

STAFFING ANALYSIS

I am not come forth to find difficulties, but to remove them.

-Horatio Nelson, 1758-1805

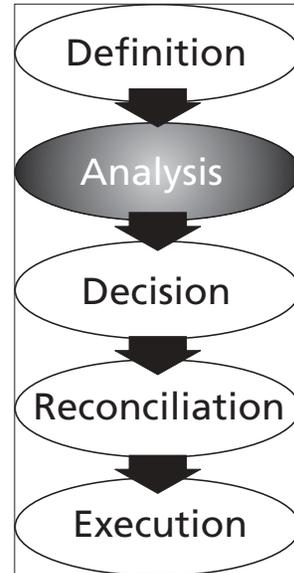
THROUGHOUT THE TEXT, we used our Executive Decision-Making Framework to compose our organization's structured, rational decision-making process. Because analysis is the coin of the realm used throughout the defense community and the government generally, in addition to overseeing new analysis, we often evaluate other organizations' analyses. For example, the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, the General Accounting Office, and the Federally Funded Research and Development Centers continually publish analyses concerning defense policy and force planning. When they study issues that concern us, we need to critique their analysis ably.

Similarly, many studies done by others in the defense community, including the other services, the joint staffs, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and professional research and analysis institutions, require staff evaluation so that we can understand the implications of their conclusions and recommendations for our organization. Also, there will be many occasions when we participate in working groups that must choose between competing ideas about assumptions, designing the study, and interpreting the results.

Our framework is equally applicable for each of these situations, whether guiding new analysis or for evaluating analysis already done for others, as we have shown by evaluating the Marine Medium Lift (V-22 Osprey) case study at the end of many of our text chapters.

Analysis Outside Our Organization

In large DoD organizations, such as service and joint headquarters, other staff elements will ask us to participate in analysis in different stages of completion. These requests come from within our headquarters by other directorates or divisions and from outside commands and staffs. The more important the issue is to our organization, the more we desire to become deeply involved with others and their analysis. The earlier we join the process, the more opportunity we have to inject our organization's perspective and to apply more fully the logic of our Executive Decision Making Framework.



ADVOCACY

Why is it important to be able to accurately evaluate and respond to analysis other than your own? There is an obvious answer to this question: we share a commitment to providing the nation with the best military resources will permit. But there is a deeper and less obvious answer, as well: as we discussed in the first part of the course, the U.S. defense planning and resource allocation system is based on ethical advocacy. We expect each organization in the defense community to be vigorous in arguing for the choices and courses of action that it thinks best. Analysis is the basis for making cases, therefore evaluating analysis well is important to being a competent advocate.

The concept of advocacy is easily misunderstood. Much of the decision making process in the U.S. defense community is based on the idea that the best way to find a proper solution is through the competition among alternatives. This goes back to the Founding Fathers and the concept of a marketplace of ideas as the surest way to find the truth. We can play either of two roles in this competition depending on the circumstances and the nature of our post. The first is to be an advocate for one of the competing alternatives. The second is to decide objectively among the competing alternatives, or support the individual who does. U.S. defense decision making does not function as envisioned unless both roles are carried out competently. Obviously, we cannot play both roles simultaneously, since the advocate has an interest in a particular alternative and the decision maker should be neutral. In most assignments in the defense community, we sometimes play one role and sometimes the other.

When we ethically advocate an alternative, the emphasis is on the word "ethical." The principal ethical requirement is to the truth, as best as we can know it. This means that the analyses we are responsible for must be rigorously done, contain no manipulations designed to produce a particular answer, and be transparent for the evaluation of others. By the same token, we have the right to insist on that standard of quality from others, and this is why the ability to do probing evaluation of the analyses of others is important. We strongly take the view that the consistent, long-term winners of the competitions between alternatives are not the individuals who are masters of bureaucratic conspiracy, yell the loudest, or pound the table. A reputation for shading the truth is fatal within DoD. Rather, the best advocates are those who consistently, vigorously, and calmly make the best-reasoned arguments for their position, and in the same spirit, expose the weaknesses of less well-reasoned arguments. Skill in evaluating analysis, one's own and that of others, is crucial to this kind of success.

ARENAS

The stage of a proposal, program, or policy development and the method of document coordination affect our behavior as we review analyses. Draft proposals require more scrutiny, but our comments are likely to have more impact and require lower levels of approval than they do for advanced drafts or final products. Organizations are more receptive to suggestions during the earlier stages of analysis.

We discuss analysis in many venues; the most common are electronic mail, video teleconferences, fact-finding trips, working groups, and briefing presentations. Electronic mail is the easiest and most prevalent means used by large staffs for coordination. Video teleconferences are becoming increasingly popular but suffer from time limits and scheduling challenges. There are also difficulties working across different time zones. Teleconferences discussing analysis tend to be singular events that occur after the participants have digested at least

the initial proposals for study. The coordinator must restrict the agenda based on the number of participants and the time available and he must control the conference tightly.

Researchers and analysts use fact-finding trips to collect data and opinions from those who are likely to be affected by a procurement or policy decision. They occur early in decision making, sometimes in the Definition Phase, but more usually in the Analysis Phase. Generally, the researchers and analysts seek more specific information once they have a crystallized analytic method. Usually, headquarters and staffs will leave their involvement with fact-finding groups at the action officer level because their inputs are either already on the record or action officer comments are non-committal.

Working groups are a cooperative multi-organization methodology for examining issues. We use them early in the decision process because their less-structured environment facilitates creative, inclusive, multi-disciplinary approaches for problem solving and analysis. Working groups tend to gravitate toward consensus opinions; these can have a dulling effect on their output - unless they convene with activist agenda or to build support for a new idea. They can be a very effective forum for creating grass roots advocates in other organizations. Commitments by the participants in working groups are usually contingent upon the approval of their parent organizations. The organization that chairs the working group takes responsibility for documenting results or commissioning the analysis the group defines. As active members of working groups, we are likely to have a significant opportunity to influence the analysis before it is completed.

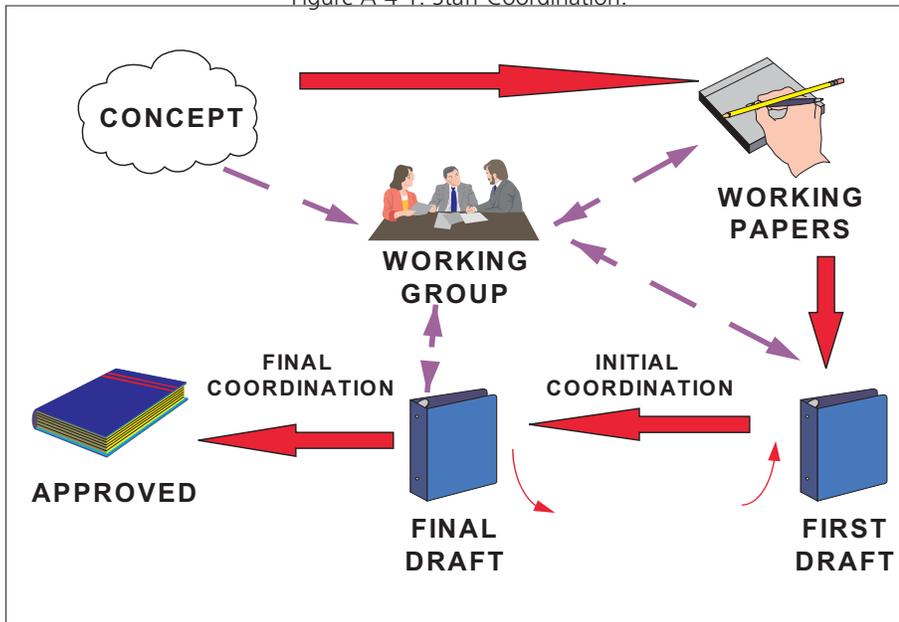
Briefing presentations usually occur after the analysis is complete and the sponsoring organization is ready to present its results. Good briefing officers illustrate how they defined the problem and how they constructed the analysis, especially where their organization made important choices about objectives, boundaries, assumptions (especially assumptions), criteria, etc. A careful briefing preempts many questions along these lines. (Our framework provides an excellent outline for preparing such a briefing. Briefings place the recipients on the defensive; they are presumed to concur with the contents unless they object. If the briefing organization truly wants support and concurrence for a decision, they forward their material in advance of the briefing to allow the audience to prepare.

Critical Review of Analysis

The objective of reviewing another organization's analysis is to determine its importance to us, to object to it if it is flawed, and to improve it if possible. We examine the study to determine if it contains debilitating errors or biases and how those flaws, if they exist, taint the results of the analysis. We may detect error or bias in the Definition Phase by the way the problem is described or bounded, or in the Analysis Phase by the way the alternatives are crafted or the situation is modeled. Once discovered, we evaluate how the bias or error affects the results of the analysis and decide whether the problems are tolerable, whether we should propose changes to the analysis, or whether the mistakes are serious enough to discount the analysis entirely.

Our Executive Decision-Making Framework, particularly the expanded version in Appendix 2, provides valuable guidelines for reviewing the analysis of others just as it assists us as we create new analyses. We realize that our terminology may not match that used by other organizations and that not all the steps are required to review every analysis. We accept that we cannot answer every question for every analysis, that our data may be incomplete, and that the motiva-

Figure A-4-1. Staff Coordination.



tion and objectives of the other organization may not be clear; nonetheless our framework is a useful checklist. We skip the steps that do not apply.

Feedback on Analysis

Whether we are reviewing an initial proposal for a study, a draft report, a previously coordinated draft, or a final product, our procedure for evaluating the analysis using the framework is the same. What we change is how we present our feedback to the originating organization and the level of approval we need before releasing

our comments. The feedback we transmit (or receive on our products) is a clear indication of how difficult the Reconciliation Phase will be for our organization and whether we have serious differences with other organizations. Figure A-4-1 is a generic model of the path a report takes from origination to final approval.¹

COORDINATION PROCESS

Upon receipt of an analysis from another organization, we decide how we want to review it within our command or headquarters. There are two basic techniques: we can review the study ourselves and then solicit comments on our analysis, or we can send the study to our peers and subordinates and compile everyone's comments. We select our method based on the importance of the issue to the other groups and on how much time is available to respond to the originator. For example, for an analysis of the effectiveness of peacetime naval forward presence, a unified Commander-in-Chief's staff knows their Navy Component Commander will want to submit comments based on their own review without waiting for a headquarters draft. The CINC headquarters would forward the study to the Navy component in advance of their own review and probably use the Navy Component Commander's input for the crux of their response. For peripheral issues, the first process is more efficient because it minimizes the burden on other organizations while still providing them an opportunity to comment. When in doubt, we should coordinate with parallel and subordinate organizations. If a party is disinterested, they may concur after a cursory review without comment. If they are affected, and we neglect them, at best we will be embarrassed.

COMMENTS

Feedback comments fit into four general categories: concur, concur with comments, concur with critical comments, and nonconcur. Critical comments mean we have serious objections to somethings in the document. Non-concur means our organization will not accept the document

1. See the Joint Forces Staff College Pub 1: *The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 2000* (Norfolk, VA: National Defense University, 2000) for a detailed discussion of joint staff organization and staff procedures.

as it is currently written unless it is changed. This is an important statement. Generally, we call the originator to prepare him if we are recommending that our command submit critical comments or non-concur with the document. Usually, the General Officers and Flag Officers in our organization want to know when we plan to return critical comments, or nonconcur, even for the review of an initial draft.² Major comments deal with substance but they do not have to be adopted for the product to move forward. Administrative comments are technical or stylistic improvements.

We return our comments to the requesting organization formally (in letters) to put the comments and their approval authority on the record. Often, we precede our formal response with advanced copies electronically, by fax or electronic mail. When we provide feedback in advance of the record copies, we must be clear about the level of approval for our comments when we send them. The recipients are entitled to know whether we are speaking for the command or just for ourselves. In a similar vein, we receive and process comments on our products.

We *must* try to reconcile critical comments; we *should* reconcile other comments with the organization that submits them. If we cannot reconcile our critical differences, the originator forwards the analysis as written, with the critical comments and his reclama appended, until it reaches a common superior for both organizations who will adjudicate the issue. This is a deliberately painful process for the contending organizations; an issue will go this far only if it affects core competencies and missions, strategies, major procurement decisions (like the V-22), policies or operations. When an organization makes major revisions to a document after initial (draft) coordination, they re-coordinate the product *at the same level* to allow those who previously commented to look at the new material.

Summary

We apply the same standards and principles for evaluating analysis done by other organizations as we use for conducting our own. It is in our organization's self-interest to assist others in improving the quality of their analysis whenever the opportunity arises. We prefer to contribute early in the process before other organizations' positions solidify. Preparing and processing feedback prepares us for the Reconciliation Phase by ensuring we understand our command or staff's positions and interests, including the importance and urgency of the issue under study.

2. The initial draft of a document sent for formal review usually requires Planner-level approval, implying a Captain or Colonel has approved the feedback comments. Final drafts of important studies, reports, or policies usually require a General or Flag Officer signature on the reviewing comments.

