



Small Business Spotlight: Former Agent Robert Strang's Journey From Law Enforcement To Cybersecurity

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NEW YORK (WCBS 880) – Robert Strang had a career as an agent with the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration, and now he has parlayed those skills into a new business focusing on intelligence gathering, corporate security, and especially cybersecurity.

Speaking with WCBS 880's Joe Connolly, Strang emphasized how important cybersecurity is for small businesses, and the unique ability of his firm, Investigative Management Group, to protect individuals and businesses.

Strang said he has gone from a law enforcement career based on tips to a business career based on leads. "It's interesting, because that's the nature of the business. You know, they want people that they can trust. Usually when we get calls, it's people with really severe problems that need help," he said. "So it's kind of a closed industry in a way."

He noted the challenges involved with moving from the government to the private sector, but said his company is like a "private FBI" that can investigate a variety of subjects.

"Most of the time, there's a theft in a company. Most of the time, there might be something to do with sexual harassment; workplace violence. Very often, it may just be due diligence when someone's buying a company in another country and they want to know more about it. It could be just somebody who's traveling and needs security on their trip," Strang said.



Ann Hayes
Investigative Management Group Co-Founder,
President, and Former DEA Special Agent

Investigative Management Group also has subcontractors around the world.

Strang noted that his company's work also now almost always some type of cyber investigation. "Something to look at – digital forensics," he said. "You can't do anything internally or externally without having a record of what transpired."

Strang said the cybersecurity industry is growing, and college students often ask him how to get into it. "If you look around the world with what's happening in China and Russia; with all we're seeing with Hillary (Clinton)'s emails; with all of what's going on with Russia, this is a big industry," he said. "No one's solved it yet. You know, there's nothing out there that's 100 percent foolproof. Any of us who communicate on the internet are vulnerable."

Strang said he does no advertising at all.

"You've got to remember – we're usually hired by audit committees of boards of directors; by the CEO, and it's usually a very sensitive, important matter. And these things, you know, are referred by other CEOs; other members of their community. They're not going to look at an advertisement. They're not going to look in the Wall Street Journal even for an ad," he said. "They're going to want a recommendation from someone who's used the firm before that's satisfied with the work that they've done."

Strang said he is often approached by agents who want to move from the government to starting their own business.

"I say, look, you know, start something if you can first. Get a client or two, do some consulting work, get a sense for it, start to build up the business. But they have to understand that in the private sector, it's not a government. You need a business plan. You have to have some capital to get going. It's very different," he said. He noted that businesses must work with a budget, while federal law enforcement agents do not.

"We have to arrest bad guys, and it's endless – I need 15 people, I need so much money, I need a wiretap, we get the money, right, from Congress," he said. "When you're running a business, you really have to focus on the business side of the business, and you have to make sure that you've got the clients. You've got to make sure that you've got the cash flow, and you've got to, you know, grow that business very carefully."

Strang said he was loved his job as a federal agent, and would still be there "if (he) had a trust fund." But he said an average day with Investigative Management Group is likewise "very exciting."

"I've met, you know, the people that I've met; the accomplished people around our corporate structure in the U.S.; around the world," he said. "It's been amazing, you know, we grew this business when we left 27 years ago. We sold it in 2001 to a public company. We restarted our business – same management team – in 2003, and we've been blessed, because we've got such great clients; wonderful, interesting people, and sometimes, you know, people that are in trouble. Sometimes it's well-known individuals that we read about in the newspaper that we're trying to help behind the scenes as best we can – working with their PR people; working with their lawyers; working with their psychiatrists."

As to where to go next, he said Investigative Management Group is looking to "keep in the space that we're in" amid a business that is growing tremendously.

"It's kind of a unique, smaller firm that is dealing specifically with high-level investigations within corporations or for wealthy families. And that's kind of where we want to be," he said. "Now does that mean that someday, we're not going to want to extend that to some degree? Perhaps. But you know, it's interesting, you can either stay where you are and have a good, solid business with a nice profit; enjoy what you do, and that's kind of where we are."