

Book Review

***Intelligence and Private Investigation:
Developing Sophisticated Methods for Conducting
Inquiries***

by Hank Prunckun, editor

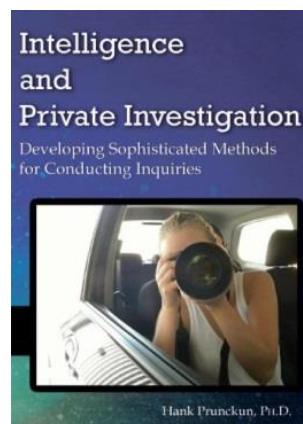
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Whether you are an experienced investigator, someone new to the field, or a person thinking of entering the field *Intelligence and Private Investigation: Developing Sophisticated Methods for Conducting Inquiries*, edited by Dr Hank Prunckun, challenges the reader not only to look within in an attempt to curb preconceived views or biases, but to look at the field of investigation in an entirely new light.

This book shows how rapidly private investigation and intelligence is evolving, but also how it is promoting a “revolution” in the field. In my view, this book challenges experienced investigators to evolve and take a more holistic view of the field of investigation; moving inquiry agents into intelligence-based investigations. As a new investigator, or someone looking to build a career in this field, this book provides some exciting insights into how multi-faceted the field of intelligence and private investigation actually is, and the fascinating options available to the modern day investigator.

Intelligence-led investigations is a new approach in the private investigations field that inspires investigators to adopt a range of analytical methods that add to general factual based investigations. Within the policing field, intelligence-led investigations focus on interpreting criminal activity. For private investigators there also exists an opportunity to develop interpretative skills when approaching factual and surveillance cases. For example, this book highlights the role of an analysis of competing hypotheses. Through this approach the investigator is able to begin moving from simply providing facts to

providing analysis of events and circumstances. Essentially, competing hypotheses is about brainstorming a range of possibilities in a given situation and making an argument for-or-against each of the possible hypotheses. While perhaps common place amongst government intelligence agencies, such an approach could propel private investigations into a more sophisticated form of inquiry.

This book's strength is its ability to illustrate how the field—particularly in the last ten years—has evolved and how some of the techniques formerly used by military or national security analysts can be integrated into intelligence-based investigations in the private sector. Further, with the growth of social media and other open-sources of information this book discusses how such information can be gathered and used in intelligence-based investigations (by Jeff Corkill, Edith Cowan University). This is discussed within the legal and ethical constraints that PIs operate, and are covered in dedicated chapters by Professor Rick Sarre and former-Detective Chief Superintendent Mark S. Bradley, respectively.

With claimants and respondents rapidly becoming more sophisticated, and clients becoming better informed, there is a greater demand on the modern day investigator. Clients not only require factual information, they demand answers; sometimes to multiple hypotheses during the course of an investigation, so this book provides both practical and theoretical knowledge as well as solutions for addressing these dilemmas. This bodes well for PIs because it assists them navigate through the “operational minefield” towards better investigative outcomes.

In essence, this book provides social and historical context for the field of investigation and how today's investigators need to have a greater understanding of a very diverse society made up of a multitude of cultures and influences. This in turn allows for a greater understanding and better interaction with people and organisations in general. The book takes the reader through numerous intelligence-based topics, including target profiling (Tony Buffett, Charles Sturt University), fraud intelligence (Rebecca Vogel, Macquarie University), political intelligence (Dr Troy Whitford), anti-terrorist and anti-gang intelligence (Dr Hank Prunckun), illicit organisations and financial intelligence (Levi J. West, Charles Sturt University), counterintelligence (Dr Petrus Duvenage), and covert communications (military intelligence specialist, Michael Chesbro), but in doing so explains how these fields overlap. These chapters may also provoke a passion for a more specific career and gives the budding investigator food for thought in regards to where private investigation could take them. Of particular note are the

contributions made by Dr Patrick F. Walsh who wrote on investigative intelligence and Dr Troy Whitford who called for investigators to develop a practice of lifelong learning.

Overall, Dr Prunckun has assembled a number of experts in the field (four were also government licenced PIs) and should be commended for his ability to shape such a diverse collection of perspectives into a readable examination of a topic that has been crying-out for greater professionalisation. He was able to bring private investigations into the Twenty-First Century illustrating the commonalities, or perhaps the positive influences, national security and law enforcement agencies can have on the industry.

The book engages its reader through the variety of interesting exercises and self-reflection activities that capitalises on the existing practices of the private investigator, and serves as an educative self-study guide. This book is able to provide strategies on how to grow and become a well-rounded investigator through providing mechanisms to expand their skillset and discard some of the preconceived ideas of private investigations and what it actually means to be a modern day investigator.

Having worked in the private investigation industry for many years, both in the field and in a management and consultative capacity, I recommend the book to investigators, educators, and investigation agencies alike. It is an interesting read with contributions from experts from the “five eyes” intelligence alliance. This is a book that will no doubt be used as a resource in intelligence and private investigation fields for many years to come.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Robert Bostelman, BA(Psy), holds a Certificate III in Investigative Services and has extensive experience as a licenced PI encompassing the information technology, insurance, and other investigative industries spanning a twenty year career. He is a highly-skilled fraud investigator with well-developed intelligence gathering, analytic, and inquiry skills. He has worked for many large private entities, major insurers, solicitors, and investigation providers involving all fields of fraud. Mr Bostelman now manages the national operations of Insight Intelligence, a national firm that provides investigator training, quality assurance, and facilitates workshops on topics such as profiling and questioning techniques. Insight Intelligence has a range of large private entities and major insurers as its clients.