

Preface

Search management today is not simple, easy, uncomplicated or liability free. It requires some homework, a professional attitude about the disciplines involved, and most of all the humility to ask for help even when pride gets in the way. No matter what aspect you analyze in the search management process, teamwork and collective minds find people faster. The best search managers share information and knowledge because they know that people's lives depend on it. The problems are the same, the world over. Only the people, their networks and their attitudes are different.

The term "handbook" is somewhat of an enigma. Webster says that it is a "compact reference book on a particular subject." Another source alludes to a small or brief manual of instructions and guidelines. In researching and compiling information for this handbook, I found the information neither compact, brief or simple in any way.

There are those that would say, *"Just give me something to serve as a reminder. Short, simple and to the point. It should fit into my shirt or coat pocket and provide a checklist or two when I need them. I have all of our protocols and procedures in my head anyway."* Just where to draw the line about what to put in and what to leave out is a tough dilemma. As anyone who has been involved in SAR for any length of time will attest, *"There is no lack of opinion, perspective and certainly bias among managers and searchers who respond to help search when the callout occurs."*

While a short checklist and a brief notepad reminder may have sufficed a decade or so ago, that is most certainly not the case today. Every dedicated individual working in SAR wants to do their level best, if for no other reason than the self satisfaction of being able to make a difference when someone's life hangs in the balance. The entire purpose of this Handbook is to provide the tools necessary to make that difference. When the wheel falls off the cart and a search manager is into the third day of searching with no new leads and faced with having to answer questions about which he knows very little, it is hoped this publication will provide some key guidance and rationale.

After over twenty five years of teaching “Search Management” in nine countries around the world to police and land management agency personnel, I am convinced more than ever that we all still have a lot to learn (myself included). And a lot more people to reach! There have been some exciting and innovative new ideas surface in just the past several years (in the application of search theory), but we have not kept pace with either technology or the need for the delivery of comprehensive training in search management.

In today’s fast pace society, if its not intuitive or simple, throw it out and get something faster, easier and less complicated. Just like good down-to-earth basic detective work is sometimes required to solve a difficult crime, good investigation and the application of basic “search theory” principles can often make the difference on a search. If you only have the rudiments, its hard to make the leap into the “big leagues” of liability and distraught relatives. Unfortunately, some find this out the hard way.

Is there some of the same old stuff in this handbook? Yes, because that information will always form the foundation to good search management. Are there new ideas, concepts, research, forms and time saving hints? Most definitely! I think you will find it a vast improvement over handbooks of a similar nature that have been developed in the past.

Keep in mind that this handbook is by no means comprehensive when it comes to search management. It is not something the beginner could pick up and use effectively. It was not designed for that. There are too many concepts referred to that require field experience, a comprehensive text to explain, or an instructor’s guidance to make them useful. The bibliography in the back of this publication isn’t even as complete as it could be. It does however, provide a list of references that should be of interest to anyone serious about this subject. This handbook was originally conceived only as an aid to the manager in the field and an abbreviated version of the larger and more comprehensive text, but it is obvious that it can also be used as a training review document and it should be.

It is my fervent hope that this handbook provides some real assistance on scene, and also serves as a catalyst for planning and learning. *“Professionals are never through with school.”* And the homework doesn’t end either!

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