

ELICITATION

Guided conversation with a concealed purpose

Elicitation is a technique commonly used to discreetly gather information through face to face, telephone and internet interaction. It is a conversation designed to collect information that is not readily available without disclosing the intent of the conversation. Conducted by a well trained and skillful intelligence professional, elicitation appears to be a normal, perhaps even mundane, social or professional discussion and can take place virtually anywhere and at any time. In actuality, elicitors focus their questions on issues of importance to their intelligence service and exploit the subject's desire to be cordial, interesting and helpful.

Personal information, information regarding colleagues, and information not publically available concerning your employment, may be very valuable to an intelligence service or terrorist organization. Consequently, these types of disclosures, though seemingly harmless individually, can jeopardize the safety of Americans and compromise national security.

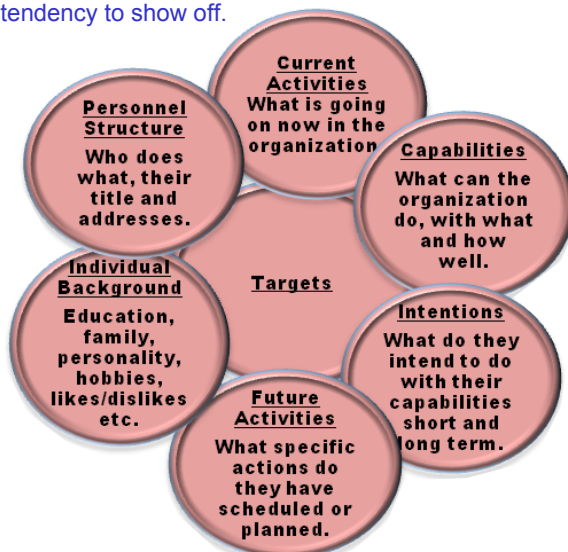
THE THREAT & WHY IT WORKS

Intelligence, both friendly and adversarial, and terrorist organizations take advantage of professional and social opportunities to interact with individuals who have access to classified and unclassified information. They often target events such as conferences and social gatherings where they know individuals with knowledge of, or access to, information they need will be present. Pieces of information, collected over an extended period, can provide the final piece of the puzzle to a complex problem or save scarce research money.

Elicitation is non-threatening. It is hard to recognize as an intelligence technique and it is easy to deny any wrong doing. US Army employees, contractors, and affiliates are highly targeted by foreign intelligence services and terrorist organizations. Intelligence officers could look like anyone from your neighbor to your friends at the local bar.

Elicitation exploits fundamental aspects of human nature:

- ◆ Most of us want to be polite and helpful so we try to answer questions when asked.
- ◆ We want to feel as if the work we are doing is valuable.
- ◆ We are often reluctant to withhold information, lie or be suspicious of other motives.
- ◆ We want to appear well informed about our job.
- ◆ We desire to convert someone to our opinion.
- ◆ We have a tendency to underestimate the value of the information being sought or given.
- ◆ We have a tendency to correct others.
- ◆ We have a tendency to show off.



TECHNIQUES

You are at a social gathering having a conversation with someone you do not know very well. You both ask questions of one another covering a wide range of topics. How do you know if the conversation is merely social talk or if the conversation is happening for ulterior reasons?

The following are descriptions of some elicitation techniques:

- ◆ **Ruse Interviews**: Someone pretending to be a headhunter calls and asks about your experience, qualifications, and recent projects.
- ◆ **Flattery**: Use praise and credit to entice a person into providing information.
- ◆ **Assumed Knowledge**: Pretend to have knowledge or association in common with a person.
- ◆ **Bracketing**: Provide a high or a low estimate in order to entice a more specific number.
- ◆ **Quid Pro Quo**: Give information in hopes the person will reciprocate.
- ◆ **Word Repetition**: Repeat cover words or concepts to encourage a person to expand on what he/she already said.
- ◆ **False Statement**: State something wrong in the hopes that the person will correct your statement with facts.
- ◆ **Criticism**: Criticize a person or organization in which the person has an interest in hopes the person will disclose information during a defense.
- ◆ **Feigned ignorance**: Pretend to be ignorant of a topic in order to exploit the person's tendency to educate.
- ◆ **Mutual interest**: Suggest you are similar to a person based on shared interests, hobbies, or experiences.
- ◆ **Questionnaires and Surveys**: State a benign purpose for the survey. Surround a few questions you want answered with other logical questions. Or use a survey to get people to agree to talk with you.
- ◆ **Confidential Statement**: Pretend to disclose confidential information in hopes of receiving confidential information in return.
- ◆ **Hour glass**: Start a conversation on a general topic, gradually guide the person toward the topic of actual interest, and then guide the conversation back to a general topic.

ELECTRONIC APPROACHES

Elicitation techniques are just as effective over electronic communication, such as telephone and the internet, as they are in face to face communication. The elicitor can make himself into anyone. Instead of one person, you could be dealing with a whole team of experts to include technical experts and psychologists. Since very few organizations have an unsolicited requests for information (RFI) policy, RFIs via calls, emails, chats, and social networking websites are an easy way for an intelligence officer to target a large audience without exposing himself.

YOUR RESPONSE

Do not hesitate to meet new people to the point you avoid creating new friendships and contacts. We live in a global society where contact with foreign nationals cannot be avoided and is often encouraged as way to foster international relations and build sales. Feel free to expand your personal and professional life, but keep in mind that not everyone you meet has the best intentions.

If you are aware of the elicitation threat and the methods used, it can be relatively easy to recognize them and become suspicious of the other person's motives. When meeting new people, be mindful not to draw attention to yourself and your professional duties. Make sure you know what information is important to your organization and why. If you do not know what needs to be protected, you will see no reason not to talk about it. If your supervisor does not tell you, ask.

Think about what you are comfortable in having everyone know about you. Do not lie or make up stories. This will just draw attention to you because it makes it appear you may have a hidden agenda. You do not have to respond or impress the elicitor with your own background or experiences. Think about what you will say if your employment or personal questions come up in conversation. Be ready to tactfully deflect the questions that are intrusive and too probing regarding your job, private life, and co-workers. Never feel compelled to directly answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You can always talk about what you want to talk about and not what the elicitor wants you to talk about.

Find out if your organization has an unsolicited RFI policy and if it does not, encourage your supervisor to create one. At a minimum, the policy should require all unsolicited calls and emails to be automatically forwarded to one office with a public relations responsibility, which will allow for proper screening of the request for indications of collection attempts and will help identify what was being targeted.

REPORTING

Elicitation may appear as only a conversation between colleagues and friends. On your next trip or during any conversation with foreign colleagues, be aware of who you are talking to and what you are talking about.

Report ALL contact with foreign nationals, either within or beyond the normal scope of duty, in which:

- ◆ Illegal or unauthorized access is sought to classified or other sensitive information.
- ◆ You have concern that you may be the target of actual or attempted exploitation.
- ◆ Electronic unsolicited RFI was made.



If you feel uneasy about the nature or direction of conversation, report it!

Report information about any contact or suspected exploitation that may pose a threat to the security of US personnel, resources, classified information, or controlled unclassified information

Report It!

902d Military Intelligence Group
410-278-3600
1-800-Call-Spy * iSalute

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Bel Air RA
410-515-4769



COUNTERMEASURES

Know what information cannot be shared, and be wary of people who ask for that information. Do not share any information with people who are not authorized to know, to include personal information about you, your family, or your colleagues.

You can politely deflect elicitation attempts by:

- ◆ Ignoring any question or statement you think is improper and change the topic.
- ◆ Referring them to public sources like websites or press releases.
- ◆ Deflecting a question with one of your own.
- ◆ Responding with "Why do you ask?".
- ◆ Giving vague, nondescript answers.
- ◆ Saying that you do not know.
- ◆ Stating you have to clear such discussions with your supervisor because you do not want to get in trouble.
- ◆ Asking about the reason for a person's interest in an area.
- ◆ Returning the question.
- ◆ Keeping control of your conversation.
- ◆ Listening more than talking.
- ◆ Changing the topic of the conversation to something you want to talk about.
- ◆ Providing a general, non-descriptive answer.
- ◆ Limiting the personal information you publish on social networking sites.
- ◆ Ensure your department has an aggressive unsolicited Request for Information policy