



photo DONNA BISE

Robert Schurmeier Jr. has successfully started and guided his investigative security services agency since 2004 after retiring from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department after 29 years.

Watchful eyes

High-tech investigative company sells integrity

BEA QUIRK
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The unmarked office of the U.S. Investigative Security Services Agency in Ballantyne looks like a scene out of the TV series *24*.

Black Crown Victorias with tinted glass are parked outside. Inside, there are biometric fingerprint devices, a global satellite command center and other high-tech gizmos.

But it's not the technology driving ISS' success. It's the trust clients have in the people using it.

The company, founded in 2004 by retired Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Deputy Chief Robert Schurmeier Jr., employs 12 full-time staffers and about 60 contract workers.

Most of them have law enforcement or military experience.

ISS — unlike many of its competitors — also has an attorney/chief privacy officer on staff.

The company's services include investigations, risk and threat assessments and pre-employment screening that ranges from database reviews to full-scale investigations.

For example, ISS conducts about 150 background and reference checks each year for the CMPD. "They care about our organization and know what we are looking for," says CMPD Sgt. Mark Davis.

ISS touts its expertise and integrity, Schurmeier says. "We have developed a niche because we provide customized service and in-depth reports. We don't sell ourselves as a high-volume company

QUICKINFO

U.S. INVESTIGATIVE SECURITY SERVICES AGENCY

Business: Security-related and investigative services

Founded: 2004

HQ: 13860 Ballantyne Corporate Place, Suite 240, Charlotte 28277

Principal: Robert Schurmeier Jr.

Employees: 12, plus 50 to 60 independent contractors

Phone: (704) 525-5221

Web: www.isecureus.com

process. We offer interpretation of results and thorough, professional, detailed work — no cookie-cutter approaches."

The company has about four dozen clients, mostly from the Charlotte area. About 60% to 70% are public agencies. The client base includes a large federal contract with the Transportation Security Administration that started in May.

ISS began turning a profit this summer, a year ahead of its projections.

But success wasn't a sure thing. Schurmeier put in "a pretty significant planning period" before opening the business with one employee working from a virtual office.

Schurmeier made use of his law enforcement contacts and knocked on lots of doors. But he acknowledges the company's start "was a struggle

at first, and work didn't come easily or quickly. It was all about persistence."

Schurmeier got early support — in terms of business advice and cash — from business executive Robert Sterling. He convinced Schurmeier to move ISS into its Ballantyne office in 2005.

Two other investors followed — real estate developer Johnny Harris and realty company owner Dan Cottingham, whom Schurmeier credits with helping him expand into the private sector. Harris chairs ISS' board of advisers, and Cottingham is a member as well.

Bea Quirk is a Charlotte-based free-lance writer who can be reached at beawrites@aol.com.

LESSON LEARNED:

Robert Schurmeier Jr., a 29-year veteran of the local police force, used his extensive contacts in law enforcement to gradually build the client base of the U.S. Investigative Security Services Agency.