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Investigative Edge

Education IS the Edge

Jan Fye, INspi, Executive Administrator

Over 30 attendees joined us in South Bend for our annual training event, **Investigative Edge**, on September 25th. It was a great event and the surveys from our members are coming in with positive results. Why? We had some great topics presented. Here's a quick recap:

George Gergis presented a robust review of the preparation and process for choosing a case management system that works for the specific needs of the investigator, but those needs must be determined first before a system can be chosen. I would encourage you to send me an email at admin@indiana-investigators.com if you would like a copy of his presentation. It's easy to understand and will give you an overview of the information George shared.

David Norris introduced members to Generative AI and got us thinking about how we might use artificial intelligence as a resource in our business, case management, and investigations. It's a relatively new subject for most of us but David is committed to partnering with INspi and helping us find or develop the kind of tools that will be most useful. Please let me know if you would like a copy of his slide deck.

Andrew Tyler discussed many of the risks present when technology is involved. The cyber security topic is one that seems endless and a little overwhelming but something investigators need to know not only for their business, but also to help protect clients. A copy of Andrew's slide deck is also available upon request.

We finished the day with a Round Table and a surprise guest. Some of you may have met **Marianne Tucker** before. She worked as an investigator for Brandy Lord at Integrity Investigations Inc. for many years. While working as a paralegal, she decided to return to school to earn her law degree

and now works as an attorney for Hahn|Walz in South Bend. She was invited to chat a bit with members about what she has learned as an attorney that would have been helpful to know while working as an investigator. Members had several questions for her, and I sincerely hope she can join us again at future events.

We are always lucky to have sponsors that help us keep our registration fee reasonable and we were blessed again with four event sponsors. Joining us this year were:

- Investigators' Toolbox
- Acrisure (formerly The Campbell Group)
- Justice Investigations and Protection Services
- JM Jenkins

I would also love to tell you a little bit about our attendees. Including presenters and members, some of which overlapped, we registered 34 people. Two of those were unable to join us. One of the things that was especially exciting is that Indiana was not the only state with members attending.

Here's a breakdown:

Indiana = 19
Florida = 6
Michigan = 6
Illinois = 2
Ohio = 1

We also had several new INspi members join us. Nine of the attendees at the event were new members. What a fantastic way to start their tenure as a member.

Now I know you are wondering if I'm going to include any pictures, and you know I will. You'll see more later in the newsletter.

One final thing, if you joined us on the 25th—thank you. If you were unable to join us, we look forward to seeing you next time!

New Members

Welcome to all our new members. We are delighted to have you join us and look forward to working with you!

Brett Coppins

Coppins Investigative & Security Group
South Bend, Indiana

Salvatore Grasso

Salvatore A. Grasso Co. LLC
Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Sue Hardesty

Hardesty Private Investigations
Brighton, Michigan

Tara Major

Integrity Investigations Inc.
Granger, Indiana

Dewey Powell

Eugene Butler, Private Investigator
Flint, Michigan

Crystal Coppins

Coppins Investigative & Security Group
South Bend, Indiana

Meredith Hanley

MLH Investigations
South Bend, Indiana

Chad Hooten

Integrity Investigations Inc.
Granger, Indiana

Zachariah Meyer

Integrity Investigations Inc.
Granger, Indiana

Patrick Salerno

Investigative Support Unit, Inc.
South Bend, Indiana



Tech Tips

Schedule text messages: With iOS 18, **you can** do this on your iPhone. Just open a text in **Messages**, tap the **+** (plus sign) > **Send Later**, then **pick your time** and confirm with the blue arrow. For Android users, it's just as easy. Tap the **+** in your chat > **Schedule Send** > set the **date and time** > **Send**.

Use your spacebar as a scroll wheel: It's easy. Press your **spacebar** to scroll down a page and **Shift + spacebar** to scroll up.

If you give a mouse a click: It'll do some handy things. Hover over a link, then click the middle button on your mouse to open it in a new tab. Middle-click an app in your PC's toolbar to open it in a new window (even if the app is already open). **Pro tip:** Let's say you want to refresh a page, but you don't want to lose the current version--middle click your browser's refresh button to open a fresh copy.

Type with your voice: In Word, sign into Microsoft 365. Open a new or existing doc and go to **Home > Dictate**. Wait for the Dictate button to turn on and start listening. In Google Docs, click **Tools > Voice typing**. Click the **microphone** that appears.

Cheaper than a personal assistant: ChatGPT can plan your day for you. Tell the AI your top three priorities, appointments, or commitments and how long a task typically takes, then ask it to create a schedule. Bam, a bulleted list, scheduled to the minute.

Finders keepers: Looking for a file? Hit the **Windows key** and start typing its name. That's it. On a Mac, hit **Cmd + spacebar** and start typin.' So simple and saves so much time.

Google trick: Type **filetype:** at the beginning of your search when looking for a spreadsheet or other document. Want a PDF? Write **filetype:pdf** and then **your keyword**. For an Excel spreadsheet, type **filetype:xlsx** and **your keyword**. Anything publicly available is a few clicks away.

Stop using your Google profile this way: Logging into other services through Google puts one of your most important accounts at risk. Log in at **myaccount.google.com** and tap **Security**. Scroll to **Your connections to third-party apps & services > See all connections**. You'll see a list of apps. Open the details, then click **Stop using Sign in with Google**.

Your keyboard explained: Hit **F2** to rename a selected file or folder. **F3** allows you to search within an open or active application. **Alt + F4** closes your active window, and pressing **F5** lets you refresh or reload a page or document window.

The ability to block people on social media is there for good reason: To keep away creeps and harassers. But your "Block" button's also good for exes, overshareers and nosy family members. Ever want to see who you've blocked over time? I pulled together steps to do just that on every major social platform. Check your list of people you've blocked. Maybe it was a mistake or misunderstanding.

Find your blacklist on 8 popular apps:

1. **Facebook:** Tap your profile picture (top right), then **Settings & privacy > Settings > Blocking**.
2. **Instagram:** Tap your profile picture (bottom right), then tap the three horizontal lines at the top right, followed by **Blocked**.
3. **X (Twitter):** Tap your profile picture (top left), then **Settings & Support > Settings and privacy > Privacy and safety > Mute and block > Blocked accounts**.
4. **Snapchat:** Tap your profile picture (top left), then tap the gear icon (top right) and choose **Blocked users**.
5. **TikTok:** Tap **Profile**, followed by the three horizontal lines (top right). Then, tap **Settings and privacy > Privacy > Blocked accounts**.
6. **WhatsApp:** On Android, tap the three dots (top right in **Chats**), then **Settings > Privacy > Blocked contacts**. On iOS, tap **Settings > Privacy > Blocked**.
7. **Signal:** From the **Chats** tab, tap the three dots (top right), then tap **Settings > Privacy > Blocked**.
8. **Telegram:** On Android, it's the three lines (top left), then **Settings > Privacy and Security > Blocked Users**. On iOS, from **Settings**, pick **Privacy and Security > Blocked Users**.

How about on your phone? Your smartphone also has a blocked list for calls and texts. In case you're wondering, people don't get alerted when you block (or unblock) them.

Android: Open the Phone app, tap the three dots (top right), then **Settings > Blocked numbers**.

iOS: Open Settings, then tap **Phone > Blocked Contacts**. The same lists get shared across the default phone and messaging apps, so you won't need to check in your messages, too.

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/>

Using ChatGPT

What Does That Look Like?

Jan Fye, SEA Results Advisors LLC

*To show exactly how ChatGPT works, look at the document below. This is an example of ChatGPT's answer to a request for more information on how AI might be helpful to professional investigators. After the initial response, ChatGPT was prompted to include how the suggestions made can be implemented. When requesting feedback from our **Investigative Edge** speaker (introducing the topic of AI for Professional Investigators), David Norris encouraged PIs to engage with AI developers to make sure the final resource used is the best for what you are trying to accomplish. Great reminder and something to consider as you read the suggestions below. Remember, this is meant to give you an idea of how ChatGPT can be a resource...not a replacement for your "always working" brain power.*

ChatGPT said: Good morning! I think your approach to introducing AI to private investigators in a relatable way is great, especially if we focus on practical applications. Here are some concrete ideas tailored to their work:

1. Case Management Efficiency

- **AI-Powered Case Organization:** AI can help PIs manage and organize cases by automatically categorizing documents, transcriptions, or evidence based on keywords or relevance. This reduces time spent on administrative tasks.
- **Scheduling Automation:** AI tools can manage appointments, send reminders, and track deadlines to keep cases moving without the need for manual oversight.

2. Data Analysis & Pattern Recognition

- **AI for Analyzing Surveillance Footage:** Instead of watching hours of video, AI can quickly scan and identify important moments or objects (such as specific vehicles, people, or suspicious activities) using pattern recognition.
- **Financial Fraud Detection:** AI can analyze large sets of financial data for inconsistencies, uncovering potential fraud or irregular patterns that a human might miss.

3. Social Media & Online Investigation

- **Automated Web Scraping:** AI can scan social media and public records, compiling relevant information about individuals or companies. This is useful in background checks, locating persons of interest, or verifying details for ongoing investigations.
- **Sentiment & Tone Analysis:** For cases where online behavior or communication is involved, AI can assess the tone of messages or posts to detect distress, aggression, or deception.

4. Facial Recognition & Image Analysis

- **Enhanced Surveillance:** AI-powered facial recognition systems can help PIs identify individuals from photos or videos, speeding up surveillance and identification tasks.
- **Object Identification in Photos:** AI tools can scan images from social media or surveillance footage to identify cars, license plates, or specific landmarks that may be relevant to a case.

5. Predictive Analytics for Risk Assessment

- **Assessing Risk in Missing Person Cases:** AI can analyze data from similar cases to suggest patterns or behaviors likely to occur, helping PIs make more informed decisions during their investigation.
- **Predicting Suspect Behavior:** By analyzing historical data, AI could help PIs anticipate a suspect's movements or decisions, which can aid in surveillance and capture efforts.

6. Voice-to-Text Transcription

- **Transcribing Interviews & Conversations:** AI can convert audio recordings into text automatically, saving PIs time and making it easier to review interview or surveillance material.
- **Language Translation:** For PIs working in diverse communities or with foreign clients, AI can assist by translating documents or communications.

7. Digital Forensics

- **Automated Keyword Searches:** AI can quickly sift through large volumes of data—emails, documents, phone records—to find relevant keywords or patterns, speeding up digital investigations.
- **File Recovery:** AI tools can help recover lost or hidden files that are crucial for cases, using advanced algorithms to restore deleted data.

These ideas focus on how AI tools can streamline their day-to-day work, making it faster, more accurate, and allowing them to focus on high-value tasks. By keeping the descriptions simple and emphasizing how these tools support their investigative skills, you'll make AI feel accessible and relevant. Does this align with what you're looking for?

ChatGPT said: You're making perfect sense. The key is to help investigators understand how to implement AI without overwhelming them with technical hurdles. Let's expand on how they can adopt these AI tools, whether by using existing software, hiring developers, or investing in specialized programs, and what costs to expect. Here's how we can break it down:

Using ChatGPT (cont.)

1. Case Management Efficiency

- **How to Do It:** Many case management systems, such as **Clio** or **CaseFleet**, now have built-in AI features. Investigators could upgrade their existing software or subscribe to one that offers AI integration, such as document categorization and scheduling automation.
- **Cost:** These systems are typically available on a subscription basis, costing anywhere from **\$50 to \$100 per user, per month**. No need to develop custom software here—most modern systems include these tools.
- **Next Steps:** Contact your current case management provider to see if they offer AI-powered upgrades or explore new platforms that fit your budget.

2. Data Analysis & Pattern Recognition

- **How to Do It:** To analyze surveillance footage or financial data, PIs can use off-the-shelf tools like **BriefCam** (for video analysis) or **SAS Fraud Management** (for financial investigation). These programs leverage AI to detect patterns and anomalies in massive data sets.
- **Cost:** These platforms can range from **\$1,000 to \$10,000** annually, depending on the features you need and the size of your business.
- **Next Steps:** Investigators should assess how much data they handle. If it's considerable, a larger investment in these tools can be worthwhile. Start with trial versions before committing to long-term contracts.

3. Social Media & Online Investigation

- **How to Do It:** Tools like **WebHarvy** or **Octoparse** offer affordable web-scraping solutions that are plug-and-play, requiring no coding skills. For deeper investigations, hiring a freelance developer to create a custom web-scraping tool could be an option.
- **Cost:** These off-the-shelf tools can cost **\$20 to \$100 per month**. Hiring a developer for custom solutions could range from **\$2,000 to \$5,000**, depending on complexity.
- **Next Steps:** Investigators can try out basic web-scraping software first. If they need more customized results, a freelance developer can be hired through platforms like **Upwork** or **Fiverr**.

4. Facial Recognition & Image Analysis

- **How to Do It:** Many affordable facial recognition systems are cloud-based. Services like **Amazon Rekognition** or **Microsoft Azure's Face API** offer easy-to-use platforms. Investigators simply upload images, and the AI does the rest.
- **Cost:** Cloud-based facial recognition typically charges based on usage, costing around **\$1 to \$5 per 1,000 images analyzed**. If larger-scale, custom systems are needed, costs could go higher, but often starting small is enough.
- **Next Steps:** Investigators can sign up for cloud services on a pay-as-you-go model and scale up based on their workload.

5. Predictive Analytics for Risk Assessment

- **How to Do It:** Tools like **IBM SPSS** or **RapidMiner** can be used for predictive analytics, but for those unfamiliar with AI, starting with a consultant or expert can be the best option to set up systems that make sense for their data.
- **Cost:** Subscription services range from **\$200 to \$500 per user, per year**. Hiring a data scientist for setup or customization could cost **\$5,000 to \$10,000** for a basic project.
- **Next Steps:** Start by experimenting with user-friendly platforms and engage a consultant only if needed for more complex setups.

6. Voice-to-Text Transcription

- **How to Do It:** Services like **Otter.ai** and **Rev** are popular for transcription and don't require any technical setup. Simply upload audio files, and the AI transcribes them.
- **Cost:** These services generally charge **\$10 to \$30 per month** for transcription of up to a set number of hours. Custom voice-to-text solutions may cost significantly more but are rarely necessary for standard PI tasks.
- **Next Steps:** PIs can sign up for a subscription and begin uploading their audio files. No developer is required.

7. Digital Forensics

- **How to Do It:** Software like **Magnet AXIOM** or **EnCase** offers out-of-the-box AI tools to scan through devices, search for keywords, and restore deleted files. These are well known in the forensic community and come with training materials.
- **Cost:** Forensic software typically costs around **\$3,000 to \$5,000 per year**, but training and support are often included.
- **Next Steps:** Investigators should evaluate how often they handle digital forensics cases to decide if investing in specialized software is worth it. Many offer free trials or demo versions.

Additional Considerations:

- **In-house vs. Outsourced Development:** If investigators want fully custom AI solutions, they'll need to hire a software developer or an AI consultant. This can cost anywhere from **\$5,000 to \$50,000** depending on the complexity and scope of the project. However, most PIs won't need custom development—plenty of existing tools are available to meet their needs.
- **Training and Support:** Most AI-powered tools provide training and customer support as part of their service, making it easier for non-technical users to get started without needing to become experts.

By breaking it down into these categories and emphasizing that many AI solutions are ready-made, investigators will understand they don't need to build custom software unless their needs are very specialized. This should address their "how" questions without overwhelming them. How does this approach sound?

Member Spotlight—Tyrone Edwards



Introduction—Tell us a little about you and your company.

My name is Tyrone Edwards, and my company is Merchants Loss Prevention. I am a retired Cook County Adult Probation officer.

During my twenty-year tenure with CCAPD, I worked in several units: Caseload management, pretrial service officer, intensive probation supervision officer, and post release officer. While working as a probation officer, I worked off-duty retail security details with the loss prevention departments of Polo Ralph Lauren, Target, Kmart, and Walmart. I am currently employed as an Investigator with Lake County Public Defenders Office in Crown Point, Indiana.

I received my B.A. in Criminal Justice in 1998, and M.A. in Political and Justice Studies in 1999, from Governors State University in University Park, Illinois. I received my M.B.A. in Human Resource Management from Keller Graduate School of Management in 2004 in Oak Brook, Illinois.

How long have you been a member of INspi?

I have been a member of INspi for four years.

How has INspi been helpful to you?

I have enjoyed the professional training seminars, fellowship with like-minded professionals, and the networking with professional investigators.

What inspired you to become a private investigator?

I became inspired to become a private investigator as a natural transition from public investigation into private investigations.

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

The most interesting, and challenging, case I have worked on, was a case at a large department store, where a large amount of merchandise was missing during a quarterly audit. The loss prevention management team and I later found out it was the store's loss prevention manager, along with the shipping and receiving manager and tractor trailer driver, transporting the stolen merchandise to a warehouse, and holding a sale once a month to smaller mom and pop stores.

What is your favorite part of being a private investigator?

My favorite part of being a private investigator is the aha moment with a sudden insight or discovery of evidence or locating a hard-to-find person.

What is your least favorite part of being a private investigator?

My least favorite part is long surveillance next to delivering bad news.

What are some common misconceptions about private investigators?

The common misconceptions about private investigations are the tv images of being the know-it-all, wise-cracking guy/gal, and that private investigators have the same authority as police detectives.

How do you stay up to date with the latest techniques and technologies?

The way I stay up to date is through PI catalogs, seminars, and referrals from other PIs in my network.

What advice would you give to someone considering becoming a private investigator?

The advice I would give anyone considering becoming a private investigator would be to first do your research about the job description of a private investigator and finding out what type of private investigations you would like to work in, such as criminal, civil, or family law. I would also advise joining your local private investigator association like INspi. Work under an experienced PI before branching out on your own.

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

The most important thing I have learned in my PI career is that knowledge is king, because the more you know the better PI you will become.

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

One of the biggest challenges facing PI today is technology.

Member Spotlight—Meredith Hanley



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

My name is Meredith Hanley, and I am the owner of MLH Investigations, LLC which is based in South Bend, Indiana. I am trying to narrow down what my specialty will be, as I have a diverse set of interests. For over 25 years my investigations have been law enforcement and then gaming (casino) regulation centered, and I have covered many types of investigation.

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

I became a member of INspi in September and was able to attend the Annual Conference, which allowed me to meet and network with so many of INspi's members. I was encouraged to join by my former Executive Director who is a PI in

California.

How has INspi been helpful to you so far?

The connections I have made have been very important, as I feel like I can reach out to any of them for questions regarding the business aspect of being a PI. I have the "Investigator" portion down, but the business aspect is something new for me!

What inspired you to become a private investigator?

My Executive Director encouraged me to obtain a PI license after he had worked with me in Gaming Regulations. I was the director of a licensing and investigations team that regulated a set of four casinos in Indiana and Michigan. He saw that my passion for investigations went further than my prior career in law enforcement or gaming regulations and thought I'd have success running my own business.

What are your firm's specialties?

I am not yet sure yet, but I would like to focus on death investigations eventually, digging into unsolved (cold) cases and deaths ruled suicides or undetermined.

What is the most challenging case you have worked on?

One of my most challenging investigations was when my search for facts and information led me to a different finding than the county's Child Protective Services. I was able to disprove an alleged abuse burn to a 16-month-old child's foot. CPS was insistent that abuse had occurred, and they removed 5 children from what I found to be a safe, responsible, hard-working, but poor, family.

My research and findings led the Prosecutor's office to concur and uphold my findings, but CPS refused and "demanded" that I change my findings and rule either abuse or neglect took place. At this time in 2007, the county's CPS workers were a revolving door, just out of college, lack of life experience group. They were unfortunately notorious for making poor decisions at every turn, leaving abused and neglected children with dangerous guardians, and never substantiating any allegation until they received heat from politicians and the media about a child death. This was after one of those media- and politically-infused situations, and CPS was hell-bent on substantiating every claim, regardless of facts.

I worked with the Prosecutor to get the rest of the children back to the family, as well as support visitation of the hospitalized child to the parents. Ultimately CPS and their board of "experts" had to acknowledge the findings of the Prosecutor's office and Special Victims Unit would overrule theirs.

What is your most/least favorite part of being an investigator?

My favorite part of being an investigator is finding the details someone else has missed. I like to dig deep into a person's behavior, their non-verbals and history. I love to watch people and listen to them, when I know they are trying to be persuasive or deceptive and note their comfort (or lack thereof) with the subject matter.

What are some common misconceptions about private investigators?

That they can't work well or in conjunction with the police.

How do you stay up to date with the latest techniques and technologies?

I am an avid reader and network with other investigators. My years in law enforcement and gaming regulations have exposed me to such a variety of experts and "so-called experts" that there is no limit to the information, both good and bad, on the horizon. Continually updating yourself on new trends, new laws, and training on the most cutting-edge technologies is paramount. Considering all the potential information you need to obtain, prioritizing what to do on a daily basis and paying attention to detail is critical.

What didn't you know about being a private investigator before you started that you'd wish you'd known?

I'm not sure, still finding my way in the new business of private investigations.

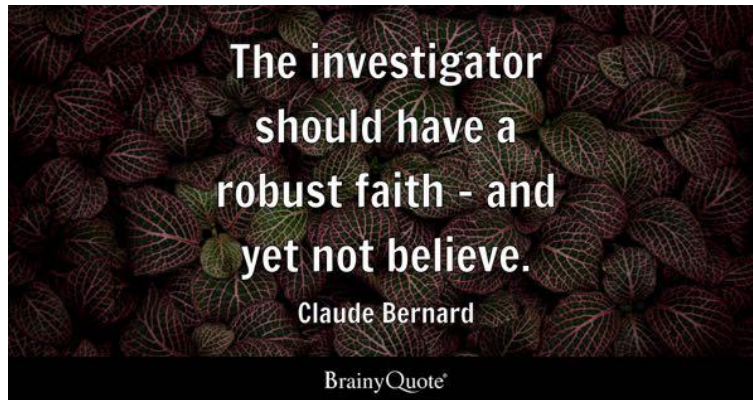
Member Spotlight—Meredith Hanley (cont.)

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

That your findings may not align with the popular opinion. What things may look like on the surface can be substantially different from what the facts are. When you go into a situation with a preconceived outcome, or idea, you may be leading yourself down a more difficult path than necessary. You have to know when to dig deeper and when to just accept that the simplest answer is the right answer.

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

For me it's going from privileged accesses that I have been accustomed to as a law enforcement and government-endorsed investigator to open source and public-access investigations. It is something that I've had to navigate and work my way around.



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