

Factors that influence the Price of the Investigation

Like people, not all investigations are alike. What may seem to be a simple matter at first glance can turn out to be more complicated than it appears or in some cases less complicated which brings us to the heart of the reason as to why one investigation may cost more or less than another – unknown factors and variables or as one attorney once put it, “you can’t see what’s coming around the bend in the road”. Since we have been asked this question time and time again, we have compiled a list of the most common factors that influence price fluctuations below. Examples of each category are listed below:

- **Scope and type of investigation:**
 - . Geographic regions where checks need to be conducted
 - . Number of individuals and business entities names that need to be checked
 - . Financial status of the individuals or entities
 - . Sophistication of subject’s business operations and structure
 - . Research on business entities
 - . Investigation objectives - degree of due diligence required to meet
 - . Complexity of investigation in general
 - . Follow-up investigation in general / “following leads”

- **Behavioral characteristics:**
 - . Personality type; i.e. law abiding, criminal in nature, introvert, extrovert, etc...
 - . Blue and white collar criminals may require more in-depth investigation as they are more likely to use sophisticated & complex methods to conceal their identity, assets, location, and activities
 - . Common names requires additional diligence to determine which records pertain to that individual
 - . Use of abbreviated names and/or those that contain suffixes – i.e. a. J. Smith or a. John smith. A. J. Smith III, etc... may cause confusion as to which individual is the Subject or not
 - . Use of aliases, intentional or otherwise

- **Deception, in general:**
 - . Similar named business entities which appear to be set up to deliberately confuse creditors collection efforts and/or ownership – (i.e. ABC Company, LLC, ABC Company, Inc, ABC Company I, Inc, ABC Company II, LLC, etc...)
 - . Use of acronyms and formatting methods using letters of company names (i.e. abc company, A B C Company, Inc., A.B.C. Company, Inc., A. B. C. Company, Inc. etc...)
 - . Determining ownership interests in business entities when apparent methods have been used obfuscate the chain of ownership – i.e., use of attorneys and/or generic registered agents, or other business entities as their registered agents to cloak business associations)
 - . Use of mail drops or other methods used to conceal locations of residential or business addresses
 - . Sophistication of subject’s asset concealment mechanisms – i.e. use of trusts, titling assets in the names of other family members or business entities, use of proxy agents, online banking, etc...
 - . Method of concealing / titling assets - i.e title assets in names of family members, trusts, or business entities

- **Issues with access to information:**
 - . Restricted access to records in the region where the Subject is located – i.e. records not accessible to the public online that require physical visits to courthouses, law enforcement agencies, government agencies, etc..., property records not being indexed by name, costly subscriptions required to access on-line records. Increased difficulty equates to additional time needed to procure the information needed.
 - . Data collection, processing, integration, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of available information (on complex cases)

- . Data integrity – determination / confirmation of accuracy and/or determining if data is up-to-date or out-dated.
- . Excessive number of records found requires additional due diligence to check
- **Overhead costs:**
 - . Database expenses
 - . Access / subscription fees to obtain records
 - . Copy costs
 - . Use of another vendor or investigator to access or pull records
 - . Local taxes
 - . Regulatory fees as required by law
- **Converting information into intelligence for the Client:**
 - . Data collection
 - . Analysis
 - . Collating known information
 - . Drawing conclusions
 - . Report preparation – composition, formatting and conversion of data into tables, charts, and graphs, and attachment and exhibit incorporation into the report
- **Special or additional requests by clients**
 - . Insufficient or incorrect information provided by client
 - . Additional questions or investigative tasks added during the investigation
 - . Rush basis

What can you do to minimize your investigation costs?

We strive to provide our clients excellent investigation services at an affordable cost. Simple measures can reduce the cost of your investigation and stay within a particular budget if necessary. Follow these guidelines and minimize your costs:

- **Define what you want to know beforehand**
Before contacting an investigator define exactly what you want to know. This may sound simple but we are contacted by clients regularly who aren't exactly sure what they want to find out. They may use the shotgun approach and inundate the investigator they are talking to. Most investigators are organized and task-oriented individuals. They usually make compile a list and go down it ticking one task off after another as they complete them. This not only will keep your costs down but will make the investigator work faster and more efficiently.
- **Gather information prior to contacting the investigator**
Items like the full name, date of birth, social security number, address, associated business entities, name of the spouse will help us properly identify the person that we are investigating. Too often our clients have little information to work with. A name like John Smith or James Jones with no address may take us hours to properly identify the specific person that we are investigating. One thing we recommend is to take the information you gather about the target of the investigation and put it into a Word or Notepad document. This will save the investigator from having to take it down and retype it later.
- **Have copies of supporting documents on hand if they are relevant to the investigation**
Why? It saves us time and money if we need them later.

- **Limit the scope or focus of your investigation**

By limiting the scope or focus of the investigation and concentrating on key issues the investigation team will expend less time and expenses.

- **Set a budget limit**

Investigators are often called into situations where they are given assignments to find out specific types of information that require a substantial degree of effort, out-of-pocket costs, and thinking outside the box strategies. In these types of situations, it is difficult to give a specific timeframe or cost estimate for the completion of the task at hand. It is often prudent to set a budget limitation on these types of cases. The investigator assigned to your case will advise you if your case matches this criterion or not.

- **Allow the investigator to do his job**

One of the factors that inhibit an investigator's efficiency is a constant barrage of questions from the client while he is working on their case. The investigator has to then re-shift his focus on the investigation to answer their questions and add new ones. Many times after the investigator answers their questions they are followed by new ones in the same fashion again. Remember that the investigator is billing you for his time. For this reason alone, it is prudent to prepare your questions prior to the investigation. It is perfectly normal for most clients to ask a few additional questions during an investigation, however, we are referring to individuals with insecurity issues that are never satisfied no matter how many questions are answered.