

**CV** training operator >>

operations manager >>

contractor >> director

## Luke Athens – Director, International Intelligence Agency, Sydney



Luke’s passion for Technical Surveillance Counter Measures (TSCM) began when he commenced his career in 1996 as a trainee private inquiry agent under the guidance of a former government operative. He worked in a small Sydney-based investigation company, carrying out low-level duties, including workers compensation surveillance and interviews whilst studying his true passion – TSCM.

Upon completion of his studies, Luke established his first investigation business, Central Intelligence Investigations. Whilst conducting surveillance, matrimonial inquiries, and fraud investigations, he transformed his business into the International Intelligence Agency, specialising in counter intelligence.

### detour

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[www.careerfaqs.com.au](http://www.careerfaqs.com.au)

### q&a

#### What does your role entail?

I supply TSCM and counter intelligence solutions to private and corporate markets. TSCM involves locating intrusive listening or tracking devices installed in a room, phone or car. Counter intelligence is the activity of obtaining important information from business competitors or enemies. My services include SIM forensics, risk management, de-bugging, corporate intelligence and surveillance. I overlook all operational and safety aspects in the field, ensuring that the correct framework is implemented prior to commencing our surveillance and counter intelligence operations.

#### How did you get into this line of work?

It all started with a dream that I was a private investigator, perhaps triggered by too many Bond films. Over the next few weeks I looked into how to become an investigator and enrolled myself into a private investigator traineeship. Back when I started out, there were minimal training opportunities in Australia to support this industry, so many investigators were either trained on the job or were ex-police officers. Recently the New South Wales government decided to overhaul the industry, and now you must complete a Certificate III in Investigative Services through a registered training organisation.



You must then work as a trainee under a licensed investigation company for a probation period of 12 months before applying for a master licence, which will enable you to contract and carry out your own investigations under your own business.

### **What does it take to become a private investigator?**

I believe the most important attributes are a keen eye for detail, patience, flexibility, reliability and a general interest in solving problems.



*Luke at an amateur rally*

### **What's the best thing about your job?**

I enjoy my position because of the variety of people that I meet on a day-to-day basis and the variety of requests. It is never repetitive in the private sector – every day you will hear, see and learn something new and this keeps it interesting. The best part of my job is being able to travel interstate and overseas.

### **Any negatives?**

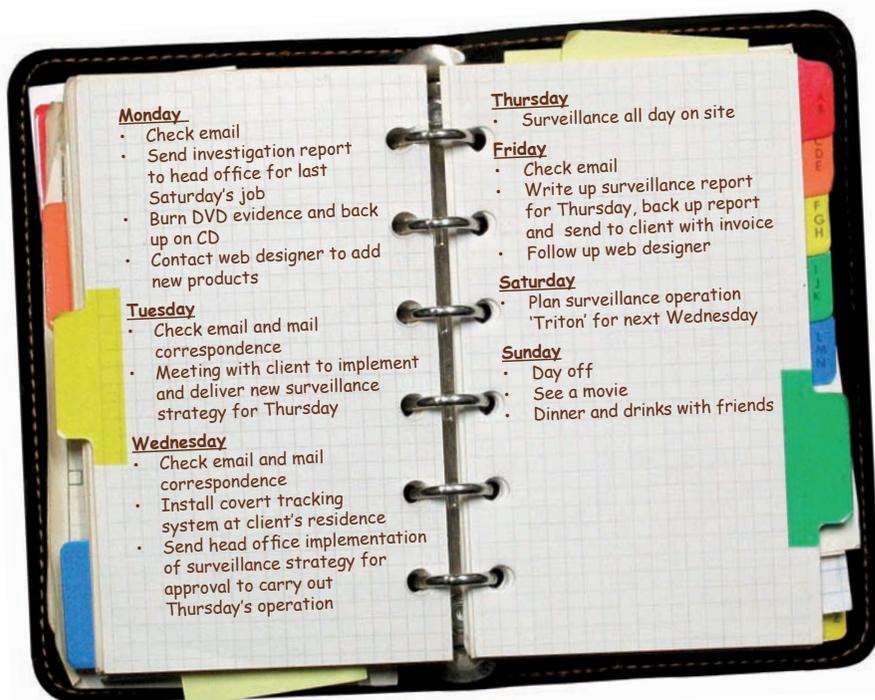
Unfortunately every job has its hazards. I have spent long hours in a hot steamy vehicle with the windows wound up and endured freezing cold conditions in the morning without access to proper toilet facilities whilst conducting surveillance.

Another issue we face is restricted access to certain types of training in Australia, forcing private investigators and security agents overseas to further improve their skills.



When we are assisting in policing duties we, unfortunately and unfairly, do not receive any exemptions under normal government legislation. For example, if we are parked five minutes too long in a one-hour parking zone whilst conducting surveillance on a missing persons case, we still receive penalties. I believe in these situations we should receive the same exemptions as police.

Access to information is also difficult – we cannot access information other than what the general public can obtain through strict regulations.



**Monday**

- Check email
- Send investigation report to head office for last Saturday's job
- Burn DVD evidence and back up on CD
- Contact web designer to add new products

**Tuesday**

- Check email and mail correspondence
- Meeting with client to implement and deliver new surveillance strategy for Thursday

**Wednesday**

- Check email and mail correspondence
- Install covert tracking system at client's residence
- Send head office implementation of surveillance strategy for approval to carry out Thursday's operation

**Thursday**

- Surveillance all day on site

**Friday**

- Check email
- Write up surveillance report for Thursday, back up report and send to client with invoice
- Follow up web designer

**Saturday**

- Plan surveillance operation 'Triton' for next Wednesday

**Sunday**

- Day off
- See a movie
- Dinner and drinks with friends

**What myths exist about this industry? What is the reality?**

We do not wear black trench coats and drive around in Ferraris. The American movies have a lot to answer for! Ninety per cent of private investigators don't have offices – they tend to be a mobile service, meeting in cafés or McDonalds seems to be the going thing at the moment.

**What's an interesting assignment you have worked on?**

I was recently conducting a sweep (locating installed listening devices) for a corporate client and my professional de-bugging unit, the **OSCOR-5000**, showed that there was a threat within the vicinity.

**glossary**

OSCOR-5000 is:

- an advanced electronic counter measure receiver which sweeps areas to detect bugs.

I then proceeded with my broadband **CPM-700** near field probe detector to find the exact location of the device, though it didn't receive any signals indicating that the device was present.

I did a physical search, pulling power points and anything that seemed suspicious apart. After three hours, I located the device with a piece of cloth wrapped around it. On further investigation I discovered the cloth was a new design from Russian intelligence that interferes with the broadband receiver making it invisible to the CPM-700.

### How large is the profession?

I believe there would be roughly 1300 private investigators in Australia. No real figures are available at the present time due to recent changes under legislation. The private investigation industry is only a small market in Australia, so if you're considering a career in investigations make sure you research your options thoroughly.

### Are there any trends or developments taking place?

Yes, due to the new policing regulations within the security registry and the compliancy issues, we will face a private investigator shortage within a few years.

Another trend is that private investigators are becoming more multi-skilled, branching into areas such as risk management, security, occupational health and safety, intellectual property and insurance investigations.

## glossary

CPM-700 is:

– a broadband receiver that can detect and locate major types of electronic surveillance devices including room, telephone and body bugs, video transmitters, and some tape recorders.

## OPEN CASE

In 2002, an Australian Institute of Criminology study found that for every dollar spent on an investigation by private investigators between three and six dollars were saved in uncovering fraud.

### What should people thinking about a private investigation career know about the industry?

Ensure you research your options, speak to some private investigation companies and gather as much information as possible. Take note, this industry very rarely hires people, so you are forced to set up a company and buy your own insurance and equipment before you are even able to try to look for a job.

## in brief

Director

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40–70K

quals

Certified risk manager; certified trainer; certified government fraud controller; certified investigator; certified security guard and defensive tactics; Currently studying M Intelligence & Counter-terrorism

hrs/wk

50

work-life

great environment

flexibility

must be flexible with working hours