



Unit 3 The Direction Phase

MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE (MOOC)

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ANALYST - A New Advanced Level for Your Specialised Training

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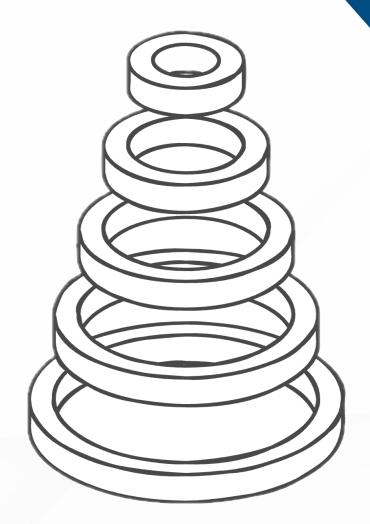






Learning objectives

- Understand the importance of the Direction Phase
- Identify Key Intelligence Topics (KITs) and Key Intelligence Questions (KIQs)
- Engage stakeholders effectively
- Set intelligence objectives and prioritize tasks (planning)
- Recognize the impact of a well-structured Direction
 Phase





















Why direction matters

Output Direction Phase: Setting the Path

Before we collect or analyze anything, we must ask the right questions. The Direction Phase ensures we know what we're looking for — and why.

To do this effectively, we must formulate precise **Key Intelligence Questions (KIQs)** that guide the rest of the process. These questions focus our efforts and prevent wasted **time** and **resources**.

Equally important is engaging with **stakeholders** - the people who will use the intelligence. Their input ensures that our work is aligned with actual security/business needs, not just assumptions.

No good intelligence happens without a clear direction.



















Clarifying the need

? What Do We Need to Know?

Often, decision-makers express their needs in **broad, vague terms**, like "we need to monitor competitors" or "tell me what's happening in the market."

But intelligence cannot thrive on vagueness.

Our role as analysts is to decode these concerns, clarify what information is truly needed, and translate ambiguity into clear questions.

That process begins with curiosity, dialogue, and a structured mindset.

Unclear questions lead to unclear answers.



















KITs and KIQs



From Concerns to Questions

We make sense of complexity by breaking it down. That's why we use two tools:

Key Intelligence Topics (KITs) identify broad areas of interest, such as market trends or competitor behavior.

Key Intelligence Questions (KIQs) translate those topics into specific, answerable questions.

For example: if the KIT is "competitor expansion", a relevant KIQ might be "Has Company X announced partnerships in the healthcare sector?"

KITs and KIQs give structure and purpose to our intelligence effort.



















Why questions matter



TWHY KITS and KIQs Matter

Without clear questions, intelligence risks becoming noise.

KITs and KIQs help us filter complexity and focus only on what's relevant.

They allow us to allocate resources efficiently, prevent aimless data collection, and ensure that what we deliver is tied to real decision-making needs.

By turning general concerns into structured inquiries, we avoid chasing everything, and instead pursue what truly matters.

Good questions protect us from irrelevant data and wasted effort.



















Talk to decision-makers

L Engaging Stakeholders

The best intelligence doesn't come from guessing, it comes from **conversation**.

Stakeholders, the people who will actually use the intelligence, must be involved from the very beginning. Their insights shape the questions we ask and help us avoid assumptions.

Analysts must learn to listen actively, ask follow-up questions, and build trust.

This engagement ensures the intelligence we produce is grounded in real-world priorities, not theoretical ones.

Engaging stakeholders is not optional — it's essential.



















Focus your goals

Setting Objectives that Work

Once the direction is clear, we must focus our efforts. Not all intelligence tasks are equally urgent, or even necessary. Using prioritization tools, like the **SMART framework**, helps us stay on track.

Clear objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

They provide a filter for choosing what to investigate first, and how deeply. Prioritization isn't about doing less, it's about doing what matters most.

Clear and prioritized objectives lead to effective intelligence.



















SMART Framework

Make your goal specific and narrow **Specific** for more effective planning Make sure your goal and progress Measurable are measurable **Achievable** Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain time frame Your goal should align with your values Relevant and long-term objectives Set a realistic but ambitious end date to clarify Time-based task prioritization and increase motivation















Credit: indeed.com





What to avoid



Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Even experienced teams can get the Direction Phase wrong.

The most common mistake? Accepting vague requests without pushing for clarity. Others include misaligning with stakeholder priorities, failing to define objectives, or trying to answer too many questions at once.

These errors create confusion later in the process and often result in irrelevant, late, or unusable intelligence.

If you skip the structure now, you'll pay for it later



















Real-world example

III Case Study: Competitive Intelligence Scenario

A technology company suspects that a major competitor is moving into the healthcare sector. The analyst doesn't jump into data collection.

Instead, they first engage the product and strategy teams to clarify the concern.

Together, they define a KIT: Competitor Expansion, and a KIQ: Has Competitor X formed partnerships in the healthcare sector in the last 6 months?

With this focus, the intelligence team gathers only the most relevant data, and delivers a timely briefing that supports the company's next move.

A well-defined direction leads to fast, targeted, and useful results.



















What we can learn

- Lessons from the Case Study
- The intelligence cycle is a structured process that transforms information into actionable insight.
- ➤ It includes four (five) core phases:
 Direction → Collection → (Processing) → Analysis → Dissemination (with optional Review & Learning phase)
- The process is **iterative**, constantly improving through feedback (internal and/or external).
- Each phase plays a unique role in aligning intelligence with security/business needs and reducing uncertainty.

In today's complex environments, intelligence must be clear, focused, timely, and useful.

Structured intelligence isn't just about data. It's about enabling better decisions.



















Recap of key ideas



What We Learned

The Direction Phase is more than just a starting point. It's what sets the tone for the entire intelligence cycle: it converge to the planning of the analysis.

By clarifying the problem, defining KITs and KIQs, engaging stakeholders, and setting clear objectives, we build the foundation for all that follows.

When done well, this phase saves time, improves accuracy, and ensures that intelligence supports real decisions.

The Direction Phase is the cornerstone of intelligence success.



















Reflect and apply



Let's imagine:

A senior manager tells you: "I want to know what our competitors are doing."

Do you:

- Start collecting data right away?
- ➤ Or ask questions like: "Which competitors?", "In what areas?", "What do you want to do with this information?"

This is where analytical thinking begins - not with answers, but with better questions.

Analysts don't just gather facts.
They shape the right questions first.



















Final takeaway

☑ The Power of Direction

Direction isn't just a phase. It's a mindset.

By defining what matters, involving the right people, and asking the right questions, we ensure that intelligence is not only produced, but truly used.

Everything that follows (collection, process, analysis and production, dissemination) depends on the quality of this first step.

A clear direction transforms information into impact.













