

JOINING PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: AN INVESTIGATIVE WIN-WIN

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Much has been written about the pros and cons of joining professional organizations. An excellent article in UMass Global, a nonprofit affiliate of the University of Massachusetts, defines an organization / association as groups of people from the same industry or profession gathered to represent the industry or profession. The article goes on to mention that oftentimes these groups help to champion new standards within the profession as well as being key advocates for or against municipal legislation affecting the industry at large.¹

Another excellent publication “How to use professional organizations to boost your career” by Lora Korpor featured on LinkedIn News speaks to how professional organizations exist to help people in similar fields connect, network, and grow. The article goes on to speak to which resources professional organization offer, how to use professional organizations to network, and the importance of using organizational membership to bolster credentials.²

LOOKING BACK TO YESTERDAY: The authors’ personal stories.

Whether one comes from the law enforcement, private security or business sectors, the investigative skills learned help form the sum and substance of the professional’s toolkit. Upon our retirement from law enforcement, both authors of this article opened investigative firms and applied for an investigative license. As small to moderate investigative company owners, we needed to find a path forward to hone our skills and grow our businesses. As we entered the profession of private business, we reached out to organizations that we believed could help us to grow and prosper. Like the medical profession, we learned that there are many investigative specialties that we could pursue. However, to achieve specialty status we needed credentialing which was only available via private corporate entities such as the American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS) and the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE). These organizations offered courses of study to become credentialed experts. ASIS offers the Certified Protection Professional certification (CPP), and the ACFE offers the Certified Fraud Examiner certification (CFE), Intellenet Board Accredited Investigator (BAI) founded by Harvey Morse and Ari Morse to name a few. Beyond getting credentialed and accredited, we realized that we also needed to join in-



vestigative organizations to share expertise with other professionals. Both authors are past presidents of the Society of Professional Investigators. Today, both authors remain active organization ambassadors and mentors – John Gaspar serves as president of the Florida Association of Private Investigators, past chairperson and program director of BAI, Board Accredited Investigators, and Anthony Luizzo serves as a founding member and president emeritus of the New York Chapter Association of Certified Fraud Examiners. Anthony Luizzo also serves as a Volunteer Investigative Sleuth in the “Seniors vs Crime Project,” an anti-crime program that helps senior citizens and others who believe they have been scammed. The program is sponsored by the Florida Attorney General’s Office (www.seniorsvscrime.com).

NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND STATE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

These organizations provide conferences and recruit qualified subject area experts that provide new, updated information and/or information that we may have forgotten. As president of FAPI, in association with our conference committee we continue to provide an annual virtual conference that supports a global audience at no cost to the participants (CEU’s and CLE’s are provided). Post covid FAPI, like many other organizations, has once again begun to provide in-person workshops, symposiums, and annual conferences. (<https://myfapi.org/> and <https://myfapi.org/page-1854640>)

SOME INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

International Intelligence Network (Intellenet) was founded by James P. Carino Jr. CPP, VSM. Jeff Stein, executive director, provides an environment that supports global networking and information sharing. Accreditation is available through the BAI program

via contacting program director Jerry DeFatta³

World Association of Detectives (<https://www.wad.net/>) With origins dating back to 1921, W.A.D. is the longest established and largest association of its kind in the world. The World Association of Detectives was formed as a joint venture by the combined membership of the World Association of Detectives and the International Secret Service Association.

There is a plethora of worthy national, international, and state organizations and over 40 private investigative state organizations nationwide. We strongly advise that you do your homework and let your fingers do the walking and searching to find those special organizations and/or associations that can best serve your needs!

BENEFITS OF ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP.

The UMass Global University of Massachusetts article referenced above offers the following reasons why investigative sleuths should join a professional organization:

- Certification access (CEUs) and CLE’s)
- Resume enrichment
- Expertise sharing
- Knowledge sharing
- Career advancement
- Leadership development
- Information sharing / media exposure
- Competitive advantage
- Philanthropic outreach
- Access to membership directories
- Access to new innovations
- Information sharing (the collective intelligent is better than the singular)
- Mentoring
- Expanding your resource pool with experts
- Developing strategic partners
- Access to qualified field specific experts (CSI, forensic specialists, TSCM (electronic debugging), accident reconstruction, etc.)

Certification and accreditation access – some organizations offer specialized certification and accreditation programs to help its members deepen and sharpen their skillset! It's important to note that continuing education (CEU) & continuing legal education (CLE) are needed and required to keep accreditation current.

Resume enrichment – showcasing organization affiliation sends a strong message that you are staying up to date with current innovative advancements in your industry. As an aside, would anyone want to go to a healthcare provider who does not keep up to the most current advancements? The lesson learned here is that 'science gives us knowledge; opinion gives us ignorance!'

Expertise Sharing – organizational membership instantly connects fellow sleuths with like-minded professionals from both the local and global galaxy. Moreover, organizations offer exposure to thought-provoking professionals discussing topics that help us unleash our innovative chops!

Knowledge Sharing – It is said that successful administrators always surround themselves with competent staff. Taking a page from this successful recipe, organization membership is a great place to meet and greet other professionals who may have successfully handled similar problematic issues in the past and have the answers you need to move ever-forward!

Career advancement – many top companies reach out to recognized professional organizations seeking talented prospective job candidates. More enlightened security and investigative hiring executives instinctively know that reaching out to a recognized investigative organization is the right marketplace to find the talent to fill the vacant position!

Leadership development – many organizations offer membership volunteer board positions to help individuals grow and develop their leadership potential. Oftentimes existing board executives serve as mentors to novice professionals seeking to advance his or her leadership skillset. Many more enlightened board executives follow the advice of Thomas Edison when he was asked why he failed hundreds of times whilst trying to invent the light bulb – he said it took hundreds of times trying to get it exactly right!

Information sharing / media exposure – as a matter of course, many organizations are affiliated with professional journals and magazines such as PI Magazine, Security Management Magazine, Security Magazine, and the Journal of Healthcare Protection Management to name a few that help get the word out about crime trends, industry standards, legislative insights, and innovative advancements. The great benefit of having industry journals and magazines supporting the investigator's educational effort is that it teaches fellow sleuths the difference between ignorance and stupidity – ignorance is not knowing what you don't know, stupidity is not wanting to know what you don't know!

Competitive advantage – simply put, organization membership is like having a fully staffed in-house marketing department at a cost all small entrepreneurs can afford. As a matter of course, organizational resources often include monthly networking events, webinars, podcasts, and current issue speaker symposiums. This treasure trove gives member companies a massive competitive edge over competitors who are not member firms. Oftentimes organizations are

thermostats not thermometers – they are the fuel that businesses need to reach new customers!

Philanthropic outreach – since many organizations have a direct conduit to several non-profit entities, they can showcase their member's expertise. In many respects, organizations play an "Angi's List" role via serving as a clearing house for investigative competence and expertise!

Access to membership directories – many organizations maintain a member business directory which helps to champion exposure to new and/or existing clients and markets. Taking a page from an age-old proverb "an investigator without the support of his marketing force -The Organization – is condemned to working alone"!

Access to new innovations – organizations keep members up to speed on new products and are introduced to tomorrow's invention, today!

There is a legion of organizations / associations that investigators should consider joining. Regardless of where you practice your investigative specialty, it's imperative that you find the appropriate organization to join. As an example, in the State of Florida, where we practice our trade, two organizations immediately come to mind:⁴

1. **(FAPI) Florida Association of Private Investigators**, president John Michael Gaspar, founders Harvey Morse, Ari Morse and the EC have taken initiatives and financial obligations to lobby in Tallahassee for several years in an attempt to advocate for Florida C and CC licensed Investigators to have the right to carry a concealed firearm with a Florida concealed carry permit while performing investigative duties pursuant to chapter 493 for their own self-protection as any other Florida citizen.⁵
2. **Florida Association of Licensed Investigators** (FALI-www.fali.org/) and president Dan Riemer were successful for the FALI's Tax Repeal Bill. ... HB 763. When signed by the governor, the effort by FALI has relieved PIs in Florida supporting that licensees do not have to collect sales tax from their clients under certain terms and conditions. This is a big win.

CONCLUSION

Becoming part of an organization /association should be on every investigative sleuth's front burner. Organizations are marketplaces of ideas that offer their members a front row seat on the self-improvement and business expansion express. Organizations serve as laboratories of growth and strategic thinking that help investigative sleuths to focus on their potential instead of their limitations. Success comes when the pedal hits the metal, and the rubber hits the road. The secret to getting ahead is getting started. A wise man once said that "the greatest waste in the world is the difference between what we are and what we could become." It is also said that all roads lead somewhere, chart yours with organizational membership in mind! **PI**

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2. *Demystifying the Investigative process, PI Magazine*
3. *Published study on Forensic Hypnosis & Memory Recall -NYPD*
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