



QUALIFYING QUESTIONS TO ASK AN INVESTIGATOR

Listen carefully to his or her voice as they answer your questions. Do you hear the sound of confidence in their voice? Do you feel you can reach your objective with this person?

How long have you been an investigator?

Hint: Fraud investigators like other investigators have to be licensed, bonded and insured. But these are the minimum standards. To hire or retain an investigator who is going to investigate complex cases such as fraud, homicide, etc., you want someone with skills and experience that have been refined over time.

How many different types of fraud schemes have you uncovered?

Hint: To reach such a point one should have significant experience investigating various types of fraud schemes. Experience helps the investigator navigate in an investigation as they move from the start of the investigation to the conclusion. Experience, along with having been there before, keeps the investigator on course, and helps him not get lost in an investigation like a novice would.

Do you enjoy working puzzles?

Hint: Make certain your investigator is creative. The most critical tool an investigator has is his or her creativity. There are two ways to solve a fraud scheme: Solve it through your intelligence or through your creativity. Intelligence is limited. Creativity is not. Sometimes you have to come up with new ideas or tactics no one else has thought of to solve a case.

Is investigative work all you do?

Hint: A good investigator is committed to his or her work. They are not a part-time investigator. Dustin Hoffman once said that he was an actor. He was very fortunate to be able to act in movies and on the stage on Broadway. But if he could not do this, he is still an actor and would be acting somewhere. Whether playhouses around the country or in church or neighborhood theaters, he would be acting. The same is true of investigators. Being an investigator is who they are, not what they do.

When conducting a fraud investigation, where would you start?

Hint: Like all investigations fraud investigations start at the very beginning. The beginning is how and when the victims were contacted by the con artist or his operative. What did they say? What information or evidence did they leave behind? What is said or told via letter, fax or e-mail are representations. One of the first things an investigator needs to do is prove these are false. If they are not false, there is no crime.

If an investigator tells you he is going after the perpetrator first, he may be running over his evidence. If he finds the perpetrator he may not have the foundation to proceed further. All he has done is alert the perpetrator that the fraud scheme is over. A good fraudster will disappear at this time.

What plan or strategy would you suggest for my case?

Hint: Did they suggest a plan or strategy that makes sense to you? No two frauds are exactly alike but there are common elements in all fraud scams. For the most part fraud operators like to stay hidden, like rabbits in a hole. To operate their scam they must show themselves a little. Most often this is when they make their mistake. They also make mistakes when they collect money or something of value from their victims. The key is to identify the misrepresentations, determine the scope of the fraud, identify the scammer and his location. An investigator who works quickly and effectively would be in your best interests; especially if recovery of lost money is possible.

How much do you charge?

Hint: Remember you get what you pay for: \$35 per hour is too low and shows a lack of Experience; \$185 per hour is too high and may indicate a con of a different type. No two investigators are the same. You need to find the one best suited to your needs.

Selecting an effective fraud investigator is difficult. I suggest picking one for lesser tasks first. You can then judge how he conducts the investigation, consults with you and the quality of his reports and overall work product. Of course, Cadfael is always available to help you. Call us at (763) 694-6086 with your questions.