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SAMPLE DIGITAL FORENSIC REPORT

Was a competing business set up on company time?

SCENARIO	Suspected preparation of a competing business and personal use of a company MacBook
INSTRUCTED BY	A design and branding studio (anonymised)
DEVICE	Apple MacBook Pro, Apple silicon, 1 TB, FileVault enabled
PERIOD EXAMINED	1 June to 31 July 2026
METHOD	Forensic logical image of the data volume, analysed with our Mac forensic system

Sample report: anonymised, details changed. This is an example of our reporting, based on real casework. Names, dates, file names and identifying details have been changed. It is not a live case file.

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01 Summary of findings

The MacBook records show documents for a new design business being created and worked on during the senior designer's employment, mostly within working hours, together with visits to company-registration and domain-registration websites and the use of a new business email address. Times are UK time (BST).

- **Business documents.** A folder named `NewCo` was created in the designer's Documents on 9 June 2026. By 31 July it held 47 files: a business plan, a rate card, a logo in several versions, a website wireframe, proposal templates and a spreadsheet of contacts.
- **When the work was done.** Of 212 saves to files in that folder, 151 (71 per cent) fell between 09:00 and 17:30 on working days.
- **Registration and domain.** The company-registration service's incorporation pages were visited on 16 and 17 June. A domain registrar's checkout page was visited on 18 June. A webmail account at the new domain was first opened on 22 June.
- **Client contacts.** The contacts spreadsheet in `NewCo` was created on 1 July within three minutes of the studio's client list being opened. It lists 38 organisations, 31 of which are studio clients.
- **Approach to a client.** A proposal PDF addressed to one of the studio's clients was created on 21 July and attached in the new webmail account the same afternoon, according to the page titles.
- **Other personal use.** Personal use beyond the new business was modest: banking, shopping and news, averaging about 25 minutes a day.

The records support the conclusion that a competing business was prepared on the company laptop during employment and largely in working time (confidence: high), and that at least one studio client was approached before the designer resigned (confidence: medium to high).

02 Instructions and scope

The client is a design studio. A senior designer resigned on 31 July 2026 and began trading under a new studio name two weeks later, with two former clients of the studio. The client asked five questions.

NO.	QUESTION	SHORT ANSWER
1	Was work done for a competing business on the laptop?	Yes, from 9 June
2	Was it done in working hours?	About 71 per cent of it
3	Were the studio's client details used?	A contacts list was built alongside the studio's client list
4	Were studio clients approached during employment?	One proposal on 21 July. Others cannot be confirmed
5	How much general personal use was there?	About 25 minutes a day

Whether any contractual restriction applies, and whether it is enforceable, are legal questions outside the scope of this report.

03 How to read this report

Every finding in this report is labelled so that a reader can see at once how much weight it carries.

LABEL	MEANING
Observed fact	Something recorded on the laptop itself. The source record is named, and another examiner working from the same image would find the same thing.
Inference	What the examiner concludes from one or more observed facts. Each inference carries a confidence level.
Unresolved	A question the laptop cannot answer. Where another source could answer it, that source is named.

Confidence levels are used as follows. **High**: several independent records agree and no reasonable alternative fits them. **Medium**: the records support the conclusion, but an alternative explanation remains open. **Low**: the records are consistent with the conclusion and no more. Findings describe actions recorded under a user account. They do not, by themselves, identify the person at the keyboard or the reason for an action.

04 Evidence and method

Exhibit. One Apple MacBook Pro with Apple silicon and a 1 TB internal drive, FileVault enabled. The designer returned it on 31 July 2026. The studio's director switched it off that day and delivered it to us on 4 August with the login password.

Imaging. Apple silicon storage is encrypted by hardware and cannot be removed for copying. A forensic logical image of the data volume was taken on 4 August with the Mac running and unlocked, and hashed with SHA-256 on completion. All analysis was carried out on a working copy.

Analysis. The working copy was analysed with our Mac forensic system. Document properties were read with standard metadata tools.

Sources used.

- File system event logs (FSEvents), for the creation and saving of files.
- Saved document versions, which macOS keeps for many apps and which carry the time of each save.
- Document properties: author, creating application and creation date.
- Safari history, downloads and the download-source record that macOS attaches to files.
- App-usage records, which survive for the final four weeks.
- Recent-document lists for the design, word-processing and spreadsheet apps.

Times. Converted from UTC to UK time, BST (UTC+1) throughout.

05 Lawful basis and proportionality

The laptop is the client's property and was examined on the client's written instruction for the specific questions listed above. The examination was limited to the stated period and to material relevant to those questions. Personal content found on the laptop was not read beyond what was needed to classify it, and is reported by category and count, not reproduced. The client was advised to record its lawful basis for the examination and to keep this report confidential to those who need it, in line with the Information Commissioner's guidance on monitoring workers. The individual concerned may be entitled to request a copy of personal data held about them, including in this report.

06 Limitations

- **Webmail content is not stored on the Mac.** Safari history gives the page titles and times for the new business mailbox. The titles of opened messages include their subject lines. Message text, recipients and attachments are not recorded.
- **App-usage records cover four weeks.** They survive from 6 July. For June, timing rests on file saves and browser history.
- **Work on other devices is invisible.** A personal computer or phone may have been used as well. This report covers only the company laptop.
- **Trading is not shown.** The laptop shows preparation. It cannot show whether the new business invoiced anyone during employment.
- **A person is not identified.** The records show activity under the designer's user account.

07 The `NewCo` folder

FILE OR GROUP	CREATED	SAVES	NOTES
`Business plan.pages`	9 June, 10:42	34	Author field is the designer's name. 14 pages at the last save
`Rate card.numbers`	11 June, 14:05	12	Day rates and package prices
`Logo` (9 files)	12 to 19 June	41	Vector artwork, made in the studio's licensed design application
`Site wireframe` (6 files)	23 to 30 June	38	Page layouts for a studio website
`Proposal template.pages`	29 June, 11:20	19	Derived from the studio's own proposal template: 22 of 26 paragraphs match
`Contacts.numbers`	1 July, 15:31	27	38 organisations with named contacts
`Proposals` (4 files)	14 to 28 July	29	Four proposals addressed to named organisations
Other (invoices template, terms, images)	June to July	12	

OBSERVED FACT
The saved-version store holds 212 timed versions of files in this folder. Each version is a save made by the user or an automatic save while the document was being edited.

OBSERVED FACT
The logo and wireframe files were made in a design application licensed to the studio. The application's recent-document list shows them interleaved with studio client work on the same days.

INFERENCE
The folder is the working material of a new design business, built up over seven weeks on this laptop. Confidence: high.

08 When the work was done

PERIOD	SAVES TO NEWCO FILES	SHARE
Working days, 09:00 to 17:30	151	71%
Working days, 12:30 to 13:30 (included above)	22	10%
Working days, before 09:00 or after 17:30	43	20%
Weekends	18	9%

For the four weeks with app-usage records, time can also be measured directly.

WEEK BEGINNING	TIME WITH NEWCO DOCUMENTS IN FRONT	TIME ON STUDIO CLIENT FILES
6 July	6 h 10 min	24 h 30 min
13 July	9 h 45 min	21 h 05 min
20 July	11 h 20 min	18 h 40 min
27 July	7 h 30 min	15 h 15 min

OBSERVED FACT
The studio's working hours, supplied by the client, are 09:00 to 17:30 with an hour for lunch. The designer's timesheets for the same four weeks record 37.5 hours a week on client projects.

INFERENCE
A substantial part of the working week was spent on the new business in July, rising to roughly a third of measured document time in the week of 20 July. Confidence: high for the four measured weeks; medium for June, where timing rests on saves alone.

09 Registration, domain and email

DATE AND TIME	EVENT	SOURCE
15 June, 13:10	Search: "set up limited company Scotland sole director"	Safari history
16 June, 10:05 to 10:40	Company-registration service: name-availability check and "Register a company" pages	Safari history
17 June, 16:12	Registration service page titled "Application submitted"	Safari history
18 June, 11:30	Domain registrar: search, basket and "Order complete" pages	Safari history
22 June, 09:48	Webmail at the new domain opened for the first time	Safari history
22 June to 31 July	The same webmail opened on 24 of 29 working days	Safari history
3 July	Business bank "Open an account" pages	Safari history

OBSERVED FACT

A PDF titled "Certificate of incorporation" was downloaded from the registration service on 19 June at 09:15. The Mac's download-source record names the registration service as its origin. The company name on the certificate matches the name in the business plan.

INFERENCE

A limited company was incorporated and a domain and business mailbox were set up between 16 and 22 June, about six weeks before the resignation. Confidence: high. The public register will confirm the incorporation date and the director.

10 Use of the studio's client details

OBSERVED FACT

On 1 July at 15:28 the studio's client list, `Client directory 2026.numbers`, was opened from the studio's shared drive. At 15:31 `NewCo/Contacts.numbers` was created. Both stayed open until 16:20, and the user switched between them 46 times.

OBSERVED FACT

`Contacts.numbers` lists 38 organisations. Thirty-one appear in the studio's client directory with the same named contact and email address. A column headed "Warm?" is marked "Y" against 12 of them.

INFERENCE

The new business's contact list was compiled from the studio's client directory. Confidence: high.

UNRESOLVED

Whether the list was used to contact all 12 marked organisations. The business mailbox's sent items would show this.

11 Approach to a studio client

DATE AND TIME	EVENT	SOURCE
14 July, 14:20	`Proposals/[Client F] rebrand proposal.pages` created	FSEvents; versions
21 July, 11:05	Exported as `[Client F] rebrand proposal.pdf`	FSEvents
21 July, 15:42	New webmail: page title "New message"	Safari history
21 July, 15:44	File-chooser use recorded for Safari, last folder `NewCo/Proposals`	Safari and Finder preferences
21 July, 15:47	New webmail: page title "Sent"	Safari history
24 July, 10:12	New webmail: message opened, subject "Re: Rebrand proposal"	Safari history (page title)

OBSERVED FACT

Client F is one of the two studio clients that moved to the designer's new business in August, according to the studio.

INFERENCE

A proposal was sent to Client F from the new business mailbox on 21 July and a reply was received by 24 July, both during employment. Confidence: medium to high. The page titles and file-chooser record fit that sequence closely, and the message itself is not on the laptop.

UNRESOLVED

Whether the three other proposals in the folder, addressed to two studio clients and one prospect, were sent.

12 General personal use

The client also asked about personal use in general. To respect proportionality, this was measured by category from browser history and app-usage totals, and individual pages were not reviewed.

CATEGORY	AVERAGE PER WORKING DAY, JULY
Banking, shopping and travel sites	11 min
News and social media	9 min
Personal mail (not the new business)	5 min
Messages app	Counted only: 1,940 messages synced in the period. Not read

OBSERVED FACT

Apart from the new business, personal use was about 25 minutes a day and concentrated at lunchtime.

INFERENCE

General personal use was within what most acceptable-use policies tolerate. The concern in this case is the new business, not personal browsing. Confidence: high.

13 Alternative explanations considered

- **Planning for after employment.** Preparing to leave is not in itself wrongful, and much depends on the contract. That is for the client's solicitor. The factual points are that the preparation used the employer's laptop, software, template and client directory, and largely took place in paid hours.
- **A freelance sideline the studio knew about.** The client states that no outside work was declared. The designer's contract was supplied and requires consent for outside work.
- **The contact list is the designer's own network.** Seven of the 38 entries are not studio clients. The other 31 match the studio's directory in contact name and address, and the list was created while the directory was open.
- **The proposal to Client F was never sent.** That remains possible, which is why the finding is not stated as fact. The reply subject line on 24 July makes it less likely.

14 Conclusions

QUESTION	FINDING	CONFIDENCE
Was work done for a competing business on the laptop?	A 47-file business folder was built from 9 June	HIGH
Was it done in working hours?	71 per cent of saves; up to a third of measured document time in July	HIGH
Were the studio's client details used?	A contact list was compiled from the client directory on 1 July	HIGH
Were studio clients approached during employment?	One proposal, to Client F, on 21 July	MEDIUM
How much general personal use was there?	About 25 minutes a day	HIGH

15 What we would also ask for

WHAT WE WOULD ASK FOR

The public company register entry for the new company, which gives the incorporation date and officers and costs nothing to obtain.

WHAT WE WOULD ASK FOR

The studio's own mail and shared-drive logs for the designer's account, to show whether client files were shared externally or downloaded in bulk in July.

WHAT WE WOULD ASK FOR

Correspondence from Client F and the second client about when they were first approached. A client's own account is often the most direct evidence.

Any request for the contents of the new business mailbox is a legal step. This report is written so that it can accompany a solicitor's letter, and the saved-version records can be supplied as a schedule with a time for every save.

16 Glossary of records relied on

RECORD	WHAT IT IS	WHAT IT CAN AND CANNOT SHOW
File system events (FSEvents)	macOS's log of files created, renamed, moved and removed	What happened to which path. Each event is timed by the log file that holds it, usually a window of seconds to a few minutes.
Recent-item lists	Each app's list of recently opened documents and volumes	That a file was opened, and from where, including external drives. Most lists carry no time for each entry.
App-usage records (Biome)	Minute-by-minute record of which app was in front	How long each app was in use. Kept for about four weeks only.
Power log	The Mac's record of sleep, wake and lid events	When the laptop was awake. Not who was using it.
Quarantine and download records	A log of files downloaded from the internet	The file, the time and the app that fetched it, and often the web address.
Safari history	Browsing history database	Sites visited with times. If history is cleared, a marker records when.
Trash index	The hidden index inside the Trash folder	Original location of items put in the Trash. Not the time.
Print and version records	Print-job files and saved document versions	What was printed and when; earlier saved versions of documents.

17 About this sample report

This document is a sample. It is based on employment casework carried out by our forensic team and shows the structure, depth and wording a client receives. Names, dates, file names, device identifiers and other identifying details have been changed, and findings have been adapted so that no real person or organisation can be recognised. It is not a live case file and should not be relied on as evidence of any event.

Where a report is to be used in proceedings in Scotland, it is finalised on the instruction of the client's solicitor with the examiner's qualifications, the sources of all information relied on and a declaration of independence, reflecting the duties of a skilled witness described by the Supreme Court in Kennedy v Cordia (Services) LLP.

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