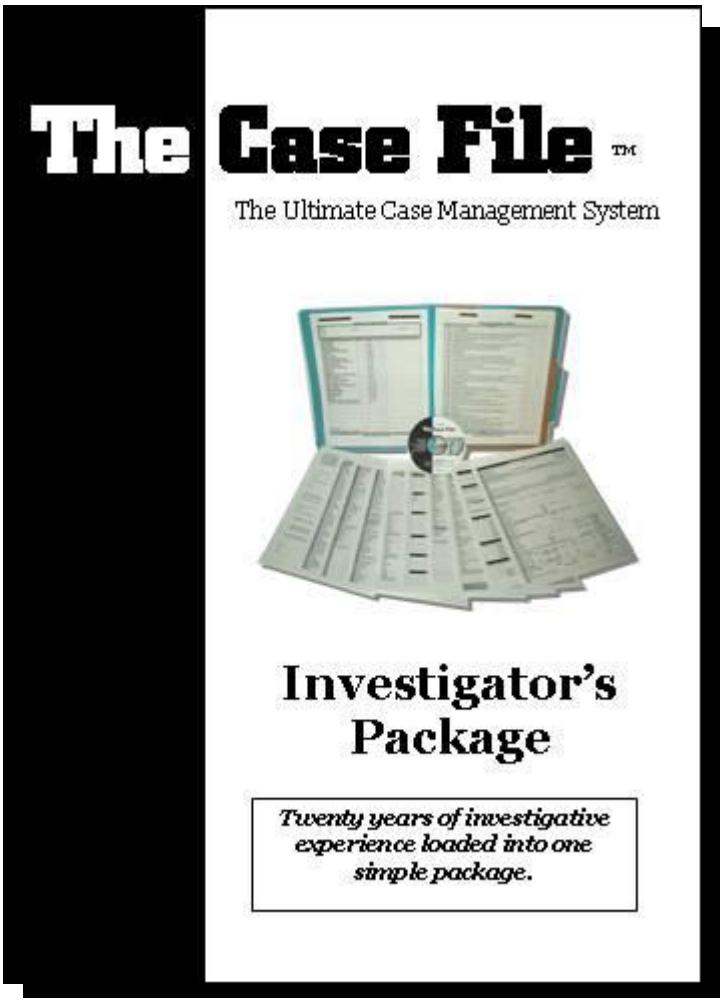
# Case Management 101

*By Paul Purcell, author of:*




*A small sample of our case management system for my fellow investigators.*

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Now that all of that's out of the way, let's get to the good stuff!

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# Section One - Introduction

Welcome to "Case Management 101," a small how-to section from our investigative case management system "The Case File".

Case management sometimes seems to be a straightforward and simple process. You get a case, write down what you need to do, go do it, and write up the results along with the bill. While true, there is SO much in the way of helpful detail that can make all the difference in the world to the success of your agency. We're here to provide you with some helpful detail, most of which we've learned the hard way on our own, that will help streamline your case management efforts and improve your bottom line.

At InfoQuest we always try to help our fellow investigators be more successful in our chosen profession. The way we look at it, the investigative world is full of potential colleagues, not competitors, and the more professional and successful we help our colleagues become, the better are all of our reputations, and the more friends we have in the industry.

That's why we commercially marketed The Case File, which was originally an in-house tool for our own agency, and that's also why we send out our marketing newsletter, our sample forms now and then, and individual articles to help you maintain a thriving agency. And, that's also why we're here with yet another no-cost ebook for you. Our own agency is constantly evolving for the better and we want to give of our experience to help our friends. So in keeping with what we do with The Case File, and the material we've put into other articles and ebooks, we have great info for the newbie, and fresh ideas for the pro.

For this installment of our educational series, we'll be focusing on the important case management detail you should consider when putting together and using a comprehensive **C.A.S.E. F.I.L.E.:**

**C**lient & Case – *Do you set yourself up for success starting from the first moment you talk to the client?*
**A**greements – *Figuring the Retainer, detailing the Contract, and crafting the Confirmation Letter.*
**S**ituation – *Good case work starts with knowing the case and all its background details*.
**E**ngineer – *Lay out the path your investigation is to take, schedule the staff, and assign the tasks.*
**F**iles & Forms – *Creating your Case File and working from forms, checklists, and templates*.
**I**nvestigation – *Working the case, tracking the hours, and thoughts on software.*
**L**etters – *Writing the Report, double-checking the Invoice, and making your final presentation*.
**E**nding – *Wrapping up the Clerical Activity and filing and storing your documents*.

We have a lot of good material here for you, so let's get started!

# Section Two – Case Management

## I. Client & Case

Without a client who has a need, you wouldn't have a case would you? All cases start with the first contact with the client and proceed from there. What we'll cover in "Client & Case" is a few of the ways in which you can make sure you're getting the information you need up front. When you first take a case, this extra info makes all the difference in the world on how the case will proceed. We'll cover **client data**, creating a **case number**, and getting the **basic case information**. In this and following sections, **form names** highlighted in **red text** have **forms included in this ebook in Section Three – Sample Forms**.

**1. Client Data:** The first player in your case is the client. Get as much information about **them** as you can in the beginning. Here are some thoughts on how and why.

A. **The Client Data Sheet / Work Order:** Your case begins with the very first client contact. Create a detailed client information sheet / work order so you can get as much information as possible from the client about themselves and their case. Gathering info now saves you time in the long run and is more **impressive** to the client. After all, they're hiring a detective, and a detective that asks questions and takes notes from the beginning is reassuring. Knowing more about the client and case up front makes it easier to formulate how you might need to work the case, who you assign it to, what resources you need to utilize, etc. This is vital to **formulating your retainer** amount, and customizing the contract for this client on this case. Some items you'll want to include in your work order / client contact info sheet:

- ***Basic Contact Info:*** *Client's name, address, phone number, email, etc.*
- ***Place of Employment:*** *Company name, address, phone number, company website, email, etc.*
- ***Secondary Contact:*** *Second phone, neighbor's info, other cell phone, online chat ID, social media.*
- ***Personal Identifiers:*** *Client's Social Security Number or Tax ID Number, DOB, Maiden Name, etc.*
- ***Synopsis of Case:*** *The very basic info so you'll know how to classify the investigation.*
- ***Releases:*** *If your specialty requires certain releases or other forms from the client, list them here.*
- ***Other Parties:*** *If other people, such as attorneys, are an active part of the case, list them here.*
- ***Communication Security:*** *How you can and cannot contact the client. Which methods are secure?*
- ***Case Number****: Your case begins now, so you should start tracking the details now.*

B. Getting detailed information on the client serves a few hidden needs as well. **One**, with some cases, you'll need to know **why** the client wants the information or you'll want to verify the legitimacy of their position in the investigation. Having good intel on your client lets you perform **due diligence** before working the case. **Two**, some civil cases can drag on for years, and the easier it is for you to contact the client and vice versa, the better. **Three**, there will be times when you have to turn a client over to collections because they haven't paid their bill. The more info you have on them the easier that process becomes.

C. Note: You'll want to keep some information about the client available while in the field, but you'll want to keep it secure. One thing to keep in mind is to **use the case number as the label** on file jackets, tops of forms, etc., rather than the client name. Another option is to code some of the sensitive information in the hardcopy file you take to the field so that if you inadvertently allow prying eyes to see the documents, you're still keeping the identity of your client confidential. Also, if you keep your computer with you or store data on a smart phone, be sure to use **passwords**.

**2. Creating a Case Number:** Create a case number at the first client contact if you think there's a chance you'll get or take the case. This gives you a tool to identify and reference the rest of your files, and this one little step will pay for itself over and over as you proceed with an investigation.

A. **Case Number Format:** Here's what we use at InfoQuest. We start with the date (in yyyymmdd descending format), add a two-letter case type code, two initials of the client, followed by a three digit number if it's a client we'll be doing multiple cases for (if it's a single case, just leave the end numbers off). For example, if we started a case on March 12th, 1992 for a Worker's Comp case for Acme Jones Insurance and it was our tenth case for them, the case number would be **19920312-WC-AJ-010**. We use **date-based formats** since everything we do as PIs, from billable hours, to scheduling, to billing, to taxes revolves around ***time***.

B. If you need to further **differentiate between clients** with similar initials, **add a third letter**. In our example above we used AJ to represent "Acme Jones Insurance." What if you had two very regular clients "Acme Jones Insurance" and "Andrew Johnson Attorney at Law?" You might show the first as AJI and the second as AJA.

C. Some **two-letter code** suggestions for case types include: DS = Domestic Surveillance, MP = Missing Persons, WD = Wrongful Death, AC = Activity Check, etc. Make a list and keep it handy.

D. Put the case number on the Client Data Sheet as soon as you discuss taking a case. Use the case number as the **beginning** of any **electronic filename** and any electronic or paper **file folder** you create even if you add text or other codes to show what the file is for. For example a witness list for the above case might have a file name of **19920312-WC-AJ-010-Witnesses.doc**. Using this filename format makes it easy to call up all documents having to do with that case.

E. Using the case number in part of the **file name** helps in other ways as well. First, you know by looking at it when the file was started. Second, when you use any computer's document manager, you can **sort by folder or file name**, which, in this instance, will automatically list your cases in chronological order. You can also **search by case type** (or client) by calling up all files with the two-letter code in question. For example, with Microsoft's "My Documents" search tool, you can use wild cards such as an asterisk (*). If you wanted to find all the Word ® documents related to your Domestic Surveillance (DS) cases, you'd enter the search as *DS*.doc. This would call up all the files that had the DS code as part of their file name. One important point to make here is that your average computer will do far more than most of us realize, and they already do it for **free**.

**3. Basic Case Information:** Always get as much case information from the client as you possibly can from the very beginning, and get it in writing. Not only is this an important step, it helps illustrate a crucial concept, and that is, if it's important enough to do, it's important enough to write down and create a standardized list. As the saying goes, "The dullest pencil has a better memory than the sharpest mind."

A. If you haven't done so yet, you should create **forms, checklists, and templates** that prompt you to gather all necessary information related to the specific types of cases you work. We'll discuss this in greater depth in part **V. Files & Forms** and we'll provide you with a few worksheets you can print and use in **Section Three – Sample Forms**.

B. Having a **checklist** or **worksheet** for gathering case background information does several things. **First**, it makes you look more prepared and professional in front of the client. **Second**, it saves time since you're sure to get all the information you need on the first trip. **Third**, for the seasoned investigator, worksheets provide an organized place to list all the info you already know to gather (makes report writing and invoicing MUCH easier). And **fourth**, it allows you to assign cases to less experienced investigators because with a detailed worksheet, everything they need to do is laid out for them in checklist format. They won't forget to ask things and they'll look good in the process.



***When meeting with the client, get as much early information directly from them as possible.***

## II. Agreements

Once you have a client and a case, your next step is to make absolutely sure and certain that everyone is on the same page about the goals of the case, how the investigation is to be conducted, the roles of the investigator and client throughout the process, how the report is to be submitted, and the details of the financial relationship. Here we'll cover formulating **the retainer**, detailing **the contract**, and a discussion of the "**confirmation letter**."

**1. The Retainer:** Retainers are one of the hot-button topics of discussion at a variety of PI gatherings. At InfoQuest we base our retainer on a percentage of projected case costs and we generally offer a refund if the case is completed before the retainer amount has been used up. Also, we vary our retainer policy based on the client and type of case. For example, we have attorneys we regularly work cases for and we don't require a retainer from them. This is just the way we chose to work things, and how you formulate your own policies is entirely up to you. Our job with this ebook is not to say "you *have* to do things this way or that." **Our goal is to make you think and give you options**.

A. **Thoughts and questions about your retainer policies**:

- *If the retainer is paid by check, will you require that the **check clear the bank** before case work begins?*
- *Is any part of your retainer going to be **refundable** or non-refundable?*
- *If you refund a portion of the retainer, do you do it immediately or do you set a safety-zone **time frame**?*
- *Safety-zone time frames **protect you** from refunding portions of a retainer if the initial retainer **bounces**.*
- *Some agencies make a portion of the retainer a non-refundable "kill fee" for **early termination** by client.*
- *Does your state have laws regarding retainers such as the funds going into an **escrow** account?*
- *Does your state have laws about **interest** that retainer fees accrue while a case is being worked?*
- *Have you asked your **attorney**, accountant, and state **PI association** about retainer laws?*
- *Have you made it easy for your client to pay a retainer (or other fees) by accepting **credit cards**?*
- *When formulating the retainer, do you figure in **projected hours** as well as conceivable **costs**?*
- *Do you have a set **percentage** of total projected costs that you base your retainer figure on?*
- *Will you charge a retainer on all cases or just specific types of cases, or not for certain clients?*
- *If you **exceed the retainer amount**, do you immediately stop work or do you offer a grace period?*
- *If you complete a case before using up the retainer amount, will you offer a **refund**?*

**2. The Contract:** The most important piece of paper associated with a case is the contract. Make sure yours protects both you and the client and helps streamline the case by spelling out such details as overall case goals, case limitations (time or types of activity), and payment arrangements.

A. We've provided a basic template for you in this ebook. However, this is one document you want to go over with your **attorney** and your **accountant**. Make sure you've dotted the "I"s, crossed the "T"s, and covered your… well, you know. Note: When possible, have contracts **notarized**. This helps prevent some disagreements that may arise with some clients. Anyone on your staff a notary?



***The contract is one of your most important documents***

B. To help convey the importance of the contract, and to help enhance your professional image in the field, consider having your contract produced at a **print shop** on some **better paper** than just your average office copy / printer paper OR, have your contract made with attached carbonless copies (you would keep the signed original). If you go this route, be sure your contract matches the agency letterhead you use on business cards, brochures, etc.

C. If you have your contract professionally printed, consider having as many of the set fees, rates, and percentages that you regularly charge **printed on the contract** rather than leaving a blank. This lets your client know that these are your fees and that's that. Otherwise, empty blanks might make it look like some things are negotiable or that you may overcharge them while cutting others a deal.

D. Make a **photocopy** of the contract to be the "working document" to file with some of your data or the report, but keep the original document safe and secure with other contracts. This is one of the few times we'll tell you to keep a case-related document away from the rest of the case materials.

E. **Clauses and details to consider including in your contract**:

- ***Retainer Amount****: Show retainer amount and policies for refunds, or going over or under the retainer.*
- ***Hourly Rate****: Display exactly how much you charge by the hour for each case aspect or activity.*
- ***Billable Hour Increments:*** *Do you bill for every fifteen minutes, or is the time exact? Spell it out here.*
- ***Payment Terms****: Include, and have client initial, dates when retainer and final payments are due.*
- ***Form of Payment:*** *Make sure type of payment is agreed to in writing with client's promise to pay.* *****
- ***Dual Confidentiality****: Let the client know you provide and expect full confidentiality.*
- ***Billable Costs****: List rates you charge for mileage, court appearances, etc.*
- ***Investigator Conduct****: Reiterate that no unprofessional or illegal acts will be performed.* ******
- ***Client Conduct****: Prevent the client from divulging case details or interfering in the investigation.*
- ***Communication Frequency:*** *Let the client know when they can and cannot contact you or how often.*
- ***Full Client Disclosure****: A clause compelling the client to provide ALL known data about the case.*
- ***Case Start Date****: Put the start date in writing so there is no later conflict.*
- ***Time Constraints****: Include a projected number of hours, case end date, or schedule.*
- ***Case Type & Short Synopsis****: Put the basic case goals on the contract to avoid conflict.*
- ***Outsourcing****: If, for any part of the case you might use subcontractors, spell out the details here.*
- ***Report Terms****: Set terms on due date of final report and whether it's to be in verbal or written format.*
- ***Report Restrictions****: If there is data you will not include in the report, list that here.*
- ***Materials Possession****: At the end of the case, who keeps the case file, original documents, etc.?*
- ***Addendum Notation****: Have client initial if additional terms or details are attached to the contract.*

***** Credit card companies are difficult to deal with. If you accept cards you may need this extra documentation.

****** We've included a copy of our form "**The Nature of Investigations**" in **Section Three – Sample Forms**

**3. The Confirmation letter:** One of the simplest and most overlooked case management elements is the confirmation letter. Very few things are as important at the start of the case as clarity and good two-way communication between you and the client. Having a good, solid, mutual understanding – especially in writing – serves both parties well. Naturally, the first place you want to have everything spelled out is in the contract. The confirmation letter serves as a redundant backup. In short, "When it doubt, write it out!"

A. After the initial client meeting and/or contract signing, send your client a letter - keeping security and confidentiality in mind - thanking them for the case and reiterating the **details, terms, and goals** of the case. This does two things. **One**, it shows the client you appreciate their business and reassures them that you're on the job and clear about what it is you're supposed to do. **Two**, it gives you additional confirmation that the client knows what you will and will not do regarding their case. Sometimes this is just good business, and other times this helps protect you in "misunderstandings" when the client receives the invoice.

B. Send this letter both **email and "snail mail"** with confirmation on the snail mail. Note: Sending letters via USPS Priority Mail automatically generates a tracking / confirmation number and the recipient does not have to sign for the letter.

C. As with other important documents that are sent to the client, you want it to be on **professional stationery** and you want to make sure your **spelling** and **grammar** are correct.

## III. Situation

You have the case, the contract is signed, and the goals of the case are clear. Now it's time to get the *rest* of the detail that can be gathered from the client so you can begin work on the case in earnest. Note: though we list these as separate steps; meeting the client, getting *basic* background info, securing the retainer, signing the contract, and gathering *this* detailed background data, it can actually all be accomplished at a single short meeting. The reason we list them separately is because each topic has unique considerations and we want to lay everything out in some detail so you get more out of this little ebook of ours. Here we'll go over the **definition of "situation"** and background materials, a **tool to help you gather the information**, and examples of early **information items** you should look for.

1. **The Definition of "Situation"**: "Situation" is the **detailed** case background information you need to get from the **client** to help you start the "official" investigation. Let's say you have a missing persons case involving an adult college student and your client(s) are the parents. In your initial client meeting you found that a police report has been filed, the college where the student was last seen has been contacted, and the clients certainly have a legitimate reason to secure you as an investigator. The investigation itself would involve the active search for the missing person. The thing that will help the most is getting as much background information from the parents as possible so you have everything you need to launch your investigation and to communicate effectively with law enforcement and other players in the process. This is what we call "situational awareness" or simply the "situation." It's the initial detailed background that can and will make all the difference in the world when you're out in the field conducting the actual investigation.



***The more detail you can gather at the beginning of a case, the better off you are***

2. **A Helpful Information Tool**: The **Case Cover Sheet / Questionnaire**. If you work certain types of cases for a while you're sure to have come up with a list of questions you ask as a matter of routine. You should put these questions into a form or worksheet that you use to get detailed information from the client. We've included a sample for you. It's the first of a three-page questionnaire for a **Missing Persons** case and it can be found in **Section Three – Sample Forms**. Keep its detail and appearance in mind if you decide to create your own forms. Here are a few ways **background info checklists** are helpful:

A. Detailed worksheets are one of the most effective **time savers** you can have.

B. The more traumatic the case is to the client, the less detail they'll sometimes be able to call up without being prompted. Having a structured worksheet allows you to **ask the right questions**, or it gives you a form that the client can fill out on their own. This can be useful because some people respond better to verbal questions, while some respond better when they see things in writing.

C. Add "**releases**" to your checklists. If any part of your investigation is going to require a release, now is the time to get it, while you're getting all the other information from the client. Some releases are obvious. For example, if you're doing a pre-employment screening, you'd naturally get a **Background Check Authorization** from the prospective employee. Other releases are not so obvious and actually don't guarantee anything, but it's better to have them and not need them than to need them and not have them. As an example, let's say you're working the missing persons case mentioned above involving the college student who's gone missing. Though it won't legally require anyone to do anything, it's still nice if you had a notarized letter from the parents (client) stating that you are working for them and that they are giving permission for any information about their child to be shared with investigators. (We use this as an example because we worked a case just like this and the release letter, though not legally compelling, opened quite a few doors.)

D. A detailed worksheet **reassures the client** that you know what you're doing and enhances your professional image in front of the client as well as others involved in the investigation. It also helps you question the client a bit more about the case, its origins, and its history. Sometimes you will learn things that didn't come out in the initial interview; things such as extra detail about the subject, whether or not a prior investigation had been performed by law enforcement or another agency, or whether or not the client had initiated actions that will affect your investigation (like telling the subject they were hiring a PI, which is another reason we suggested you add clauses in your contract about full client disclosure and client conduct).

E. With a content-rich worksheet, you can **send newer investigators** out to do the "situation" interviews and you can be sure they'll get the information you need.

F. Having detailed and structured forms, worksheets, and checklists may, in some cases, help reduce premiums on an Errors and Omissions (E&O) insurance policy. And, depending on the scenario, it may protect you in a malpractice case. This is an item to run by your **attorney** and insurance rep.

3. **Information Items to Look For**: We have a saying at InfoQuest: "If it is a rock, we must look under it." In other words, we might quickly filter out a piece of information, but we never ignore it. We've learned that it's usually that one bit of data that you turn a blind eye to that could have helped the most. You already know to look for this stuff, but here are some things the client may already have on hand that could help. You might want to add these to your Cover Sheet / Questionnaire as check boxes. No use gathering this stuff as part of the investigation if **the client** has already done the leg work for you, right?

A. **Official Reports**: Was there a police report? An insurance report? Does the client have a copy of it? Make a copy of whatever they have while you're there.

B. **Media Coverage**: If your case has hit the news, sometimes reporters will help do part of your job for you. Was there a newspaper story? Video from the local news? Is an investigative journalist also involved in the case? Whatever the client has, get a copy of it.

C. **Maps, Photographs**, **Journals**, etc.: Any time you can get some data from the client, do it. It's better to not need it and return it later than to make an extra trip to go back for it. The two key take-away points for all this under "information items" are **one**, the more you know to ask for, the more reassured the client is that you're on the job and know what you're doing. And **two**, making sure you get everything you can up front saves you time and money.




***You have an unusual wrongful death case with 10 witnesses, 2 insurance companies, and covering 3 law enforcement jurisdictions. You know there are numerous reports you need to get, but what if the client has already gathered them for you?***

## IV. Engineer

A little bit of thought and planning go a long, long way toward making your investigation as efficient, successful, and profitable as possible. In fact, this is where some agencies lose money. They don't plan, coordinate, or set themselves up for success from the beginning, and instead, they "wing it" and bounce around like a pinball trying to conduct their investigation. Some of the best advice we ever heard was the simplest: "Plan your work, then work your plan." Here we'll touch on tracking cases with a "**Master Case Roster**," **game-planning the case**, **coordinating open cases and scheduling,** and **time management**.

**1. The Master Case Roster**. One way agencies lose money is by not keeping track of open cases; either by getting so busy that some smaller cases somehow fall through the cracks or by failing to follow up in a timely manner with outstanding invoices. The best time to start tracking these things is the moment you start a case. Here are some simple options you can put to use today with minimal cost or time.



***How much of this do you leave on the table due to poor planning or tracking?***

A. The simplest solution is to put your **spreadsheet** software (most of us have Excel ®) to work and create a simple tool to help you track open cases. **Create a file** called "**Master Case Roster**," or something like that, and give it **six columns**. Label the columns 1. Case Number, 2. Start Date, 3. Due Date, 4. Report Sent, 5. Latest Payment, and 6. Paid in Full. Naturally, most of the columns are for dates, and provided you're diligent about keeping your information current, you can scroll up and down your list to see which cases have outstanding invoices, how far behind those invoices might be, or which cases are still open.

B. As an addition (or alternative) to a spreadsheet, enter the case number on the start date, and plot various **payment due dates** on a **calendar program** such as Outlook ®. Having due dates show up in a list in both your spreadsheet and on a calendar program gives you a redundant backup and cross-reference so you're sure to keep track of all cases.

C. You can use only one of the above if you wish and have all your entries on your spreadsheet or on your calendar program (or accounting program like Quickbooks). Using either gives you a very simple and very economical way of tracking cases. However, **we suggest using both** because that really helps to make sure you haven't missed anything.

D. If you're electronically declined like many of us (I consider myself just barely "mousebroken"), you can opt for a hardcopy "**tickler file**." This is where you simply create a file folder in a filing cabinet or notebook and you either keep a list of open cases (using a hardcopy accounting ledger with the same columns and entries as mentioned under A above), or you can use a copy of the **Clerical Activity Checklist** for each case and then remove the sheet from the file once the case is closed and paid in full. In the same fashion, you can write date due and other entries on a **paper calendar** or time management system (by the way, **time management system forms** come as part of The Case File). As mentioned earlier, our job here is to make you think and give you options.

E. The true key to using any sort of tracking, reminder, or roster system is **consistency** and the **discipline** behind that consistency. Tools don't fail because they're bad tools (usually); tools fail because *we* fail to use them properly. If there's one take-away that's more important than all the others in this ebook it's this one: If you have the discipline to be consistent, then almost any tool system you use to track anything from time to case data will be useful to you at some level.

**2. Game-Planning the Case**. An ounce of preparation is worth a pound of catch-up. Like the saying goes "it's easier to do it right than do it over." We work in an industry focused on **detail**, so there's no such thing as a trivial piece of data, and with time management, planning is not a trivial step. It's the weak link that

breaks the chain and the tiniest wrench that can foul up the works. Make sure you take a few minutes to plan what you're about to do so you can streamline the effort, dot every "I" and cross every "T" along the way, and do things right the first time. This is what can make or break your case in the field and what can help or hinder your income, image, and reputation. We have a few thoughts to share:



***Game-planning meetings with your staff greatly improve your efficiency.***

A. The more complex or important the case, the more you should have your **whole staff involved** in the planning, at least on some level. The most overlooked asset within most agencies is the experience of the agents. Granted, some cases are considered "routine" and you follow a standard operating format, or with some agencies, one person is the "chief, cook, and bottle washer." But, if you have a staff, involve them, or if you have colleagues, consult with them on the bigger cases.

B. One of the key steps in the game-plan process is **outlining the steps needed** to reach the case goals. Again, some cases are "routine" and so are their procedures. However, other cases aren't so cut and dried, and even some that might seem so could use improvement in operational efficiency. So, it's best to meet with your staff and go over some elements of planning:

- *How do the **due dates** on this case compare to the needs of other open cases? What do you juggle?*
- *Review all **prior investigation** on this case conducted by or for the client. Are all sources known?*
- *List the **investigative elements** of this case such as surveillance, interviews, database searches, etc.*
- *Do you have all the **in-house assistance** you need to work those case elements?*
- *Do you need to **outsource** any of your steps because of expertise, equipment, or geographic location?*
- *Do any of the elements of this case **share** needed elements of other cases? Can you **coordinate**?*
- *What's a realistic **time** completion expectation for **each element** or step of the case?*
- *What is the **availability** of your staff or regularly contracted personnel? Do you keep a **roster**?*
- *Will you use more than the usual amount of office supplies, fuel, CDs, etc? Do you need to **restock**?*
- *Will you need specialized **equipment** you don't normally have on hand? Make a list of what you need.*
- *Consider **people** involved in the case. Who can you contact directly? Who needs more tact or time?*
- *Consider **data sources**. How many do you need to use? Have you listed them in order of priority?*
- *Make a **master "to-do" list** for the case, assign tasks to agents, and make sure they have list copies.*

**3. Coordinate your open cases; the importance of scheduling**: Though this is but a short section, good scheduling is one of the most important skills you can learn with agency management. As much art as it is science, a detailed schedule lets you coordinate the actions of your investigators with the needs of your open cases in such a way that all aspects of your cases are being worked, nothing is left hanging, no one is sitting around waiting to do their job, and no one is overwhelmed. You can make your schedule on a simple sheet of paper, a spreadsheet, or on a dry-erase whiteboard in the office (viewable only by staff). When making out your schedule, or trying to decide on a format, **consider these scheduling thoughts**:

A. Do you have full-time agents on staff or do you bring in some agents on an as-needed **contractual basis**?

B. Do you prefer **one agent to work a whole case** all the way through or do you farm out aspects (like surveillance) of **different cases to applicable specialists**?

C. **Regularly review your open cases** to see if the same data source can be used on more than one case. For example, pull data for several cases in one sitting from your online data sources (keeping results separate of course), or, you might have several cases requiring records from one courthouse. Instead of sending multiple agents on multiple trips, send one agent on one trip to do all required records searches at that court house.

D. Require your agents to give at least **30 days notice for vacations**, time off, etc. and have a specific log book or networked file just for that purpose. This is another good use for the Outlook ® calendar if you have it.

E. In addition to a time schedule, **keep an area map visible** and show the basic geographic locations that open cases will involve. You might want to schedule your agents or assign cases or case aspects (surveillance, records searches, interviews, etc.) based on location rather than time or specialty. You could also show the basic locations **where your agents live** and take that into consideration when assigning tasks.

F. If any of your work is regularly outsourced to a select few **independent contractor specialists**, you should maintain a **roster** of their availability so if an important assignment comes up with difficult time demands, you'll know immediately who's available and who isn't. By the way, be sure to get W-9s for all subcontractors! And, how's your subcontractor agreement?



***In a profession where time is literally money, good staff scheduling is a HUGE issue.***

G. Regarding agent assignment, **consider personality types** or extenuating circumstances. For example, if you have a problem client, do you have that one agent who is really good at making friends and soothing ruffled feathers? Give them the case. Or, you might have a domestic abuse / child custody case where your female client might only feel comfortable with a female agent. (Not to be sexist or prejudicial, but sometimes this is just the way things are and you should consider your clients' feelings when assigning cases.)

H. Consider your state's **labor laws.** How do the state laws compare to federal laws? How many hours people can work in a day or week before going into overtime? Who is considered a commercial driver and how many hours a day they can drive? Does your state have laws regarding meal breaks? And of course, what are your state's laws on pay structure? Are **hourly employees** and **salaried employees** subject to different rules? This is another of many areas in which you want to consult with your attorney and accountant.

I. Speaking of driving, if you take a case that has a long-distance element to it, is it better for you to send one of your own agents far away to do the investigation, or can you **outsource** or **subcontract** to an investigator who's already in that area? If you're crossing state lines to investigate or subcontracting with an **out-of-state** investigator, you'll need to know how that relates to your own state regulations and the laws of the other state.

**4. Time Management.** Since ours in a profession that measures work by billable hours, anything you learn about good time management will help your agency anywhere and any time it's applied. This small section could make a full book of its own (and bits of time management are woven into other sections), but for right now, we'll leave you with just a few thoughts.

A. Just like case management, any time management tool you choose is going to require **discipline and consistency**, or it's just another "thing" sitting on your desk or computer.

B. If you get time management forms or software, make sure they're **similar in form or function** to your office scheduling and case management tools, and that all staff members use the same tools.

C. One step common to most time management systems is that you write down some **review and to-do notes** at the end of each day and review those notes first thing in the morning. Having your goals and work objectives clearly in mind keeps you on track and focused which, in and of itself, saves time.

D. **Diet, rest, and exercise**. The better your physical energy, the more you can get done in a day. Hint: One of the "employee benefits" you might consider for your agents is a gym membership. Not only does their good health offset health benefits (if you're required to provide them) but it keeps them happier, healthier, and more energetic which translates into more work done in the average day and possibly fewer sick days.

E. Your **contract**. Time management is one of the many reasons that we suggest you spell out in your contract when the client can and cannot contact you, and that we suggest you get as much detail as possible early in the investigation.

F. A random time saving tip is to lay out your daily travel routes using **right-hand turns** only (if possible). Delivery companies do this in order to save both time and fuel.

## V. Files & Forms

Another opportunity for you to increase your efficiency, image, and income is through the careful construction of a detailed yet easy-to-use case file. Though a short section, this is probably the most important one in this ebook because good case management centers on detail, data, and records, and that means paperwork; both which you gather and that which you create. The best thing you can do is invest in a good forms or template-based case management package and customize it to suit your needs, or create your own. Let's look at some thoughts on working from **forms, checklists, and templates**, and how to combine them to create a good working **case file** to use in the field or in the office.

**1. Work from forms, checklists, and templates**. Put your wordprocessor to work. There's nothing more tedious and boring that making forms and checklists, but those are the very things that will pay for themselves over and over if you do them right.

A. **Reasons to work from forms, checklists, and templates**:

- *You'll **remember** to find **important facts** and ask **important questions** when you have blanks to fill in.*
- ***Uniformity** in all your field notes makes **data entry on computer** much faster and much easier.*
- *You look far more **professional** in the field than you would by working from a blank notepad.*
- *You can assign more complex cases to **less experienced investigators** (which helps train them).*
- *When there's **structure** to your note taking system, you'll account for more of your **billable hours**.*
- *It's easier to create a **customized case file** for each case when you have standardized templates.*
- *As you update forms and lists you're allowing your **accumulated experience** to help with each case.*
- *Having standardized forms and questions may help protect you somewhat from certain types of **liability**.*
- *You spend far **less time** on case prep when you have all your forms ready to go at the click of a mouse.*
- *It's much, much easier to prepare a **comprehensive report** when you've been organized from the start.*
- *It's also much easier to prepare a comprehensive and **accurate invoice** from standardized forms.*
- *It's better and easier to do it right than to do it over.*
- *If you have a sizable software package, using forms in the field makes **data entry** MUCH easier!*

B. Remember, we have **sample forms** for you in **Section Three – Sample Forms**.

**2. Organize the case file.** Once you get your case info from the client and you know what you want to accomplish, start putting the pieces together for a fill-in-the-blank case file (using your forms, checklists, and templates). You'll want to have your basic to-do list, lists of people to talk to, databases to search (and a very specific list of data to search for), a journal page for billable hours and costs, a "gathered data" section for all your field notes, and a clerical section where you house contact and case paperwork details.

A. We set up our larger field notebooks (some are three-ring binders, but most are 2-divider / 6-section "classification" folders) **with the following sections**:

- ***Background**: This section holds the information the client gives you when you take the case.*
- ***To-Do**: Based on background info, list what your next steps should be and who will do them.*
- ***Data / Notes**: As information is gathered (interviews, surveillance, etc.) place your notes here.*
- ***Billable Hours**: Keep a **journal** showing hours worked and costs incurred each day.*
- ***Communication**: Keep a list of phone calls and times, and important letters (email or snail mail).*
- ***Clerical**: Keep a hardcopy of your report, invoice, and other checklists / data needed to close the case.*

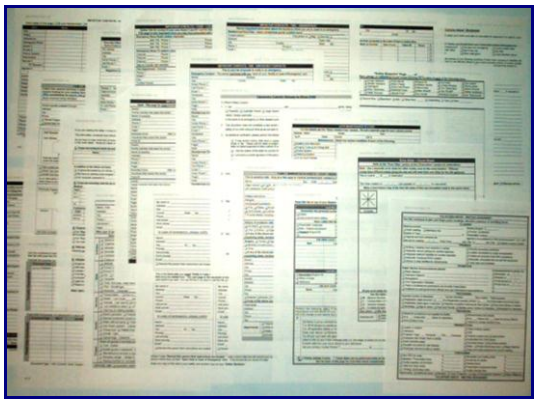
B. At InfoQuest we **customize** each case file for the case being worked and prep it to be as large or small as needed. But, though we adjust the size, we use the same sections, the same core forms and worksheets (and we add or subtract support forms) so our **field notes are uniform** and we get all the information we need while ensuring efficiency and economy to the client.

C. Though in a day and age of everything being electronic, laptops smaller than ever, smart phones making yesterday's PDAs seem archaic, and everyone "going green," there is still a lot to be said about **using a hardcopy set of notes** as your in-the-field case file:



***When we mention hardcopy notes, we DON'T mean this!***

- *You can issue everyone forms and worksheets for **pennies**, while laptops and software still cost a lot.*
- *Many of us investigators are "old school." We **understand** handwritten notes better than electronics.*
- *When the **computer crashes**, your hardcopy field notes are just fine and fully accessible.*
- *Software and **operating systems will change** over time, but handwritten notes will still be readable.*
- *When working a case you want to **pay attention to the case**; not to trying to figure out your software.*
- *Professional forms can **impress clients** or gain respect from the opposition. No one sees software.*
- *The more agents you have in the field, the more **uniform** you need their notes. Forms do this for you.*
- ***Forms**, checklists, worksheets, and templates can **grow with you**. Software usually can't be changed.*
- *If you have several agents working a case, standardized forms make it easier to **share info**.*
- *Forms and templates saved as wordprocessor files can be **emailed** or shared over **networks** with ease.*
- *Hardcopy notes written on good forms can be **scanned** in and saved electronically with no problem.*
- *Even with a software component on computer, you still need detailed notes to **gather good data**.*
- *If you **invest** in high-end software, **good forms** are to it what premium gas and oil are to a sports car.*
- *When it's time to write the report and invoice, or even enter software data, you'll need **organized** notes!*
- ***Highly detailed** notes from forms let you brush up on case details if you're called to testify in **court**.*
- *There's genius in **simplicity and economy**; two of the many advantages of hardcopy notes.*



***A set of detailed, professional looking forms can do more for your image and bottom line than any gadget, gizmo, or high-end piece of software.***

## VI. Investigation

This ebook isn't about "how to investigate." You're an old hat at that, and we're not going to waste electrons here when there's so much good material available elsewhere. What we'll cover are some of the tips that can help you run a more efficient investigation, and some of the ways you're losing money in the field. Since we've already covered the planning stages and case file creation, let's talk about tracking **billable hours**, some thoughts on **software** and on **coordinating field notes** with software.

**1. Track the hours and dollars**: Time is money and good case management tracks both. Let's say you run one case a week (for the sake of easy math), and you happen to miss, on average, one billable hour per case. That's 52 billable hours per year, and at, say, $60 per hour, that's $3,120 a year you're losing! The two places you might "misplace" billable hours are in your field notes and in your report or invoice.

A. The short-answer solution to tracking hours in the field is to pay **more attention to detail** in all areas and make sure your agents record start times and end times for EVERY activity they perform. Each agent should be asked to record their day's activities in a **journal** fashion with separate journals kept for each case worked. Each entry should be like a diary entry with the date, start and stop time, any costs associated with the activity and a note detailing what activity was performed. At the end of each day, each agent should submit (by email, fax, etc.) an update listing each case worked on (by case number) and the total hours, costs, and any important updates.

B. When you write your reports and invoices, check them against all field notes to make sure nothing's missing. Now, some of you might have a decent **software package** that helps track the data entered, but here's the catch: These programs only track *the data entered*. You still have to make sure that everything that happens in the field is noted accurately so that when it comes time to enter the data, you have everything you need. As the old saying goes with computers, "**Garbage in, garbage out**." In the field we recommend you always work from forms, checklists, and templates so you're prompted to record everything related to each and every step you take.

**2. Software dos and don'ts**. One key tip here is that **most computers come pre-loaded** with almost everything you need for good case management. In fact, we joke and say that the software that came packaged on our units is "ESO," or "Equipment Superior to Operator!" meaning the software is able to do far more than we even know to tell it. So use what you already have and buy only what you need.

A. If you're thinking of getting a software-based case management package, **consider the following**:

- *The software's **system requirements** must match the capabilities of your firm's computers.*
- *The software has good **security** and also allows you to **back up** and retrieve data on your schedule.*
- *The package's features and functions are an exact match to your **agency's needs**.*
- *The software's function is not simply a "**repeat** with a nice presentation" of software you **already have**.*
- *Use is **intuitive** and does not require much training. And if it does, training or instruction is included.*
- *All of your **agents** or intended software users understand the software and can **access it easily**.*
- *There are **no hidden fees** or limitations such as "per station," "per time period," "number of cases," etc.*
- *The software company does not place a great deal of emphasis on common or **useless features**.*
- *The package won't be **obsolete** in just a few months, unless upgrades are free or very low cost.*
- *You can **recoup the cost** of investing in the software in a very short period of time.*
- *The package is **customizable** by the user and can change and grow with the firm's needs.*
- *The package has elements that work both in the office and **in the field**.*
- *Tech support is **free** and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or at least in a very timely fashion.*
- *Tech support is staffed with knowledgeable operators **you can understand** and who can understand you.*

B. **Back up your data!** Very few things are as disruptive to office work flow as the loss of data from a computer crash or losing a disk or drive. Here are a few points to keep your files safe.

- *Once a week (or more) **back up** the hard drive on all agency computers. Store the backups safely.*
- *Store a copy of your master backup(s) in a **secure off-site** location such as a safe deposit box.*
- *Consider using a secure "cloud based" online data backup and file storage service.*
- *Save the current data on each case on a daily basis to a separate disk, AND folder on a thumb drive.*
- ***Label** disks and thumb drives (flash drives) so you can readily identify which one contains which info.*
- *Set your word processor, spreadsheet, and other tools to "**auto save**" every five minutes or so.*
- *Agents working an active case should **back up** the electronic data on the case **daily** as a minimum.*
- *Before copying electronic data from **outside devices**, be sure you are **authorized** to do so and that you know the **correct procedures** for using the device and ensuring data safety of originals and copies.*

**3. Coordinating field notes and software**. Like we said, this section isn't about how to investigate. It's a collection of things that will help you with case management as you go about performing the investigative operations you already know, and it's about setting you up for success when it comes time to write the report and invoice. One area that provides a good opportunity for improvement is in coordinating the collection of notes and data with a software package or more importantly, organizing the field notes as you go along. If you don't organize everything as you go, you might spend almost as much time deciphering your notes while doing the report as you did on the investigation itself. Let's look at a few ideas that will help.



***Whether hardcopy or softcopy, you'll generate lots of info. Best to stay organized from the start!***

A. The first order of business is "always stay organized." Sounds easy, but there are a lot of things to consider and quite a few tips to offer. For example:

- *Though short, the previous section about creating your **in-the-field case file** is an important starting point.*
- *If you work from hardcopy notebooks or folders in the field, keep each case in a **separate notebook**.*
- *Electronic files should be kept on **separate** disks or drives (preferably) and labeled with the case number.*
- ***Never, ever write personal notes** or jot down items unrelated to a case on a case file or note set.*
- ***Color code** some of your forms or file folders so you'll know what they're for at a glance.*
- *Some things to color code might be **type of case**, or whether the form is case or agency related, etc.*
- *Require all agents in the field to use the **same software** and backup systems (disks or drives).*
- *Whatever system you choose, it should have some **flexibility**. No two cases are exactly alike.*
- *Regardless of your case management system, open investigations should be **audited daily**.*
- *Whichever format you use, hardcopy notes or software, you'll always need **an element of both**. As we said, you'll need good notes to make good use of any software. Wherever possible, make the format of each match the other. If you can alter your forms, make them match the layout or order of input for your software. Or, if you have customizable software, adjust it to match the data that is recorded on your forms.*

B. **Work on your report as you go**. If you can. At the end of each day, try to spend a little time (especially on the larger cases) typing in the notes from the day's investigation. Staying on top of a major task in daily bites is much easier than trying to do everything from start to finish in one sitting. You'll have a better product, you'll make fewer errors (like misplacing that billable hour or two), and you'll be better able to mix in other tasks and projects. As the saying goes, "The only way to save time is to spend it wisely."

C. **Software** in and of itself **doesn't do the work for you**. If you spend a thousand dollars on a case management system, you're still no better off than the office using blank legal pads. The trick to using either is in **consistency** and the **discipline** necessary to maintain that consistency.

## VII. Letters

There are three places you really want to shine when working a case. One is in front of the client when you're marketing or beginning the case. The second is in front of people where they see your professional image in person. The third, and more permanent of the three, is in your final report. The final report is the end product of your investigation. It's what the client has paid good money for, it's what might make the difference in someone's life or livelihood, and though you might have people comment on the impression you made in person, your final report might be handed to more people than you'd meet in a year. Better make it a good one! For this section we'll look at **qualities of a good report**, **report formats and components, presentation formats, production tips** for writing your report**,** and **the invoice**.

**1. Qualities of a Good Report:** You want to pay good attention to all aspects of the case, but you REALLY want to make sure the report is a stellar piece of work. You might mess up on a surveillance or online search and have to go back and do it over, but the report is one of those things where it really is best to get it right the first time! Let's look at some qualities of a good report:

A. The report is **complete** and **accurate**; otherwise it serves no one well. In fact, if there are items missing from the report or invoice (even if it's in the client's favor) the client (and others) might wonder what you missed in the investigation. Speaking of accuracy, never speculate or give opinions. In an investigation, the glass is neither half full nor half empty. It's "at 50% capacity."

B. It's written in easy to understand "**plain English**" and doesn't use jargon, obscure terms, "fancy words," or "official speak" (you know, like a rookie trying to sound "official"). It's also written with a balance of educational levels. On one hand you want your client to understand everything, but on the other hand, this report might be used by attorneys in a court of law. Write accordingly.

C. **Spelling and grammar are correct**. We cannot stress enough how important this is! In fact, you should have someone either on staff, or someone you trust, to proof-read the reports. There are a lot of things that spell check and grammar check on your computer can miss! You also want to make sure the report makes sense to someone who was not part of the investigation.

D. You give good descriptions in the **shortest sentences** or paragraphs possible. In other words, you don't go on and on when a couple of sentences will do. Conversely, you don't pare things down so much that you fail to include proper detail.

E. Though you should write for brevity and get the point across without being long-winded, you should also write for clarity so that the reader will be able to follow the report with complete understanding even if it's being read **several years from now**.

F. The text is easy to read. Use a good font, and make it large enough to read (10 to 12 point font), taking your client's eyesight into consideration. (Is your client older or visually impaired? Make the font larger, maybe use 14 point.) Speaking of fonts, pick a style and stick with it. Using too many fonts can cause confusion and make your report look amateurish. Use **consistent** fonts and styles for section headers, etc. so that it's easier for the client and others to navigate the documents.

G. Most reports are written in **third person**. This means it's written as if the writer was telling a story about two other people whenever context is used. For example, in the cover or summary you might say "XYZ Agency was retained on mm/dd/yy by [client] to ascertain [case goal]. The text would not read "On mm/dd/yy you hired us to work a case about…"

H. The report is presented on good **stationery** (try to use the same paper throughout) with a good binding or in a nice folder, even if it's only a couple of pages long. The client has paid good money for that information so the report itself should reflect value.

I. The final report is **all-inclusive**, meaning the client has everything they need and/or paid for in one package. They don't have to wait for other components or sections to be presented (unless they specifically asked for early interim reports or a component is coming in from an outside vendor).

**2. Report formats**. There are several ways to write reports, just as there are several ways to write a book. In fact, we wrestled with the layout of this little ebook for while. Do we make a short, dry list that might leave out good info? Do we go into great detail to answer every question only to put the reader to sleep? What do we do? The same questions are asked quite often by even the most seasoned investigators. With reports, there are two things to consider: **One**, what does the client want, and **two**, what does your state or jurisdiction require? One client may want only a verbal report while another wants a hardcopy accounting of every single investigative minute. Some states may require a written report be given while others don't. Our suggestion is this: Always create a hardcopy report even if the client doesn't want it. It records all the work that went into the case, it gives you a chance to showcase your professional work product, and it corroborates the invoice. As for the actual format a written report should take, let's look at some **components** of a good report covering an "average" case. Granted, some smaller or more routine cases might need only a page or two for a report, but cases aren't always small or routine.

A. **Cover Sheet with Title**: A bound report always looks more professional. If you choose this option, make your first page inside the cover a title sheet with only one short sentence that will remind the client what they're looking at, and will shield any detailed information from casual observers. (Consider a "confidentiality" statement letting an accidental reader know they should go no further.)

B. **Cover Letter**: This is the same as the Confirmation Letter, except it's to conclude the case rather than begin it. It's to the client and though it is part of the report, it's more an "intro to the intro" since the cover letter could be kept by the client and not affect the rest of the report that may be sent along to others. In general though, the cover letter should once again state the nature, direction, and goals of the case to maintain clarity of communication between client and investigator and to ensure clarity of communication with other readers of the report should they read the cover letter.

C. **Executive Summary**: The first actual *document* in your collective report should be a one-page Executive Summary. The purpose of this page is to sum up, in general terms, when the case was initiated, a brief description of the investigative actions taken, and a few sentences or a paragraph giving the conclusion. In short, this is like your Confirmation Letter, only it lists the end results.

D. **Table of Contents**: Any report over a couple of pages long, and certainly one with appreciable documentation included in the report, should have a Table of Contents similar to the one in this ebook. Show the section name, a description of what is found in that section, and a page number.

E. **Report Body**: We have **two** quick schools of thought regarding how to organize your report: **One**, you give a **journal** style report where you present your investigation in a day-by-day, result-by-result fashion. **Two**, you provide a **narrative** report where you simply elaborate on the Executive Summary by providing more information in detail and relaying the case results in "short story" fashion. The journal style report format is the most common. **Hint**: It's a good idea to have some sort of line numbering in your main report to assist with later communication (as is found with most legal documents). Most word processors can automatically number each line for you.

F. **Supporting Documentation**: Regardless if your report style is journal format or narrative, you'll more than likely have evidence, exhibits, or pertinent data you've collected that accompanies your report. Each exhibit item should be referred to as the associated activity is mentioned in the report. For example you may have conducted an asset search and have a report line item saying something like "*October 3, 2001, 4:45pm – Conducted online database search for bankruptcy listings and returned a filing for subject John Doe. (See Tab 1)*." The Supporting Documents section should be appropriately divided by labeled tabs and behind Tab 1 is where you'd have the results of the online bankruptcy search. Let's look at some ideas related to organizing your supporting documentation:



***Using differently colored notebooks helps organize supporting documentation***

- ***Chronological Order*** *– If your report is Journal Style, you might want to organize supporting documentation in the same order in which you acquired it. A* ***second thought*** *on this is if you were providing some sort of personal history on the subject, you might want to present the*

*exhibits and documentation in the order in which they occurred instead of the order in which you found them. If this is the case, be sure to make note of it in your report.*

- ***Weighted Relevance*** *– If one piece of documentation or evidence is the overwhelming piece, you might consider putting it first, with the rest of the documents arranged in order of importance. This might be a natural fit with a Narrative Report, but keep in mind that you still need to make a "book and tab" reference in the report body to the location of the evidence.*
- ***Activity Grouping*** *– In this example, you might group supporting exhibits by type of activity. You might put all online database results in one section, all witness interview transcripts, in another, all surveillance reports in a third, etc. Same rules apply though, be sure to reference them in the report by location. Note: If you group by activity, consider having a separate Table of Contents for the documentation.*
- ***Note****: If your evidence, exhibits, or supporting documentation is substantial, you'll probably put it in a separate binder. If you have a lot of information, consider having several three-ring binders which are* ***color-coded*** *as to the data contained. Be sure to reference the color system in your report's main Table of Contents. Then, have either a Table of Contents for the notebook series, or a Table of Contents in each color-coded and labeled notebook.*
- *If you have electronic or softcopy files accompanying the hardcopy sets you can provide them either on* ***disk or flash drive*** *and have a plastic sleeve or a page with a sleeve in the binder or report cover. This protects the drive and its files, and keeps the information in place with the other components of the report.*

G. **Index**: Depending on the size and importance of the case, you might want to include an index showing the mention of pertinent people, events, facts, or figures found throughout the supporting documentation and other materials. Most wordprocessors will let you create an index as you write.

H. **Initial Documents – Copies**: For final clarity, you might want to include a copy of your original contract and a copy of your initial "confirmation letter" as discussed earlier. For clients you service regularly, this might not be necessary.

I. **Invoice**: The last thing to go in the report set is the invoice. It should be in the main folder or notebook and not in the appendices or attached exhibits / documentation. **Note**: Not all parties who are privy to the report are privy to the invoice or financial arrangements.

J. If the report contained sensitive info such as bank accounts, unlisted phone numbers, etc., you might give the client an additional "redacted" copy that they can share with others that has the sensitive info removed or blacked-out. Their primary copy will generally contain all info in full detail.

**3. Presentation Formats**. Though we started off by saying a report might be written or verbal, we didn't mention what formats a written report might take. Our preference is a hardcopy report, on good stationery, in a nice binder or presentation folder. We generally put these together for our own files even if the client prefers a verbal report. This way we have it already done if a case grows larger than originally intended, or if more players become involved, and a detailed report becomes necessary (as happens in some court cases). Other format options to consider are softcopy formats and their delivery.

A. One of the things you need to find out in your "Contract" and "Situation" endeavors is whether the client wants a written report on **paper** or if they prefer an **electronic** version. And, if they prefer the electronic softcopy, do they prefer disk, flash drive, email, or something different still?

B. Hint: If you send a softcopy report, make it a format that is readable but **not alterable** by the client. Save it in a **password-protected** PDF (preferred) or Wordprocessor file. The same holds true for the invoice. This helps keep honest people honest, but more importantly, it prevents erroneous reformatting or other errors that can occur when an unprotected document is opened on a computer different than the one on which it was written. If you happen to send the report by email, make note of the time and date sent for not only invoice purposes (due date) but for security.

C. Note: The more important the case, the more you should consider setting a **face-to-face meeting** with the client, and their attorney if one is involved, to go over the report in detail to make sure there are no missing items or steps and that everyone understands the supporting documentation.

**4. Production Tips for Writing Your Final Report:** Now that we've covered how important the report is and all the pieces that go into it, let's offer a few general tips on how to make report writing easier.

A. Avoid emails, phone calls, and other distractions. If you have to, leave the office to work.
B. Do you work better with regular breaks, or with unbroken continuous work periods?
C. Focus on only one report at a time. Some offices try to "mass produce" and it can backfire.
D. What's your most focused time of day? Are you a morning or night person? Work then.
E. Does something like coffee or food work for you or against you? Adjust your diet accordingly.
F. Work from a report template or checklist or refer to a good report you made before.
G. Check your supplies. Do you have paper? Ink? Your laptop power cord? Set up for success.
H. Have all production components on hand: notebook, laptop, CD/DVDs, thumb drives, etc.
I. Copies of all **pertinent materials and documents** should be on hand. Searching wastes time. Have the starting documents with you: client data / work order, contract, confirmation letter, copy of case to-do / gameplan list, your list of agents working the case and their assignments, journal of case activity, and so on. Have all gathered data: Field reports, video, audio, photographic, witness interview transcripts, online data reports, etc., and all hardcopy and softcopy files on hand. All hardcopy receipts from costs, printout from agency checking account if debit card was used, printout from agency credit card(s) if used and online statements should be available.
J. Having all the notes, especially the expense receipts, will give you all the data you need to cross-reference with each other to make sure all elements of the case are complete and that all information that needs to go in the report can be accounted for. **Tip**: One of the reasons you want your **expense receipts** on hand is to have them as **reminders** of activity should the results of that activity not be on hand or have fallen through the cracks somehow. Your data results can also alert you to a missing receipt if that happens to be the case.
K. Work alone or in small numbers for the first report assembly. Let a staff member review it later. In fact, the final report is so important that we'll reiterate the importance of having someone else review it for you. Two heads are better than one.

**5. The Invoice.** Invoices are usually pretty straightforward and not subject to as much "style" debate as are reports. However, we offer you a few thoughts on the invoice as well.

A. Most invoices use the **journal** format where you itemize each element of the investigation **chronologically** and provide the total charge for that line item or activity.
B. Some **group all like activity** or costs categories and provide a total for each. For example, "Total Investigation Hours = ____, Total Long Distance Calls = ____, Total Mileage = ____" etc.
C. Either way, your invoice format should closely **match your report format** for easier verification by the client and line items in the report should match the **same wording** in the invoice, at least enough for the client to know they match. For example, if you say in the report "*10/22/09 – Performed database search to locate current whereabouts of subject*," but on the invoice the line item was "*10/22/09 – Autotrack, IRB, Merlin, POE query*," then that might confuse the client, even though an investigator would know what was meant.
D. Note: The invoice should be **all-inclusive** even if you did not charge for an item. It's best the client know an activity was performed and not charged for than to not see something important included in your work product.
E. Most spreadsheet programs come loaded with invoice files, or you can get **free templates** online.
F. If you send the invoice softcopy, be sure it **cannot be altered**. Send it in a password protected spreadsheet, wordprocessor document, or PDF. Like we said earlier, doing so keeps honest people honest and it prevents errors that might crop up when an electronic file is opened on a different computer than the one on which it was written (a more common situation than dishonesty).

## VIII. Ending

Like most everything else in this country, no job is finished until the paperwork is complete! Private Investigation certainly holds true to that old adage. Once the investigation is completed and the report and invoice submitted, don't go thinking you're through. Not just yet. In this step, we'll cover our **Clerical Activity Checklist**, **filing and storage** of old case materials, and a **final recap**.

**1. Fill out the "Clerical Activity Checklist"**: One of the forms we have for you in **Section Three – Sample Forms** is the "Clerical Activity Checklist." Though you'd fill out part of it at the start of a case, it figures more prominently at the end. This worksheet acts as your reminder checklist for all the little clerical things you need to do when you start and end a case. On this particular template, we've included sections to record pertinent info about the various steps involved with your case paperwork:

A. **Case Start**: At InfoQuest we use a copy of this page in our hardcopy "tickler file" in order to track open cases and the steps involved. The first thing to do is fill in the client info, case number, retainer details, etc.

B. **Final Disposition**: This form isn't focused on the investigation itself so there isn't much "during the investigation" data. The final disposition section is to record how and when the case ended, and a few notes to remind you who the case was for in case you're looking at this sheet years from now.

C. **Disposition of Evidence**: This section of the Clerical Activity Checklist lets you make notes about where you've stored your closed files and various exhibits related to this particular case.

D. **Billing and Accounting**: This section can act as a redundant backup and cross-reference to the spreadsheet list you created for your "Master Case Roster." Here you'd list the details surrounding both the initial retainer and the final payment of the invoice.

E. **Final Communication**: After all is said and done, nothing is done until all things are said. By this, we mean that the last word should come from you and it should be "Thank You." After checking off the items in this section, sending out final report copies, storing the files, and entering spreadsheet data (putting the final dates on your "Master Case Roster"), you should send the client a thank you letter. It's important enough for us to have included a checklist item for it here. After that, there's nothing to do but file away the boxes.

**2. Filing, Storage, and Tracking the Files**. Information is useless if you can't put your hands on it when you need it. This includes old case files and documents that you might need one day if the case is still going through court processes years down the road or if you run into an old player in a new case. Here are a few filing and storage tips:

A. **Keep case materials together**. You should keep all elements of a particular case grouped with other elements of that case as much as possible. Too many times we've seen agencies try to group "like format with like format" (and we tried this for a while) where you would keep all your video footage from all cases together, all your hardcopy notes together, all photos together, etc. and have each category of material type sub-grouped by case. It didn't work well for us (nor for other agencies we've spoken with) because you then have to go to several different spots to gather all the materials you need for one particular case and it becomes too easy to leave an important component out. Group all your items by case.

B. **Label your files** and each of the case components. We suggest using the case file number to label your files, folders, backup disks, thumb drives, etc. Then label the box or folder where you have everything for that one case stored. Remember, you can use a suffix on the case file number to note what the particular component is. For example, using our sample case number from earlier (19920312-WC-AJ-010), we might have a DVD with surveillance video footage so we might label the DVD **19920312-WC-AJ-010-Surveillance-Video**. Hint: While the case is active and you might

have multiple case-related files on your computer, keep all the files with a particular case in its **own folder on the hard drive**.

C. The debate over **how long to store files** will continue for years. As a general rule, if your investigation is related to a court matter, keep the files until all court actions have been exhausted, and then for five years after that. For more authoritative advice, check with your state office that governs private investigation practices and see if they have any particular requirements. Next, check with your own PI Association and your state's Bar Association for their advice regarding investigative file storage. Additional guidance should come from the IRS and their current ruling(s) on the retention of financial records.

D. One storage thought is before you destroy old files is to **scan all the hardcopy items** and retain the info in softcopy format. Retain all video and voice data in electronic format as well. We noticed long ago with our own investigations that on occasion, some players tended to pop up again in unusual places. The more info we had on file, the easier our jobs became. Just a thought.

E. **Update your files as technology changes**. Pencil and paper, to reel-to-reel, to 8mm movies, to cassette tapes, to 5 ¼ inch floppies, to 3 ½ inch floppies, to CD, to DVD, to Blue Ray, to Flash Drives, to, to, to… Who knows what kind of data storage medium is coming our way tomorrow? The key point to make here is if you're going to keep files in storage for a number of years, make sure to update both their storage medium (disks or drives) and their format (.doc? .pdf? mp3?) so as to keep them accessible and readable.

F. **Note**: If you run across a case that has historical significance (landmark court case for instance) or media popularity (like a wrongful death case on a celebrity) then you'll probably want to keep all original notes and documents for a long, long time, and you'll want to keep them safe and secure from not only the elements, but from those who might try to steal your case files!

**3. A Final Recap**: Speaking of "ending," this is where we end the main instructional portion of our ebook before we send you to the sample forms, so let's do a quick recap over what we've covered:

A. **Client & Case**: The main ingredients in your dinner recipe are what can make a wonderful meal or a trip to the ER. So it is with investigations. The better you are at getting exactly what you need to start with, the better off you'll be.

B. **Agreements**: The key word in business relationship is "relationship." Agreements and good communication make a two-way street that benefits both parties. Setting yourself up for success with a good contract and a thorough confirmation letter protects the client as much as it does you.

C. **Situation**: The middle of a case is the worst time to discover there are new players in the game, or key facts you didn't know. It doesn't work in books or movies, and it certainly doesn't work in real life. Make sure you get full disclosure of all facts and facets of the case from the client at the start.

D. **Engineer**: An ounce of planning is worth a ton of gold. If you're going to spend time, spend it wisely and sit down with your staff to do detailed game planning for your more important cases.

E. **Files & Forms**: Always work from forms, checklists, worksheets, and templates, even if you have a great software-based package. One key take away from all this is to remember to get back to basics. No matter what you do in life, be it business, sports, academics, the arts, whatever, if you need to improve on what you do, getting back to your basics and your foundation is always a good move. So it is with Private Investigation case management. The better your foundation, the better your bottom line. Period.

F. **Investigation**: Though not a book on investigation, this is a book on details and keeping them from slipping through your fingers. Learn to use attention to detail and other tools to make your investigations more efficient and more profitable.

G. **Letters**: The final report is the crown jewel of your investigation. Focus on yours, pay attention to all the elements and detail, and make the client as happy as possible. This leads to more business.

H. **Ending**: And here we are. Dot the "I"s, cross the "T"s, and put away the files in case they're needed again.

# Section Three – Sample Forms

As promised, the forms, checklists, worksheets, and templates that we **highlighted in red text** during the course of our ebook have sample copies in this section. Though this is a locked PDF file, you can scan these forms with OCR software and customize them for your personal use. **Section Four – The Source** provides more information about where these samples come from and how you can get more.


**Pg.**

**Client Data Sheet:** *This serves as your "work order" as well as the information page that prompts you to start gathering background information on the client as well as their case.* **25**

**Contract:** *The contract is one of the most important documents in your case file. This is a basic template, and we have included clauses to consider on page 8. However, this is one form you'll want to run by both your attorney and accountant to make sure all bases are covered.* **26**

**The Nature of Investigations:** *This is a disclaimer of sorts that helps you explain to the client what private investigators basically can and cannot do. Too many clients get their "education" about us through TV and don't understand the ethical and legal standards to which we are held. This is a good form to include as an attachment to either the contract or confirmation letter.* **27**

**Missing Persons:** *One of our "Incident Reports," this is the type template you would use to get your case background information during the "Situation" step. Please note that this particular form is the first page of three. When gathering initial data, thoroughness is that important.* **28**

**Background Check Authorization:** *Releases can be an important asset in quite a number of investigations. This one sets the stage for either a pre-employment screening or business partnership. As with any release, run it by your attorney to make sure it meets your needs.* **29**

**Clerical Activity Checklist:** *No job is finished until the paperwork is complete, and this is the checklist that helps you make sure all the "I"s are dotted and the "T"s are crossed. Once you scan this form in for your personal use, you can change the contents to better suit your operations. Note: If you get a copy of The Case File, all documents come as unlocked wordprocessor files. (Note: The next three sample forms weren't mentioned earlier in the ebook, but we wanted you to have them anyway!)* **30**

**Witness Information:** *One of the things we'd like to point out about this form is that it prompts you to gather additional contact and tracking information about your witness. As cases drag on in court witnesses sometimes move or do other things that make it difficult to locate them when the next round of a trial starts. With this form you'll have all the data you need in order to contact them again and again in the future.* **31**

**Surveillance Report:** *This is the worksheet an agent in the field would use to report the findings of the day's surveillance assignment on a particular subject or location. In fact, this is the first page of what could be several since you never know how much activity you'll log. If you'll note on this form, the user is asked to identify the file name, type, and other information related to the video and other media used for that surveillance. This helps you track your data.* **32**

**Wrongful Death:** *Another of our "Incident Report" cover sheets, this worksheet helps you gather all the information you need to launch a good death investigation. You'll note that it ties in to several of our other forms. Most of the items in our set prompt you to fill out the necessary supporting paperwork. If you create your own forms, try to incorporate this same level of detail.* **33**

# CLIENT DATA SHEET

Case number:_____ Type of Case: _____Date of first contact:___/___/___

| | |
|---|---|
| Name: SSN: Sex: DOB:___/___/___ | |
| Address: Apt/Ste: Complex/Subdivision: | |
| City: Co: St: Zip: -- Own/Rnt/Rsd:Yrs: | |
| Phones: (H): ( ) - Cell Phone 1: ( ) - | |
| Cell Phone 2: ( ) - Fax: ( ) - Pager: ( ) - | |
| E-Mail 1: E-Mail 2: Website: | |
| Social Media Pages: | |
| Client's Place of Employment: Reachable at work? Y / N | Staple Business Card Here |
| Address: | |
| City: St: Zip: -- E-Mail: | |
| Phone:( ) - Website: ICQ/UIN: | |
| Cell Phone: ( ) - Fax: ( ) - Pager: ( ) - | |
| Phone: (other): ( ) - ( ) - | |
| Attorney: | Staple Business Card Here |
| Firm: Atty's Case #: | |
| Address: Suite: | |
| City: St: Zip: -- | |
| Phones: (W): ( ) - (H): ( ) - | |
| Cell Phone: ( ) - Fax: ( ) - Pager: ( ) - | |
| E-Mail: Website: | |

| Background: | Misc. Info: | Releases: | Type of Case: | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| □ Printed Articles<br>□ News Media<br>□ Social Media<br>□ Website:<br>□ Official Reports<br>□ Legal Documents<br>□_____ | □ Photos<br>□ Videos<br>□ Maps<br>□ Diagrams<br>□ Phone book<br>□_____ | □ All Info – Client<br>□ All Info – Child<br>□ All Info – Subject<br>□ Power of Attorney<br>□ Subpoena<br>□_____ | □ Missing Person<br>□ Locates<br>□ Wrongful Death<br>□ Fraud / Theft<br>□ Workers Comp<br>□ Interview<br>□ Accident:_____ | □ Arson<br>□ Medical Malpractice<br>□ Asset Search<br>□ Background Check<br>□ Repo / Recovery<br>□ Child Custody<br>□ Consumer Protection | □ Security Analysis<br>□ Risk Management<br>□ Activity Check<br>□ Criminal Defense<br>□ Criminal Prosecution<br>□ Domestic<br>□ _____ |

□ Incident Report filled out □ Other necessary forms filled □ Case entered on master roster □ Full background/due diligence on client

**Case Synopsis:**

**Client referred by**: □ Single Case Only □ Single client, multiple cases

□ Other Persons to contact regarding this case listed on "Other Contacts – Client" sheet. □ Price / Cost estimate figured for contract.

□ Contract signed on: ___/___/___ Retainer received in the amount of: $_____ □ Case assigned to:_____

**Only Contact Client: At location / phone / email: and During Hours Of:**

CLIENT DATA SHEET

[YOUR LOGO OR LETTERHEAD HERE]

## CONTRACT OF RETAINER

**1.** This contract/agreement is made this day:_____, ____/____/_____ between [your company name] (Agency) by its officer or representative: _____ and Client: _____

Located at:_____

_____

who comes before us requesting assistance in this case under the general heading of _____

_____ and described as:

Case#:_____, Concerning: _____

_____

**2.** In exchange for services rendered by [your company name], above client agrees to the following terms of retainer and payment: Advance retainer in the amount of $_____ payable by cash, check, M.O. or Visa, MC, Amex, Discover. Base rate = $_____ per_____ and $____/mile, plus applicable, pertinent, and necessary expenses paid on client's behalf or incurred during investigation.

Payment of balance detailed as follows: _____

___ _____

Visa, MC, Amex, Discover #:_____ Exp: ____/____/_____

Amount: $ _____ Signature:_____

**3**. Client agrees to indemnify and hold agency harmless for the misuse by client of data legally obtained by [your company name].

**4.** This agreement binds [your company name] to client confidentiality. We will discuss the case with no one but the client and individuals privileged to the case as specified by client or by law. Client further agrees to not divulge case details to outside parties.

**5.** The client understands and acknowledges that [your company name] offers no guarantee on the outcome of the case or the existence of pertinent information. [your company name] only guarantees that the necessary information, documentation, etc. will be searched for diligently, legally, expediently, and as economically as possible.

**6.** Client further understands and acknowledges that [your company name] offers no guarantee on the validity of information provided by public documents, or outside vendors.

**7.** Client acknowledges that [your company name] provides report in written format within 7 days of case conclusion or final activity.

**8.** Client has received, read, and understands [your company name] retainer usage, refund, and termination fee policies. Initial: _____

**9.** Client has received, read, and understands investigative caveats outlined on "The Nature of Investigations" page. Initial: _____

Client:_____ (Signed:)_____ Date:___/___/___

Agent:_____ (Signed:)_____Date: ___/___/___

Witness:_____ (Signed:)_____Date: ___/___/___

## The Nature of Investigations

*As an aid to help our clients better understand the nature of the Private Detective industry, the processes by which we work, and the regulations by which we are governed, we have prepared this information sheet so you may have more realistic expectations regarding the work [Your Company Name] will conduct on your behalf.*

1. We have no more authority than does a private citizen. We are not police officers. The training, testing, background checks, and certification process we go through in order to obtain our licenses is meant to set us apart as individuals who are committed to unbiased professionalism. As such, we are bound to rigid codes of conduct dictated by the State of [Your State].
2. Similarly, we are not attorneys. Though we are very knowledgeable of the laws governing our actions, any advice we give concerning the direction or outcome of your case is merely a suggestion that should be approved by any legal representative you may have.
3. We are not magicians. Ours is an industry revolving around detail gathered through available information, the understanding of this detail, and the working knowledge of how to follow the trails we uncover. This detailed information is generated through diligence and knowing where to look. Like librarians, we are not geniuses. We are simply trained on where and how to find information.
4. We will abide by our standards of conduct and we expect the same from you. To reiterate, we will not perform any illegal acts. To further protect you, we remind you to let us do the job for which we are trained and to not attempt any form of investigative participation on your own. It is also in everyone's best interest if the investigation itself is treated as confidential and not disclosed to anyone except those parties either listed in the contract, or with a legal right, need, or authority to know.
5. Sometimes the information generated in an investigation is contrary to what the client hopes to find. We cannot guarantee results. We can only guarantee that the necessary information, documentation, etc. will be searched for diligently, legally, expediently, and as economically as possible.
6. If surveillance is necessary we feel obligated to inform you of the "real life caveats." Surveillance, especially moving surveillance, is a hit and miss science. We can perform these observations under agreed upon time and location parameters but cannot promise activity on behalf of the subject. Similarly, moving surveillance carries with it inherent obstacles such as the unpredictable nature of traffic. There is no guarantee that contact with the subject can be maintained as we cannot predict traffic flow, traffic conditions, weather, or other unforeseen problems. As in number one above, we have no more authority than an ordinary citizen. This includes traffic laws. Similarly, privacy and private property laws will dictate the conduct of some surveillances.
7. [Your Company Name] can, however, make a promise that most other agencies can't. That is, we will do everything in our power to reach the goal of obtaining the information you need in a timely and economical fashion and conduct ourselves in a professional and discreet manner while representing you in your case.

Agent:_____, Signature:_____ Date:___/___/___

Client:_____, Signature:_____ Date:___/___/___

## INCIDENT REPORT – MISSING PERSONS (Page 1 of 3)

This report : ☐ Original/Initial dated: / / ☐ Update/Correction dated: / / ← ☐ Case File Started
Subject's name: ← ☐ Data File Created
Last seen by: ← ☐ Info in Case File
Date reported missing: ___/___/___ Reported missing by: ← ☐ Client Data Sheet
Reporter's relationship: To Subject: To Case: ☐ Client ☐ Witness ☐ Other:

Appears to be: ☐ Parental abduction ☐ Other abduction ☐ Runaway ☐ "Wandered Off" ☐ Unknown Foul Play ☐:_____
Gen. Summary (☐ taped):

Communications: ☐ LEO: Their case #:
Phone 1: Phone 2: ← Full contact info listed on "Other Contacts" sheet
Other communications: ☐ Missing Persons Orgs ☐ Shelters ☐ Relatives ☐ Friends ☐ Work ☐ School ☐ Church ☐ Social Orgs
☐ Professional Orgs ☐ Mental Institutions ☐ Medical Hospital ☐ SSA ☐ Credit Card Cos. ☐ Bank ☐ _____
Investigations to date (☐ taped):

Last seen: Date: / / Day: Time: AM/PM Weather:
Sub's behavior: ☐ Medical Info Attached
☐ Psych Info Attached
Last seen: Location:
Address:
City: State: Zip:
Phone: Phone 2:
Cell phone: Fax:
Website: E-Mail:
☐ Owner and/or manager listed on "Other Contacts" sheet. Scene Analysis Conducted? ☐ Y ☐ N. If Yes, when? ____/____/____

Subject was wearing: Hat: Jewelry:
Shirt/blouse: Pants:
Dress: Shoes:
Underwear: Coat:
Other Clothing:
Other items carried. Describe each in minor detail here, attach additional sheet(s) if necessary:
Purse:
Wallet
Cell Phone: #: Make / Model:
Other electronics:

Intended destination (if any): ETA:
Address: Traveling from:
City: State: Zip:
Phone: Fax: Depart time/date:
Cell phone: Pager:
Website: E-Mail:
☐ Location owner and/or manager on duty listed on "Other Contacts" sheet. Is travel origin the "Last Seen Location"? ☐ Y ☐ N

Location is:
☐ Subject's job site
☐ Education
☐ Residence
☐ Recreation
☐ Commercial
☐ Public/Gvrmnt
☐ Travel related
☐ Other:

Travelling Via:
Type: Make: Model: Year: Colors: Body: Roof:
VIN: Marks/Features: Tag: County:
Description other forms of travel:

**Attachments**: ☐ Missing Persons Two-Description ☐ Missing Persons Three – Identifiers ☐ Report Copy – Law Enforcement
☐ Additional Photographs of Subject ☐ Audio of Subject ☐ Video of Subject ☐ Maps of Search Area(s)

[Your Logo or Letterhead Here]

# Background Check Authorization

**1.** I _____ as a precursor to employment by, or business involvement with _____ give my permission for _____ and any and all of their assigns to research any and all information pertaining to those parts of my personal and professional history having a bearing on our employment or business relationship and/or my ability to carry out all requirements of said relationship. Furthermore I agree to hold harmless "employer", their assigns, and any and all information sources from liability stemming from the discovery of truthful information causing termination of said relationship.

**2.** I understand that all information gathered will be kept in the strictest confidence.

**3.** I understand the course of this background check will include (but is not limited to): (Initial Each)

| Category | Initial | Category | Initial |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A**. Criminal History | _____ | **B**. Civil Litigation History | _____ |
| **C**. Verification of education | _____ | **D**. Credit History, Credit Report | _____ |
| **E**. Driving record, DMV record | _____ | **F.** Medical History | _____ |
| **G**. Military Service | _____ | **H**. Work / Employment History | _____ |
| **I.** Verification of all information provided on resume or application (if any) | | | _____ |

**4. Applicant Information:**

First:_____ Middle:_____ Last:_____

Address:_____Apt:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____ - _____

Phone: (_____)_____-_____ E-Mail:_____

Length of time at this address:_____ List previous address below:

Address:_____Apt:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____ - _____

Phone at old address: (_____)_____-_____

Sex:_____ DOB:___/___/___ SSN:_____-____-_____ Marital Status:_____

Place of birth: Country:_____ State:___ City:_____ County:_____

☐ I have attached a resume and authorize verification of all details it contains. Initial: _____

☐ I authorize my prospective employer to release my signed application for review. Initial: _____

**5.** Applicant's Printed Name: _____

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Witness/Notary: _____ Date: _____

Notary Seal:

## Clerical Activity Checklist

Case#: Client:: Re:

| Case Start | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **IN** | **Activity** | **Date** | **IN** | **Activity** |
| | | Initial contact with client | | | Retainer of $_____ deposited. |
| | | Contract signed | | | Agent assigned:_____ |
| | | All necessary releases signed | | | Agent assigned:_____ |
| | | Info listed in Master Case Roster | | | |
| | | | | | **(IN Column = Supervisor's Initials)** |

| Case Final Disposition | |
|---|---|
| Case: ☐ Closed ☐ Terminated ☐ Suspended on: ___/___/___ Re: | |
| Synopsis of final result: | |
| | |
| Reopened on: ___/___/___ Re: | |
| Court date of:___/___/___ Court:_____ Judge:_____ | |
| **Subject** | **Notes:** |
| | |
| | |
| Other disposition of main subject: | |
| | |

| Disposition of Evidence | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **IN** | **Activity** | **Storage / Filing Location** |
| | | Police reports | |
| | | Forensics reports | |
| | | Witness Interview Tapes and Transcripts | |
| | | Surveillance Reports and Materials | |
| | | Number of audio files: _____ | |
| | | Number of video files: _____ | |
| | | Still photos: Total # : _____ | |
| | | Courthouse or other legal doc. Copies: | |
| | | Misc. items from trash run: | |

| Billing and Accounting | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **IN** | **Activity** | **Date** | **IN** | **Activity** |
| | | Retainer of: $_____ collected w/contract | | | Payment of:$_____ rec'd |
| | | Case conclusion balance of:$_____ | | | 30 day notice sent |
| | | Retainer refund or first bill of: $_____ | | | 60 day notice sent |
| | | First invoice mailed. | | | 90 day notice sent |
| | | Payment of:$_____ rec'd | | | Final payment of $:_____ paid in full |

| Final Communication | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **IN** | **Activity** |
| | | Final synopsis/report/invoice mailed to: ☐ Client ☐ Client's attorney ☐ Other: |
| | | Case File entered into "Closed Case" files. |
| | | Thank you notes sent to all applicable people (client, attorney, LEOs, stellar witnesses, etc.) |
| | | All computer files copied to disk and stored in: |
| | | Case entered into master log and/or database ☐ Case details entered into spreadsheet |
| | | |

| Items from the Spreadsheet |
|---|
| Total number billable hours: _____ Total hourly fee billed: _____ Total amount billable expenses: _____ |
| Final total amount billed & paid: _____ Gross profit this case: _____ |

# Witness Information

Intvwng Agent:_____ Witness #:_____Pg #:_____

| | |
|---|---|
| Full Name: SSN: Sex: DOB:___/___/___ | |
| Address: Apt/Ste Cmp/Sb: | |
| City: Co. St: Zip: -- Own/Rnt/Rsd Yrs: | |
| Phones: (H): ( ) - Cell Phone: ( ) - | Staple Business Card here |
| E-Mail: Website: | |
| Social Media: | |
| Place of Employment: Supervisor: | |
| Address: Title: | |
| City: St: Zip: -- Website: | |
| Phone: - x Fax: E-Mail | |
| Vehicle: Type: Make: Model: Year: Colors: Body: Roof: | |
| Marks/Features: | |
| VIN: Tag: State: County: | |
| Closest friend or relative: (if married, use for spouse) Name: | |
| Relationship: SSN: Sex: DOB:___/___/___ | |
| Address: Apt/Ste: Cmp/Sb: | |
| City: St: Zip: -- Own/Rnt/Rsd Yrs.: | |
| Phones: (H): ( ) - Cell Phone: ( ) - | |
| E-Mail: Website: | |
| Social Media: | |
| Place of Employment: Supervisor: | |
| Address: Website: | |
| City: St: Zip: -- | |
| Phone: ( ) - Fax: E-Mail: | |
| Other contact: Name: | |
| Relationship: SSN: Sex: DOB:___/___/___ | |
| Address: Apt/Ste: | |
| City: St: Zip: -- Own/Rnt/Rsd Yrs.: | |
| Phone: Cell Phone: ( ) - | |
| E-Mail: Website: | |
| Social Media: | |
| Place of Employment: Supervisor: | |
| Address: Website: | |
| City: St: Zip: -- | |
| Phone: ( ) - Fax: E-Mail: | |
| **Short synopsis of testimony:** | |
| | |
| Interviews: 1. ___/___/___ By:_____ 2. ___/___/___ By: _____ 3. ___/___/___ By:_____ 4. ___/___/___ By:_____ | |
| Full deposition made on: ___/___/___ Recorded by: Transcript filed in: | |
| **Attachments**: □ Photo □ Audio □ Video □ Full "Subject Data File" □ _____ □ _____ | |

# Surveillance Report

Surveillance # ____of_____ Case #:_____ Surveillance Date: ___/___/___
Start Time: ____:____ am pm. End Time: ____:____ am pm. This surveillance ended re: _____
Primary Agent: _____ Secondary Agent: _____
Surveillance subject:_____
Surveillance Location: _____
Purpose:_____
Equipment Used:_____

Total time length of **video**: _____ minutes. Time length of video of subject: _____ minutes. Video footage saved to:
☐ Disk: Disk Type: _____File Type: _____ File Size _____ Disk #: _____ Filename: _____
☐ Flash Drive: File Type: _____ File Size _____ Disk #: _____ Filename: _____

Total number of **still photographs** taken: _____ Total number of still photographs of subject taken: _____
Photo Series: Exp #:_____ through_____ Photo File Format: _____ Photos saved to:
☐ Disk: Disk Type: _____File Type: _____ File Size _____ Disk #: _____ Filename: _____
☐ Flash Drive: File Type: _____ File Size _____ Disk #: _____ Filename: _____

Weather: _____ Light: _____ **Page: one Of:** _____

| | Time | Activity |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |
| 6. | | |
| 7. | | |
| 8. | | |
| 9. | | |
| 10. | | |
| 11. | | |
| 12. | | |
| 13. | | |
| 14. | | |
| 15. | | |
| 16. | | |
| 17. | | |
| 18. | | |
| 19. | | |
| 20. | | |
| 21. | | |
| 22. | | |
| 23. | | |

**Attachments**: ☐ Additional Report pages: #____ ☐ Map showing location of subject and surveillance personnel.

## INCIDENT REPORT – WRONGFUL DEATH

Deceased: ☐ Subj. Data File Started

Discovered/Reported on: Day: _____Date:___/___/___ Time: _____am/pm Weather:

Discovered/Reported by: ☐ Subj. Data File Started

Death occurred on or about: Day: _____Date:___/___/___ Time: _____am/pm Weather:

Deceased's relationship: To Discoverer: To Client:

Body Discovered (location):

Address: Apt/Ste:

City: County: St: Zip:

Death occurred:
☐ This Location
☐ Elsewhere

Reason for being at location:

If death occurred elsewhere, list location particulars on "Addendum Sheet".

Preliminary Indications (fill in all that apply as early clues may conflict):

| | Indicators: | Note: |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Natural | | |
| ☐ Accident | | |
| ☐ Homicide | | |
| ☐ Suicide | | |

Describe Incident:

Crime(s) associated with this incident: ← ☐ Incident Report(s) Filled

Total numbers: # Involved in incident:_____ # Injured:_____ # Dead:_____ ← ☐ "Other Contacts" Filled

Responding Official Personnel

| Official: | Name: | Phone: | Their Case/File #: | File |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Officer: | | | | ☐ |
| Detective: | | | | ☐ |
| Fire: | | | | ☐ |
| EMS: | | | | ☐ |
| ER Physician | | | | ☐ |
| Surgeon | | | | ☐ |
| Nurse | | | | ☐ |
| Coroner: | | | | ☐ |
| Medical Ex. | | | | ☐ |
| Mortician: | | | | ☐ |

☐ Each of the above officials' information listed on an "Other Contacts" sheet ☐ Interviews complete w/all above.

Description of position, appearance, and condition of body:

☐ Autopsy Report Attached

Personal effects on deceased:

☐ Correlation or connection to deaths in other cases / jurisdictions investigated. # of **Other Deaths** _____ (Use additional sheets)

☐ "**Crime Scene Analysis**" report started ☐ "**Witness Tracker**" sheet started ☐ "**Case Event Timeline**" started

☐ "**Other Contacts**" sheet started ☐ "**Addendum**" sheet attached ☐ _____ ☐ _____

# Section Four - The Source




Everything given to you thus far has come from **The Case File**. This is the package you need that will make all the difference in the world with organizing your cases, work product, and making your agency more profitable.

The few sample forms we've provided here don't begin to do the system justice. The Case File is made up of **over 100 pages** of interrelated forms, checklists, and templates, all of which carry the detail to keep you on track, the appearance to enhance your professional image, at a cost less than one billable hour.

But that's just one of the many, many benefits we offer. For now, let's tell you a little more about what our system is made of.

1. **The Case File** is a template-based case management system that uses the tools that already come with your computer. That's how we can offer such a strong package at such a **low price**!
2. **The Main Case File Section** has every template you need for full case management on sizable investigations. This section gives you the benefit of over 20 years of investigative experience in the form of detailed **checklists, interrelated forms, templates, and worksheets**, all of which can be printed to use hardcopy in the field, softcopy on computer, and can be **completely customized by the user**. And, we can act as a stand-alone system or incorporate into any system you might currently use. No other system on the market does this!
3. **Our Case Specific Forms** help you gather the early info you need and then help you organize your case and game-plan the investigation. We have cover sheets for Missing Persons, Theft, Arson, Wrongful Death, Crime Scene Analysis, and **many more**. This set also includes agency management forms like schedules, time tracking templates, case rosters, and more.
4. **Continuing Ed.** Education is important to us so we added a "continuing ed" section which has nearly 100 books and training manuals on a variety of investigative topics including Death Scene Investigation, Cyber Crime, Terrorism, and so on. We also have marketing and agency management books and manuals as well.

The next thing you should do is visit our site to learn more about our complete system and the long list of benefits we don't have room to list here.

**"A *lifetime* of case management for less than the cost of *one* billable hour."**

**Click here: The Case File**

And by the way, thanks to a special arrangement with InfoQuest and **TALI**, we have one more **member benefit** for you: **A coupon code for $5 off of The Case File**.

## Use discount code #: 997765846

PS-Thanks to this special arrangement with InfoQuest, by ordering through the Goldbar tracking link that appears in each of the order links, InfoQuest will **donate 50% of the profit back to TALI** so that we may continue to bring you great service and more member benefits in the future. Thank you for supporting TALI!

*(**A final note**: About the "accident scene" photo on page 10. Yes, it's a fake. We were sitting around with some crime scene tape, red electrical tape, a project we were working on, and too much time on our hands. That's when things happen! Just thought you should also know that no people, animals, or trees were harmed in the making of this ebook although billions of electrons were temporarily inconvenienced.)*

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