Intelligence Analysis Reference Guide

THE QUALITY OF YOUR ANALYSIS DEPENDS ON THE SOUNDNESS OF YOUR THINKING

TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND MAKE SOUND, EFFECTIVE DECISIONS, WE MUST LEARN TO COUNTER THE UNCONSCIOUS, INSTINCTIVE COMPULSIONS OF THE MIND THAT INHIBIT OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

The Two Fundamental Modes of Analysis

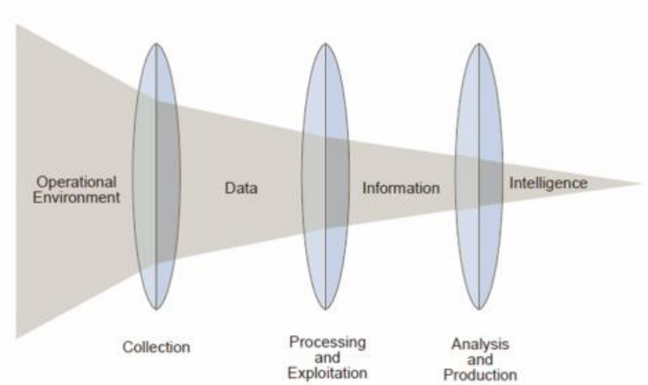
Divergent Analysis:

Separating components of a problem for more in depth analysis, branching out and broadening perspective – Brainstorming (Golden rule: Don't yet evaluate! Liberate thought constraints. The more ideas, the better. Eliminate options later.)

Convergent Analysis:

Reassembly of components to study interactivity and function – Structuring techniques group event elements and theories together, which are then eliminated successively until the appropriate solution is found.

Though each mode functions distinctively, there is much interplay between the two.



5 Basic steps of the analytic process

1. Problem Restatement (refines/clarifies) | 2. Data Research | 3. Hypothesis generation and evaluation
4. Hypothesis selection based on evidence | 5. Reevaluation and revalidation of conclusions

Getting the Question Right

How we define a problem determines how we analyze and resolve it

Pitfalls in Problem Definition

1. No focus – the question is too vague | 2. Misdirected focus – the problem is too narrow or aimed poorly
3. Problem statement is assumption driven (assumption = risk)
4. Statement is solution driven – which can be leading, and may advocate a particular fix

Problem Restatement can help distinguish the problem from its symptoms

The useful technique of restating the problem helps in broadening perspective, may help identify major factors previously unrecognized, and increase the overall chance of an accurate solution

1. Paraphrase – reword the question without losing meaning
2. 180 degrees – turn questions on their head, take opposite approach
3. Broaden Focus – restate the problem in larger context
4. Redirect focus – boldly, consciously focus on a different aspect of the problem
5. Ask "Why?" of the initial problem and keep drilling down.

For best results restate problems with simple sentence structure and use a positive, active voice

7 Problematic proclivities to be wary of

1. Emotional influence *will* hijack your ability to reason.
2. Unconscious mental shortcuts *will* form unwittingly
3. Life experiences *will* cause false pattern recognition
4. Certain amount of reliance on and susceptibility to bias is healthy in day-to-day life. Not in analysis.
5. The human mind has an innate need to find explanation(s) for events, regardless of accuracy
6. 'Focusing' views problem one dimensionally and thus we begin to advocate a particular solution
7. Tend to cling to untrue beliefs despite contradictory evidence, we rationalize our beliefs and

Event Structuring

Structuring of the data is one of the first steps in analysis; it organizes and reveals knowledge gaps or new leads. Do not confuse structuring with analysis

Structuring Tools

Decision/Event Tree (aka impact analysis tree) graphically shows sequential series of real (and theoretical) cause and effect. Great for exploring alternatives

Event Matrix tables data in a way that helps identify relationships (or lack of)

Link Analysis reveals levels of influence and importance by identifying nodes and their links to one another. Cluster associates, search for empty space

Evidence Evaluation

1. Who or what was the source?
2. What was the source's access?
3. What is the source's reliability?
4. Is the information plausible?

Hypothesis Evaluation

1. Deliberately look for refutative evidence
2. Use ACH (Analysis of competing hypothesis) to systematically disprove
3. Play Devil's Advocate to challenge ideas
4. Sanity check: Ask, "Is this reasonable?"

THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF FLAWED OR INCOMPLETE ANALYSIS IS THE FAILURE TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES FULLY

MORE DATA ≠ Better Intelligence

Guide based on Udemy course "Level 1 Intelligence Analysis" by Robert Folker