

## The Intelligence Cycle

The Intelligence Cycle is a model for dealing with information. It works extremely well when conducting Internet Investigations because it allows you to systematically and logically deal with the data you find. If you have attended an online investigations course and there has been no mention of the differences between 'information' and 'intelligence' then there is a massive element missing. It is often the case that OSINT (Open Source Intelligence) will be used to sell training sessions. However, what you see online is not 'intelligence' until it has been through a process, a process such as the intelligence cycle.



The reason the process is described in a cyclical fashion is to emphasise that it is non-linear. The cycle does not cease until your investigative requirements are completely satisfied.

**Planning & Direction** is the first step. The old adage of 'failing to plan is planning to fail' is very applicable in online investigations. It is crucial to remain within your objectives and remit. This will also include appropriate legislation such as Data Protection and privacy laws applicable to your own jurisdiction. It's crucial here to understand what you already have and how you are going to use it. Our planning guide contains more information on this.

**Collection** – This is the phase of the process where 'information' is gathered. During an online investigation you will often be presented with an abundance of data. It is therefore vital you identify the most credible sources by the use of the most effective search techniques.

**Evaluation** – A means of critically evaluating online information is crucial to a good online intelligence product. Investigators should avoid their own bias as an example, but also be able to identify false and misleading data, often referred to as ‘Fake News’.

**Collation** – With the speed at which digital data can be gathered it is essential that investigators have a method of organising and storing their investigative data. Adherence to legislation such as Data Protection and the EU-General Data Protection Regulation is now a fundamental aspect of online investigations. You could at any time be asked to recite exactly where you obtained information from. Not having an auditable record completely devalues your work and will make you look unprofessional.

**Analysis** – is the point at which the various sources of information are ‘analysed’ to add value to the purpose of your enquiry. This could include building a profile of your subject and an amalgamation of the information you have found. It may also include his/her associations, social networks, entities and adverse media.

**Dissemination** – The result of your enquiries can be disseminated in a number of ways. If for the purposes of Customer Due Diligence the likelihood is that this will take the form of a written report. There is no one templated report that is perfect. Each organisation has its own ideas and preferences. Any intelligence (or intelligent) report should be a concise summary with the salient points relevant to the objectives answered appropriately.

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We are specialists in developing bespoke Internet Investigations training and continue to prove our benefit in a wide portfolio of investigations.

Want to understand more? Contact [colin@intelectsolutions.im](mailto:colin@intelectsolutions.im)