

Techniques of Verbal Elicitation

Elicitation is the art of inducing another person to talk, of guiding the conversation in an innocuous manner, of asking the right questions at the right time and of making the conversation interesting to the other party. If executed correctly, the “Target” or “Subject” rarely recognizes a Collector as being interested in a particular area or technology. The following are a few approaches used to effectively elicit information.

False Statement - Collector purposely makes a false statement in the hopes of being corrected. For Example: “I can’t believe that device has an effective range of 5,000 meters.” Targeted Response: “No, actually the range is closer to 9,000 meters.” This technique is very effective when employed against an overly confident person or one with a large ego.

Indirect Flattery – Indirect flattery employed against a knowledgeable person is usually successful in causing him/her to relate information relative to their personal capabilities. For Example: “This facility is so secure I bet only a select few personnel actually know what types of programs are serviced here.” Targeted Response: “You are correct, but I can tell you...”

Naïve Mentality – Quite often a Collector will project himself/herself as being uninformed or unfamiliar with certain programs/technologies. This approach is designed to force a knowledgeable person to feel obligated or compelled to educate the Collector. For Example: “I had no idea this facility is used to manufacture rockets.” Targeted Response: “They sure do. Our company manufacturers...”

Repetition of Words – One of the most effective and frequently used approaches is to cause an individual to expand upon something he/she previously stated. This is often used by the Collector repeating the key points of the person’s last statement. For Example: A Subject targeted for collection makes a comment that some of his colleagues are frustrated in the workplace. A Collector would respond by stating “You believe your coworkers are disgruntled in the workplace?” The Subject responds, “Yes, they are fed up with working 12 hour shifts here lately.” Collector: “Everyone is being required to work 12 hour shifts?” Subject: “Yes, we are producing XXX number of sensors for”

Instinct to Complain – Many times people will unwittingly provide more information on a particular topic when they are incited to complain. For Example: “Is everything OK? You appear to be pretty stressed out today. Boss working you too hard?” Targeted Response: “My boss is a jerk. He is all bent out of shape because we are preparing to deploy....”

Criticism – Indirectly criticizing a person by criticizing the situation. When this happens, the knowledgeable person may feel obligated to provide information in defense of the posed situation. Collector: “It’s a shame that the US government does not permit foreign military sales of” Targeted Response: “Actually, we already have a waiver in place for sales to....”

Disbelief – An approach similar to criticizing in that the Collector simply expresses a level of doubt concerning a targeted subject. For Example: “I can’t believe the US military is able to keep track of all those tanks and vehicles in Iraq and Afghanistan.” Targeted Response: “It’s really pretty easy, we use a sophisticated...”

Leading Question – Used by making a statement and an open ended follow on statement. Example: “Last night I saw a convoy on Hwy 42. I drove down a portion of Hwy 42 this morning and I noticed the road was visibly damaged. You know, it was pretty bad to begin with.” Targeted Response: “Yeah, we have a convoy oftraveling that road to run resupply missions for our....”