

The image shows two silhouetted figures sitting on a ledge or bench, engaged in conversation. The background is a textured, light-colored wall. The lighting is dramatic, creating strong shadows.

It's All About Them

Tools and Techniques for Interviewing and Human Source Development

By ROBIN K. DREEKE

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More and more federal, state, and local law enforcement entities face the challenge of dealing with a growing number of new professionals in their ranks while, at the same time, losing seasoned members at an ever-increasing rate. Because recruiting confidential sources for human intelligence collection constitutes a primary function of the profession and represents

the key to any investigation—whether terrorism, counterintelligence, drug trafficking, gangs, or the myriad of other criminal violations—no professional law enforcement organization can succeed in its pursuit of securing the United States from all threats without this valuable commodity. Although the current professionals entering law enforcement are highly educated, technically savvy,

and extremely intelligent, some have not had the opportunity to develop the human interpersonal skills that time and experience can provide. Compounding the challenge is the increasing workload that inhibits veteran professionals from devoting the necessary time to mentor incoming personnel.

One solution that can help alleviate the difficulty of having less time to mentor involves

breaking down the practice of relationship building into clear, understandable steps and phases. An effective law enforcement professional and leader can take the “art” of relationship building and make it “paint by number.” To illustrate this concept, the author presents a realistic interview and a follow-up explanation involving a veteran law enforcement professional and his less experienced colleague.

THE INTERVIEW

During his first month on the job, Wilson has worked with the Joint Terrorism Task Force. Smith, one of the veteran agents on the squad, asks him if he wants to meet one of his new sources. Wilson readily agrees, hoping to gain valuable and intangible knowledge from the

experienced agent on how to go about finding and developing confidential human sources. After all, he knows that valuable sources are an effective tool in combating terrorists, spies, and criminals and was a topic dwelt upon extensively at the training academy.

As they travel to the meeting site, a quiet and hidden back booth at a small eatery about 20 to 30 minutes from the office, Wilson asks Smith some questions about how the agent identified this source. Smith gives him a puzzled look and simply states, “I don’t know, you bump into interesting people that you get a hunch about and you start talking.” Amazed at the simplicity of it all, Wilson begins to speculate that source spotting and development may prove easier than he thought.

Once at the restaurant, however, he wonders why they have arrived so early. Smith offers no explanation, and Wilson feels too overwhelmed to ask. Smith selects a table in a quiet back corner, rearranges the chairs, and moves a small floral arrangement to another table. Wilson finally gets up the courage and inquires, “Why did you just do all that?” Smith replies, “I didn’t like the feel of the way things were set up.” Wilson accepts the response, not probing any further about this strange activity.

The source arrives a few minutes later. Smith stands and greets him with a broad smile and a strong handshake and then pulls out a chair for him to sit in. After briefly introducing Wilson, Smith asks the source how his son is feeling. The source responds that he is much better and thanks Smith for asking. Smith next inquires about his spouse’s job search. The source elaborates on this and also mentions that his mother-in-law has fallen ill. During this exchange, the waitress comes to the table to take their lunch orders. Smith immediately suggests something for himself and the source without even glancing at the menu. The source smiles and says, “That sounds great.” Wilson quickly looks at the menu and makes a selection.



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The dialogue between Smith and the source continues. Finding himself somewhat bored, Wilson looks at the clock and thinks about getting back to the office and typing a report before the end of the day. A few times, Wilson attempts to say something but quickly feels uncomfortable as both Smith and the source stare briefly at him in silence before resuming their conversation.

During the next hour, lunch comes and goes while the source talks about himself and an experience he had at Christmas when he was about 6 years old. Wilson listens in disbelief at what he perceives as a complete waste of time. As the clock ticks into the second hour of this seemingly never-ending conversation, he inadvertently begins to tap his foot as he continues to look at his watch. Wilson, having an extremely hard time understanding the point to this discussion, wonders why Smith does not pose questions relevant to their investigations.

Finally, after more than 2 hours, this apparently useless exchange comes to an end. Smith pays the bill and tells the source that he always enjoys their time together and that his family will be thinking of his mother-in-law during her surgery. Smith makes arrangements to get together again in a few weeks, giving the source

a business card from the venue where they will meet.

After the source departs, Smith sits down and invites Wilson to do the same. Smith questions Wilson regarding his conduct during the meeting and his apparent impatience. In return, Wilson inquires about the long conversation concerning the source's personal life. Smith just gives Wilson a puzzled look while pursing his lips and rubbing the back of his neck before he gets up to leave.

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THE EXPLANATION

Back at the office, Wilson watches Smith sit down and start writing furiously. He asks him what he is doing. Smith says that he is recording the results of the meeting, taking notes on things to cover in the next one, and processing the meal voucher. After he finishes, he asks Wilson to sit down with him to review the conversation.

Smith tells Wilson that he also wants to plan the next encounter with the source based on what they have learned. With a quizical look on his face, Wilson says that he does not understand the point to the meeting with the source and how it could further their investigations. Sitting back in his chair and smiling, Smith apologizes and explains that sometimes he forgets that what has become natural for him over time may not seem as obvious to someone a little newer to their line of work.

Smith asks Wilson what he considers important and notable about the encounter. Wilson says that he understands why they showed up early and why they chose a table in the back corner where it was quiet and more private. He also recognizes the value in asking about the source's son and making arrangements for the next meeting. Smith nods and says that Wilson has made some valid observations but that a great deal more took place in between those events. Wilson's head drops a little, and Smith quickly adds that he should not feel bad because those other elements took Smith quite a lot of time to learn through trial and error and mentoring from a senior agent.

Smith explains that they went to the meeting site early to ensure that they would not be late, to get an appropriate



table in the quiet back corner of the restaurant, and to see that nothing had changed since he had been there a few days earlier. Smith tells Wilson that the questions he asked about the source's son and wife stem from the previous conversation they had together, wherein the source had mentioned them at both the beginning of their meeting and when they parted. So, Smith wanted to assure the source of his concern. This meeting gave him further insight into the source's personal life and the current health issue involving his mother-in-law. Smith informs Wilson that the mother-in-law's health would be the first thing that they ask about at the next meeting with the source and that they also would follow up more on the son and wife.

Wilson says that he understands but still wonders why they spent so much time talking

about the source's personal life. Smith explains that before beginning to ask or task a source for information, agents must "anchor" the relationship for it to withstand some potentially sensitive subjects. To help Wilson understand, Smith asks if he had proposed to his wife on their first or second date. Wilson replies that he had not done that, adding that she did not even like him when they first met. Smith laughs and says, "I'm not surprised." Smith explains that the relationship could not withstand the "storm" of a tough or sensitive question at that time because it had not been "anchored." He tells Wilson that while this particular source has some potentially excellent access to individuals and information that will further their cases, he will not easily share it unless he feels that they have a strong, anchored relationship. Wilson

nods in agreement and says that it took considerable time to anchor his relationship with his wife before he knew he could ask her to marry him without her walking away laughing.

Smith then tells Wilson that he reorganized the table setting and chairs in the restaurant because a majority of communication happens nonverbally and is transmitted throughout the human body. He explains that effective interviewers make sure that they can see a person's entire body, especially the legs and feet because these are some of the best indicators of stress or discomfort. As an example, he advises Wilson that individuals who do not want to be interviewed or answer uncomfortable questions often angle their feet and legs toward an exit. Smith says that he moved the visual obstacles out of the way so that he could gauge how receptive and comfortable the source was during the meeting. Observing the source's entire body will help in the future when Smith eventually asks him more sensitive questions that can help with their investigations. Based on the source's nonverbal baseline that he has acquired over time, Smith will know if he becomes uncomfortable with a question by the way his body responds nonverbally.¹

Now truly amazed at all that he obviously failed to see and the multitude of reasons

behind all of the actions that Smith took, Wilson asks what else he missed. Smith describes his holding out the chair for the source to sit in as a subliminal act meant to get the source accustomed to taking direction from him and recognizing that he is in charge and will control their time together. Smith also notes that he did this with a broad, genuine smile to soften a potentially uncomfortable situation and to reduce the somewhat intimidating aspects of his subliminal behavior.²

Smith explains that he also ordered the source's favorite meal on purpose, although it posed a slight risk as it was the first time he had done so. Smith tells Wilson that this not only demonstrated to the source that they had similar likes and tastes but also probed how receptive and open the source was to taking some tasking from him. Even though this involved a simple acceptance of a meal choice, Smith had thought it through and planned it in advance as a low-key test of the source's responsiveness.

Next, Smith asks Wilson why he had tapped his foot and looked at his watch during the meeting. Having had this whole new world of understanding thrust upon him, Wilson suddenly realizes that he may have acted inappropriately and apologizes for his impatience. Smith

assures him that he watched the source's nonverbal response to Wilson and it revealed no negative reaction. Wilson breathes a sigh of relief and promises Smith that it will not happen again. Smith knowingly smiles and tells Wilson to remember, out of all of the new information flooding into his brain, the

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phrase *It's always all about them, not us* because nothing is more important than what the source has to say, especially during the early stages of the relationship-building process. Smith reiterates the point, and Wilson writes the statement on his paper and underlines it.

Encouraged by Wilson's understanding and enthusiasm, Smith asks if he can remember anything else that may have been significant in the conversation that relates to building the relationship. Wilson takes a minute to think while star-

ing at the phrase *It's all about them* and at all of the places he has written the words *relationship building* on his paper. As he recalls the conversation with his newfound awareness, he has an epiphany and exuberantly blurts out, “Christmas!” Smith chuckles, nods, and asks him to explain. Wilson says that as the source spoke about a Christmas when he was 6 years old, his whole face lit up with joy and his eyes got a bit misty. Smith commends Wilson for remembering this event and states that sharing this powerful childhood memory with them formed a strong anchor in their new relationship. Wilson nods, smiles, and thanks Smith for taking the time to explain all of this.

Wilson says that he never would have recognized all that happened without Smith describing the many thoughtful actions that go into developing strong relationships and valuable sources.

Smith praises Wilson for being open to so many new concepts and asks if he has any more questions regarding the day's events. After thinking for a moment, Wilson observes that Smith, generally rather quiet and not too gregarious at the office, seemed outgoing and animated around the source. This amazes Smith because Wilson has identified one of the key factors in developing any relationship. He agrees with

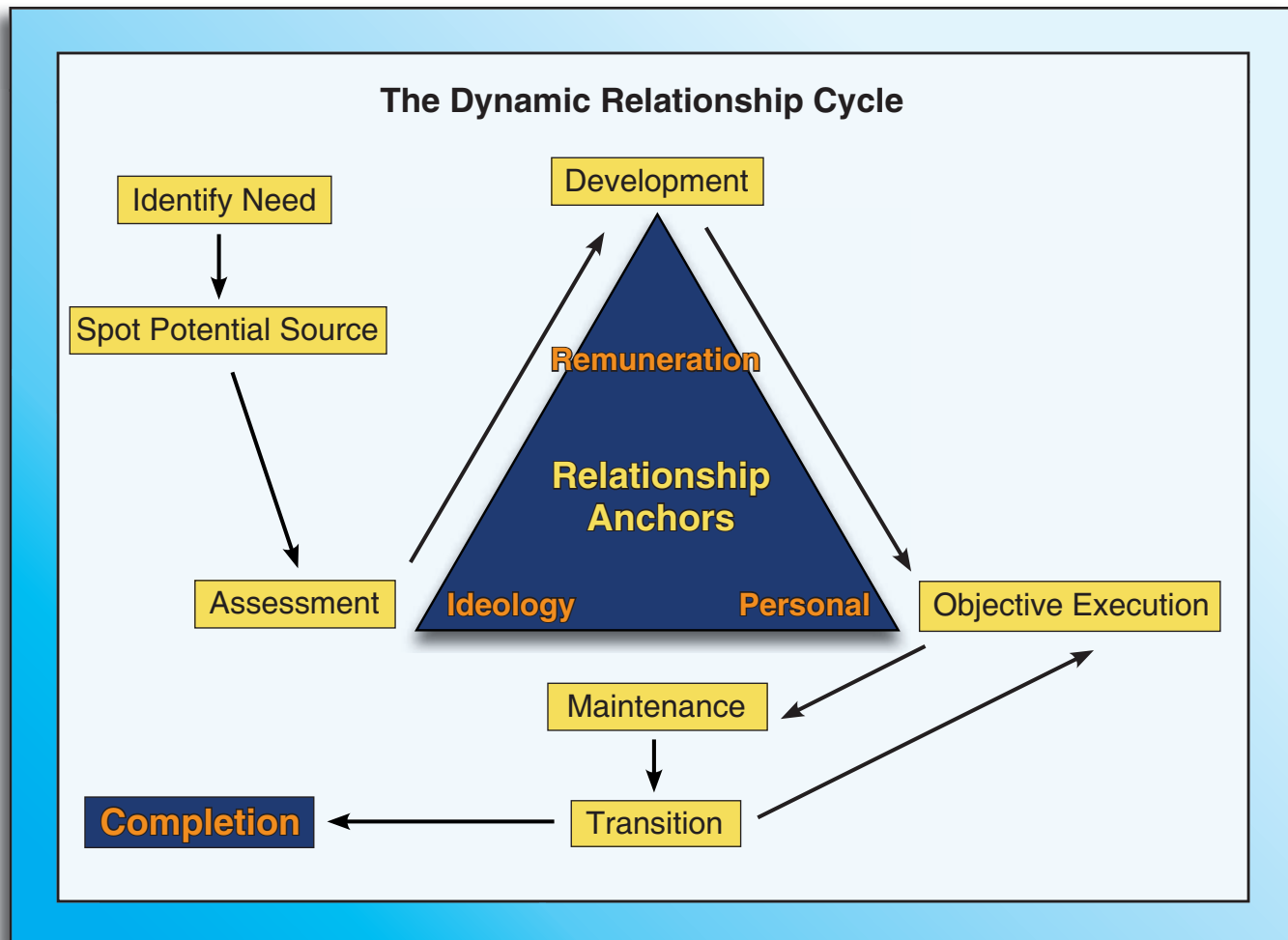
Wilson's assessment and then says that because the source is a more sociable and energetic person, he consciously modifies his behavior to match the source's personality when they are together. Smith explains that people have different personalities and do not want to be treated as someone else would like to be but as *they* want to be treated.³ Smith takes Wilson's paper and underlines the phrase *It's all about them* again. Wilson

agrees and recognizes the wisdom that Smith has graciously shared with him.

THE EFFECT

This interview and follow-up explanation demonstrate the challenges associated with developing human sources and the importance of veteran law enforcement professionals mentoring their less experienced colleagues. Smith concentrated on the developmental phase

with a new source, whereas Wilson focused on quickly gleaned valuable human intelligence information for his assigned cases. Both had difficulty understanding what the other was doing. But, because Smith took the time to explain his actions and Wilson remained open to his well-intentioned efforts, an inexperienced agent acquired some valuable lessons from a knowledgeable veteran. Such constructive exchanges



can have far-reaching effects. Wilson not only gained insight into source development but also saw the importance of mentoring new employees. In years to come, he will look back at this experience with gratitude for Smith's sage advice and for his willingness to share the knowledge he has acquired.

To demonstrate some of the tools and techniques that Smith employed in developing a valuable human source, the author offers an overview of his Dynamic Relationship Cycle that sets forth the seven phases of relationship building and details how to identify the "tri-anchors" that can secure, or "anchor," relationships in a more solid manner.⁴ In addition, he provides a simple, effective method of compiling the information obtained about sources that can help law enforcement professionals become better "relationship leaders." After all, whenever an individual takes an active role in directing the course of a relationship and sets the objectives of that relationship, that person becomes the relationship leader.

THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP CYCLE

As an active and thoughtful process to relationship development and leadership, the Dynamic Relationship Cycle requires law enforcement

professionals to outwardly focus on the individual of interest. It offers these professionals a systematic approach to the often challenging but extremely important responsibility of source development and gives them techniques to use in establishing themselves as relationship leaders.

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Understanding the Phases

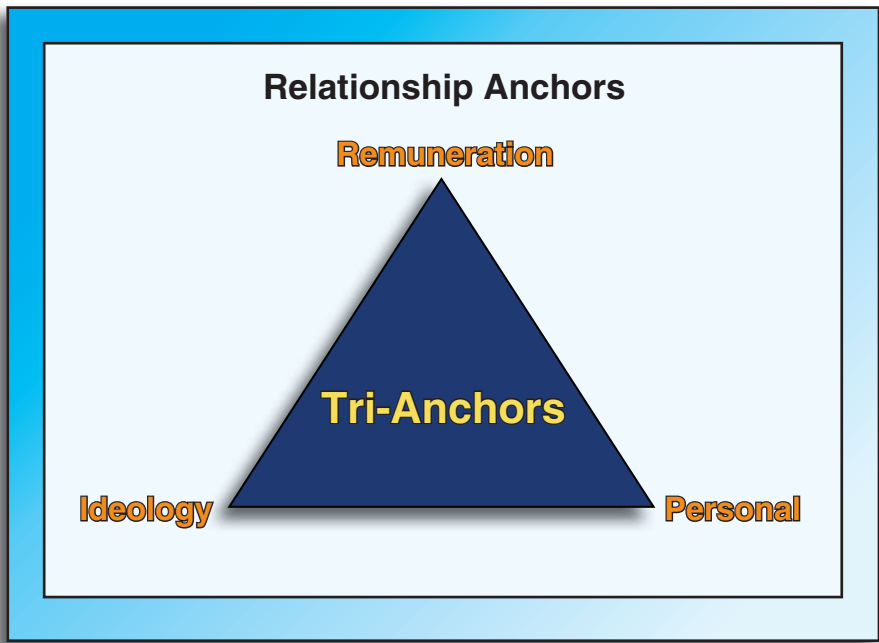
The cycle begins with law enforcement professionals identifying the need for the relationship by recognizing the gap between what they know and what they do not and then creating a biography of the ideal individual to fill that void. The professionals then move into the spotting phase of the cycle where they spot, or discover, an individual who may fit the biography. Next, they assess this person by identifying those key elements, or tri-anchors, that will help set the relationship. The preliminary objective also will be set in this phase.

When the professionals have assessed enough information on the individual, they move into the relationship development phase, typically the most intricate and involved of all of the stages. Then, they finalize the relationship objective, and, by utilizing all of the knowledge they have gleaned during the assessment phase, they solidify the relationship and establish their role as the relationship leader. At this point, the professionals attempt to execute the objective they set in the development phase. Upon completion of the objective, the relationship evolves into the maintenance phase. The law enforcement professionals continue to anchor the relationship, as well as establish another more developed and potentially more sensitive objective.

Finally, the relationship will move into the transition phase where the professionals finalize the new objective and either transition the relationship back to the objective execution phase or move it to conclusion. The cycle continues to flow for the duration of the relationship, and the law enforcement professionals remain outwardly focused, constantly assessing the source and setting new objectives.

Identifying the Tri-Anchors

The underlying foundations and motivations of the Dynamic



Relationship Cycle rest on three core elements of knowledge, or tri-anchors, that law enforcement professionals must gain and understand to fully execute this approach. They include remuneration, ideology, and personal (RIP) anchors that can help uncover an individual’s “sense of greatness” and provide the solid base upon which to exercise relationship leadership.⁵ As such, they are at the heart of someone’s personal motivators. Knowing and understanding a source’s tri-anchors can help law enforcement professionals maximize their role as a leader by inducing relationship anchors, which they set prior to the objective execution phase of the Dynamic Relationship Cycle.

Remuneration refers to what a person expects from a

relationship. In one between a law enforcement professional and a confidential source, remuneration can take the form of financial payment, immunity from prosecution, gifts, and many other types of properly authorized compensation. It also can be as simple as someone to listen to the individual’s personal issues and problems. In nonprofessional relationships involving friends, family members, or neighbors, people often seek friendship as their remuneration. Most humans have several desires, such as health and the preservation of life, food, sleep, money and the items that money will buy, life in the hereafter, sexual gratification, the well-being of their children, and a feeling of importance, that law enforcement professionals can easily

identify in the remuneration tri-anchor category.⁶

Ideology relates to an individual’s particular beliefs and personal priorities that usually pertain to such arenas as religion, politics, work, and family. Whatever topics the person appears passionate about often can be gleaned through value-based statements. For example, people who say that they would do anything for their children or that they never would go against their family are providing significant indicators of their ideology. It is important to remember, however, that value-based statements are made from the individual’s context of value.

Personal anchors represent extremely powerful and positive recollections. They can be almost anything but are more easily found in happy memories from childhood, including holidays or family traditions. Knowing an individual’s personal anchor intensifiers, such as tastes and smells, also can prove helpful. A powerful emotional anchor about a traditional holiday meal as a child will be accentuated by similar tastes and smells from the memory.

Gaining an understanding of these tri-anchors and relating to the person through rapport-building exercises enable law enforcement professionals to set

their own relationship anchors during the Dynamic Relationship Cycle. These anchors can prove extremely important, especially if a more difficult objective has been identified for the relationship.

Compiling the Information

After identifying the tri-anchors, law enforcement professionals can use a leadership notebook to compile all of the information they have obtained in the assessment phase of the Dynamic Relationship Cycle.⁷ The notebook becomes a repository for recording the findings of their forays into the relationship-building process.

Using the tri-anchors as an overall framework and then formulating general topics, including personal information, physical characteristics, family history and religion, health, education, current employment and work history, financial (past and present), family dynamics, residence, office, vehicle, appearance, behaviors, interests/hobbies, and personal traits, can help professionals organize the information they have and allow them to see what else they should try to obtain to fulfill the objectives of the relationship. If professionals use the notebook to its full potential, they can remember significant events important to sources and be

well versed on the strengths and weaknesses of these individuals.

CONCLUSION

In today's high-speed technical world with ever-pressing demands on time, the thoughtful process of relationship development and leadership can sometimes fall by the wayside. The ultimate key to human interaction, both professionally and personally, comes down to interpersonal skills. The attentive process of acquiring the necessary information

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about an individual's "desire for greatness" will build the leader's understanding of the person's tri-anchors and help facilitate the Dynamic Relationship Cycle. More important, the law enforcement professional executing the cycle will be much better equipped to develop the human sources necessary to keep this country safe and

secure from all threats, whether foreign or domestic. ♦

Endnotes

¹ Joe Navarro with Marvin Karlins, *What Every Body Is Saying* (New York, NY: Harper-Collins, 2008).

² John R. Schafer and Joe Navarro, *Advanced Interviewing Techniques: Proven Strategies for Law Enforcement, Military, and Security Personnel* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 2003).

³ Tony Alessandra and Michael J. O'Connor, *The Platinum Rule* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 1996).

⁴ The author modified what is recognized as the recruitment cycle into the Dynamic Relationship Cycle based upon his more than 11 years of experience as an FBI special agent in the Counterintelligence Division and as a member of the Counterintelligence Division's Behavioral Analysis Program for 6 of those years. He developed the term *tri-anchors* during that time and has taught this concept in numerous training courses.

⁵ Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1981).

⁶ Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370-396; retrieved from <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>.

⁷ The author developed the concept of the leadership notebook based upon his experiences as a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps and a member of the FBI's Counterintelligence Division's Behavioral Analysis Program.

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