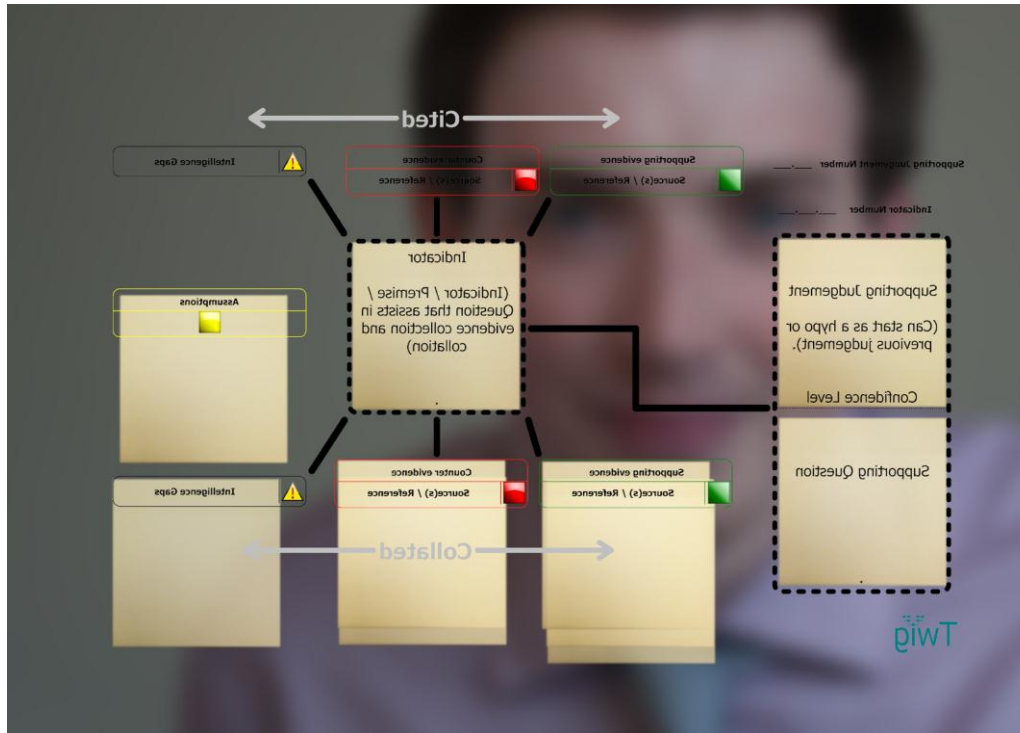


## How a simple TWIG can improve your analysis.



### **Can't see the forest for the trees?**

*Read on to discover how a TWIG could clear your way to better analysis.*

### What is TWIG?

A TWIG is a simple but effective way to move the analysis process out of your brain and into a framework that you (and later others) can properly scrutinise. Clearly documenting what your analysis is based upon makes it much easier to identify gaps, inconsistencies and opportunities.

The TWIG framework provides placeholders where evidence, knowledge gaps and assumptions can be stated against each part of

the question to be answered and the resulting judgements or findings their combination produces.

Setting out each part of the problem in this manner enables you (and later your peers and managers) to evaluate how well each finding reflects both the evidence and the question it intends to address.

This makes it much easier to spot where information has been missed (facilitating contribution from others) or misinterpreted (facilitating challenge from others). The framework also makes it much easier to restructure an argument to better explain the findings.

**To Twig – To suddenly gain insight into what is going on.**

And the best bit - all of this hard work can be done before report drafting commences.

To TWIG, you can use either paper placeholder templates with Post-it notes or i2 Analysts Notebook. Whilst the processes are similar, each tool has particular benefits. These are listed at the end of this article.

### The process

1. Start as normal by breaking down the exam question into component parts. Typically this will involve three to five key questions with each of these broken down further into a number of subcomponent questions.
2. For each of these subcomponent questions come up with one or more indicators\* around which to gather your evidence. (\* You may need to substitute your own department specific device for collating evidence).
3. Below each indicator create a column of individual items of **supporting** evidence. For each, paraphrase the pertinent information and record the original source. You can also record any intelligence marking, intelligence type, dates, original document location etc., according to your needs. Place these in order of relevance; the most relevant at the top. Create an adjacent column for **countering** evidence.



exam question properly addressed? If not then ask yourself, do I need to redraft or do I need to approach the sponsor to renegotiate.

13. Invite colleagues to challenge the TWIG. They will have a clear view of your argument, the issue it aims to address and the evidence it is based upon, both cited and uncited. This will allow them to be much more effective in challenge. Furthermore, their challenge will require them to explicitly show how the available information can be reinterpreted or to specify the information that is missing.

14. Once you have decided upon any amendments you may wish to invite challenge from relevant stakeholders. This may reveal 'unknown knowns' - the information we don't realise we already have. (Donald Rumsfeld missed that bit).

15. Once you (or your manager) are satisfied, use the TWIG to begin drafting your report.

## Applications of TWIG

### Multi-Analyst Projects

A TWIG is very useful for multi-analyst projects, especially watching briefs.

- The structure makes it much easier to specify who is doing what. (With both i2 and Post-Its, coloured shapes can be used to identify which team member is responsible for what).
- Because the system is so visual it is easy to look at each section to monitor where you are data rich and data poor.
- Sections can develop independently, facilitating more insightful sponsor updates.
- The requirement to use paraphrasing encourages more focused reporting and makes it easier to convert multiple contributors to a single-voice final report.
- It makes it much easier to introduce intelligence that you happen upon that is relevant to a colleagues work area – you can see if they already have it. If not, you can place it against the relevant indicator and include your identifier so that they know who to come back to with any questions. (This feature also evidences such additional contributions).
- It helps avoid mission creep by keeping the goal of answering the question central.

- It helps identify bias – particularly a challenge where there are multiple contributors.

### *Think you don't need to worry about bias?*

*The primacy effect in particular has been shown to influence Intelligence Analysts. This is where you pre-emptively form a subconscious judgement, either through a currently held position or in reflection of the initial intelligence reviewed.*

*Its subconscious nature makes it difficult to self-identify. The problem is exacerbated by our desire to start drafting a report as soon as possible, usually well before most of the data becomes available.*

*The explicit nature of a TWIG makes it much easier for others to identify unreported assumptions or to challenge how evidence is interpreted.*

### Upskilling new analysts

New analysts will benefit from a TWIG in a number of ways:

- It provides a solid framework on which to base their work.
- Managers have a much clearer oversight of process and progress.
- By reviewing a TWIG created by more skilled colleagues, new analysts gain insight, better enabling them to join the dots.
- The framework facilitates challenge, making more effective use of the fresh perspective offered by new analysts.

### Watching briefs / Cyclical reports

A TWIG can provide insight into how a subject develops over time. The TWIG devised for a previous report can be used as a basis for the new one. New data can be speedily compared against previous data and findings to see if and how our understanding of the situation has evolved.

## Manager and peer reviews

A TWIG makes the review process far more effective at all stages of the process.

- Its visual nature makes it possible to get an instant overview of progress; areas with little or no evidence are instantly spotted.
- It makes challenge far more effective. Colleagues have sight of all of the evidence considered, not just that which is cited in the final draft. This also makes a TWIG a valuable resource when a post mortem is necessary as it will better show what was known and how it was interpreted.
- Worthy suggestions are more likely to be actioned. It is much easier to change the content, flow or emphasis of a TWIG than it is with a drafted report. Additionally, moving such interventions to the pre-drafting stage allows more time to act upon any worthy suggestions that arise.

## Have you TWIG'ed yet?

### Summary

*A stitch in time saves nine.*

Creating a TWIG may lead to a little more work at the start of a project but it will prevent a great deal of the unnecessary extra effort and missed opportunities that are often apparent at the end.

Additionally, as David Thurgate explained in the previous PHIA newsletter, the job of an intelligence analyst is to 'challenge, add value and dig deeper'. A TWIG will help you with all of these.

If you would like to try TWIG then please contact me for guides and templates.

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Feature	Post-It Notes	i2 Analyst Notebook
Template Based	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
Adaptable to needs	☆☆	☆☆☆
Universally available	☆☆☆	☆
Simple to complete	☆☆☆	☆☆
Due diligence record	☆	☆☆☆
Import from Excel		☆☆☆
Remote collaboration		☆☆☆
Quick & dirty	☆☆☆	☆
Ongoing	☆	☆☆☆

Post-It notes and i2 were chosen because they are simple to amend to reflect a changing intelligence picture.