

Bumps in the Night!!!!

Tools of the Trade



Time Syncing

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A technique used by TnT Paranormal to prepare for an investigation is to synchronize (aka sync) the time clocks for all camera (handheld and digital), digital voice recorders (aka digis), and the DVR camera system. We started using this technique when we started having issues during review locating an exact point within a data file on another piece of equipment using data from the first piece of equipment. We call that process, Cross Referencing, which means checking more than one device to see if the data was picked up on one, showed up on another and/or provides an explanation of what was going on at the time. Look for a future article on the Cross Reference topic.

You might ask, why do that? Why Cross Reference data? Well, it is just one more way for us to try and debunk data captured and do our total due diligence. If you look at two devices and one shows a whisper that sounds paranormal, but the other one shows a team member whispering then you throw it out.

The syncing of times on equipment is critical in making the Cross Reference technique a tool you can use. Otherwise you'll have to spend countless minutes (or even hours) searching for that exact spot.

Anyway, back to time syncing, this technique is really a three-step technique. The first step is to take a watch and check the date/time, and if necessary reset the date/time, on each piece of equipment that has a built-in time clock. Using the same watch is key so that they all are set to the same time. It is even better if that watch is the one that an investigator will be wearing during the investigation. This step should occur before being on site for the investigation to save time and not cut into investigation time. However, you don't want to do it more than 24 hours before an investigation. Some devices lose time naturally as the batteries wear down, so if you set the date/time to soon it will be for naught.

The second step will occur on site at the investigation and that is to start all equipment of like types at the same time. So start all of the digis at the same time, all of the handheld cameras at the same time, etc. If possible start everything at the same time, but that is a lofty goal and may not be doable (for several reasons). By starting them all at the same time they will all be in sync and for the most part be of the same length and the time stamps. There are some other factors that can cause the times to not be 100%, but this technique allows you to get as close as you can get.

The third step we do is to start a stop watch with the recorders. The stop watch becomes the control time for the recorders and the time on it will be noted if any digital recorders need to be restarted for any reason. So for instance if all digital recorders are started at 00:00:00 and then at 01:23:45 the digital recorder called #1 needed to be restarted, that time is recorded in the log for future use. FYI: Some smart phones, like iPhone, have a stop watch app which means one less tool to have to buy and maintain.

This technique might seem like an unnecessary or minimal impact technique, but we would have to disagree. Trust us when we say this technique has assisted us several times during evidence reviews, not only in time savings, effort, and frustration. Thus, helping us locate additional data that either supporting the initial finding and/or debunked it. This in turn gave us confidence in what we were or were not presenting as potential evidence of paranormal to a client. This technique is well worth the effort it takes to execute.