



# The effective analyst

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*In this, the first in a series of four articles, Janet takes us through the findings of research by her and Mark Kebbell on what makes intelligence analysts effective.*



Having worked as an analyst and then as a manager of analysts I often wondered what made some analysts effective and others ...well

just not! I pondered it for several years and finally had the opportunity while working with Mark Kebbell at The Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security to really nut this out.

I wanted to establish the skills and abilities required by an analyst to be recognised as effective. I set about looking for 30 subject matter experts (in our speak that is analysts, managers of analysts who have substantial experience and decision-makers who use analytical products) who I could talk to.

Being the combination of an academic nerd and an analyst meant I wasn't happy just asking them in one way what made an analyst effective, I had to ask in three ways.

The first method was using the Repertory Grid Technique (for those who are interested I recommend reading Kelly, 1955) and then I used semi structured inter-

views and the Critical Incident Technique (see Flanagan, 1954).

What I found was all three methods gave me similar results but each method added a little that the other two methods didn't reveal. The [study](#) showed that there were three main ways subject matter experts identified an effective analyst;

- The analyst would have skills and abilities that could contribute to the development and dissemination of an *analytical product*,
- The analyst would have an *attitude* that included being productive, seeking out work, having a high level commitment and pride and having a 'can do' attitude,
- Some physical and personal *attributes*, like gender and age were included that subject matter experts thought characterised effectiveness.

In subsequent issues I will talk more specifically about the findings in each of these three areas and the meaning it has for us as analysts and managers.

Overall, the main findings are a change from the analyst being

seen as a technical specialist (who can create maps, do crime stats) to a growing understanding of the analyst as part of a support structure for decision makers.

For example an analyst who uses technical skills to answer a question posed by management will only have to engage limited thinking skills where as in the role of supporting a decision-maker the analyst needs to be a problem-solver who generates recommendations for action and would need extensive thinking ability. Subject matter experts said these thinking skills included lateral thinking, critical thinking and the ability to think 'outside the box'.

**Analysts**  
are becoming  
**decision-makers' aides**

For me, all this has implications for recruitment, and what training or development opportunities we need to be offering our existing analysts to move them from technician to a decision-makers aid. •