips out there, but tips are like cars—a Buick might be a great fit for one driver’s needs, but not another’s. To market *your* [private investigator](#) business, it’s important to first identify customers you want to attract, your budget constraints, your edge over your competitors. After using that information to identify and schedule your marketing tasks, give those tasks some “added juice” with follow-up actions.

Identify Your Customers

Identifying your customers helps you decide where to commit resources and what promotions to use.

There are dozens of specializations in the private investigations field. An infidelity investigator, for example, may want to attract two types of customers: people in the general population who suspect a partner or spouse of cheating, and lawyers who specialize in family law. Legal investigators want to attract lawyer clients, focusing on firms that handle their investigative specialization (such as criminal defense or personal injury).

Set Your Budget

Decide how much money you want to spend on marketing. There are plenty of free options you can explore, some of which are covered in this article.

Define Your Edge Over Your Competition

Unless you have a very unique, narrow investigative niche, there are other investigators offering the same services as you. Think about how you excel in comparison—for example, do you provide a faster turnaround, specialized training, or state-of-the-art equipment? Emphasize your edge in your marketing.

A Few Online Marketing Ideas That Cost Nothing

A 2010 Pew Research Center survey states that 79 percent of American adults go online, with 66 percent of their searches to buy products or services. Take advantage of those searching online for services! Below are a few free online marketing suggestions:

- 1. Update Your Website.** Web crawlers for top search engines like Google, Bing and Yahoo! love updated content. It doesn’t take much to update—add a new photo, personal recommendation, original article.
- 2. Start a Blog.** Websites promote your investigations business, whereas a blog lets potential customers “see” you in action—your investigative advice, how you recently solved a case, and so on. You can easily build a free blog through WordPress, Blogger, and Blog.com. As with your website, update often. It’s smart to host the blog on your own domain - such as [www.examplewebsite.com/blog](#) - to ensure that your website becomes more searchable by search engines because of the fresh content.
- 3. Register Social Media Accounts.** According to the University of Maryland Smith School of Business, in 2009 sixty-one percent of businesses attracted new clients via social media. It’s easy to register an account on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and other social media sites. You can manually post to these sites, or set up your blog (such as WordPress) to automatically post your articles to social media sites.
- 4. Write a Press Release.** Plug your services, the launch of a blog, a speaking engagement or other event to a regional audience through an online PR release. You can submit free press releases through such sites as [Free-press-release.com](#), [PRlog.org](#) and [PRcom](#).

Schedule Your Marketing Tasks

Scheduling tasks helps you stay focused and not get distracted, or lose sight of, your marketing plan goals. It can be as easy as jotting notes in a paper calendar or typing ideas in a free online calendar, such as Google calendar. Schedule for any period of time—for example, when we started our agency we scheduled an intensive four-month marketing plan to gain visibility and attract potential clients. These days, we might do a one-month marketing blitz during slow times. Some investigations agencies schedule small, year-round marketing tasks.

Add Juice to Those Tasks

For each scheduled task, add some juice by following up on it. For example, follow up a letter campaign with phone calls, follow up a website launch with an electronic PR notice, follow up a blog post with a Twitter message.



Is your sound recording “at a loss for words?”

Audio enhancement, speech extraction, noise reduction
from video, microcassette, analog and digital sources.

Over seven years' experience working with
PI's, attorneys, individuals, and law enforcement agencies.

David Leonard

david@revealaudio.com

770.928.1955

Example: A Turbo-Marketing Plan for an Infidelity Investigator

Potential Clients: Local adult population, family law attorneys.

Budget: Limited (free, when possible).

Competitive Edge: State-of-the-art digital video equipment and undercover cameras, overnight delivery of video/photos.

January 20: Launch a WordPress blog that has region, service, business title and phone number in name (“Great Lakes Infidelity Investigations: Call Smith Investigations 555-555-5555 for Free Consultation”)—web crawlers will pick up/post the information in this blog name. Blog plugs state-of-the-art surveillance equipment. First article builds on this, titled “Why You Want a Technically Savvy Infidelity Investigator.”

Add Juice: Jan 20: Blog automatically posts to my Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn accounts. **Jan 21:** Write a free, electronic press release using PRLog.org announcing the blog launch.

February 1: Mail letters (that describe business services, edge over the competition, contact information) to family law firms in the area. Hand-deliver some to selected firms for opportunities to meet prospective clients in person.

Add Juice: Call each law firm a few weeks later to explain I'm following up to my letter and ask if they have any questions about the rates or services. Opportunity to network with attorneys and paralegals. Keep conversations professional, courteous, and brief.

February 15: Contact local groups (via email, letter) potentially interested in infidelity investigation services (divorce/dating groups, others) and offer to be a guest speaker.

Speaking Events: Distribute business cards at the event, and bring a sign-up sheet for people to enter their names and email addresses.

Add Juice: Send a follow-up email to the attendees. Thank them for attending, include a link to blog/website, a reminder about types of investigative services I offer.

You get the idea. It's about customizing your marketing to fit your needs, then adding juice to reinforce your message. Here's to a successful, turbo-charged 2011!

Colleen Collins wrote this article for Plnow.com, a trusted network of private investigators.

Collins is a professional private investigator who co-owns Highlands Investigations and Legal Services, Inc. (<http://www.highlandsinvestigations.com/>) based in Denver, Colorado. To learn more about Plnow.com, visit www.Plnow.com.

CyForensics, LLC[®]
GA License #PDC002282
www.cyforensics.com
info@cyforensics.com

(478) 731-0752



Louis M. Schlesinger, MMIS, LPI
CCE, CIFI, CFC, ACE, WCSI
Member: ISFCE, IISFA, ACFEI, GAPPI, ISPAG
GA Lic. #PDE047590



Computer Forensics Investigations / Data Recovery
Password Recovery / Expert Testimony

Advertise in The Connection!

Business Card—Approximate size: 3.5" x 2"
\$10 per issue or \$100 per year
(11 issues)

Quarter Page—Approximate size: 3.5" x 4.5"
\$25 per issue or \$250 per year
(11 issues)

Half Page—Approximate size: 7.5" x 4.5"
\$50 per issue or \$500 per year
(11 issues)

Full Page—Approximate size: 7.5" x 10"
\$100 per issue or \$1,000 per year
(11 issues)

For more information, contact us at:
vernon@ahqi.com / 404-766-1632

The Connection is published 11 times a year (monthly, Nov/Dec issue is combined) by the Georgia Association of Professional Private Investigators, Inc. (GAPPI). The staff of *The Connection* reserves the right to review and edit articles, advertisements, or other writings that are submitted for inclusion in this newsletter. The writer may contact *The Connection* Editor to request an exception to this policy. Articles printed in the newsletter may not necessarily reflect the views of GAPPI officers or members, and GAPPI does not necessarily endorse any product or service advertised in the newsletter. Contact GAPPI at Vernon@ahqi.com, 404-766-1632 for advertising information or notification of change of address, phone or e-mail.