

Investigator Spotlight: An Expert Q&A Series

TechOps special agent shares how his team uses PenLink to help investigators save manpower and dig deeper into criminal networks.

In each edition of PenLink’s monthly Q&A series, we interview investigative experts to understand the impact of digital evidence in today’s investigations. This month we sat down with **Daryl Henderson, a special agent with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation**, to talk about how investigations have changed with digital evidence. The TechOps unit he leads supports agencies throughout the state of Ohio with services that include taking care of all electronic communications intercepts.

Q: How has the investigative process changed with technology?

A: Using mobile devices for communications is now much more a part of the criminal network. Our tools have also changed, so we have more opportunities to intercept those communications. Because of the shrinking numbers in law enforcement, we now rely heavily on technology. Even when we aren’t running Title III live intercepts, our TechOps team is busy monitoring social media, Pen registers, and pings more than they used to.

Q: What impact has digital evidence had on clearing your cases?

A: The best evidence you can get is someone talking on an intercept about their dirty deeds. Live intercepts allow investigators to wrap things up faster and hopefully get deeper into

the network, so we’re seeing more agencies using them.

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Daryl Henderson,
Special Agent

Q: How has utilizing technology in your investigations made your team more efficient?

A: A lot of legwork is required to exhaust all other options and get to a Title III. TechOps is a force multiplier in terms of providing tools that the investigators can use to reduce legwork time. Surveillance camera systems and electronic communications intercepts can provide good evidence that helps agencies shorten the time required to complete their investigations.

With the many changes to technology, like the 5G standard, we’re constantly trying to keep up. One of the good things about PenLink is that it keeps up with technological changes, so

the system continues to provide the information we need.

The volume of digital data from investigations is now hundreds of gigabytes in a dump. Parsing that out in an effective way is very difficult for people who don't do this every day. Our analysts use PenLink to filter out information and get it back to the agents very quickly. Investigators don't have to go through hundreds of pages of phone-dump data, which saves manpower resources.

From an administrative standpoint, our unit has to justify the cost of our PenLink system every time our contract comes up—but we can show that the tools we provide are very useful and much needed today.

Q: What's your favorite investigative tip?

A: PenPoint is such a good tool when you're trying to run a pen register or a ping, because

it enhances surveillance activities. For example, you get a better GPS location, which investigators appreciate because it cuts down on them having to manually overlay latitude and longitude on Google Maps. With PenPoint, it happens in the background.

Q: How are the expectations for investigations evolving, and how are you preparing for those changes?

A: As technology advances, there are expectations for us to get more social media data in a less painful fashion. Law enforcement is playing catch-up in terms of the technology being used and what the culture is doing. It's hard to fight from behind. We need easier access to social media and encrypted data, because that's where a lot of the younger criminal targets are—it's how they communicate.

*Thank you to **Daryl** and the entire **Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation** for their commitment to keep their community safe—and to Daryl for his willingness to share his experiences with us.*

If you would like to participate in our Q&A series, please contact info@penlink.com. To learn more about PenLink and view additional resources, visit penlink.com.

