



# THE Connection

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

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mark Your Calendar for November 4 & 5, 2011 for the 8th Annual Southeast Investigators Conference

The Next GAPPI Atlanta Chapter Meeting September 13, 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—1p.m.

The cost is \$15.00 for GAPPI members

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

\$10 for meeting only - no lunch

Students and potential members are always welcome.

"We look forward to seeing you all there!"

## 11 Ways for Private Investigators to Prevent Credit Card Charge Backs

Your investigation firm just concluded a successful case where you conducted hours of surveillance and searched through countless records to find out exactly what the client needed to know. You're feeling great about the successful job - until you discover that the client has initiated a charge back on the credit card they used to pay you. You groan as you consider the hassles you are about to endure dealing with the client, the client's bank and your merchant processing company.

Private investigators occasionally face this frustrating issue and it has caused many to stop accepting credit card payment altogether. But it doesn't have to be this way. A combination of preparation, high-quality customer service and solid business practices can prevent charge backs, as we'll explain.

### Why would a client initiate a charge back?

The reasons that a client might initiate a chargeback vary, but they can include dissatisfaction with services, confusion over billing, or even that the person wants something for nothing. For the purposes of this article, we will focus on preventing charge backs from clients resulting from billing confusion or a dispute over services rendered by a private investigator.

### How can I prevent a charge back?

Here is a list of 11 preventative measures and resolution tactics you can use to reduce your chances of dealing with a credit card chargeback.

1. Clearly explain your billing and refund policies to clients and if possible have them sign a written copy to prove that they read and understand them.
2. Give clients a detailed written description of the services you will be providing. If possible, have them sign a copy of this outlined plan.
3. Make sure the business name on the credit card billing statement matches your firm's name (or at least let the client know which name will appear if it's different than your firm's name). People become highly suspicious when they see an unknown charge on their card and may respond with a chargeback.
4. Include a phone number on the statement so clients can contact you in the event of confusion or disputes.
5. Keep clients fully updated on the status of their investigation so they don't consider a chargeback because they don't know if their job is being handled.
6. If your investigation on the client's behalf will be delayed, let them know promptly so they don't try to have their money returned through a chargeback.

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7. When choosing a merchant processing company or bank, research them thoroughly to compare chargeback resolution measures. Some merchant processing companies side firmly with consumers while giving little recourse to merchants or service-providers, so you should find a company that protects your rights and lets you fairly fight charge backs.
8. Keep careful records of your entire interaction with each client. Hold on to notes about telephone conversations, records of e-mail conversations, receipts, contracts, copies of credit cards and more. The more information you can offer as proof in the event of a chargeback, the better.
9. Work with clients to resolve disputes before they resort to a chargeback. You may deal occasionally with a client who rebukes all attempts to resolve the situation, but often a healthy dose of reasoning and customer service can save the day.
10. If the client's bank issues a retrieval request, which is where they ask for proof that you delivered the promised services, respond as quickly as possible. The sooner you offer proof, the less chance of a chargeback.
11. Last but not least is a tip that you likely practice every day but is nonetheless important to preventing charge backs: provide high-quality investigative services. Good old-fashioned hard work that produces the desired results is an effective way to keep clients from even considering a chargeback.

Do you accept credit cards and have some preferred methods of preventing charge backs or dealing with them? You can join in the discussion about accepting credit cards in the PInow.com Yahoo! Group.

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## 10 SEO Mistakes Private Investigators Should Avoid

Your investigation firm's website can be one of your greatest assets, but it loses a lot of value if it is unpopular with search engines. Google and other search engines are the main online entities that direct people to your site, so you need to make sure that the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tactics you use don't negatively impact your search rankings.

Take a look at this list of 10 common SEO mistakes that private investigators and others make, and maybe you'll find a couple of areas in which you can improve.

### 1. Not studying SEO basics

Whether you're trying to optimize your website on your own or employing a company to do it, you should gain a solid understanding of SEO and its importance. There are good and bad ways to optimize for search engines, and it would serve you well to be able to tell the difference.

### 2. Targeting the wrong keywords

One common keyword mistake is trying to optimize for really general terms like "investigator" or "investigation" instead of being very specific. When you optimize for these general terms, you are competing with thousands or millions of other sites and are less likely to see positive results. Use keyword research to identify more precise words you should be targeting, such as "Los Angeles private investigator." This focused approach will have greater impact on drawing potential customers to your site.

### 3. Failing to optimize locally

Search engines want to show people results that are as local as possible. If someone searches for investigators in Denver, Google prominently displays Denver investigation agencies. This means that your SEO strategy needs to include optimizing for keywords such as "Denver investigators" and "Denver investigations." To read more about local search, read [Ranking in Google Places for Process Servers and Investigators](#).

### 4. Stuffing your site with too many keywords

Keywords, like many things, are best in moderation. If you try to overload your website with keywords, the search engines will lose some interest and possibly lower your ranking. As long as your content flows naturally for readers and includes keywords in moderation, you're in good shape.

### 5. Not optimizing title tags

The title tag is the series of words you see at the top of your browser. Placing keywords in the title tag is a hugely important component of SEO, so ideally your title tag will contain investigator-specific keywords as well as your agency's location. Many websites still have "XYZ Intelligence" in the title tag, which tells search engines little about your site's purpose.

### 6. Trading or buying links from dubious sources

Many people will tell you that they can get thousands of links to your website (a good thing for SEO) for a price. However, many of these link-building services are either scams, or they use practices that can actually damage your SEO ranking. Instead of placing your trust in these questionable link peddlers, you should either research best practices for building your own links or work with a reputable company.

### **7. Trying to fool the search engines**

Companies like Google pay their brainiac staff members well to write complex algorithms that sniff out attempts to fool their search engines. In other words, don't waste your time trying. Historically, people have tried things such as including keywords in white or light-gray text, hoping that search engines would recognize the keywords while website visitors remained unaware. This and other sneaky techniques are called black-hat SEO, and they can get you blacklisted from search engines.

### **8. Not differentiating the content on your pages**

Make sure each page of your website has unique content, title tags and meta descriptions (the descriptive text you see in search results under links). It's a turn-off for search engines when they come across a site where every page is very similar.

### **9. Not fixing broken links**

Search engines don't like broken links and neither do your site visitors. This is an easy fix - just make sure that all links on your site go to the appropriate destination instead of an error screen.

### **10. Not blogging**

Blogging is actually optional, but it's beneficial. The more unique and relevant content you have on your website, the more impressed search engines will be. Another benefit of blogging is that if you write client-focused content, potential clients will come to your site for investigation information.

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## **Mark Your Calendar!!**

**Start earning CEU's now for your next renewal  
at the 8th Annual Southeast Investigators  
Conference on Nov 4-5, 2011. Come network  
with other professionals and attend some great  
educational sessions.**

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