

Introduction to Re-publication of Weber 2004 SCIP Article on Remote Profiling

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The Background: At the time SCIP published this article, ABS had been involved in profiling beyond purely forensic applications for five years, during which we'd conducted almost one hundred successful profiles of leading executives and other 'key players', most of them for CI clientele. We were confident in our methodology, having made it a practice to track our subjects over time to evaluate our forecasting accuracy. We were confident in the value proposition in CI. We wanted to help other practitioners sharpen their skills in an approach that was gaining traction in our field. Method and technique were our areas of focus in that piece. Our main concerns for our own work lay in continued quality improvement. Our main concerns for other practitioners who tended not to have psychological training, were on the one hand that they produce *profiles* aimed at forecasting the behaviors of their subjects and not merely portraits, and on the other hand, that they not over-reach in their predictive findings. Careful analysis had to turn information into intelligence, as always. Profiling research, which can be labor intensive and not inexpensive, had to be truly actionable, guided by the intelligence cycle developed and advocated by Jan Herring.

Five years on, our numbers in CI have grown by a factor of four and we've conducted many other profiling projects in the political, NGO and governmental realms. This is a welcome opportunity to share lessons learned from that experience.

Update: Lessons Learned

ABS work – We've refined our techniques. The first major adjustment came in standardizing our terminology: we deal in *forecasting* behaviors among the most likely scenarios. We don't offer "prediction", which really means singling out a specific action at a specific time – a near impossibility almost all of the time. The capture of the most likely actions in specified scenarios becomes a core approach that we've made more robust and self-evaluating by including the evaluation of competing hypotheses.

We've expanded the proprietary Weber Motivational Index (WMI) and have continued to refine it through face validation. The mapping of subjects' specific objectives to underlying motivational drivers as well as capabilities, both individual and organizational, has offered insights of increasing value as we've improved our methods through experience and ongoing evaluation.

The need for cross-cultural literacy has grown as we've looked at the global picture for multi-national corporate and NGO clients and subjects, and in our governmental work for U.S. agencies. While we've become personally more knowledgeable, we strongly believe that cultural expertise requires subject matter expertise. A key skill for any practitioner is knowing what you don't know and adequately compensating for your knowledge gaps. Our own guideline at ABS is that if we don't have the language, we don't have the cultural access we need without additional assistance. In those cases, we bring in the experts. Clearly, cross-cultural savvy is a growing need in all CI work.

Over time, certain patterns have emerged among leaders we've profiled. Leadership needs in the 21st century increasingly differ from those of the 20th and the rate of change appears to be accelerating. In addition to personality factors, cultural influences play at the macro level and within individual organizations. The original article cites some excellent sources for the analysis of corporate leadership styles and relevant processes. The business literature continues to offer useful models, and although some of this material is not strongly evidence-based, it offers important concepts for hypothesis building when used with care. Within that body of work, the publications by CI experts seem to be among the most grounded in experience and practical. Of particular note is

a new book by T. J. Waters, *Hyperformance: Using Competitive Intelligence for Better Strategy and Execution*, Jossey-Bass, 2010. The extensive work in political psychology led by the U. S. Intelligence community has provided a knowledge base that can be utilized in the analysis of not only political leaders, but others, as well. In all cases, empirical evidence has to anchor the interpretation of traits, attributes and other individual variables, as well as situational determinants.

The experience of seeing profiling contribute to other analytical techniques in CI, such as scenario planning, war-gaming, early-warning analyses and various elements of counter intelligence measures has been particularly gratifying. We've been able to demonstrate the value of behavioral forecasting in applications as varied as due diligence investigations for M&A initiatives and post-acquisition integration, business and political negotiations of various stripes, major executive vetting and human capital assessment in a range of competitive and other contexts. From an early focus on individual leaders, experience has moved us more toward investigation of leadership teams and tiers. Succession scenarios are increasingly significant. We've seen again and again the crucial role that organizational culture plays – the alignment of executive leadership and management with the cultural underpinnings of any organization is a core factor in successful implementation of even the most visionary strategy and thus, must be a key factor in analysis. The ability of leaders to change not only organizational process but also culture itself in response to changing landscapes is an emerging need.

We believe that these lessons learned are very likely applicable to other CI practitioners seeking to provide behavioral forecasting via profiling and offer them in the spirit of supporting and raising the standards of excellence in the field.

Profiling in the work of other Practitioners:

The training and consulting we've done in CI profiling have allowed us a view of other efforts in this highly specialized field. Informal sharing of practice with other CI professionals has been invaluable in being able to link specific methods with useful deliverables. Our concerns here remain largely those we had when the article was published: over reliance on information and the lack of analysis necessary to produce true intelligence at one end of the continuum and exaggerated predictive claims at the other end.

Timidity and weak analysis often frame the profiling report in terms that are too narrow to be useful. To be sure, loose conjecture is to be avoided, but a careful presentation of scenarios ranked as hypotheses in order of likelihood is always valuable to your own decision-makers.

Our other observation is that on occasion, unbridled enthusiasm for profiling has led to exaggerated claims and the resulting challenge to the credibility of the product and its author. A profile is a composite picture made of several elements. If the researcher includes a careful and objective assessment of each of the components that make up the summary findings and forecasting, both s/he and the end-user will be able to retain the utility of components that stand up to the unfolding of future events, even as others may prove not so helpful. Most profiling subjects remain on the radar over a period of time, and thus may require, as well as offer the opportunity for review and revision of the forecasting effort. Including supporting evidence, discussion of competing hypotheses and early and ongoing indicators of confirmation of the scenarios and actions you've forecast will provide a more robust intelligence product for your end-user. It is always a good idea to monitor your subject and your profiling product over time, in order to adjust your view and to evaluate your methods, from collection to analysis. As always, adherence to proper ethical standards of practice is a must.

Behavioral forecasting through profiling is a tool of increasing importance in the global business realm where globalization, increasing complexity of the landscape and the proliferation of knowledge-based products are major trends. It's a pleasure to contribute to the understanding and use of that tool among CI practitioners and customers.

Updated Bio:

Marta S. Weber, Ph.D. is a psychologist who has applied thirty years of clinical and forensic experience to the intelligence domain since 1998. She founded and heads Applied Behavioral Sciences (ABS) , LLC, a consultancy specializing in human-source, human-subject intelligence research, consultation and training. Dr. Weber is an internationally recognized pioneer in sophisticated remote profiling for CI and other applications. ABS clientele include Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies, global NGOs, U. S. Government agencies and other CI consultancies.

Update to the update in email

One of our main interests has been addressing the cross-cultural issues as global companies and other organizations increasingly seek & employ globally-sourced leadership - using Hofstede, *et. al.* as a point of departure.. On *informal* findings so far, it turns out that his model applies more accurately and usefully down the vertical structure of an org. and less at the top - in the corporate realm there are psycho-operational norms that leaders tend to exhibit despite cultural variance. The biggest culturally-anchored differences relate to underlying motivation..