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# Improving Analytical Engagement at MCIA

## **Introduction**

*“IC employees are expected to responsibly and proactively provide, discover, and request information and knowledge to achieve results, and in that regard are expected to recognize, value, build and leverage diverse collaborative networks of coworkers, peers, customers, stakeholders, and teams, within an organization and/or across the IC.”*

- ODNI, Intelligence Community Directive 651 (April 2012)

This paper describes why and how engagement among MCIA’S intelligence producers is currently occurring, identifies key obstacles for engagement within MCIA, and offers recommendations on how to improve engagement within MCIA. For the purposes of this paper, “engagement” refers to providing analysis or facilitating collections to support analysis, on an intelligence product from inception to completion. The key trends and recommendations discussed in this paper were derived from the responses to a survey developed by this paper’s authors. Although the number of respondents to the survey represented only a small percentage of MCIA’s intelligence workforce, it was sufficient to identify reoccurring issues. This survey provides a starting point for determining what improvements need to be worked on.

## **Survey Methodology**

The survey was posted on MCIA’s SharePoint from 3-10 January 2013. Its purpose was to understand how frequently MCIA personnel engaged with each other in support of intelligence production, what motivated them to do so, how effective current engagement is, and how to improve engagement within MCIA. The survey consisted of 19 questions, most of which provided the respondents with a selection of canned answers including an option to select “other” and provide an alternative response. Some questions also allowed the respondent to select multiple responses. The final question was an open-ended question that solicited respondents for their recommendations on how to improve engagement. The author’s attempted to categorize the responses to open-ended questions. A total of 50 personnel responded to the survey; this represents approximately 9% of the Command. Respondents were from the analytic and collections work units within MCIA, which directly contribute to production. Personnel from entities within MCIA who are not involved in either analyzing or collecting intelligence in direct support of intelligence production (i.e. Human Capital, CE-OPS, SSO, etc.) were not queried.

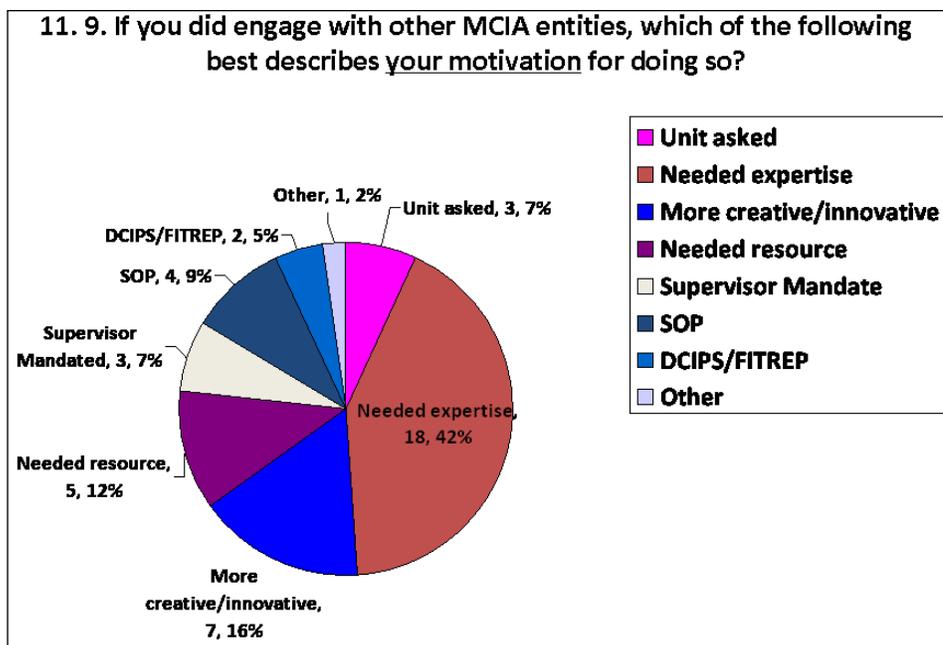
## **Key Results: Employee Engagement within MCIA**

***The survey reveals that personal empowerment, rather than forced mechanisms could further engagement within MCIA.*** Of those surveyed, only 2 respondents said that greater accountability, more supervisor involvement, or mandating engagement in their DCIPS/FITREP would motivate them to engage more with other MCIA entities. MCIA's personnel are proactive in seeking-out expertise, want a better understanding of MCIA's internal capabilities, want the bureaucracy streamlined, and desire greater flexibility in their production timelines.

### ***Proactive in Seeking Expertise***

MCIA's personnel are proactive in seeking-out expertise. 72% of those surveyed said they engaged on a daily or weekly basis with other MCIA personnel and were primarily motivated to do so because they needed to leverage expertise they did not have. However, 72% of the respondents find engagement with entities external to MCIA more useful because MCIA did not have the expertise they needed. This is largely a result of MCIA's size and organization. Unlike larger organizations, MCIA does not have branches organized first by functional specialties, then further organized into regional specialties. Larger organizations, such as DIA, may have weapons analysts who specifically focus on Russia, or infrastructure analysts who solely focus on Africa, which makes it more conducive for MCIA's regional analysts to find a

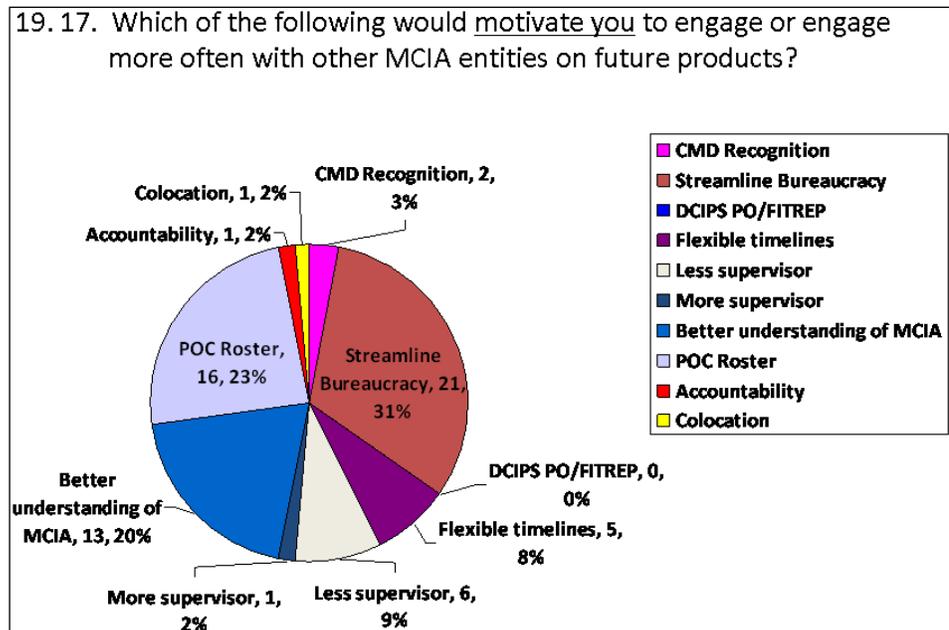
functional expert who specializes in their region. Similarly, an MCIA analyst who specializes in a particular weapons system will only find a similar expert at another organization. Despite the lack of desired expertise residing in MCIA, this



has not discouraged MCIAs personnel from trying to engage with each other. Of those surveyed, only 5 respondents said they would be less inclined to engage with others based on their most recent experience with engagement within MCIAs. MCIAs personnel are driven to engage with each other because they recognize the potential value engagement has in enhancing their analysis.

**Want the Bureaucracy Streamlined**

One of the greatest obstacles to efficient engagement among entities internal to MCIAs is the bureaucracy involved. When asked what would motivate respondents to engage more, streamlining the bureaucracy accounted for 31% of the responses.



Although the survey clearly identified “bureaucracy” as a source of frustration, it is difficult to pinpoint what specifically to streamline given the variations in organizational structure across MCIAs diverse collection and production entities, which creates variations in supervisory oversight/control over their employees’ projects. Variations in employee experience and rank/grade further creates varying degrees of supervisory oversight. Thus, when asked what the respondents would do to improve engagement within MCIAs, a number of bureaucratic origins stood out as obstacles. Among these origins were: the production process and the number of individuals involved with a particular project, meetings, timelines, and the Enterprise Production Plan (EPP). But one common theme does emerge, employees’ preference for more direct informal contact at the analyst level rather than going through formal processes that are designed to manage the collaborative effort. When asked what would improve effective engagement in future production, “more peer/colleague involvement” accounted for 18% of the responses and less supervisor involvement accounted for 11%. However, supervisors are not perceived as an impediment to engagement, only 1 respondent said his/her supervisor discouraged

him/her from engaging and only 2 said their supervisor was unsupportive of engagement. This suggests that employees perceive MCIA's formal processes for engagement as cumbersome.

Currently, MCIA's GCC Working Groups and OTMS (MCIA's internal tasking management system) are the formal mechanisms for facilitating engagement. However, these mechanisms insert several intermediaries between those managing their resources and those executing the work, which complicates communication and takes time. Attendees to the GCC Working Groups consist of LNOs from MCIA's single source units (e.g. CIHSC, CSG, GID, etc.) and the regional Branch Head. The regional branch heads have the direct authority to commit their resources to anything discussed in the working group meetings. In contrast, the LNOs have varying degrees of authority over any needed resources the all-source analysts would request. The CIHSC LNO can commit to processing any HCR, but would not have the authority to commit a CI analyst, for example. The GID LNO does not have any decision-making authority; rather, he serves as an intermediary between the all-source analyst and the decision-making authority within GID. In this capacity, the GID LNO would help that decision-maker understand the scope of the request to enable him to determine the resourcing needed. Once GID's decision-maker determines the request can be supported, he would identify the GID analyst(s) who would work the requirement. Only then would the all-source analyst be able to begin discussing the project with a GID analyst working the project. Until that moment, the all-source analyst's supervisor and the GCC OPS

*“Engagement with outside entities is faster, more productive, and results in higher quality work than trying to work within MCIA.”*

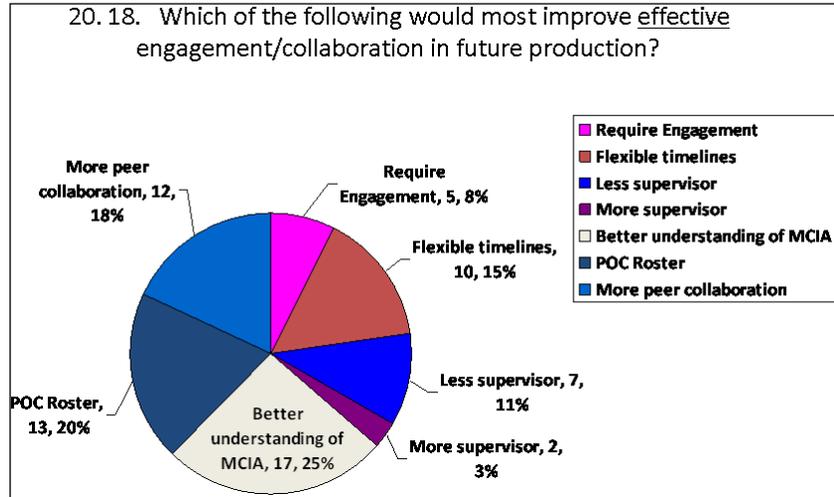
lead would inquire as to how that analyst's coordination with the GID LNO was going, which to the analyst may seem duplicative. In some respects, it is easier to leverage resources from outside MCIA because other agencies have single-source analysts dedicated to specific regions or functions. Thus, MCIA's all-source analysts can contact their

counterpart directly, a counterpart who is immediately familiar with the analytical problem, has a concept of the coverage and data currently available, and has the flexibility, in most cases, to commit themselves to collaborating on a given project.

### ***Desire More Understanding of Internal Capabilities***

Engagement within MCIA can best be facilitated if its personnel had a better understanding of MCIA's internal capabilities and who to contact to leverage those capabilities. Of the 18 respondents who did not engage with other MCIA entities on their last 3 products, 3 (17%) did not because they were “unsure what expertise other entities had that could have helped [them]”. When asked what would motivate

them to engage or engage more often with other MCIA entities on future products (a question that allowed multiple selections) “improving my understanding of what other entities do / what their analytical expertise is” accounted for 20% of the responses, and “having a



contact roster so I know who to contact” accounted for 23%. Similarly, when asked what would make engagement more effective, these two responses accounted for 25% and 20%, respectively. Because engagement within MCIA is largely facilitated by the individual needing the expertise (only 4% of respondents said they did not contact any MCIA entity for support and 38% said they were not

*“Sometimes just going directly to the person you want to work with is [the] best method...”*

contacted by anyone offering support), increasing its workforce’s awareness of who does what and how to contact them is crucial for increasing MCIA’s production efficiency. Similarly, within the USMC Enterprise, effective collaboration will depend upon each intelligence component sharing its capabilities and production focus. This latter point is especially critical when

considering that 67% of the survey’s respondents did not believe the Enterprise Production Plan (EPP) effectively provided sufficient lead time and/or advertise opportunities for MCIA colleagues to collaborate on.

**Want Greater Flexibility with Their Production Timelines**

Employees also suggest that timelines create an unnecessary obstacle to engagement. Internally driven timelines create an unnecessary hysteria among the producer, supervisors, and the multiple people involved with managing OTMS which ultimately creates a loss of production time. While timelines are necessary, there must be an understanding between the producers and the various OTMS managers that if the timeline is internally driven, they must be willing to push the expected date of accomplishment. The producer should attempt to fulfill the internal timeline,

*“Allowing greater fluidity in [production] timelines and encouragement of collaboration from the command level down through the supervisors would be useful. If the analysts saw greater collaboration between the supervisors/managers it would also improve the culture.”*

but should not sacrifice valuable time that could be used to increase product quality. Arbitrary timelines decrease overall time that the producer has to create a better product, and the amount of time that the producer can engage with others to create that product. That said, if the producer has a timeline that is fixed by the customer, it is incumbent on the producer to finish their product within the timeframe allotted.

### **Recommendations for increasing inclusion and innovation**

*“Reduce the number of chiefs...give me freedom and less good ideas.”*

MCIA’s intelligence producers want to work together and already do so; they don’t need forcing mechanisms. What they do need is an environment that enables them to engage more efficiently. The survey’s participants want the current system streamlined to enable them to more efficiently leverage the subject matter expertise and resources they are already proactive in seeking-out. The flow of information needs to allow adequate time for inside and outside engagement to develop our products. Effective engagement depends upon a common organizational focus and timelines that allow for engagement.

### ***Empowering People***

According to the survey results, engagement within MCIA can be furthered through empowering its personnel with the information they need to more efficiently initiate engagement. Each entity within MCIA should maintain a website that shows how it is organized, what its organic capabilities are, what analysis it focuses on, and who to contact for support or more information.

*“It would improve efficiencies if I were able to identify who to engage within MCIA or within the Enterprise if POC data... were attached to each of the listed EPP...production...descriptions”*

Giving employees greater flexibility in their production focus and timelines will enable more engagement. Both analysts and their supervisors must not be pressured into adhering to products and timelines for internally initiated production at the expense of developing quality products. As the target area evolves, so too must the production plan. Analysts and their supervisors must feel comfortable to deviate from timelines and production plans that were established under earlier conditions. Create timelines that are more flexible and that encourage producers to spend time engaging with others to fuse a product. Decrease arbitrary timelines and hold producers to tight deadlines proposed only by customers. Such support will give the producer what he needs to create the highest quality product.

### **Focusing Production**

Refine the USMC Intelligence Enterprise production process so it is no longer results in an Enterprise Production Plan (EPP) that identifies what products MCIA is producing and instead results in individual Intelligence Campaign Plans (ICP) that support numbered plans and recurring exercises. These ICPs will identify the Marine Corps' Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIRs) in support of identified lines of operation under each CONPLAN and recurring exercise, facilitate the development of Intelligence Task

*“An understanding of what really should be produced, and how/why that product requires GID-regional/GMI-S&TI integration.”*

Lists (ITL), and identify which intelligence entities within the Marine Corps will produce against each ITL. This will better enable MCIA's components to align their production focus against the same ITLs, which should result in increased engagement. It will also reduce redundancy within the USMC Intelligence Enterprise, and may facilitate increased engagement throughout the USMC Enterprise since different entities may be producing against

related ITLs in support of related PIRs. To facilitate engagement across the USMC Enterprise, these ICPs should include the direct point of contact for the responsible producers under the ICP to facilitate direct analyst to analyst collaboration.

### **Further Research**

Disseminating another survey to the workforce that will elicit responses to better understand what bureaucratic issues the workforce wants streamlined. Obtaining more fidelity on what the key issues are within each analytic and collections entities that employees perceive to be a hindrance, as well as promulgator of engagement would enable the Command to know what is working and what needs revision.

## **APPENDIX 1: MCIA Engagement Survey Questions**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this survey is to understand how frequently MCIA personnel engage with each other in support of intelligence production, what motivates them to do so, how effective current engagement is, and how to improve engagement within MCIA.

### **Terminology:**

**“Engagement”** = For the purposes of this survey, “engagement” refers to providing analysis or facilitating collections to support analysis, on an intelligence product from inception to completion. Reviewing someone else’s product only after it is drafted is not considered “engagement”.

**“Product”**= Refers to any published analytical document that resulted from original analysis.

1. I engage more with others on production inside MCIA than I do with entities outside of MCIA:

- Only sometimes
- All the time
- I only engage with MCIA entities
- I only engage with outside entities
- I engage equally with both
- I don’t engage with either one
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

2. I find engagement on products with entities internal or external to MCIA more useful because: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How often do you engage with others within MCIA?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- I never engage with others within MCIA (Skip to question 6)
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

4. When you engage with others, within MCIA, I use the following method most:

- Phone Call
- Chat
- Email
- Face to Face interaction
- Mix of one or two of the aforementioned methods
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

5. When is the best occasion or time that you engage with others within MCIA?

- When developing a product
- During mandatory meetings, working groups etc.
- For personal reasons i.e. lunch, gym, smoke break
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

6. In the development of your last 3 products, did the Enterprise Production Plan (EPP) effectively provide sufficient lead time and/or advertise opportunities for MCIA colleagues to collaborate on your production?
- No
  - Yes
7. During the development of your last 3 products, did any of the following units contact you to offer production support? (select all that apply)
- Not contacted by any MCIA unit
  - Cryptological Support Group (CSG)
  - Collections Management
  - Futures & Technology Division
  - Geospatial Intelligence Division
  - ACE/APS Division (i.e. regional analysts)
  - CIHSC
  - Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_
8. During the development of your last 3 products, did you contact any of the following units to request production support? (select all that apply)
- Did not contact any MCIA unit
  - Cryptological Support Group (CSG)
  - Collections Management
  - Futures & Technology Division
  - Geospatial Intelligence Division
  - ACE/APS (i.e. regional analysts)
  - CIHSC
  - Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_
9. If you did engage with other MCIA entities, which of the following best describes your motivation for doing so?
- Unit I engaged with heard about my product and asked to participate
  - Needed to leverage expertise / technical knowledge I didn't have
  - Thought it would result in more creative/innovative ideas
  - Other branch had access to a resource I needed
  - My supervisor told me to
  - Mandated by my branch's SOP
  - Mandated by my DCIPS PO/PE or emphasized in my FITREP
  - Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_
10. If you did not engage with other MCIA entities on your last 3 products, why not?
- My supervisor discouraged me
  - Time allotted to complete product did not allow for engagement
  - Unsure what expertise other entities had that could have helped me
  - Knew what entity I wanted to leverage, but unsure who to contact to initiate engagement
  - I tried, but did not receive a response from the entity I contacted

- I had a bad experience from previous engagement
- Didn't occur to me to engage with others
- Thought that cooperating with others would reduce my latitude for creativity
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

11. During the development of your last 3 products, which MCIA sections were most helpful and/or timely in supporting your production?

- Did not engage with anyone in MCIA
- CSG
- Collections
- FTD
- ACE/APS
- CIHSC
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

12. During the development of your last 3 products, which MCIA sections were least helpful and/or timely in supporting your production?

- Did not engage with anyone in MCIA
- CSG
- Collections
- FTD
- ACE/APS
- CIHSC
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

13. Which best describes the impact MCIA engagement within MCIA on the development of your last 3 products?

- Did not engage
- Did not improve product
- Moderately improved product
- Significantly improved product
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

14. Based on your most recent experience with engagement within MCIA, would you be more or less inclined to engage with others outside your unit in the future?

- More inclined (skip to question #16)
- Less inclined
- Same (skip to question #17)

15. If less likely, why?

- Too time consuming
- Too difficult to navigate through the bureaucracy
- Did not improve overall product quality
- Personality engaged with was too difficult to work with
- My supervisor was unsupportive / complicated the process
- Reduced my control over the product
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

16. If more likely, why?

- Improved product's quality
- It expanded my professional network
- I learned more about what other entities within MCIA do
- It changed my original assessment
- It enhanced my analytical skills / technical expertise
- I learned about a different intelligence discipline
- It increased my DICIPS/FITREP scores
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

17. Which of the following would motivate you to engage or engage more often with other MCIA entities on future products?

- Receive Command recognition
- Streamline bureaucracy
- Make it a DCIPS PO or emphasize it in my FITREP
- Leadership enables me greater flexibility in my production timelines
- Less supervisor involvement
- More supervisor involvement
- Improve my understanding of what other entities do / what their analytical expertise is
- Having a contact roster so I know who to contact
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

18. Which of the following would most improve *effective* engagement/collaboration in future production?

- Requirement in position/duty description, SOPs, and/or performance evaluation
- Greater flexibility in production timelines
- Less supervisor involvement
- More supervisor involvement
- More peer/colleague involvement
- Greater understanding of the analytical expertise available in other MCIA sections/offices
- A current/updated MCIA contact roster with associated analytic targets/accounts
- Other (please specify). \_\_\_\_\_

19. What would you do to change or improve engagement and collaboration among MCIA units?  
Please be specific.

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