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BUSINESS STYLE

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t some point in our lives, almost all of us has had that moment when something just doesn't feel right. Call it intuition or a sixth sense, but it's the impression that things aren't exactly what they seem. Learning to trust those instincts is important but it can be difficult, especially when it involves those close to us or those we want to be close with. Knowing how to follow up on those feelings is Rick Johnson's specialty.

Rick of Rick Johnson & Associates is a private investigator with over 30 years of experience. Whether it is a personal, business, insurance, or governmental issue, Rick and his staff have the ability to find the truth of the matter and help guide clients to a responsible solution, he says. "I like to think of what we do as an extension of family law," Rick says. "Many of the cases we deal with might be considered 'women's issues,' but we see a wide range of situations that really can threaten families."

Over the years, Rick and his staff have handled thousands of cases and situations. Parental kidnapping, parental custody, employee dishonesty, insurance fraud, runaway children, and missing adult cases have come across Rick's desk. While the procedures have become more technical and efficient nowadays, the foundations of the business have remained the same. "Having a client be able to trust me is crucial," he stresses.

Rick states that his business requires him to not only be well-versed in all kinds of research and investigative techniques, but he is often a therapist or counselor for his clients as well. "People tell me things they wouldn't tell anyone—even their best friend," he comments. "I have to help them separate the emotion from the common sense." Part of that separation process is making sure the client understands what their own reasons are for wanting the information. Answering that question is a key part of what Rick does when he initially meets with clients.

"Probably the most important question I ask is what a client wants to do with the information once we have answers," says Rick. "Many times, the client hasn't considered the ramifications of what happens next. Knowing the next step is just about as important as finding the answers." Rick states that there are some cases when he hears the answer to that question and immediately knows that he is the wrong private investigator for that particular case.

While many people have some misconceptions about what private investigators do, Rick says it is not like what people have seen on television and in the movies. "Sure, there are the 'wow' things every once in a while," he says. "But most of the time, it is a lot of tedious work and attention to detail. Surveillance isn't fun, and there can be real liability issues."

In the beginning, Rick was an investigator for two of the largest District Attorneys' offices in Colorado in Denver and Jefferson Counties. Through the experience he gained in those two offices, he developed a reputation as a tough and thorough investigator. That reputation served him well when he started his own company in 1986.

Ethics are extremely important to Rick, both personally and

professionally. "We meet extremely interesting people at very difficult times in their lives," Rick shares. "Sometimes they want things that are not acceptable or legal to obtain, and I am very direct with clients about what we can and will do."

As part of Rick's commitment to his profession, he is the founder and president of The Private Investigators Academy of the Rockies. Through this program, Rick has provided a solid training ground for those interested in private investigation as a career or as part of their current occupation, he says. As part of the program, Rick emphasizes the tactics and techniques of private investigation, as well as the principles and ethics that are critical to the profession. Topics covered during the several-week course include researching public records, surveillance, interviewing, processes, and even how to set up an office. Through his contacts, Rick says he is able to bring in some of the most respected and knowledgeable professionals in the industry to help provide a realistic look at the profession.

As student Sally Bishop states in her course evaluation on the Academy's Web site, "This course is a no holds barred, punch-in-the-gut entry into the fascinating field of private investigation. It is refreshing to have someone be brutally honest, to care so much about work that is important and crucial, and to have conviction in the worth of his reputation and reputation of the industry."

Rick says the profession has changed a lot over the years. When he first started, there was a lot of driving back and forth between government offices in order to do background checks and to gather information regarding various public records. Now most of those records can be accessed on the Internet. However, those records are only a starting point for any good investigation, he says. "It's important to remember that this is not really a do-it-yourself profession," he emphasizes.

An additional key point that Rick stresses in his lectures as well as with his clients is the power information has. He feels it is especially important for women to understand how powerful it is and what

they intend to do with the information once they have it. "Many women are easily victimized because they want to believe the best in people," he says. "Often women won't connect the information they have until someone else points it out. Then they have to decide what to do with it. Information is powerful. You have to decide how to use it to calm a situation."

One thing Rick says he is proud of is that his company has multigenerational clients. Some of his clients are the third generation of a family to use the company's services. "That speaks very loudly about how we conduct our business," he points out.

Rick Johnson & Associates offers a full range of private investigation services to clients throughout Colorado. They are available to help in a variety of situations, including doing background checks for household employees, marital and child custody, and computer forensics, business, and insurance issues. For more information about the services offered by Rick Johnson & Associates, as well as The Private Investigators Academy of the Rockies, call 303-296-2200 or visit the Web site at www.denverpi.com.

RICK JOHNSON & ASSOCIATES PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

By Deanna Duncan Allen



Rick Johnson, private investigator