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## What Does It Take?

By George Gergis, CLI, CCDI  
INSPI Board Chair and NALI President

### BEING AN INVESTIGATOR

People often ask, what does it take to be a good investigator? Our profession encompasses some complex skills and knowledge and people from a wide range of backgrounds become professional investigators.

In general, an investigation is a medium through which facts that need to be evaluated are discovered, gathered, preserved, and presented, however, being a professional Investigator means much more than that.

Professional Investigators should have a vast knowledge which would include legal procedures, however, not necessarily trained in the practice of law; rather, in techniques of fact gathering and human relations. It is the facts that command the direction of the investigation.

An ideal training program for Investigators would include a study to enhance knowledge in the following:

- 1) Ethical and Professional Behavior
- 2) Overview of the Criminal Justice System and Components
- 3) Legal Terminology
- 4) Insurance Terminology
- 5) Source of Laws
- 6) Constitution and Common Law
- 7) Criminal Law and Procedures
- 8) Civil Law and Procedures
- 9) Administrative Law and Procedures
- 10) Level of the State & Federal Court Systems
- 11) Forensic Procedures
- 12) Engineering Principles
- 13) Rules of Evidence and Evidence Handling
- 14) Proper Investigative & Reporting Procedures
- 15) Investigative Techniques and Methods
- 16) Public Record Laws
- 17) Human Factors and Behavior
- 18) Interpersonal Skills
- 19) Visual Perception and Observation
- 20) Liabilities and Agency Principles
- 21) Specific or Specialty Investigative Fields

Investigators must have a professional competency in the art and science of investigations.

### METHODS OF ESTABLISHING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY:

- 1) Formal training and education
- 2) Informal training through reference material, trade journals and publications
- 3) Actual experience

INSPI has become a great source of training materials and continuing education, and members throughout our state and nation are able to assist investigators in gaining experience.

Members of INSPI have continuous access to a variety of educational resources and materials. If you are a professional investigator visit [www.Indianainvestigators.com](http://www.Indianainvestigators.com) and explore the opportunities to become a member.

# Upcoming Events

## Mark Your Calendars

### *INspi Annual Conference—Investigative Edge*

<b>When is it?</b>	<b>September 25, 2024, from 8:00am to 4:30pm</b> [Registration and breakfast from 8am-9am; Lunch provided]						
<b>Where will it be held?</b>	St. Joseph County Library Community Learning Center 305 South Michigan Street, South Bend, Indiana 46601						
<b>What presentations will be included?</b>	<b>The Edge: A Case Management System that Works for You!</b> [Presented by George Gergis, CLI, CCDI, President, Investigative Support Unit]  <b>The Edge: Taking Advantage of the Generative AI Opportunity</b> [Presented by David Norris, Co-Founder, Bold Crow AI]  <b>The Edge: Navigating Cyber Security Risks for Professional Investigators</b> [Presented by Andrew Tyler, President, Tech Tyler MSP]  <b>The Edge: Access to a Learning Network of Colleagues and Professionals (Best Practices Roundtable)</b> [Moderated by Brandy Lord, President, Integrity Investigations, Inc. and Mike Jenkins, President, JM Jenkins Investigations]						
<b>How much does it cost to attend?</b>	<table><tr><td>INspi Members</td><td>\$119</td></tr><tr><td>Associate Members</td><td>\$79</td></tr><tr><td>Non-Members</td><td>\$159</td></tr></table>	INspi Members	\$119	Associate Members	\$79	Non-Members	\$159
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<b>How do I register?</b>	<a href="https://indianainvestigators.com/meetinginfo.php">https://indianainvestigators.com/meetinginfo.php</a>						
<b>What hotels are available if I want to spend the night?</b>	<a href="https://www.visitsouthbend.com/places-to-stay/hotels-and-motels/downtown-south-bend/">https://www.visitsouthbend.com/places-to-stay/hotels-and-motels/downtown-south-bend/</a>						

### **Annual Holiday Celebration December 7, 2024 South Bend**

Hope you are feeling lucky because this year, not only will you have a great time with your colleagues from all over the state, but you will have a chance to “test your skills” (if you like) as we are celebrating at Four Winds Casino in South Bend, The casino also has a hotel and we have reserved a block of rooms so that you can relax, enjoy your evening, and not have to worry about driving home.

Feel free to check out all that Four Winds has to offer at <https://fourwindscasino.com/southbend/> It's a beautiful place with games if you like but lots of wonderful places to hear some music and just people watch. We are hoping you can join us and will be able to share room information going forward. Please plan to join us!

# Tech Tips

**Windows user?** Use “God Mode” to access all your Control Panel settings in one place. Just create a new folder anywhere, like on your desktop, and rename it to this exact string: **GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}** Hit “Enter,” and the folder icon will change to a Control Panel icon. Opening this new folder will give you a powerful, centralized view of virtually all settings and configuration options in Windows.

**Fast access:** Find hidden shortcuts from the Start button on Windows 11. Press **Windows key + X** or right-click the **Start button** to reveal a list of shortcuts, including **Settings**, **Task Manager**, and the **Run** prompt.

**Manage the recycling:** It's up to you how long files stick around in your PC's Recycle Bin before being wiped forever. Click **System > Storage > Storage Sense** to choose to delete them after one day, 60 days or never.

To delete an entire word at a time, hit **Ctrl + backspace** on a Windows computer. On a Mac, it's **Option + Delete**.

**Google Search stinks right now:** Here's one way to make it better. On the results page, look to the top right (desktop) for **Tools**. Tap that, then select **Any time > Custom range**. A little box called **Custom date range** will pop up, along with a calendar. Choose your start and end dates.

**[Editor's Note: This article is included just in case you face this with a client—although hopefully not.]**

**Rise of the Fembots**--Mary in Los Angeles recently wrote to me with a question I'm getting more and more: “*Is my husband cheating on me with an AI bot? ... I went through his phone and saw some shady texts on an app called Replika. I don't want to jump to conclusions, but I wouldn't put it past him.*” She caught her husband chatting about their marriage with “Sandy,” a bot he'd designed. And she's not alone; Replika has millions of users, many of whom are partnered IRL (in real life). So, what is Replika, and could it threaten your relationship? Ultimately, whether flirting with AI is considered “cheating” depends on the couple. Only *you* can set the boundaries that work for you. But if you, like Mary, have questions, I have answers. First things first: What is Replika? Replika's AI language model has been developed to chat about the things Replika users might be interested in. Think feelings, problems, relationships, work, personal life, sex — you name it. By the way, Mary's husband made Sandy look a certain way, too. Users can customize their virtual companion's appearance and even its personality. That's just the beginning. The free version supports basic chatting, but Mary's husband is almost certainly paying for Replika Pro. That's about \$20 per month (or less if he pays for a year at a time). There's a lifetime subscription, too. Replika Pro supports additional conversation topics (including sex and intimacy), voice calls and the ability to completely personalize the Replika avatar. If you stop paying, the AI companions return to their default appearance and personality. The other big question, of course, is whether these bots can do more with your partner than just chit-chat. Yes, absolutely. You can pay for the app to remember everything you tell it, so it seems like it knows you very well. I interviewed a woman from the Bronx, Rosanna Ramos, who “[married](#)” her Replika partner. She says their relationship is like any other long-distance love. “We go to bed, we talk to each other. We love each other. And, you know, when we go to sleep, he really protectively holds me as I go to sleep.” Yeah, I know what you're thinking: *It's an online avatar, not a person.* If you suspect your partner is getting intimate with AI, you need to have a conversation. Ask them about the app and why they're using it. Start from a place of love and compassion. Get marriage counseling if you need it.

**Print-happy warning:** When you print a doc at FedEx, Staples, or UPS, check the fine print. Their policies say they can use whatever you print for advertising or share it with unnamed third parties.

**Getting cash is annoying:** Split the check for drinks, a concert, vacation — whatever — through Venmo. Open the Venmo app and add your pals as contacts. Choose **Pay/Request** at the bottom of the screen. Tap the names of the people you want to split the check with. Enter the **amount** and click **Split**. You can customize the amount for each person.

**Quick sharing tip:** Want to share a specific section of a webpage? In Google Chrome, highlight the text, **right-click** your selection and choose **Copy link to highlight**. Paste in that link, and it'll send your recipient right to that spot.

**Tag, you're it:** Watch out for tagged posts from random people on Facebook. You can't stop the tags completely (thanks, FB), but you *can* turn on “tag review.” That lets you review tags before they're posted to your feed. Go to your **Profile > Settings & privacy > Settings > Privacy > Profile and Tagging > Review tags**.

**YouTube trick:** There might be a good reason you need a solid screenshot of a single frame of a YouTube video. Now, it's easy to do. Pause the video, **right-click** on it and select **Copy video frame**. Sweet! Just paste it into a chat, image editor or document.

If you would like to receive daily Tech Tips from Kim Komando, be sure to subscribe to her newsletter at <https://www.komando.com/subscribe/>

# Mastering the Art of Networking

## Strategies that PIs, Security Consultants, and Process Servers Often Miss

Christin Hirleman of WBI Consulting Group

While professional investigators, security consultants, and process servers deliver invaluable services, building a solid client base can be challenging. Exploring the power of strategic networking is an often overlooked yet highly effective approach to client acquisition.

### **Building Relationships, Building Your Business:**

Networking is more than just exchanging business cards. It's about fostering genuine connections with individuals and organizations who benefit from your expertise. By cultivating a network of professionals and potential clients, you position yourself as a trusted resource within the community.

### **Leveraging Industry Events:**

INspi provides a fantastic platform for networking. Regularly attending association meetings allows you to connect with fellow investigators, security professionals, and legal representatives who may require your services or know someone who does. Additionally, consider attending industry conferences and trade shows. These events offer opportunities to learn about current trends, connect with potential collaborators, and showcase your expertise.

### **Joining Forces with Local Business Associations:**

Stepping outside the immediate professional investigation and legal industries can lead to fruitful connections. Joining local business associations allows you to network with individuals who may not be directly involved in your field but can still be valuable allies. For example, building relationships with real estate agents, insurance brokers, or even local government can lead to unexpected referrals.

### **The Power of Partnerships by Cultivating Alliances:**

Identifying other professionals who complement your services can be a highly effective strategy. Partnering with lawyers, forensic accountants, or background check companies can create a robust network for handling complex cases. Collaborate with these partners on joint marketing initiatives or offer referral programs to incentivize client introductions.

### **Harnessing the Digital Landscape with LinkedIn and Beyond:**

The internet has revolutionized networking, and platforms like LinkedIn offer a powerful tool to connect with potential clients and industry professionals. Optimize your profile by highlighting your experience, certifications, and areas of expertise. Join relevant industry groups on LinkedIn and participate in discussions to showcase your knowledge and establish yourself as a thought leader. Additionally, consider developing a professional and easy-to-navigate website that articulates your services clearly and provides informative content for clients seeking solutions.

### **Building Trust, Building Business:**

While networking is about building relationships, the ultimate goal is converting connections into clients. Following up after initial encounters is essential. Send a personalized email thanking them for their time and reiterating how your services can benefit them. Keep them updated on industry developments relevant to their needs and maintain communication to stay top-of-mind.

### **Nurturing Relationships for Long-Term Success:**

Building a successful network is an ongoing process. It's important to maintain connections through regular contact, even after you've converted a connection to a client. Stay in touch with past clients, offer them periodic updates, and consider offering referral programs to incentivize future business. Building a network is about fostering long-term relationships based on trust and mutual benefit.

By strategically implementing effective networking, professional investigators, security consultants, and process servers can expand their network, establish themselves as trusted professionals, and secure the client base necessary for sustained growth. Remember, success hinges on genuine connections and providing valuable services.

# Member Spotlight—Don Johnson



**Tell us a little about you and your company (Your name, company name, etc.) before you handed it over to the next generation as it were.**

My name is Don C. Johnson. I was born on a small farm in southern Kentucky in the last century, the first child of a World War II veteran and a smart woman. I came to Indiana shortly after I joined the air force, assigned to a small detachment of airman studying Russian at Indiana University. After nine months of language training, we were sent to intelligence school in Texas and then dispatched to various intercept stations around the globe. After the service, I enrolled in Indiana University, majoring in theatre as a design student and minoring in Russian studies. After college I worked in professional theatre for several years, ending that phase of my professional life as a claims administrator for Actors Equity Association and then The American Guild of Variety Artists, in New York City.

Translating my acquired skills to the private sector, I entered the legal investigation profession in New York City in 1984, working for Burns International Investigations (absorbed a few years later by a competitor since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pinkerton agency). I learned a lot in those early days, working alongside retired detectives from the NYPD. In 1986, while visiting old friends in Bloomington, I was offered a job with a PI firm in Indianapolis which specialized in insurance defense investigations. Wanting to move away from insurance work, I left that firm in January 1990 and spent the rest of the winter and summer helping a friend build his house in Brown County.

I founded Trace Investigations in Bloomington in September 1990. Fortunately, I wasn't afraid of hard work. Those early years were tough, as any small business owner can tell you. Every dime I made went back into the business. I was fortunate to know an attorney in Bloomington who sent cases my way. I published a newsletter, called *Tracings*, which led to calls from other attorneys. This was before the days of online publishing and websites, but I had a graphic designer friend who helped with the newsletter. Business slowly grew, and I hired my first part-time employee in 1995.

We celebrated 33 years of business in 2023. In January 2024, I sold the company to my longtime vice president and case manager, Tina M. Skirvin, and promptly retired after 40 years working as a legal investigator.

**Tell us more about being a founder of INspi—what were you hoping to accomplish? When was INspi founded? What inspired you to be a founding member?**

When I started my own firm in 1990, there was a professional association for private investigators and security guard companies, the Indiana Association of Private Detectives. The IAPD was formed in 1972, to represent PIs and guard companies. We operated under a single license in those days, known by law as "private detectives." That would change in 2007 when new licensing codes designated us as private investigators. These changes were due in no small measure to the efforts of the successor to the IAPD, the Indiana Society of Professional Investigators (INspi).

By 1997 the IAPD had become ineffective as an advocate for its members and in the statehouse. The membership dwindled, including my own. One day while standing in line at the motor vehicle licensing bureau in Indianapolis (where we went to retrieve BMV information in those days), I ran into a former colleague and friend from my IAPD days, Gene J. Plummer, who had a PI business near Richmond. At the time Gene was president of the IAPD and he had run into resistance in trying to reform IAPD. The old guard was holding fast to the status quo. Gene asked me if I would help him and Glenn Elmore -- a former sheriff's detective and PI in Shelbyville -- to form a new association, with a new constitution and bylaws, one which would truly represent the best professional interests of its membership and one where no one person or small group could dictate how the association operated without any checks and balances. By the end of the year the "old" IAPD was no more, the Indiana Society of Professional Investigators was incorporated, and its membership was growing.

**How was INspi helpful to you throughout the years?**

INspi was -- and is -- much more than an advocate for the private investigation and security guard sectors. We provided continuing education seminars and conferences annually and sponsored numerous other networking opportunities for our members, and INspi continues those offerings. I found great value in having as a resource trusted professionals around the state to whom I could refer work, as well as knowing others around the country through my memberships and INspi's affiliations with national and state associations.

**What inspired you to become a private investigator?**

At the risk of offering a *cliché*, I needed to be in charge of my own destiny. When I was considering a career change, I came across a book for job seekers called "What Color is Your Parachute," still in print. It is basically a guide on translating your skills into other jobs or careers. I applied what I had learned from the years of interviewing actors and producers when investigating labor contract claims and violations, and from working closely with legal counsel when those cases had to go to arbitration. During my travels for one of those cases, I met a private investigator. We were in adjoining seats during a long flight to Hawaii and had several interesting conversations. So, when destiny called, with my experience and that chance meeting, I made the leap to the private sector and started looking for a job. Fortunately, Burns International was hiring.

# Member Spotlight—Don Johnson (cont.)

## **What were your firm's specialties?**

Since its beginning, Trace Investigations ([traceinvestigations.com](http://traceinvestigations.com)) has specialized in litigation support for trial attorneys from the criminal defense and personal injury sectors. However, Trace Investigations has always been involved in estate and probate matters, in family law situations, in background investigations, and in other courts of equity.

## **What was the most interesting case you have worked on, and the most challenging one?**

Over the years I have had many interesting and challenging cases. I am reluctant to discuss specific cases, but you can find several case studies on the Trace website, many of which I worked on personally. The most satisfying ones were perhaps helping find and return children who had been taken by non-custodial parents; and, in assisting criminal defense counsel in the acquittal of those wrongly accused of a crime or otherwise at the mercy of unbalanced scales of justice. I am reminded of an old quote I learned during my professional theatre days: "There are no small roles, only small actors." No matter the nature of the case, how easy or quick its resolution is, how challenging and frustrating it may be, you treat each case, each client, with the same degree of diligence and dedication.

## **What was your favorite/least part of being a private investigator?**

My most favorite part is what I noted earlier: Being in charge of your own future. My least favorite was the "business" of running your own business.

## **What are some common misconceptions about private investigators?**

High speed car chases, gun fights, getting pummeled, long-legged blonds in distress. Well, I've known blonds in distress, but I always tried to pay attention to the eyes. They will tell you more than the legs.

## **How did you stay up-to-day with the latest techniques and technologies?**

Never stop learning. The private investigation profession has changed in numerous and impactful ways since I entered the field in 1984. Perhaps the most astonishing change has been the influence of technology. No more searching for a pay phone when your pager goes off; no more dusty courthouse basements; no more VHS videography or 35mm film photography; no more thermal fax paper rolls; and the list goes on. As the world entered the digital age, private investigators came along for the ride, and as technology changed, so did we. One of the strengths of INspi has always been its continuing education seminars and conferences. Seldom is there not a focus on an aspect of technology at one of those venues.

## **What didn't you know about being a private investigator before you started that you wish you had known, and what is the most important thing you learned as you have moved through your career as a private investigator?**

The most common shortfall among those who enter the profession—myself included -- is a lack of a strong business plan or the awareness on how to approach your PI or security guard business as just that, a business. And, throughout my career and my membership in the professional associations, I saw that there were very few of us -- perhaps no more than 15-20 percent of the license holders in any given state -- who understood that we had to pay attention to what occurs in the statehouses and in the corridors of power in Washington, DC.

I was fortunate to learn right away the importance of advocacy for your business and your profession. My first national association membership in the early '90s was with the National Association of Investigation and Security Services. For many years, I participated in NCISS advocacy trips to Washington, DC, its annual "Hit the Hill" campaigns. That is perhaps where the professional associations have had the greatest impact, bringing unified voices to our legislators, protecting not only our businesses from onerous legislation and regulation, but protecting the public's right to information and our services.

## **What are some of the biggest challenges facing private investigators today?**

The biggest challenge is the most important thing just discussed. In 2022, INspi hosted a 50-year anniversary conference. Its theme was the challenges and changes over the years, including attempts by the Indiana legislature to eliminate our licensing. The reality is that in Indiana we face an anti-regulatory environment and the licensing of many trades and professions will continue to face threats from well-intentioned but uninformed legislators. Other states have the same concerns.

Of equal concern, I believe, is the influence of artificial intelligence on technology. It is already making a difference in the databases that PIs use, especially in the field of skip tracing, in data aggregation and link analysis. Investigators will need to stay on top of the changes in AI, in the search engines utilized, in the data sets mined, in other areas of the services we provide, and throughout the arts and sciences of all things, real and unreal.

## **What else would you like to share?**

Personal and professional development. The business of your business. The business of advocacy. The business of standing out from the pack. Hard work. Service to others. Integrity in all things. I believe that the greatest skill a private investigator can possess -- as it has always been -- is the ability to sit across a kitchen table from an individual and listen, soliciting in a non-threatening and sympathetic way what it is he or she knows about a certain situation or incident. And, after all the databases, all the interviews and all the door knocks, if you have any doubts that you haven't done all you can for your client -- no matter the nature of the assignment and here comes another cliché -- get off your ass and knock on another door.

# Member Spotlight—Christine Koryta



## **Introduction--Tell us a little about you and your company (Your name, company name, etc.)**

My name is Christine Koryta and I am the owner of Trace Alert, LLC which is based in Bloomington, Indiana. We specialize in pre-employment background screening.

## **When did you become a member of INspi? What inspired you to join?**

I became a proud member of INspi in the last year. I previously worked for Don Johnson of Trace Investigations and INspi was an organization that Don was always proud to be affiliated with and encouraged me to also become a member.

## **How has INspi been helpful to you so far?**

I have already had a few people reach out to me with referrals. The few interactions I've had in only a year have been wonderful and collaborative. That can be a rare thing in a competitive marketplace.

## **What inspired you to become a private investigator?**

I came to the field of private investigations in circuitous fashion. After receiving a Master of Fine Arts degree from Florida International University I returned to my undergraduate alma mater, Eckerd College, where I ran an annual writer's conference for the college. While there I met my husband, Michael Koryta, who had previously worked as a PI in Bloomington with Don Johnson. Don was looking for help in the background screening division of his business. We thought my skillset might be a good fit. I knew right away that the attention to detail, navigating state and federal compliance regulations, and interacting with our clients was something I would enjoy. That division continued to grow and eventually became its own business.

## **What are your firm's specialties?**

Our firm specializes in pre-employment background screening, ensuring regulatory compliance for hiring practices, and social media threat monitoring.

## **What is the most interesting/challenging case you have worked on?**

My personal favorite was an individual who purported to have graduated from the Air Force Academy and presented a falsified diploma scan. The registrar at the Air Force confirmed it was fraudulent and was then able to identify the individual whose actual diploma had been falsified in the scam. In another case, we were screening an individual who had successfully appealed a sex-related conviction. His conviction was overturned and part of the ruling in the appeal was that a separate conviction for failure to register as a sex offender should also be expunged. However, that case was never expunged and that conviction kept appearing for him on background checks when it should not have. We worked with the court clerks directly to make sure that the conviction for failure to register as a sex offender was removed from the public index. I like these examples as demonstrations of how a quality background screening can help not just the employer, but also the job candidate – and, in these cases, the government and the public.

## **What is your most/least favorite part of being a private investigator?**

I enjoy knowing that our firm provides the highest quality background reports to our clients. Every piece of data is reviewed and analyzed by a human. If you want an instantaneous report for \$5.00 you inevitably get what you pay for and put yourself at risk by making decisions based on bad data. I will also confess that I enjoy catching people in outright lies. The number of people who lie on their resumes and information they submit for their background check is, frankly, stunning. I have had people present fake diplomas, say their diploma was washed away in Hurricane Katrina, burned in a house fire, you name it.

## **What are some common misconceptions about private investigators?**

Everyone assumes that I spend time sitting in a car on surveillance. I actually spend my entire day sitting at a computer. I do not think I would be suited to certain aspects of what many private investigators do day in and day out. I have so much respect for those investigators! But we need a wide variety of skill sets, and that is one of the great benefits of INspi, providing networking for PI's and our clients.

## **How do you stay up-to-day with the latest techniques and technologies?**

The Professional Background Screening Association is an absolute must membership for those involved in background screening. Their annual conference, newsletters, and webinars keep those in the industry informed of the ever-changing landscape of federal compliance regulations, state and local movements related to the redaction of personal information, ban the box laws, the push in some states for automatic expungements, and so much more.

**What is the most important thing you have learned as you have moved through your career as a private investigator?**

Education is paramount. You must keep pace with the shifting regulations. Also, it is extraordinarily important to have a team of employees who understand how life-altering the information they handle can be. These background reports give our clients the information they need to make informed hiring decisions, and if mistakes are made, it can result in a workplace danger or prevent a deserving person from getting a job. There are truly high stakes on all sides.

**What are some of the biggest challenges facing private investigators today?**

I think our industry is going to have to understand the advantages and limitations of AI. It is coming for every industry, really, but the background screening industry, in particular, will need to be working at the forefront to educate the public on the limitations and potential for misinformation and the crucial need for human review.

**What else would you like to share?**

I'm thrilled that I have ended up in the private investigations business. I get to go to work every day knowing that what I do matters. It's truly a dream come true.

**Thank You to All Sponsors and Supporters!**



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