

Suggestions for Finding A Well-Qualified and Professional Private Investigator

Rick Johnson
Rick Johnson & Associates of Colorado, Inc.



May 2015

To find a well-qualified and professional private investigator, begin with an investigation of your own.

Finding a well-qualified private investigator can be a challenge for many people. You know that you need information or services but you are not sure how to obtain what you need. Perhaps you don't know where to begin your search. Depending on the urgency of your information needs, the depth of detail, the amount of research required, and the difficulty in securing that information, the task can seem daunting. That is why many people find themselves turning to private investigators for assistance.

But how do you go about finding the right investigator for your needs?

Here are some things to consider:

Private investigators come with all levels of experience, expertise, and costs. But no private investigator is worth the price they charge unless they are able to deliver the information that is useful to you, in a timely way. The process begins with your own investigation.

Private eyes often work in the background, they seldom solve murder cases, they seldom get involved in the kind of violent confrontations that television and detective stories have popularized. Rather, they work carefully, professionally, and with the minimum of interference in the lives of the subjects they are investigating. Unlike newspaper reporters who may confront the subjects of their inquiry, a private investigator is most likely to gather data, conduct surveillance at a distance when needed, research public and in some cases private records, and provide confidential reports to allow their clients to make decisions about their next, appropriate steps.

Private investigators work for private individuals, businesses, both small and large, law firms, government entities, and insurance companies. In some states

Suggestions for Finding a Qualified and Professional Private Investigator

investigators are licensed, in others no license is required. But a license issued by a state agency does not guarantee that an investigator is efficient, honest, or credible. The licensing process may require a prescribed number hours of experience, education, or some level of training. But it does not guarantee competence. You may better understand competency by looking at a private eye's website, which often – and should – detail their level of experience and education.

Investigators may ask for a retainer against their time spent, which is often a good way to proceed. But good investigators, before they describe to you their charges, expenses and contracts, will do one very important preliminary thing: **they should interview you to determine if your needs and their capabilities are a match.**

This is your opportunity to also engage in an interview process. Ask your potential PI about his or her past experiences and request samples of written reports based on past cases and reported findings. While they cannot divulge specific information about specific cases or clients, they can discuss in generic terms or show you redacted copies of the types of cases they have done. Be sure to ask them about the outcomes, the process, and how their work benefited their client. Ask them what services they can perform and what services they cannot, or will not, undertake. Also ask them whether or not they have testified in court in the past and are comfortable in the courtroom.

Many times investigators are asked to locate an individual. An ethical investigator will ask you some important questions about any such request. For example: What is your relationship to the person you are trying to locate? What are your reasons for finding that person? How do you plan to use the information? If those reasons are professional and legal, they are likely to perform those services for you. If you are curious about someone you once knew or have only personal reasons for finding a person, they may decline to provide you with that information – but in some cases PIs may offer to contact the person you are trying to locate and let that person know you want to find him. In those cases they may offer the individual the opportunity to make that contact with you personally. This protects the rights of all parties involved – you, the individual you might wish to find, and the investigator.

Just as you would do your research when hiring a lawyer or law firm for an important piece of litigation, so you should also do research to find an investigator who can serve your needs. Perhaps an attorney can refer you to a competent, skilled PI. Friends or acquaintances whom you trust may be able to guide you.

Private investigators can help you determine if your child is at risk in their relationships with peers; they can help you with marital fidelity concerns, advise you in matters of conflict with others, locate funds or assets, provide research to augment legal actions, help you unravel issues of concern with employment or professional contract situations, help with due diligence, provide background

Suggestions for Finding a Qualified and Professional Private Investigator

information on individuals you may be doing business with or may be considering for a personal relationship. And they can help you understand legal issues that may affect these information needs.

Regardless of the type of assignment you may consider making with a PI – you must be able to establish a relationship of trust. Just as in other important relationships in your life, it is an importation foundation on which to build confidence in an investigator. That relationship starts by doing your homework, asking the right questions when you are interviewing a PI about your needs and their abilities; it also comes from being sure you have complete answers to questions on cost, expenses, insurance liability protection, and contractual agreements. By being thorough in your questions about an investigator's background, you will avoid surprises. With all appropriate information in hand you may make an informed decision, prepare for a good outcome, and find the reliable and dependable services that you deserve, and through which you are best served.

