

BUILDING AND PROSECUTING CASES WITH STRONG DIGITAL EVIDENCE FOUND BY USING NIGHTHAWK®

Agency Type

District Attorney's Office

Agency Size

1,000+ employees

Agency Need

Tools to efficiently analyze massive datasets to solve and prosecute a range of criminal cases

LeadsOnline Solutions

- **NightHawk** for digital evidence fusion and visualization
- **Toolbox** for phone and vehicle data lookups and other investigative resources

Results at a Glance

- Made digital evidence analysis more efficient, reducing time to lead from days to minutes
- Helped solve a series of burglaries with no physical evidence and uncover additional crimes
- Built compelling courtroom visuals that led defendants to plead guilty
- Enhanced collaboration with local police department and other jurisdictions

ABOUT THE SAN DIEGO DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The San Diego County District Attorney's (DA) Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanors outside the City of San Diego. Led by DA Summer Stephan, the office files more than 40,000 cases annually and is committed to fair and equal justice across San Diego County.

CHALLENGES

Criminals are becoming more organized and tech-savvy, forcing law enforcement agencies to evolve in adoption of technology to keep up. But most tools designed for them are siloed and linear, so investigators must manually cross-reference data from cell phone extractions, social media, tower dumps, video surveillance, and financial records. This process is tedious, time-consuming and can cause connections to be missed.

SOLUTIONS

The San Diego DA's Office implemented **NightHawk**, a platform that ingests and fuses a wide range of digital evidence into a unified interface, making it fast and easy for investigators to visualize their cases. They can filter, search and find commonalities in addition to comparing and linking suspects and their activities. With all this data in one program, they can see how events unfold in chronological order and build cases for successful prosecutions. They also use the **LeadsOnline Toolbox** to look up phone numbers and access templates to help with warrants and other important tasks.

"There's nothing else that can ingest and visualize such a wide variety of data across time and distance. **NightHawk** helps us find what otherwise would be missed. There is no going back. We'd be lost without it."

Senior Investigator Josh Pittsley
San Diego County District Attorney's Office

EFFICIENCY AT SCALE

Josh Pittsley, a 20-year law enforcement veteran and a senior investigator with the San Diego DA's office, used to spend hours or even days cross-referencing records, switching between multiple software programs. Now, **NightHawk** enables him to do the same analysis in just minutes. "What used to take me two days, I now do in 10 minutes. **NightHawk** lets me visualize and analyze the case the way I see fit—and often surfaces key evidence I would've missed the traditional way."

STARTING WITH NOTHING TO SOLVE A STRING OF BURGLARIES

In one case involving seven residential burglaries, investigators only had surveillance video of masked burglars—no fingerprints, no DNA, no names. Having just taken a **NightHawk** course, Pittsley suggested they look at area and tower dumps from near the crime scenes. They were able to identify cellular devices and eventually close 65 burglary cases spanning California and Nevada. This six-month investigation also led to a multi-agency, simultaneous takedown across nine locations in Southern California.

"TACTICAL DATA" IN THE FIELD

Pittsley's partner started calling him "tactical data" because he was doing real-time surveillance analysis from the car with his laptop. "It's not me, it's **NightHawk**. It lets me see and share the story clearly. I'm not just finding

a needle in a haystack, I'm finding a needle in a needle stack." One dataset led to another, revealing additional crimes, including vehicle theft, prostitution, and human trafficking. "We were proactively solving cases other agencies didn't even know were connected," he said.

VISUALS THAT WIN IN COURT

For one preliminary hearing, Pittsley built a 700-slide presentation using **NightHawk**'s Storyboard feature. He only got through 200 slides before all eight defense attorneys advised their clients to plead guilty. "It was so compelling they didn't want to go to trial. Even the defendants could see it. That's how clear the visualizations are." That win saved the office from a two-month trial and allowed staff to refocus on other cases.

A CATALYST FOR AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

The success of **NightHawk**-driven investigations has created a new partnership between the DA's Office and the San Diego Police Department. "Now we get to collaborate and work directly together, getting involved in cases earlier to make a difference in both commands," Pittsley says. He also works with other jurisdictions from coast to coast. "I've spent hours on the phone with teams in other states helping them use **NightHawk**. It works on any case."

EVOLVING WITH INVESTIGATORS

"We didn't know we had a digital data analysis deficiency until we started using **NightHawk**, Pittsley said." He values not just the product but the team behind it. He frequently interacts with product engineers and support staff and participates in beta testing. "They actually listen. If I suggest a feature, there's a good chance it ends up in the next update. It's not a locked box like other software. It evolves with us."

USING TOOLBOX FOR TEMPLATES, TIPS, AND MORE TIME SAVINGS

Pittsley also credits the **LeadsOnline Toolbox** in helping save time. From phone number lookups to warrant and other templates, it gives investigators access to information and tips for advancing their cases. "Digital records aren't designed with law enforcement in mind," Pittsley explained. "The **Toolbox** tells you what to ask for, where to send it, and what to expect back. It removes guesswork and anxiety, especially for newer detectives. Cops love templates, and this puts them all in one place."