

Detective really values privacy

By **TOM JOHNSTON**
STAFF WRITER

The common image of a private detective might include the slightly overweight man with whiskers, wearing a fedora and smoking cigarettes as he pines over a case in an office lit only by a lamp on a desk full of whisky.

David Hertog admits he might enjoy a Heineken or two from time to time, but the private detective, who holds an MBA and a degree in criminal justice and accounting, doesn't really fit the stereotype.

His files are full of software.

"The private detective industry, in general, has an image problem," said Hertog, president and CEO of Hertog & Associates Incorporated in Barrington.

Though he prefers wearing blue jeans and an oxford shirt to his modest offices at 836 S. Northwest Highway, Hertog is doing his best to polish his industry's tarnished image by pledging to clients that his award-winning company will commit itself to helping them reach their goals.

"We strive to be a future resource," Hertog said. "We don't want to do business all at one time. It's about giving the customer value and helping them. Really helping them. Making it a priority."

Hertog & Associates, which is licensed in Illinois and Wisconsin, has been in business for about eight years and serves mostly Fortune 500 corporations, major law firms, and privately held companies.

Having saved companies and people sometimes millions in dollars and emotional well-being by protecting them from potential harm, Hertog attributes his success to the credibility he has earned by keeping his clients' problems private.

"My clients know their stories are not going to end up on CNN. I'm not going to be a talking head on Fox," Hertog said. "It's a private matter. Whether it's five years from now or 10 years from now, I'm not going to talk about what happened with my clients."

The services Hertog & Associates provide include due diligence, threat management, background investigations and executive protection.

Due diligence work would include checking out some background information on a company with which a client is considering doing business.

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That information could include whether the company is suing or being sued, whether it's financially stable, and whether it has any criminal history.

"If company A is going to deal with company B, then company A wants to know that company B is not just going to take the money and run," Hertog said. "They want to know they're actually going to stay in there and fulfill the contract."

In threat management cases, Hertog might help a company's administration determine the risk of violent retaliation from an employee who may be terminated.

Background investigations make up much of

Hertog's business. In general, the company helps other businesses check for potential employees' criminal histories. Clients can make these requests and Hertog can answer them via e-mail.

"The best way to predict future performance is to look at their past," Hertog said. "It's a great indicator of what lies ahead."

Executive protection cases require Hertog and his employees — who range in experience from a recently retired federal agent to a recently released Marine — to act as bodyguards, for example, when executives go to disgruntled shareholders' meetings.

Other facets of the agency's work includes some surveillance, serving legal documents, and locating people anywhere in the country. Hertog & Associates also helps clients do a little investigating of their own.

Most of the detective work the agency does involves gathering information on the Internet, public records at courthouses, and interviewing people.

"All the information's out there," Hertog said. "It's all public information."

It helps Hertog, though, that he has about 20 years of experience in background investigation, threat assessment management, and criminal investigation.

Hertog has been through some extraordinarily rigorous training not only as a former member of the U. S. Army but also in top secret, high-level positions with investigative, counter-intelligence and counter terrorism duties on classified United States government programs.

In addition to completing training with the Defense Investigative Service, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the FBI and U.S. Intelligence agencies, Hertog has authored publications on hostage survival, personal safety, and protective vehicle systems.

He also has extensive experience overseeing discreet investigations of complex fraud, sexual harassment, substance abuse and workplace violence cases.

Hertog had always wanted to be a veterinarian, but he says his deficiencies in math and science dashed any hopes of ever earning a medical degree. Still, he was always interested



Richard Bajjalieh/Staff Photographer

Private detective David Hertog has received extensive training from various U.S. intelligence agencies.

in law enforcement and investigations.

"I've always been inquisitive," Hertog said.

But a good private detective requires other traits.

"You have to be ethical, honest, diligent, and just tenacious in the search for the truth," he said.

Hertog said he loves to help people and he tries to be approachable to them. With his skills honed over years of experience, the software in his desk, and even his style of dress, Hertog can do both and still blend in as needed.

"One of the things that makes us very successful is that we're discreet," he said.

For more information, call Hertog & Associates at (847) 382-4444 or visit the company's Web site at www.backgroundinvestigator.net.

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