

Expert Investigator Reveals Answers to Questions About Using Live Social Media Data to Uncover Leads

A technical investigator in the Electronic Evidence Unit of a U.S. County Sheriff's office shares insights about the value of collecting live social media data. In this Q&A, you'll learn which types of cases are most likely to benefit from live data, hear advice on staying current with trends, and more.

Q: *What makes adding live social media and other internet-based communication intercepts to telephonic data so useful?*

A: Social media, chatroom, and other internet-based communications data can help establish probable cause, identify co-conspirators, and show a pattern of life that's really important. Internet-based communications data can also help you identify additional locations that may need more investigation. For one case where a suspect was using burner phones, the confidential informants were able to identify the social media channels that the suspect was using. The pen register for the social media account helped the investigators find a phone number and narrow down a location, which led to a subsequent arrest based on an active arrest warrant. Live data saves time, and it's actionable—we're able to move on it and let it

work for our investigation. Otherwise, you have to sit and wait for results.

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Q: *What types of investigations can social media intercept data help with?*

A: We've deployed live intercepts in many different types of cases, including fugitive tracking, homicides, child abduction/kidnapping, narcotics distribution, burglary/theft, sexual assault, human trafficking, and runaways/missing persons.

Q: *What do you look for to determine which cases are most likely to be worth spending time looking for live data sources?*

A: Generally, we look for a suspect who's not in custody, in an ongoing investigation where we believe that additional evidence such as travel, co-conspirators, etc. will bolster the case and help develop additional evidence for further affidavits to increase surveillance. Sometimes, even if a suspect is in

custody, you could also see co-conspirators communicating with or using the suspect's account.

Q: *How do you stay current with where live data is available?*

A: Communication takes place through many apps such as Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and Twitter, as well as through text, phone calls, Google Voice, Skype, and IMVU. To keep current with the trends, you need to know what's being used in your community. It's important to think outside the box and get creative. Where is there a chatroom that could be used by predators? Sharing

knowledge with investigators in other parts of the country is also important for helping each other.

Q: *Do you have to be a computer-science expert to be able to gather and use live data?*

A: No, but having a tool to help you sort through and gather pertinent information is important. The PenLink PLX platform helps get results sorted so that we can easily analyze the data from multiple platforms in one view to see what is actually there and uncover trends and movements that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

About PenLink

For 35 years, PenLink has been the industry-preferred provider for communications, surveillance, and forensics data analysis. Our state-of-the-art solutions help law enforcement collect, normalize, and analyze complex data faster and more efficiently – revealing essential insights and helping them build stronger cases.

We are proud to support agencies around the world in their effort to fight wrongdoing. PenLink is headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, and operates a regional office in Washington, D.C.

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