



WHITE PAPER

# Improving investigation techniques and saving time using online resources

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# Improving investigation techniques and saving time using online resources

Most investigations fail because of a combination of contributing factors that create a snowball effect. These factors can include memory limitations in witnesses; investigator fatigue; organizational flaws; computation errors; too much time spent pursuing bad leads; and overly relying on intuition. This boils down to countless hours of wasted time that often lead to inconclusive results.

The biggest advantage any investigators can have, whether they are working on a law enforcement case, a private investigation, an insurance claim triage, or corporate due diligence, is accurate and reliable information. Naturally, in any investigation, the sooner the truth comes out, the more effective the results.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rossmo, D. Kim. "Failures in Criminal Investigation." The Police Chief. October, 2009. [www.policemagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display\\_arch&article\\_id=1922&issue\\_id=102009](http://www.policemagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display_arch&article_id=1922&issue_id=102009) (accessed June 24, 2015).

## Putting the pieces together

While every case is unique, the key to success is universal. The only way to arrive at the truth is through accurate information. The more reliable and verifiable the data compiled is, the clearer and more actionable the picture becomes. This, however, presents the greatest challenge. More often than not, completing the puzzle requires days, weeks and even months of grueling legwork.

For instance, using traditional investigatory methods, it can be a monumental and time-consuming quest to thoroughly examine just one subject. The process of locating old addresses, exploring past jobs, uncovering possible aliases, identifying friends and family relationships, and researching criminal histories can be exhausting, and at times overwhelming, causing investigations to stall.

## Noteworthy changes in how private investigators previously worked versus today:

INVESTIGATIONS THEN	INVESTIGATIONS NOW
Taking witness statements by hand	Recording witness statements via mobile device
Hanging flyers w/missing persons to solicit tips	Using online databases to discover connections, locations and relevant information
Knocking on doors and cold calls to gather information	Researching Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn messages
Visiting local libraries to find relevant information	Google and other online databases
Spending hours on surveillance and following vehicles	License plate recognition tracking with time stamps
Paper maps	GPS

It's when initial leads fail to yield results, that investigators are forced to dig deeper into ancillary areas that are far more difficult to work, particularly when someone doesn't want to be found.

- **Linking relationships with possible relatives and associates**
- **Defining specific patterns of travel**
- **Identifying predictive behaviors, hobbies or personal preferences**
- **Uncovering recent verifiable vehicle sightings**
- **Exploring past addresses and employment**
- **Identifying aliases**

Individuals trying to avoid a conviction, misrepresent the truth, or commit fraud are usually very careful to cover their tracks. Investigators who are able to identify personal relationships, make out telltale patterns of behavior and verify recent sightings, enjoy a tremendous advantage in predicting a subject's next steps.

### **Leveraging online tools and resources**

Technology has become one of the most effective tools in an investigator's arsenal. In fact, police departments around the nation have embraced social media databases, such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, to help lead their own investigations. A recent report showed that 98% of police departments are planning to augment their use of social media within the next two to five years, and with good reason.

These sites have already helped police catch criminals by providing connection points to their relatives and associates. Additionally, subjects often display photographs that can be used as evidence against them or even come right out and confess their crimes under the silly assumption that they're only telling "friends."

Police also use social media to locate individuals who are in need of help, such as missing persons, abducted children, distressed individuals and runaways. Social media often provides helpful insights into where these people might be headed, who they might be with, and even their current state of mind.<sup>2</sup>

### **Solving the puzzle even faster**

Social media is a great investigatory aid. Search engines such as Google and Bing can also yield viable leads. However, breakthrough database filtering technologies, such as TLOxp<sup>®</sup> from TransUnion, are leading the future of investigations. These systems use advanced linking algorithms to filter through BILLIONS of current public and proprietary records in a matter of seconds.

The result is a complete personal history, including addresses, phone numbers, emails, social media, vehicles, employment, criminal history and other criteria defined by the user. For instance, the TLOxp system can conduct a Utility Search to locate a subject's most recent contracts for power and water, which can be excellent indicators of likely location.

Every investigator has his or her special methods of working a case. Insurance agencies and other companies all have their own investigatory protocol. However, in every case, time is of the essence and accurate information is paramount. New technologies, such as TLOxp, are helping investigators locate the reliable and actionable data they need in a fraction of the time.

<sup>2</sup> Roufa, Timothy. "Social Networking and Law Enforcement: Discover How Police Are Using Social Media to Solve Crimes and Build Trust." [http://criminologycareers.about.com/od/Career\\_Trends/a/Social-Networking-And-Law-Enforcement.htm](http://criminologycareers.about.com/od/Career_Trends/a/Social-Networking-And-Law-Enforcement.htm) (accessed June 24, 2015).

## About TransUnion

TransUnion, a global leader in credit and information management, works with investigation professionals to achieve common goals: lower operating costs, boost growth with fewer losses, and create a better customer experience.

TransUnion's investigative solution, TLOxp®, combines up-to-date data, analytics and in-depth understanding of the industry to help reduce costs, locate individuals, verify identity, perform due diligence, and mitigate risk. Thanks to TransUnion, investigation professionals can work more cases and achieve better results—while spending fewer resources and less time doing so.

### Learn more

New technologies, such as TLOxp, are helping investigators locate the reliable and actionable data they need in a fraction of the time.

For more information about TLOxp and database investigations, visit [www.tloxp.com/investigators](http://www.tloxp.com/investigators)

The TLOxp solution is not provided by a "consumer reporting agency" and does not constitute a "consumer report," as these terms are defined by the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. Section 1681 et seq. ("FCRA"). The TLOxp solution may not be used in whole or in part as a factor in establishing an individual's creditworthiness or eligibility for credit or insurance, or employment, nor for any other purpose under the FCRA.