

## CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

# Complex Case Management and Reporting with Magnet ATLAS

Case Management Solution Designed for Modern Lab Realities Improves IMPD Lab Processes

### THE CHALLENGES:

- A legacy database that didn't adequately track devices or cases
- Time-intensive, laborious reporting
- Complex cases with numerous devices
- Locked, encrypted devices that may need to be reprocessed at some future date

### MAGNET ATLAS SOLVES BY:

- Offering fields needed to track multiple types of devices and storage media
- Streamlining and shortening the reporting process
- Easily tracking devices across complex cases and filtering those needed for reprocessing

**Investigation Type:**  
Case Management

"I can now look for exact statistics and run reports in minutes, if not seconds. One report has all the information I need to submit."

## BACKGROUND

One of the most important needs any digital forensics lab has—beyond serving the investigators who work cases—is the ability to report on its own activities. To justify budgets for software, equipment, and personnel, as well as grant funding and other resources, lab managers need to report more than the number of requests they receive, the number of devices they process, or the amount of data they process. They also have to include types of devices, storage media, and request types.

When the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) began to look for a case management solution in 2014, reporting was among its chief concerns. Its existing solution, a Microsoft Access Runtime database created in the 1990s, couldn't keep up with the rapid pace of technology.

Grant Melton, one of the forensic examiners, says the introduction of cell phones made it especially difficult to track chain of custody. "Trying to find information about the devices was a pain, and the reports and logging weren't user-friendly," he explains. "We could see the number of cases, but we had no way to determine the numbers of different devices or the amount of data we were processing."

In addition, Linda Jackson, the unit supervisor who has worked in the lab since 2014, struggled to collect required monthly statistics to help justify grant funding for the IMPD's Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. "The old program wasn't written for that purpose," she recalls. "I would spend the better part of my day each month, printing out seven or eight different reports to get all the data needed to report our ICAC and unit statistics."

---

Melton appreciated that ATLAS was able to import the legacy data from the old database into the new system. "It isn't perfect, but we can go back and see a case from 2014 without having to go back to the old system," he says, noting how important this is for court cases that can last several years, such as one major case first investigated in 2013. "It used to take five steps just to print a list of items," Melton says.

## MORE GRANULAR LAB STATISTICS MAKE FOR BETTER REPORTS

The unit found Sentinel ATLAS in 2015, after an arduous process of evaluating case management systems that would meet their needs. ATLAS accommodated all information about any device or associated media booked into evidence. It also made it possible both to generate the kinds of reports the lab needed and to improve their workflow.

"I can now look for exact statistics and run reports in minutes, if not seconds," says Jackson. "One report has all the information I need to submit." Thanks to ATLAS' reporting, Jackson can now break out numbers associated with:

- Case types. Jackson now reports on the numbers of search warrants, consent searches, deceased owners, and other circumstances the lab handles.
- Computer and mobile device types. PCs and Macs, as well as GSM, CDMA, LTE, and other devices can each be tracked.
- Internal and external storage types. SATA, IDE, SSD, and Flash internal hard drives, along with SD and micro SD cards, USB devices, and CDs or DVDs all have their own statistics.



By adding fields for unique mobile identifiers, SIM cards and SD cards, ATLAS solves another problem with the legacy database. “For computers with three hard drives, it was hard to tie each drive to one specific computer,” Melton says.

In fact, when a case involved multiple devices—say, one computer and one cell phone—the team had to create three different cases: one for the case itself, one for the computer, and the third for the phone. Creating redundant cases inflated overall numbers and made it much more difficult to track both devices and cases.

With ATLAS, all the devices associated with a case can be entered under a single case heading. “Even if that’s five computers and ten phones,” says Jackson. “It’s easier to associate the parent/child evidentiary items such as the device and its relationship to its own SIM cards and micro SD cards.”

This capability can be especially important on complex cases, or in cases where investigators seize all devices within the scope of their search warrant. “While serving a search warrant, we might see six to twelve phones. We have to seize everything, even if it isn’t ultimately connected to the case,” says Jackson. “It’s much easier to track all of the devices.”

## MANAGING COMPLEX, MULTI-DEVICE AND COLD INVESTIGATIONS

The team immediately saw benefits in managing complex, multi-device investigations, when they assisted federal drug agents with a multi-location search warrant. Each of the 30 locations had a team responsible for device seizures. “They seized 120 phones in one day,” says Jackson. It therefore made sense, she says, to “jump right in and start using [ATLAS] for such a complex undertaking.”

In another case, the team had to preview more than 100 computers after a computer repair technician’s roommate reported him for owning child sexual abuse material. “Not all of the computers were related to the case,” says Jackson, and ATLAS was needed to help sort and log the preview computers from the seized computers. Eventually, the team was able to narrow their search to find that the technician was producing the material, and the case escalated to the federal level.

One of ATLAS’ unexpected benefits, says Melton, is the ability to revisit cold cases. “Cell phone technology goes through such rapid changes that we might get a locked phone that isn’t supported for lock bypass, but a few months from now, will be,” he explains. “I used to have to remember which devices and cases to go back to, but now, when I log an exam for a device, I can flag that it was locked with no bypass. I can then filter examinations by those flags, and reprocess if we’re able to get into the device.” This capability offers a measurable impact on the ability to solve major cases.

Whether for cold cases, new cases, or legacy cases, Magnet ATLAS delivers consistent and reliable value for the IMPD digital forensics lab, saving time in reporting and enabling the examiners and investigators to focus on what matters most: solving cases.

### NAVIGATING THE CHANGE IN VENDORS

The IMPD’s digital forensics examiners were already familiar with Magnet Forensics; they owned five Magnet IEF licenses, and also used IEF as part of their work with the FBI Child Exploitation Task Force (CETF). “It was good news when Magnet bought Sentinel, because we had good working relationships with both companies,” Jackson says.

News of the acquisition wasn’t without stress; like many agencies, the IMPD has a tight budget to remain within, and the team wondered what impact the new business arrangement might mean for their budget. However, says Jackson, those strong relationships made it easier to reach out and ask what it meant—and to continue to work with developers to refine ATLAS.

“Magnet’s been around for long enough that we knew the [software] would improve, not go away or be changed in ways that wouldn’t work for us. We knew we could only expect positive changes,” she says.



## SEE MAGNET ATLAS IN ACTION FOR YOURSELF

If you'd like to learn more about Magnet ATLAS and how it can help you bring together digital evidence management, chain of custody, financials and budget management, asset management, resource management, and more, visit [magnetforensics.com/magnet-atlas](https://magnetforensics.com/magnet-atlas). You can learn more by requesting an in-depth personal demo from an ATLAS expert.

Learn more at [magnetforensics.com](https://magnetforensics.com)

For more information call us at 1-844-638-7884  
or email [sales@magnetforensics.com](mailto:sales@magnetforensics.com)

© 2018 Magnet Forensics Inc. All rights reserved. Magnet Forensics®, Internet Evidence Finder®, IEF®, Magnet™, AXIOM™, ACQUIRE™, Magnet. AI™, ATLAS™ and related trademarks, names and logos are the property of Magnet Forensics and are registered and/or used in the U.S. and countries around the world.

