The Impact of the Analytic Review Process within the Broader Battle Rhythm of the Directorate for Analysis

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Executive Summary

The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency asked the DIA Knowledge Lab to conduct an independent assessment of the impact, if any, of the analytic review process on the battle rhythm within the Directorate for Analysis.

The study revealed three major areas of importance: 1) significantly different views about the value of the existing review process; 2) a common frustration with multiple steps in the review process; and 3) the lack of customer interaction. The major conclusions were:

> the existing review process has too many steps;
> the core capability of the relationship between the frontline analyst and the first level senior intelligence analyst is at risk;
> the sense of ownership of the knowledge moves away from the author to senior level reviewers as the product moves through the review cycle;
> the exclusive use of the written word in virtually all forms of exchange is insufficient for conveying the robustness of analytic contributions;
> customer feedback lacks the resolution to be informative and to help improve analysis;
> what customer feedback does take place is almost always positive and any negative feedback rarely is received by the author;
> the analytic review process is being implemented as if analysis were primarily a production process.

Four major recommendations are offered:

1. modify key analytic practices including the reduction of the number of review layers to a maximum of three as well as a reduction of the span of control between senior intelligence analysts and frontline analysts;
2. expand the medium of exchange beyond the written word by creating structures for more interaction using dialogue;
3. include the employee interviewers who participated in this study in whatever steps are implemented as a result of this study in order that the imperatives discovered continue to shape action;
4. align our practice of all-source analysis with our conception of it, one not based on fear of failure but one that mitigates risks while preserving the cognitive nature of analysis.

Scope

The purpose of this study is to answer the question, "How is the current Analytic Review process impacting the battle rhythm of the Directorate for Analysis (DI)?" The analytic review process starts from the time the author submits his/her idea for a product and ends when the draft is approved as the final version. Included in the study were the Daily Intelligence Digest (DID) staff review and the Product Evaluation Board (PEB) review.

The study also takes into account external factors which influence the review process, factors that occur prior to the start of the review process and after the review process ends. These external factors include the social and historical context in which the review process is embedded as well as the interaction with customers primarily through the Executive Support Operation (ESO), which both informs analysts about what products are needed and which provides them information about the usefulness of their products.

In 2008, a Lean Six Sigma project was conducted on the DI Analytic Review process to find ways to make it more efficient. That project revealed that the analytic review process differs considerably within the sampled offices of the project. The intent of this study was to look at the impact of the analytic review process to the broader work of analysis.

The findings of this study were identified from factors occurring in more than one of the offices, but not necessarily in all four offices. Given that the review process differs in every division there are few issues that can be said to be consistent across all offices. Nor does this study attempt to compare the different offices with each other. Although the four offices participating in the study are identified, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Knowledge Lab made a commitment of anonymity both to the offices and to the interviewees in terms of the practices and opinions of those interviewed.

Definitions

Analytic Review Process: Interviewees were asked to draw the steps of the review process to show how a draft moved through the system. The number of steps drawn ranged from 6 to 11 and variously included SIA's, SIO's, SDIA's, peer review, external coordination, editing, and the foreign disclosure officer. Drawings also included steps unique to an office such as a Terms of Reference (TOR) meeting or a formal production meeting as well as situations where a draft was required to cycle through a specific reviewer more than one time. Interviewees variously used the terms "steps," "levels," and "layers" and this report reflects the actual language used by interviewees. It was clear within the context of the interview that regardless of the terminology used, interviewees usually meant "steps" in the sense of who "touched" or had control of the draft. Hence, in the body of the report, the common term "step" is used unless the interviewee specifically referred to the doctrinal analytic review layers e.g. SIA's, SIO's and SDIA's.

Analyst: a frontline employee who is an analyst, who is the author of the analytic work, and may have a range of experience in the account and analytic tenure.

Senior Intelligence Analyst (SIA): an employee who is in the analyst career track who has the responsibility for ensuring that the analytic work of the analyst is of good quality, who usually no longer authors analytic work, usually is a billet within the Branch and Division level, and who typically has the closest interaction with the analyst. The SIA neither has official supervisory responsibilities nor has traditional management tasks.

Senior Intelligence Officer (SIO): an employee who is in the analyst career track who typically provides the same functions as the SIA with the following exceptions: the SIO is usually more experienced than the SIA; is usually assigned at higher hierarchical levels at the Division and Office level; and who usually does not have the closest interaction with the analyst. Like the SIA, the SIO neither has official supervisory responsibilities nor has traditional management tasks.

Senior Defense Intelligence Analyst (SDIA): an employee who is in the analyst career track who has been promoted to the executive level, is the most senior analyst within an office and sometimes there are more than one SDIA, and typically has the assigned responsibility for maintaining customer contact. Like the SIA and SIO, the SDIA neither has official supervisory responsibilities nor has traditional management tasks.

Manager: an employee who is in the management track, hired or promoted into a supervisory position as the Branch Chief, Division Chief or Office Chief. The manager is responsible for traditional management of personnel, resources and programs.

Peer Review: an informal process that takes advantage of using peers as a source of learning. Peers more readily accept suggestions and ideas from each other than from those in the hierarchy. Between peers there is a sense of "helping each other" that puts everyone on an equal footing and reduces the sense of disempowerment that can occur when those in the hierarchy request changes to be made.

External Coordination: a typically formal process intended to ensure that the final draft is made available to employees outside of the analyst's immediate organization, to ensure that external organizations have an opportunity to add or correct content, and to ensure that stakeholders are not surprised by the content.

Analytic Standards: a set of requirements levied on analysts that they use during the creation of the analytic work and adhere to in the writing of the work.

Track Changes: a software tool of Microsoft Office's editing feature that allows a reviewer to include in the draft text additions, deletions, changes and to make comments so that the draft retains a written documentation of changes to the original draft.

Study Description

Four DI offices were selected by the DI Research Director to participate in the study: the Office of Asia Pacific Analysis (APA); Defense Resources & Infrastructure Office (DRI); the Joint Intelligence Task Force – Combating Terrorism (JITF-CT); and the

Underground Facility Analysis Center (UFAC). The offices represent a diversity of types of analytic work: APA does regional, strategic all-source analysis; DRI does functional, technical all-source analysis; JITF-CT does transnational, functional, mostly operational all-source analysis; and UFAC does global, functional, highly technical all-source analysis.

Employee interviewers conducted one half of the thirty-two total interviews and Dr. Dixon, a Knowledge Lab researcher, conducted the other half (see appendix A for the study methodology). One of the unique methodological features of this study was using employees from each of the offices to act as interviewers (in offices other than their own) to assist in, 1) collecting the interview data from employees who were selected by the leadership of each Office, 2) analyzing the themes from the interview data, and 3) reviewing the study draft for consistency and proposing recommendations. A study that includes employee participation as interviewers helps to embed the imperatives for why change is needed, and is much more effective than only having consultants do the interviews.

The interviewers found the interview process informative because they discovered practices that would be useful in their own office, empathized with the difficulties others faced in offices other than their own, and gained a clearer understanding of their own office process by seeing it through the eyes of others. Interviewers reported:

> "What is illuminating is seeing other processes."

> "It was very helpful. You don't realize that things could be better or worse in other offices. We asked interviewees what things needed to be fixed and we thought we could profit from those fixes too."

> "It helped us look at our own process. We've revamped a number of things."

> "It was also revealing to us that we're not doing that bad."

Findings

(1) The Value of the Analytic Review Process

Analysts Value the Analytic Review Process
Analysts clearly value the review process. They see the review process as the most important tool in their learning – far more important than courses, schooling or tradecraft memos. It is critical to their development as analysts, to improving their analytical thinking, and to helping their products meet the analytic standards.

> "It is very easy to have an idea in your head but if someone else looks at it they can say that it is not clear. They can put it into the broader picture of [name of country] that gives you guidance in going this way or that way."

"A rigorous review process makes sure that if someone asks a question after it's published, it's a question I've already been asked."

"I learned more in one hour with my SIA than in all the training courses. My SIA would say, "The first paragraph should start with this kind of sentence. The last sentence would be your statement of assessment." He walked through the whole paper that way."

"The editing process makes a document better, analytically, it's a double check, to make sure you are not missing anything, and it helps develop you as an analyst in helping you to defend your analysis. I have become better because I have argued out my logic - that's how your analytical skills are built."

The Critical Role of the Branch or Team SIA
The SIA role is valued by analysts: It is from the first level SIA that analysts draw the majority of their learning. In many divisions the SIA sits in the same physical area as the analysts he/she reviews, so the interactions tend to be a continuous conversation throughout the day rather than by scheduled appointment. Analysts view their SIA as having a vested interest in them in the sense of developing them as analysts as well as intending to get a good product out of them. This dual task of quality control and developmental mentor is of particular importance to analysts during their first two years.

"If I have a question we can talk about it. It is usually pretty straightforward. I wrote something. He said, "This part is really good," and "Put this up front," and, "This should not be a repeat of the first paragraph." I'll say, "Is this what your looking for?" He sits just two desks away. I try to take anything as a lesson and not take it personally because I'm new to this and this is how I'll learn to do it."

"I really trust the SIA to guide me as he has worked this account for decades. If I'm a little off I would rather be able to talk about it."

SIA's Hold a Similar View of the Process and Their Role: When it is done well, the SIA role involves coaching and mentoring, which requires having a person in that role who is interested not only in his/her own career but who is also interested in seeing others succeed and is willing to participate in their development. The role also requires deep content knowledge and a thorough understanding of the analytic standards.

"If I retire out of DIA as an SIA I'll feel I've been successful, because I really like this job. Bringing new analysts onboard and getting them excited about their issues/countries makes me feel the best. If an analyst can prove me wrong I really like it because it shows they're interested."

"The SIA is the best job in the analytical sphere. You're getting your hands dirty, reading traffic/papers, you can focus on the analysts themselves every day. SIO's can't do that – they've got too much else going on."

<u>Management Concerns about the SIA Role:</u> Managers see this valuable relationship between SIA and analyst at risk, particularly in offices that have expanded significantly since 2001, and where SIA's are being promoted earlier than their experience perhaps warrants into that role.

> "With less experienced reviewers in that role, the reviews tend to be more process and less real analysis; they are less strenuous in analytic rigor, for example, making sure the assessments are truly assessment and not just a restatement of facts, making sure the confidence levels in a Defense Analysis Report (DAR) are appropriate."

The problem is exacerbated by the practice of requiring divisions to use experienced analysts for temporary assignments in offices other than their own (e.g. J2, ODNI, ESO, DSO). The people most likely to be tagged or who volunteered for temporary assignments are experienced analysts at Band 4 or 5 who would normally occupy the SIA role. When experienced analysts leave for temporary assignments their billets go with them and the office can typically only bring on new hires at Band 3. To fill the gap, analysts must then be promoted early or be asked to serve in an acting SIA role to replace the Band 4 and 5's in the division who have left.

> "The requirement to fill a slot has a higher priority than having someone in the chair creating products. We don't have the luxury of saying we can't fill that slot – they are mandatory to fill. The Executive Support Operation requires a Band 5. The Direct Support Office needs four people. The watch desk requires another person. All of this just within our division. Our sister divisions have the same kind of requirements."

The resulting early promotions into SIA positions create a number of problems, which impact the analytic review process.

SIA's with less experience are less skillful in reviewing a paper causing the paper to go back and forth between them and the analyst a greater number of times. The review steps above the SIA are also more likely to catch things that the inexperienced SIA missed and send the paper back through the cycle, again slowing down the review process. An office SIO noted with amazement,

> "I had an SIA who asked me, 'Who's suppose to enforce the tradecraft standards.' I said, 'YOU!' Inexperienced people promoted into the SIA role just don't know enough."

SIA's in these offices are often expected to continue writing products for an account, leaving less time for the much needed coaching and mentoring.

> "The guys with the depth are maxed out. They are the first line managers and are still having to function as the senior subject matter experts. They don't have the luxury of just managing because their analytical skills are still needed."

> "The SIA has too much on his plate. He should be able to focus just on the analytic process. I'll send a paper up but he won't have time to look at it for 3 to 4 days. Things get lost."

SIA's promoted early may be no more that 4-5 years older than the analysts they are coaching and thus inspire less confidence in their advice.

When there is a constant turnover of SIA's, it interrupts established analyst/SIA relationships.

> "At the SIA level we have 3 teams. In 5 years, collectively, we have changed SIA's 9 times."

SIA's often take on their new role reluctantly because they receive no increased compensation for the extra work. So even those who accept the position may not be as fully committed to the teaching and mentoring aspects of the role as their colleagues who have chosen the role because it is a good fit for them.

> "Pay banding produces a disincentive for analysts to become an SIA. There is no reason to do it compensation wise because of pay banding. You take a lateral into a SIA position with no increased pay and more responsibility."

Division Managers Value the Analytic Review Process
Division managers interviewed focused on two tasks associated with the review process: the production of products and the assignment of taskers. Managers have constructed systems to track where products are in the review cycle. Some hold weekly production meetings as well where SIA/SIO's report what products analysts are currently working on.

> "I keep a chart of all the products on my wall and analysts keep me updated on where they are."

> "We have Planning Production Board that meets twice a week."

> "I chair the weekly production meeting to be sure analysts are resourced and that I'm informed of the status of where we are in production. We want a 2-3 month visibility of product line. I keep the senior intel analysts' feet to the fire to make sure they keep their analysts on task to meet our tasks on time."

The second important task is the sorting and assigning taskers that come through the E-task system.

> "When a tasker comes in, I think, "is this worth doing?" I might say of a tasker, "Does this makes sense?""

> "I send taskers and if a commander is coming in for a brief or if they have questions it comes to me and I find the right specialist for that task."

Most managers do not review products but many read them for awareness of the products the division is producing.

> "I pulled management out of chop chain."

> "As a division manager I read the reports but I don't change them."

Managers recognize the concerns of analysts and make an effort to address those issues where they can. For example, one concern analysts' have is that a product can go all the way through the review cycle and then be killed at the last step. Some managers have found ways to address this issue.

> "Before the analyst begins their research, the SDIA is informed of the topic. If the SDIA says no, we go back to the analyst and say we need to rethink this. I've not had a single DID or DAR killed by him since we initiated this process."

But managers have been unable to address many of the issues troubling analysts.

> "I wanted to do a flow chart with time to see where there were bottlenecks, how long things were at each step. But I couldn't find a process that wasn't too cumbersome. It would be nice if could see the flow then I could say it takes me 5 days and you 7 days, so why is that?"

Peer Review

Learning from peers happens both within an office and through the more formal process of external coordination. Analysts find the internal peer review - learning from their branch or office peers - of particular value. They spoke of it as a way to learn.

> "He (peer) said, "You mentioned this guy and then mentioned this guy and the last names are the same, so you might want to differentiate these two." Its good to have these guys see it, they are going to spot stuff that's not clear. I sit with these guys every day. It's not a matter of beating each other up."

> "I might see a name for a first time about a guy that is doing something with a chemical. I'll run his name and then I go to these guys [peers] and say, 'What do you know about him.' It saves me from having to try to find out all about him. My peers can just say, 'Look at this paper.' It's kind of like we are doing this as a unit, not as individual people."

In some divisions the peer review is a formal part of the review process.

> "Analysts have weekly meetings to discuss products and this is often where the peer review process takes place. All products are supposed to go through the peer

review process within the division in order to do an initial check of, 'Does this make sense? Am I meeting the standards? Did I answer the question?' The peer reviewer is supposed to make suggested changes to the content and grammar; they are supposed to put their thinking caps on as if they were the clients."

"Every day, between 9:30 and 10:00, we get together and discuss traffic, 'Does it interest customers?' We'll track it if it's not of immediate interest - follow it until a tipping point is met. Then I flesh it out and write a product."

In other divisions the learning is more informal, in either case it seems to provide the opportunity to test ideas early in the process as well as to gain useful feedback on product drafts.

"We get structural comment from peers, more 'Did you see the traffic on xxx?' 'Have you thought about this example?' It is not a formal required step in our process."

Several interviewees suggested that peer reviews should take a more prominent role in the review cycle.

"Peers are more important than any of these people [the review chain] are to your product."

"The real work on the product should happen at the analyst-to-analyst level."

"We think the most rigorous review should be from our peers. We get through it rather quickly, but when you're looking at the review process of the evidence line and traffic, we've hacked out a lot of those issues before it goes up the chain of command. We should be doing more peer review – as least we think so in our division. We think we should have longer suspense at the team level and shorter one at the division level – and that is backwards now."

An analyst described a review process with peers doing most of the coaching that he thought would be more effective than their current process.

"I don't need these three people [SIA, SIO, branch chief] reviewing a product; I just need one person from the office level. I would start by coordinating with peers. Coordination is a 2-way thing – a discussion. Anyone in the review chain could be part of the coordination discussion and could be thinking about it and giving input at the beginning of the process. The coordination changes would come to me. I'd make the changes, then it would go to one person to review. Then it would go to the editors. But ONE person."

The External Coordination Process
Managers find the formal external coordination process necessary but time consuming and costly.

"We have a set list that dictates what we coordinate on and what we do not. We put a lot of emphasis on coordination with counterparts. But it eats up a lot of resources and time; there are lots of costs associated with coordination."

"If the office SIO and/or SDIA agrees with the analytic line (the judgments, and implications) on a product, yet other offices/agencies disagree and provide alternative assessments during external coordination, the process is typically stunned for a significant amount of time; the product becomes frozen in place as the office thinks about what to do next."

"I mandate that every product has to be coordinated with related offices. The nature of what we cover makes us cut into areas with other expertise. We have to coordinate. It's more than just sending an email. I encourage them to build relationships with their counterparts."

For analysts, external coordination is fraught with problems, but is still seen as important.

"The coordination process is difficult. You have to find out who to coordinate with, and not miss anybody. And then you have to wait for a reply. I'll send out 'please coordinate by…' and if you don't respond by that time, sorry. But there's always someone who didn't get it that wanted it."

"They have more in-depth knowledge in some areas. I give them a day, noon of the next day. That tends to stretch out. But then at 12 or one I start making phone calls. We need to have a response, preferably a written response. We can't just assume they saw it. They don't have to respond so that can be a very painful process."

Analysts find that the coordination process works best when the author has developed a relationship with the external reviewers rather than simply sending the product to a list.

"This year was the year of the missile in North Korea, but because we've built up a good network, when it started to churn we turned it on right away and we could communicate a fairly consistent message. When we had disagreements we could highlight them and point it out to our customers, some of whom really appreciated it. I could do this because I knew the guys - it pays off down the line."

"I don't have a problem with coordination, it's important, but you have to not just send it out. You have to develop relationships with these people. You need to talk to them. People respond differently than if you're just an email showing up on their desk."

A second consideration for analysts was coordinating early in the process, before the paper had gone through all the review steps. Analysts recognized that when external coordination is done at the last minute it is often just a check the box activity.

"I coordinate when I'm conceiving a product. Some offices send out a draft and say, 'Coordinate by noon tomorrow.' If you think it's not good and you have conceptual problems what do you do? It should happen at the idea, the brainstorming phase. It's easier to fix at that stage. There's not so much emotional investment in it."

"It makes the product stronger when you get the input really early on. When folks don't do that, you get a copy that looks like it'll be published tomorrow anyway, despite your input. And that's fake coordination; like saying, 'We're going to run with this tomorrow, have a look.'"

"The earlier I coordinate the better."

Internal Feedback Process
The review process takes place primarily through track changes. The exception to this practice is the first level review discussed above where, although track changes are employed, there is also face-to-face interaction to talk the changes through.

"Face-to-face reviews are usually better. My branch SIA is phenomenal, the best-ever editor. She's like a net because she catches everything. And she will sit down and talk with the analyst."

In large part, analysts' appreciation of SIA's, referenced in the earlier quotes, is due to the face-to-face interaction that accompanies the use of track changes. With track changes the SIA can indicate that a paragraph needs to be moved to the front of the document, but it is in the face-to-face meeting that the analyst learns why that change is necessary and how to recognize other situations in which such a sequence would be important. It is in the face-to-face interaction that the analyst gains knowledge he or she will be able to generalize to other situations. It is also through that interaction that analysts are able to sense the SIA's interest in their own development as analysts, viewing the exchange as more than just quality control.

Beyond the SIA level, track changes are the norm, although there are some exceptions.

"There is a dividing line after the branch, my SIA talks about refining my skills as a friend to help me become a better analyst. It is about helping me as well as the product. On the other side of the line it is all about the product."

"The SIA is also trying to help you refine your skills. The division SIO, he is just another set of eyes."

"The team lead review will be e-mailed, but we'll generally sit down and go over things. At the branch SIA level, we get a majority of the changes and comments via e-mail, with some personal interaction. At the division level it is primarily

email, with infrequent interaction. Above the division SIA/SIO level all of the review comments are e-mail."

There is a specificity to track changes that makes it useful to analysts and reviewers both.

> "It's almost exclusively by e-mail – which I'm fine with. With e-mail you get track changes. I like that it creates a record and I don't have to rely on my memory."

The lack of interaction with higher-level reviewers accounts in part for analysts' sense, that senior reviewers are interested only in the product, not in the long-term development of the analyst. This is reflected in the pejorative term analysts use to talk about the upper levels of the review process, the "chop chain." The term has become ubiquitous.

> "It goes to the division SIO for chops and changes."

> "We think in the chop chain a lot of the changes are meaningless, or we can't see the significance."

However, for senior reviewers, who have many more products to review than a branch SIA, face-to-face or even phone discussions would be time consuming – perhaps prohibitive. The "track changes" software feature is more efficient and creates a record of the changes asked for. The requested changes can be copied to others in the review chain, keeping them in the loop. It allows every level to review all of the products that leave the office rather than only a sampling.

The down side of using track changes without the benefit of discussion is that if the change requested by the senior reviewer is substantive, then 1) the analyst is not privy to the reasoning of the reviewer, 2) the author is not able to provide his/her own reasoning which might influence the thinking of the senior, and 3) there is no awareness of whether the analytic integrity or tradecraft standards have been compromised.

> "Seldom do I get called in to talk with the (high level reviewer) to discuss changes they want to make. Most of the time there is no discussion about changes, so you can't say you disagree. It comes down as, 'You will make these changes.' Who's the analyst, me or you? You may have general area knowledge, but I'm the one doing the specifics."

Although the exclusive use of track changes is prevalent at senior levels, in some divisions interviewees report that higher-level reviewers make themselves available for conversation.

> "The (high level reviewer) wants to keep us honest. He has good insight into our standard for writing things. We are supposed to mark it 'moderate confidence' and 'high confidence.' I get it back with track changes and then sit down and talk. I always do that. That's helpful, like a teacher. You don't have to do everything

he suggests. He's open to ideas. We just have to prove it; we make each other think."

The DID Review Process
One of the most frequently heard complaints about the review process was frustration with the DID staff. Analysts' concerns covered a number of categories.

Inconsistent Application of the Standards: A major concern was the feeling that the DID review process was inconsistent. Analysts' experience was that different reviewers employed different standards to their products, so they were left uncertain as to what would be acceptable to the DID reviewers.

> "They are a moving target on what's acceptable to them. That's frustrating."

> "My definition of a DID is one issue that the decision makers need to know about. But I can't tell what they'll accept - what will make the cut."

> "There is no clarity on what meets the threshold; there is no continuity on what will or won't."

Timeliness: There is also a concern about getting current intel out through the DID. Although, when questioned closely, many of the interviewees acknowledged that the delays were in the analyst's own office rather than with the DID staff. However, from the perspective of the analysts, timeliness is still a problem they have with DIDs.

> "DID's are supposed to be 'current'. When it can take months to get something out, it becomes a joke. DID's zoom out of here at a glacial speed. In one instance it took six weeks to push out a DID which was meant to support an issue of immediate concern and explain to policymakers what was happening and why."

DID Graphics: The graphic function in particular came in for blame. The issues raised were mislabeled and incorrect maps and photos, as well as having to wait on the graphic. The stories about mislabeling have become apocryphal – so that interviewers heard the same story from more than one interviewee.

> "The DID Graphics shop does a very poor job at correctly creating graphics for our pieces. As an example of just one case, they put incorrect country names on a map for one of our pieces. We got lots of bad comments from our peers about it and the analyst who wrote it was made to look foolish. In another case they incorrectly marked certain key facility locations and placed a key organization in a different location."

> "The graphics shop messes up your meaning, they put out a graphic with East and West messed up."

"We are not allowed to make our own graphics. I put a placeholder in the DID but they can't use ours. It goes to DID graphics and we wait for two days to get a response. When it comes back there will be countries that are mislabeled so that has to be corrected and the delay is still longer."

The Use of SDIA's to Review Products Acceptable to Other SDIA's: The review chain for DID's goes through the office SDIA. Analysts question why SDIA's from other offices are asked to review a DID that their own office SDIA has already reviewed and said met the analytic standards. It is seen as a duplication of effort and having no explanation for it, many analysts said that the DID review should be dropped.

"I really think we should eliminate the DID staff. If you have someone at the SDIA level reviewing the product, I don't see why the DID staff need to review it."

"Our office senior edits our DID's as well as making substantive changes, then the DID Staff also edits the DID?"

Many of the DID concerns seem to relate to a lack of transparency. Analysts are unclear about why the DID staff is needed, how they make decisions, and what they actually do.

"The DID process is sort of opaque. It's like it goes into a black hole called the DID staff, then it comes out with comments from people. It has gotten better, but it's very strange."

"Not sure what the DID review board does. In the paper we saw today the DID staff said it should have been coordinated with us. It's not so much a review process; it is more, were the sources correct. They don't do a real review."

"I've never gotten any insight on the DID process from my office SIO. I wish the process was more transparent."

DID Staff Perspective on the Issues Raised by Interviewees

Analysts raised so many questions about the DID process that the Knowledge Lab thought it would be helpful to interview three members of the DID Staff to understand more fully how the DID was reviewed. The DID staff responded to the concerns analysts had raised and added some of their own concerns.

Transparency: From the perspective of the DID staff the review process is straightforward and they are puzzled about why anyone would see it as opaque. As the DID staff explain it:

The author posts the product on the SharePoint site and it is retrieved by the DID staff and sent to reviewers who are SDIA's.

The comments come back as track changes from the reviewers. Changes are merged by the DID staff and biting comments are edited out and it is sent back to the analyst through the analyst's review chain within 48 hrs.

The author makes the changes and returns it to the DID staff.

When it comes back it is reviewed by the DID staff SIO who approves the changes if they have all been completed. If they have not, or if problems still exist, the SIO calls the analyst- that happens 20 to 30% of the time. If the problems cannot be worked out over the phone the product is sent back to the reviewers to judge it.

Threshold: The threshold for turning a product away also seemed self-evident to the DID staff; either it is not current enough or it is not important enough to policy makers.

Consistency: The DID staff acknowledged that their review process results in inconsistencies. From their perspective some level of inconsistency is unavoidable as long as the process uses rotating reviewers, given that each reviewer has a different type of expertise and has different perceptions. However, they note the consistency has improved in the last year by having one permanent reviewer that reviews every DID along with at least one SDIA serving on a two week rotation schedule.

> "The first two years we were just happy to get articles and the standards were not rigorously enforced. For the last six months we have been pushing standards. So when analysts say, "You've changed the rules," it is because we are now enforcing them. The process has not changed but we are demanding that the standards be followed."

Graphics: Graphics for the DID are not handled by the DID staff. In fact DIA has no centralized graphic capability similar to CIA's. In order to include graphics in the DID publication, the DID staff have had to draw on the graphic capability of DA. The DID staff are aware of the graphic problems analysts face and are working to create a set of graphic standards that will address some of those issues. In the meantime the DID Staff have a policy of not publishing a graphic until the analyst/office has reviewed the final draft, so from the perspective of the DID staff, responsibility for incorrect graphics is shared with the analysts.

Redundancy: The DID staff was asked for their opinion as to how it was possible for products to go through 6 -11 steps of office review and still have problems with analytic standards. Their responses reflect the well known difficulty of trying to teach something that has been learned through books rather than through experience.

> "There are seniors who did not grow up writing for the DID so for the most part when they were writing they were not held to those standards."

> "Some of the young analyst are very good and may even be better than their superiors. I have seen some products that have actually gone down with review."

"Too many cooks. Many SIO's are no better than the analysts in adhering to the standards."

Improvements in Products: The DID staff report that the products they receive are getting better.

"They have started to get better. It took 6 months before we approved the first DID with no comments and that has steadily increased. Now maybe 5% have no comments. Some have so few fixes that the office is able to make those in the same day."

"Things are getting much better because articles are getting clearer and people are getting better at assessments."

However, the DID staff report that many problems still remain:
Products are unfocused
The author does not understand what is fact and what is assessment
The assessment is not based on fact or evidence
The writing is unclear

"What I find over and over again is that the analysts do not recognize the poor writing they produce and the illogical arguments they make and they don't appreciate being told."

For the last six weeks, the Deputy Director for Analysis (DI) has been reading the publication daily and commenting to the DID staff on each article. He finds problems with most of them.

"The DI always focuses on the assessment. He was a consumer when he was the J2. He looks for strong clear statements. He wants a call, not a wishy-washy assessment."

Train-the-Trainer Approach: The DID staff takes a train-the-trainer approach. They attempt to meet monthly with the SDIA's at the SDIA council to go over the comments the DI has made as well as other issues that are impacting production. The office level SIO's are expected to pass these concerns to those lower in the review process. The DID staff gave an example of an office SIO having a meeting of SIA's where he discussed the need to keep titles shorter – another concern of the DI.

From the perspective of the DID staff, if an SIO is getting poor products he should not go to the analyst, he should go to the SIA.

"The approach we are taking is one of train-the-trainer. We want the SIA and SIO aware of what we're looking for. Our expectation is that they will do their job."

The Product Evaluation Board Review Process
Interviewees mentioned the Product Evaluation Board (PEB) much less frequently than they did the DID review. No analysts we interviewed had had any interaction with it. A few managers referenced the PEB in terms of sending products to it or receiving reports from it (see next section).

The PEB is a high-level peer review process that uses experienced analysts at Band 4 or beyond (SIA/SIO's and branch managers) to evaluate DI products. The PEB started in 2007 and has evolved to its current configuration and standards.

Each DI office is tasked for at least two evaluators to work on a part time basis with the PEB for a six-month period. Evaluators receive eight hours of training by the PEB staff and receive credit for their service through EZHR.

The goal of the PEB, as explained by staff, is not to judge analysts rather it is to evaluate the overall quality of DI products in terms of analytic standards. Two analysts evaluate each product, each analyst completes an independent evaluation and they then meet to form a consensus on the product. The evaluations are based on the ODNI analytic standards, which have been modified for the use with DIA's all-source intelligence. Each product is given a score of from 0 to 3; 3 being excellent and 1 passing.

The selection of products to evaluate is made based on a variety of factors; an office can nominate products if they want to determine how well they are currently doing or if they want to demonstrate that they have improved; the PEB staff selects products of particular interest from those recently published, sometimes choosing those that appear to have a better quality of tradecraft; also periodically seniors select products of particular interest to be evaluated. The PEB staff evaluates the same percentage of products from each office but makes no attempt to develop a representative sample or to randomly select products. Currently 7-9%% of DI production is evaluated by the PEB.

Feedback from the evaluations in terms of numbers (0-3) goes to the DI SDIA Council and the DI EXCOM. No comparison is made between offices although the number of evaluations per office is reported to these groups. Feedback specific to their office is provided to each office. Offices receive the evaluation forms that each of the individual reviewers has completed as well as the consensus forum for each product which include the evaluation numbers. Again, no comparison between offices is provided.

The PEB staff's advice to managers is to use positive reviews to give kudos to analysts, but not to punish analysts for poor evaluations since the PEB assigns responsibility for low numbers to the review process not to individual analysts. The PEB staff has heard that some analysts receive feedback based on the evaluations, but do not track that information as it is not within their mission.

The PEB staff has observed that products have improved over time:
- More alternative analysis, not just tone boxes
- More attention to implications

Better constructed arguments
More thorough description of sources
More references to previous assessments

The PEB staff also note that analysts, who have served as evaluators for the PEB, appear to produce higher rated products after their term of service.

Managers Withhold Negative Feedback From Analysts
Managers feel a sense of responsibility for the products that are produced by their division or office. When they receive negative feedback from the PEB or the DID staff they accept the feedback as an indication of how the division or office as a whole is doing, but rarely pass the feedback to analysts.

> "This type of feedback is not just directed at the Analyst, but stops at me, the SIO, because I am the one who let this product go out."

> "If we get positive feedback from the PEB I bring the SIA in and we talk it through with the analyst– it's good for analyst morale. If it got a bad review evaluation then it's our (SIA/SIO) fault. If a product got a poor review it's because we let it go through the system. I would meet with the SIO and SIA of the branch to talk about what we missed because it was approved up through the chain."

> "I get the feedback from the PEB but I don't go to the analyst. I use it more to look at across the area. The PEB are only sampling. I don't turn things upside down if I get something negative."

This view conforms to the philosophy of both the DID staff and the PEB staff, e.g. that negative feedback generated externally to the office should not be passed directly to analysts. Positive feedback, on the other hand, is seen as a way to build morale and is passed on in that spirit.

(2) Multiple Steps in the Review

The Impact of Multiple Steps in the Review
As noted earlier, analysts are appreciative of the review process, however, every analyst interviewed was frustrated about the amount of time it took for their products to go through multiple steps. Many expressed the concern that by the time a product was released it had become OBE or others had published on the topic.

> "The process is long, painful, and gory."

> "The review process needs to be shorter- we are supposed to be doing Current Intel but sometimes it is not so current."

> "If it's not time sensitive it can sit there for weeks or a month."

Interviewee answers to the question, "How long does it take a product from the first draft to being released?" ranged from 1 week to 3 months. On average it appeared to take about a month from the time an analyst finished a first draft to the time it was released. Most interviewees had a horror story to tell about a product that took months to get through the process.

> "This DAR was begun 23 July and published 25 September. There were no disagreements on analysis, just structure. There were no large-scale writing problems, just slight stylistic changes. Sometimes it was hard to see what had changed."

> "We were tasked to produce a DID on a situation of immediate concern but we could not publish for 6 weeks."

> "The whole process takes a month or two. Analysts say it's too long, too much of a pain."

> "It takes 5 weeks on average. It bogs down because it has to go to the (high level reviewer) and he is away for a week."

> "Final draft to dissemination is 4 to 10 business days."

> "Absolute minimum is 2 weeks and it can take up to 3 months to process."

Interviewees cite a number of ways in which multiple steps result in time delays.
    Too many reviewers in the process

> "We sometimes miss being timely on issues because it's so layered – layer after layer after layer. I don't think there should be so many layers."

> "There is no rapidity in this process. It's so encumbered there's no way to get anything out. Ever since the WMD Commission, everyone wants to review the piece as many times as you can so we don't make mistakes. But then you just don't make any assessments. There are too many Chiefs and not enough Indians."

The multiple back and forth between an analyst and his/her reviewers.

> "One pass through the review process adds value, but multiple passes through the same level wastes time. There are bottlenecks if a product goes through multiple times."

> "Senior reviewers make comments, which you address, and then they find new comments, 'I should have commented on this before.' Everyone should get one shot at it and then it moves beyond them."

Reviewers who hold a product because they have too many products to review or because they are on travel

Conflict that arises between different reviewers in the process

> "The length of the product doesn't matter, DINs, DARs go through the same process. It goes up and it comes back. It goes up and it comes back. It's not a one-time deal – it can go back and forth more than once between levels. Sometimes your SIA will say it looks good, and off it goes. But sometimes the SIO's changes come back and the SIA won't like their changes."

Conflicts that arise between a reviewer in the chain and responses from external coordination

Managers acknowledged the difficulties that multiple reviews cause. One manager started his interview by sharing a diagram of the review process that an analyst had drawn to illustrate his frustration with the process. The diagram was covered with arrows, many returning to the same point over and over. The manager called it the "cynical map."

> "The cynical map is a good one because it shows what analysts really think. The type of chain in that map frustrates them so much that they don't want to write anymore. They say, 'By the time it goes out it's no longer useful.' Reviewers in the chain default to things they used to do, so they default to being the analyst."

> "Going through so many layers risk the products becoming 'stale.' It creates a cookie-cutter methodology for review. We frame papers that same way every time; paragraph 1 has this, paragraph 2 has that."

> "It needs to go to the SIO and then out. Team à SIA à SIO à Out. It does not need to go to the SDIA and it does not need to go to leadership."

In the opinion of many of the managers interviewed for this report, the reason for the multiple steps in the review process is that DIA has become risk adverse as a direct reaction to the criticism following 9-11 and the WMD commission report.

> "There is an institutional fear of doing something wrong. The desire to do the perfect drives out doing what is needed and results in the duplication of effort."

> "We are so afraid of pissing someone off or making a mistake that we stifle our production by creating multiple levels of redundant bureaucratic review."

> "The whole chain of command above me is risk-adverse. If analysts were given more leeway to create, more could be done. However, the risk-adverse climate precludes this. The risk of mistakes and fear of being wrong in the past outweighs the need for additional production."

There was no disagreement among the interviewees about the need to hold to high analytic standards. The question raised was whether multiple steps in the review is an effective way to achieve this goal.

Time Sensitive Products
An exception to the concerns raised above is products that are labeled "time sensitive." If an analyst indicates that a product is time sensitive, it moves through the system much more quickly. J2 slides were often used as an example of getting a product out quickly. One interviewee joked, "In our office the best thing that can happen is for OSD to give us a 24/48 hour suspense. Then nobody can slow it down!"

> "If something needs to get out tomorrow, it will get out tomorrow. Everybody will drop what they're doing and get it out in 30 minutes, like J2 slides that go out everyday."

> "If something is truly an emergency that needs to get out, it will go out in a business day – 10 or 11 hour business day, but still a business day."

> "The whole process can happen in one day if it needs to."

Multiple Steps Resulting In Changes To The Intent Of Analysts' Products Many interviewees expressed frustration that the intent of their assessment is significantly altered during the review process. In some cases a specific reviewer was singled out as someone who consistently changed assessments. In other cases the changes were seen as a result of the back and forth of the product through multiple steps.

> "Through so many people cutting and so many people pulling at it, it does change it. Everything I've ever written - it loses a lot. It ends up being something different than what I wanted. It happens at the office level and DID staff and to a lesser extent the editor."

> "Specifically you lose words that articulate the point. For example, someone somewhere along the process put in the word "temporarily" and it changed the whole meaning of the product."

> "We have a wonderful team – a small tight wonderful team. Their biggest beef is seeing their writing get changed."

Clearly some changes to assessments are expected and appropriate. Analysts identified two types of situations in which they felt reviewers' changes to assessments were unwarranted. One type of situation occurred when the topic of the product was one the reviewer had been responsible for in the past. The interviewees saw that situation as the reviewer relying on his/her own past knowledge rather than having the up-to-date information the analyst had been reading. The second type of situation occurred when a reviewer, who was reading the source material to check it against what the analyst had

written in the product, came to a different conclusion about what assessment should be made.

> "This (high level reviewer) has previous experience in this particular area and believes they know the 'right answer' in every case. They won't allow new work or scholarship on an issue. Analytic standards for this area are lower as a result.

> "Now that the sources all have to be included they read them and make their own interpretation. There have been times I've asked them to take my name off it because I disagreed with what they wrote. They said my name had to be on it, and they are in the position to dictate that."

Some reviewers were seen as "watering down" assessments to the point where they were of little use, rather than completely changing them. But whether diluted or completely altered, such changes left analysts feeling powerless.

Some analysts have developed work-arounds to avoid having assessments changed, for example, sending the paper through a step when they know the reviewer is TDY or having another office or agency author the paper. Interviewees gave examples of having asked to have their names taken off a paper because it no longer represented their assessment. But for the most part, analysts see themselves as having little recourse and simply put up with the situation and the sense of disempowerment it produces.

> "I will often time production for when the (high level reviewer) is on vacation to avoid [their] review."

> "The (high level reviewer) is well read on the topic. He develops his own theories on what he has read and makes a different interpretation of the facts. As the product goes through the review cycle the assessment changes from night to day and I say, 'Then take my name off.'"

These quotes, as harsh as they sound, accurately represent the distress analysts experience about changes to their products. During the interviews many analysts prefaced their comments about this topic by acknowledging their agreement with the maxim - that the product was a DIA product, not their product. Their argument, as they explain it, is not that changes are made to what they write, rather their frustration is that a product is changed without telling the analyst, or an analyst is instructed by a senior to change an assessment without the benefit of discussion of the issues involved.

> "We've had occasions where the (high level reviewer) flat disagreed with the assessment. We think they should ask how we got to the assessment rather than just being told we're wrong. It's more beneficial to say, 'This isn't in the outline, how did you get here?'"

> "The (high level reviewer) has changed my analysis on a product without my knowledge/approval."

"The (high level reviewer) in my office feels he shouldn't be talking to the analyst, he feels he should talk to the SIA. I can't actually talk to the (high level reviewer) and that slows down the process. So I might have a meeting with the (high level reviewer) and my SIA together, but the whole meeting he is talking to the SIA. If it was clear (the high level reviewer) had understood my position I would have accepted it, but I was never given the opportunity to explain my position."

SIA's acknowledge the problem, but given reporting relationships find themselves unable to rectify it.

"Where analysts have some real heartburn is with the (high-level reviewer), because he completely rewrites the paper."

"Good, strong papers can get watered-down or the nuance gets removed. It seems like the author's point of view can get lost in the review."

Senior Reviewer Perspective
Senior reviewers see their responsibility as training the next level down, who will then train those below them, in a "train-the-trainer" approach that occurs within the chain of command, much like the philosophy of the DID staff.

"We are taking a train-the-trainer approach. We provide the feedback to the SIA's and SIO's with the expectation that they will train the analysts."

If a poorly written product reaches higher levels in the review chain, senior reviewers see the fault lying not only with the analyst who wrote the product, but with those at lower levels in the review chain who have not corrected the problems before it reaches them. The intent of the train-the-trainer approach is for each level to benefit by learning from the level above them so that not only front line analysts gain better mastery of the analytic standards, but those in the review chain do as well.

"As the division SIO I should be developing training for tradecraft, thinking about long-term projects but I get bogged down in the daily review. A lot of my time is spent making sure that the SIA and branch SIO are doing their job – then the last two links would be just pass through."

(3) Customer Interaction

Interviewees expressed two concerns related to customers. One was the lack of customer feedback on products they produced and the second was lack of insight into what customers needed.

Feedback on Products

Interviewees saw no systematic process in place to provide feedback from customers to analysts or reviewers that would assist them in improving what they write about (content issues or focus) or the way that they write their products (depth, level of detail). There is a strong sense that, "We send it out and never know if it was read."

> "I have no idea how the customer thinks, or views, or uses our products. It makes me wonder if it's worth all the effort it takes to get a product out the door."

> "All we are hear usually is, 'Such and such saw and appreciated the product.' No additional comments aside from having seen it. We infer they probably liked it, but you don't know."

> "Sometimes we never hear anything and the newer analysts don't know how they fit in - why they do what they do. You can tell them they contributed to DIA's mission, but that's not tangible. But if we hear that we've helped keep supply lines secure or pointed out good ambush spots, then we know we contributed. It's right there and we can see it. Without that we don't know. I know because I've been here so long, but the new analysts don't."

As these comments illustrate, the lack of feedback on products has a demoralizing impact on analysts.

The most consistent source of feedback from customers comes through the ESO office. Interviewees characterized ESO feedback as limited to a notification that a policy maker read or would read a paper. Both analysts and managers say they need greater specificity about what was valuable in the paper, what was missing, and what policy issues the paper was useful for.

> "We often hear nothing. Our SIA receives a list of what generals and others have seen. We might hear from the SIA, 'Kudos for xxx' or 'General x read this.'"

> "The OSD emails feedback, e.g. 'This guy read this,' 'This made it into the SECDEF book.' Occasionally an individual will get interested in a subject and you go brief them and try to answer their questions. That's good because somebody cares. You only get real feedback on what they are looking for when you do a briefing. I ask them, 'What do you want? If I know what you are looking for I can start getting collection requirements on it.'"

> "I really think it would be useful if we had more direct interaction on what they're thinking about our paper. ESO hands our products out. As one of their duties it would be helpful if they'd send feedback directly to the analyst."

> "The best example of feedback is that about monthly we send folks to our J5 customers and have a roundtable discussion for an hour. Those have been really good sessions."

What both analysts and managers want is more frequent face-to-face interaction with customers. However they feel that asking for customer feedback is "bothering" the customer; "They are busy people." They view it as unrealistic to obtain more feedback from customers.

> "We would like to do more meeting with the customer (J5) but they are busy over there and don't want to see us that often; and we lose a half-day of work when we go over."

> "Personally I want to know if someone read a paper. I want to know if it was helpful. Did you have any questions? But that requires work and they don't have time."

> "It would be unrealistic to try to get the feedback from customers really."

> "At one time I was seeking feedback about how useful the products from our division were. I felt I was doing the customer a disservice by bothering them."

> "It's difficult because everyone is so busy. Policymakers don't have time to tell the ESO Rep, 'This is what I think of your paper.' We need more direct interaction. What they'd like to see in terms of issue sets. It could be very helpful. This may be part of what our chain is doing, but I don't know it."

Because the amount of feedback from customers is so limited, responses from ESO become exaggerated in importance. In some divisions having a product mentioned has become an important goal in and of itself. Such mentions become items in the performance review process and in some cases awards are given for receiving the feedback that a policymaker looked at their product.

> "We were told we would have a Pizza party when we got 10 products in the SECDEF read book. We did last month, and we had the party."

Managers recognize the fallacy of exaggerating the importance of ESO mentions. One manager noted, "It's the wrong metric."

> "I think the emphasis we put on ESO feedback is crazy. An off-hand gesture becomes a "good" in the feedback."

> "An aide decides what to show seniors anyway. When we get a note back that says, 'General so-and-so read this today,' it creates the illusion that he found it useful. It's the wrong metric to be working by. It's a self-licking ice cream cone."

> "When we do appraisals we look at people's work. We look at what the feedback was, e.g. got three OSD mentions. The problem is some issues are more interesting, for example, analysts doing missiles this last year gave all kinds of briefings."

Feedback From Customers

Interviewees see the current process of obtaining feedback from OSD as ineffective. They wanted ESO to make a stronger effort to obtain useful feedback from policy makers.

> "We've got to get ESO to draw out critical feedback. I'd like to know if I'm hitting the mark or not – am I answering a question they've got."

> "I wish I got more feedback and I wish it was more critical – or detailed. I wish the ESO folks would try to draw out more (from the customers), 'Is this useful?' and 'If not, how not?' That's what I'd find useful."

> "If DIA could design a system to get more feedback it would be helpful. HUMINT gets more feedback than we do and they are always striving to improve."

> "We don't do a good job of it. The bureaucracy of feedback is at least partially broken. I always wonder if the mechanism to get feedback is broken."

It troubles analysts that the feedback they do receive from ESO is sanitized.

> "We don't get negative feedback. The environment is not there for people to talk critically to each other. The 'why' never comes up in comments. We just get, 'The under secretary read with great interest.' They protect the analyst from criticism."

> "I know ESO feedback is sanitized. I have never seen negative feedback from any one."

> "I would ask the DI leadership to provide feedback on products at the DI or Research Director level and have them encourage customers to provide both positive and negative feedback."

> "Constructive, negative feedback, in my opinion, runs counter to the analytical culture. We are scared to highlight our deficiencies."

This concern about being protected from criticism is not limited to customer feedback from ESO. Both analysts and SIA's have the same concern about being sheltered from feedback from the PEB and the DID review.

> "As the SIA I don't receive the DI hard copy of comments on the DID. We have become too politically correct. I know that products have gone to the PEB board and to DI, but it does not come to the division."

"We have the Product Evaluation Boards and DI responds and provides feedback on DID's. But if there were problems, the whole review chain does not want to push it to analyst, because they (the chain) take it personal. They see it as a mark against them if a product gets negative feedback. It does not trickle down to the analyst."

Anticipating Customers' Needs
The second issue about customers that troubled both analysts and managers is the lack of a strategy to engage customers in discovering what they need, at least no strategy that was obvious to the interviewees. Analysts choose topics for products based on little more than best guess of what would be useful to their customers.

"Right now I'm just guessing what they need. We are like the media - we are just reporting information. It would be good to know what they are looking for. To some degree they articulate that in an RFI. Before I write a paper I look through those, but they are pretty generic."

"In a cosmic sense we have to rely on our gut about what we know we should be producing on as well as feedback from customers."

"We learned that Petraeus didn't even know we existed. Syrian Intelligence knew about us and told Petraeus. The SES level needs to be talking to the three and four star generals in the major commands so we can be sure the commands know about us. You need to have the flag officers know. We need to know what the war fighter wants. We don't have a good command engagement model."

Interviewees felt it was the job of the SDIA to identify customer needs, but they report that they received very little information from this level on what to write. Most of the input from SDIA's comes, 1) in the form of changes to a product to make it more useful to the customer, or 2) approving/disapproving what an analyst proposes writing.

"We need leadership to go first to the COCOM's to clear the way and say what we can do for them, and who we are, and say we want to work with them."

ESO Process of Obtaining Customer Feedback
Because of the widespread concern about limited ESO feedback, the Knowledge Lab interviewed an ESO staff member to gain an understanding of how feedback was generated and to respond to the concerns interviewees raised.

Experienced analysts are recruited from DI analytic offices for the J2's Executive Support Office (ESO) for a period of one year, which can be extended. Each analyst, called an account holder, supports one or more of the elements in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). They support this customer set by daily reviewing new intelligence assessments and selecting those that match the interests and expressed needs of their customer. The selected products are compiled into a tailored book, The Defense Executive Intelligence Review, or as a read folder or special briefing which account

holders provide to their customers each morning along with other materials for situational awareness.

The type of briefing they then hold with customers about the content of the book is primarily at the discretion of the customers. Some account holders are asked to provide a brief verbal summary, others might be asked to identify the three top issues for the day, some are simply told to leave the book, and still others have the opportunity to engage in a discussion while the policymaker goes through the book. Some account holders might have no more than 5 minutes with their customers on a given day while others might have the opportunity to be in and out of their customers' office several times a day responding to questions or requests and conducting follow-up discussions.

After their morning meeting with their customers, each account holder writes up a feedback report. These reports are complied and sent to a broad base of high level DIA seniors, for example, the DI. Because the OSD Feedback Report in its formal, fully compiled state is a sensitive document, DIA limits its dissemination in order to respect the confidential insights shared by senior policy makers. There is a second version of the Feedback Report that is sent to DIO's SDIA's, SIO's, SIO's, SIA's, division chiefs, and J2 ESO alumni who have resumed their DI positions. Those who receive the second version are requested to cut and paste relevant comments to send to analysts. The second version of the Feedback Report contains:

> reactions to products and why the customer is interested in the assessment
> expressions of current interest
> information about the OSD seniors' schedules of meetings and travel
> upcoming requirements
> production opportunities for DI initiative production
> guidance on when and how to prepare tailored pieces to support OSD offices
> first notice of incoming tasks and timing

ESO Staff Perspective on the Concerns Raised by Interviewees

The J2 ESO staff responded to the concerns raised by interviewees but saw many of those concerns as reflecting lack of effective communication within DI offices rather than limitations caused by ESO.

Feedback Being Limited to "Mentions:" ESO staff explain that in addition to the second version of the Feedback Report, ESO account holders engage in a number of methods to accomplish their liaison role including:

> email feedback and guidance on their particular customer set with more detail on customer needs and issues
> categorize production opportunities every 2-3 weeks and send them to DIOs, SDIAs SIOs, SIAs and analysts to deepen their insight, remind them of the issues and encourage more focused production
> submit formal tasks via eTask and COLISEUM detailing customer requirements, make themselves available for informal feedback, via email, phone conversation, roundtables, and small groups meetings

interact regularly with DIO's and their deputies, engaging senior DIA expertise where its most needed for OSD or EOP principals
seek opportunity for, organize and host formal briefings, desk-side discussions and roundtables between OSD seniors, staff and DIA analysts.

Adequacy of Feedback: Given the many interaction opportunities ESO provides as outlined above, J2 ESO staff do not see a problem of lack of detailed feedback as identified by DI interviewees.

> "The issue is a number of frontline analysts don't appear to get a regular flow of the reported data from the Office/Division Chiefs/SIOs, SIAs and senior analysts who receive it and are supposed to be providing all relevant portions of it to them with their own notes, insights and guidance. [Frontline analysts] therefore form their impressions [that there is a lack of feedback] based on that experience."

From the perspective of ESO, analysts have a responsibility to regularly engage their ESO colleagues, respond to the numerous production opportunities they are provided, and read the detailed guidance and background from the customers related to the tasks they receive from ESO. ESO staff notes that analysts, particularly analysts under two years, may be unaware of the opportunities available to them.

> "Resolution to these concerns may be is as much a function of better communication as it is "more" feedback."

Negative Feedback: ESO staff notes it has always provided negative feedback through the second version of the Feedback Report itself and in particularly sensitive cases directly to the authoring offices.

> "Nonetheless, quotes from interviewed analysts provides some worry that they are being kept from the real feedback"

In terms of sanitizing negative feedback, ESO Staff explains it has a longstanding practice of not publicly broadcasting highly negative feedback, rather providing it directly to the offices where constructive, corrective actions can be accomplished.

> "There are times when it is not clear to what extent that negative feedback is shared up and down the chain of a given DI organization. However, it is understandable in some cases that certain levels above the most junior analyst take responsibility for the problem."

Obtaining More Detailed Feedback: ESO staff acknowledges that sometimes the ESO account holder is at fault for not pushing harder to capture feedback. However, when that occurs the account holder is coached on how to conduct better interaction or they are replaced. That said, it is unrealistic to expect ESO account holders to daily expound on why customers read a piece or what they said about.

"Interestingly, analysts (even senior analysts and SIOs) who come to work as account holders in ESO are almost always surprised to learn how busy their senior customers actually are with non-intelligence related matters."

Conclusions

(1) The Existing Review Process Has Too Many People Involved
The number of steps in the review process ranges from 6-11 in the four offices participating in the study. No individual reported the steps being less than six. The length of time for a product to move through the review cycle, after a draft has been completed, ranges from 1 week to 3 months, averaging 1 month.

Having multiple steps of office review has not proven effective in producing products that meet analytic standards nor in improving analysts' analytic capability. After two years only 5% of the products that come to the DID staff are accepted without changes or correction, 20-30% require changes that can be fixed within a day, and the remaining 65% need substantive change.

Multiple steps delay the timely production of current intelligence and result in DI being less responsive to customers. The existing review process frustrates analysts and managers alike because of, 1) conflict between levels, 2) delays caused by absent levels, 3) changes to the assessment, and 4) numerous passes between levels.

Managers interviewed for the study interpreted having multiple steps as risk aversion in response to 9/11 criticisms and considered the existing review process to have redundant steps. The quality movement of the 1980s provides useful lessons related to the ability to inspect quality into a product. Before the 1980s U.S. manufacturing attempted to improve their quality, which was seriously lagging behind Japanese manufacturing, by putting quality inspectors on the line and sending products that did not pass their inspection back for rework. Rigorous quality inspection, however, did not substantially improve quality nor reduce the amount of re-work on a product. Quality improved only when Deming's ideas, initially implemented by the Japanese, moved into U.S. manufacturing as Total Quality Management. TQM, as it came to be called, improved manufacturing quality in the U.S. by involving the front line workers in the process of identifying improvements, e.g. quality circles.

(2) DI's Analytic Core Capability, Which Resides in Its 1st Level SIA's, is at Risk
Analysts gain the greatest value in improving their products and in building their own skills through their interaction with their 1st level SIA. However, moving inexperienced people into these positions is marginalizing the SIA role. This is occurring in offices that have significantly expanded since 2001 and is impacted by taxing divisions for Band 4 and 5 personnel to serve in temporary assignments. Inexperienced analysts functioning in the SIA role have less in-depth knowledge about the subject they are reviewing. They are often expected to continue to write products, reducing the time available to review and to focus on developing analysts' capability. Because inexperienced SIA's are less skillful reviewers, subsequent reviewers catch mistakes that the SIA missed, sending the paper

back through the cycle and unintentionally reinforcing management's perception that a lengthy review process is necessary.

(3) The Sense of Ownership of the Knowledge Created Through the Analytic Process Shifts From the Author of the Intelligence Product to Management
Two actions that occur during the review process reflect a shift of ownership from author to senior analysts or management. The first is that as products move through the review chain, assessments are significantly altered, frequently without discussion with the author. This action is de-motivating to analysts whose reputation in the intelligence community rests on their insights as reflected in products they author. However, senior reviewers consider any product that leaves their office as an "office product," not the author's product, and on that basis find it necessary to alter products to safeguard the reputation of the office.

The second action that impacts a shift in ownership is the management practice of withholding from analysts negative feedback that originates outside of the office (ESO, PEB and DID review). Management feels accountable for products that leave the office. They assume that if a product had serious flaws the review chain should have caught those flaws and therefore it is the review chain that needs to address the issues, not the author. Analysts, on the other hand, require constructive criticism in order to improve. Management's practice of withholding negative feedback slows down their learning curve. Neither action has been the subject of discussion within offices so that both analysts and management assume the actions or complaints of the other side are motivated by self-protection.

(4) The Train-The-Trainer Approach is Neither Effective in Improving Analytic Standards nor in Improving Analysts' Analytic Capability
Both ESO and the DID review process use a train-the-trainer approach to pass corrective feedback through the senior office reviewers to those lower in the review chain. The train-the-trainer approach is designed to allow each level to learn from the level above it so that not only front line analysts gain better mastery of the analytic standards, but those in the review chain do as well. However, using this approach, any information that is filtered down to analysts is necessarily generalized, while the need of analysts is for information specific to what they have produced. Moreover, the subtleties of analytic reasoning are difficult to accurately translate through multiple, hierarchical layers. Within offices the train-the-trainer approach is not transparent to analysts who are the recipients of the changes. Rather analysts interpret the unwillingness of higher-level reviewers to discuss changes directly with them as arrogance and disregard of analysts' knowledge.

(5) The Almost Exclusive Reliance on the Written Word as the Communication Medium is Insufficient
Within the analytic review process the emphasis on products makes "analysis" nearly synonymous with "written product." The review process is focused on the use of track changes to correct products, which precludes discussion with analysts about analysis. There is an implicit assumption that if the sentences or words of a product are changed or moved around, the analysis will have been improved.

However, the most effective process to improve analysis is face-to-face dialogue. Face-to-face dialogue occurs at two places in the review process, 1) an analyst's interaction with his or her 1st line SIA, and 2) with internal peers. Analysts explain that these two sources are the most valuable for them in improving their analysis. With track changes the SIA can indicate that a paragraph needs to be moved to the front of the document, but it is in the face-to-face meeting that an analyst learns why that change is necessary and how to recognize other situations in which such a sequence would be important. It is in the face-to-face interaction that an analyst gains knowledge he or she will be able to generalize to other situations.

Discussion with peers allows analysts to argue out the logic they are developing, to clarify their meaning, and to more fully understand the logic and thinking of others. Between peers there is a sense of "helping each other" that puts everyone on an equal footing and facilitates challenging each other's ideas. It is in the give and take of discussion that the core analytic capability is built.

A similar assumption is made about customers, that is, that a product can accurately communicate an analyst's knowledge about a topic or issue. The written word, as the medium of knowledge transfer with customers is too limited. It is in face-to-face exchanges that customers are able to clarify the meaning of the assessments the analyst has made; the analyst is able is to probe why those issues are of interest and to find what else is of interest to the customer; where the customer is able to challenge the analyst's assessment and the analyst is able to offer additional support. In such an exchange knowledge has the opportunity to grow and customers have the opportunity to add their knowledge to the interpretation of the findings.

(6) Customer Feedback is Inadequate to Assist Analysts in Improving their Products
The only consistent feedback offices receive from customers about the analyses they produce are the "mentions" in the daily ESO report. "Mentions" are comments that "General xx read this" or "this made it into the SECDEF's read book." "Mentions" inform analysts that their product was noticed by a policymaker but such brief comments lack the specificity that analysts would need to make their products more useful to policymakers. Analysts report that roundtables and briefings are the most productive way to obtain useful feedback on products as well as to assess what customers need. Currently such exchanges occur infrequently and when they do occur involve only a limited number of analysts.

(7) Pentagon-customer "Mentions" Have Taken on an Exaggerated Importance to Managers And to the Performance Review Process
There is no formal process for ESO to obtain customer feedback. ESO account holders, select what a policymakers read based on the current interest of the customers they support. Products from functional offices or regional areas that are not currently in the news have little opportunity to receive "mentions." "Mentions" are dependent upon the

almost casual comments of policyholders when they are in the presence of their ESO account holder.

Because the amount of feedback from customers is so limited, responses from ESO have become exaggerated in importance. In some divisions having a product mentioned has become an important goal in and of itself. Such mentions become items in the performance review process and in some cases awards are given for receiving the feedback that a senior looked at their product.

The use of "mentions" as a metric for individual or office performance is wrong for several reasons: 1) they give a false impression that a product was of value, 2) they can erroneously guide additional production on a topic "mentioned," and 3) an office's chances of receiving mentions increases the more products they produce - leading to a focus on quantity over quality.

(8) The Analytic Review Process is Being Implemented as if Analysis were Primarily a Production Process
Taken together the study findings reveal an underlying conflict between DI's beliefs and actions. Post 9/11 the analytic review process is being implemented as if the most important aspect of analysis is the management of the production process, not the critical thinking that analysts do to develop analytic thought.

The study findings reflect this movement toward a production mentality in:
> An emphasis on products that reduces "analysis" to make it synonymous with "written product"
> Investing resources in the back end of the process, that is, in looking for errors in the product, rather than in the front end where analysis is learned and practiced
> A production line mentality focused on the multi-layered inspection of products
> The numerical evaluation of products based on a set of standards as if those standards were definitive and measureable, as in scientific experiments
> The use of track changes for correction of product errors, without an accompanying dialogue that would spell out the critical thinking behind the correction

This shift is not assumed to be a deliberate attempt to reframe analysis as a production process, but rather a reaction to the 9/11 criticisms that created an institutional fear of making mistakes. When organizations become risk averse there is a tendency to establish stronger management control. In the case of DI, products, which are concrete and therefore more subject to control than is the cognitive activity of analysts, have become the focus of management attention. However unintentional, this shift toward a production mentality has resulted in the frustrations and ineffectiveness revealed in the findings of this report.

Recommendations

(1) ANALYTIC PRACTICES: **Re-Focus Resources Towards the Core Capability**
We should re-focus our analytic resources to the front end where analytic thought is being developed and away from the back end of the review process where resources are currently being heavily consumed by the multiple steps of the review process. The refocus will require:

Structural changes might include:

Reducing the number of reviewers in the analytic review process to a maximum of three

Reducing the 1st level SIA-to-analyst ratio (i.e., reduce the span of control)

Changes in SIA preparation:

Training in effective review techniques

Specific Recommendations

Improve the selection and development of SIA's
- o   Identify potential SIA's early and provide training similar to the searchlight program for managers.
- o   Develop hands-on training for current SIA's that includes:
  - §   How to do the SIA job
  - §   How to provide teaching-oriented feedback to analysts
  - §   Development of coaching skills
  - §   Building tradecraft skills

(2) VALUE: Shift the Currency of Exchange from the Written Word to Include More Dialogue
We need to shift the major currency of exchange between analysts and customers from exclusively written products to include dialogue. There are pockets within DI where an active dialogue between customers and analysts is currently being practiced. The Knowledge Lab's Analytic Quality Study will provide insight into these practices.

Changes in practice that could involve:

Building in the time and opportunity for dialogue between analysts and reviewers
More dialogue between reviewers, particularly when a product is passed to the next level or when disagreements between levels emerge
Reinforcing analytic practices (Heuer, FSA, FSX)

Making such a shift will require not only customers' willingness to interact in new ways, but their active involvement in both the planning and implementation of new practices that they help tailor to their needs.
There are a number of questions to be addressed with this shift:

How to create an exchange that accomplishes the twin goals of bringing greater value to customers and more information to analysts to guide their analytic work?
What is the most effective balance of written products and dialogue? How does that balance differ for different offices?

On what type of issues are written products sufficient and on what type of issues is dialogue essential?

Specific Recommendations

Conduct more thorough preparation for briefings
- o Treat briefing slides equally as important as written products in terms of the rigor of review
- o Review/rehearse the verbal part of briefings with analytic reviewers

Encourage greater emphasis on the peer review process through formal meetings and/or informal exchanges
- o Place the peer review process before the first formal review
- o Actively work to build collegial relationships between peers

(3) IMPLEMENTATION: Engage Analysts and Lower Level Managers in Recommendation Implementation

We should involve the interviewers from this study, who have made a serious investment in change, in the planning and implementation of changes resulting from the study.

The failure of many organizational change efforts can be attributed to the lack of involvement (or superficial involvement) of the people whose work will be changed. This study provides a head start in overcoming that problem. There are approximately five people in each of the four participating offices, (2 interviewers, a thought leader from each office invited to the third interviewer meeting, and 2-3 focus group members) who have an in-depth understanding of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. This group, made up of analysts, office and branch SIO's, SIA's and team chiefs, represents knowledge embedded in these offices. With the Knowledge Lab's facilitation this group can play a vital role in way ahead.

Specific Recommendations

Hold a meeting in each office, facilitated by the Knowledge Lab, to generate ideas about how that office might make the analytic review process more effective
- o The meeting brings together both analysts, senior reviewers and managers from all levels within the office

Disseminate this report to employees
- o Lets employees know their concerns were heard
- o And prepares them for the office-level follow-up meetings with the Knowledge Lab and DI-RD

Conduct an Innovation Search within DI
- o Create an interview team made up of analysts, SIA's and branch chiefs to identify innovations in the review process that currently exists within DI offices
- o Communicate those innovations through formal and informal venues

(4) LEADERSHIP: Align Our Practice Of All-Source Analysis with Our Conception of It

The above recommendations will work to align our practice of all-source analysis with how we conceive all-source analysis, which is the cognitive activity of developing analytic assessments, not a production process. Taken together the recommendations require a change in mindset.

Such a change will not be easily orchestrated. It will be difficult because the force keeping the current system in place is the fear of failure and that fear is real and will not go away in the foreseeable future. The cultural shift that is required then is not to deny the fear of failure, but to mitigate the risks DIA faces by:

> Developing a risk management plan to mitigate the risk of analytic mistakes - a plan that is in concert with our conception of all-source analysis
>
> Engaging our customers in identifying what risks they are willing to tolerate in exchange for speed and agility
>
> Re-evaluating how to implement the DNI standards within DIA and how much emphasis to place on them

Specific Recommendations

> Develop the PEB to be a more accurate metric for DI analytic quality and more useful to analysts for improving their products
> - o Expand the number of evaluators
> - o Increase the number of products reviewed to a minimum of 10%
> - o Develop a process for randomly selecting a representative sample of products from each office
> - o Insure that authors receive the evaluation forms from the PEB for their own products
>
> Improve the DID review process
> - o DID Staff work with Offices to develop a communication plan to make the DID process more transparent to analysts, SIA's, SIO's and SDIA's
> - o Improve consistency of review and expectations by providing training (similar in scope and frequency as PEB) for reviewers
> - o Ensure the DI's comments reach authors
>
> Conduct a follow-on study focused on the knowledge flow of feedback between J2 (ESO) and DI
> - o How customer feedback is elicited
> - o Types, sources, and frequency of feedback provided to DI including, briefings, roundtables, and desk-side discussions
> - o How, when, and for what purposes DI offices proactively engage ESO account holders
> - o Where J2 (ESO) feedback is withheld or lost in translation as it moves through the DI organization
> - o What J2 (ESO) feedback reaches differing levels within DI offices
> - o How J2 (ESO) feedback is utilized within DI to guide production or improve products

Create an intentional process for SDIA's to communicate what they learn from customers to SIO's, SIA's and frontline analysts. (A follow-on study focused on the knowledge flow of feedback between J2 (ESO) and DI, suggested above, may provide useful insights to design such a process)
- o Communicate conveyed office production and research plans
- o Obtain feedback on products
- o Learn what customers need from their offices
- o Hold a risk vs. speed discussion
- o Seek opportunities for briefings and roundtables with analysts

Next Steps

- o Vet the study results to generate additional recommendations in each office within DI
  - o Knowledge Lab and Research Director compile recommendations by April 2010 for DI's consideration in June 2010 timeframe
- o Integrate the recommendations from the concurrent Knowledge Lab project on DI Analytic Quality (due end of Feb 2010)
  - o Focus on defining and identifying customer needs
- o Integrate the recommendations from the concurrent Knowledge Lab project on Organizational Structure (due April/May 2010)
  - o Benchmarks federal and commercial organizations that successfully balance the need to minimize risk with the need to maximize agility and anticipation
  - o Results will be helpful in creating/reinforcing a structure to sustain the changes recommended from the Review and Quality studies
- o Explore J2 and DI interest in a follow-on study to examine knowledge flow of feedback between J2 and DI

APPENDIX A

Study Methodology

Four offices participated in the study, APA, DRI, JIFT-CT and UFAC. In selecting the offices, an effort was made to include offices that represent a diversity of types of analytic work. A point of contract (POC), appointed by each office Chief, identified eight interviewees in each of the four offices for a total of thirty-two interviews:

        two analysts with under two years of experience

        two analysts with more than three years experience,

        two SIA's or SIO's

        two Division or Branch managers

In addition 3 DID review staff, 1 ESO staff and 1 PEB staff were interviewed. The distribution by function and pay grade is shown in Figure 1.
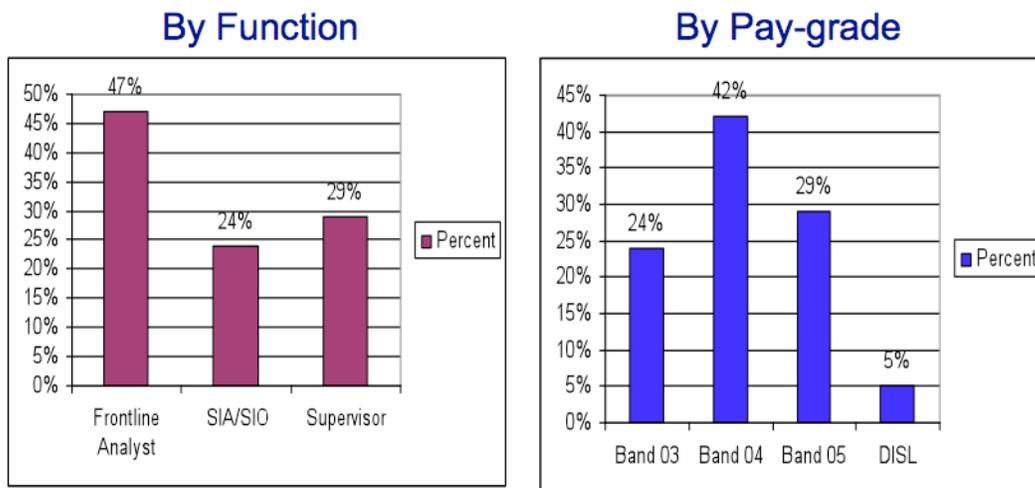

Figure 1

Dr. Dixon, a Knowledge Lab researcher, designed the study as Participatory Research. In keeping with the design, each office POC was asked to identify an interview team, consisting of one analyst and one SIA or SIO. The office interview teams met three times. In the first meeting the interviewers reviewed and revised the interview questions and reviewed the interview protocol. The protocol is a step-by-step guide of how to conduct the interview including how the study is introduced to interviewees, how questions are to be asked and probed in a semi-structured interview format, verbatim note taking, and the discussion of anonymity. The protocol helps to provide consistency across all the interviewers in a study. Interviewers were also asked to examine products that had been reviewed using track changes.

One half of the thirty-two interviews were conducted by the office interview teams, interviewing in an office other than their own. The other half of the interviews were conducted by Dr. Dixon. Dr. Dixon also conducted observations of two group meetings

as well as holding interviews with ESO, DID and PEB staff. The additional interviews were arranged in response to issues that arose during the interviews.

Once the interviews were completed and the notes retrieved from the teams, a second meeting of the interviewers was held. At this meeting the teams discussed their findings with each other. Out of that discussion they developed significant themes across the four offices.

Following the second interviewer meeting, a focus group was held with two individuals (analysts, SIA's, SIO's and branch chiefs) from each office, individuals who had not previously been involved in the study. The focus group reviewed and verified the themes the interviewers had uncovered.

The data from the interviews were analyzed using a method called interpretational analysis. The verbatim data from the interviews was coded in the database of the Text Analysis Mark-Up System Analyzer, using the themes the interviewers had identified as well as additional themes that arose during the coding process. Role based categories were developed. From these categories and themes general trends were developed which appear as findings in this report.

At the third meeting of the office interviewers the draft report was reviewed and interviewers provided input into the recommendations. In that meeting each team brought with them one thought leader from their office who had not been involved in the study to participate in the draft review.

As an additional check on anonymity, all interviewees received an early draft of the final report so that they could make corrections to any quotations and remove any identifying comments.

The DI Analytic Ombudsman attended all the group meetings and was helpful in setting up interviews with the DID, PEB and ESO. Over the course of the three meetings the interviewers coalesced into a team who were invested in the study findings.

Study Participants

    Interviewees
- o 16 analysts, half under 2 years tenure
- o 8 Division Chiefs/Branch Chiefs
- o 8 SIO/SIA's
- Interviewers
  - o Principle researcher
  - o 2 SIA's
  - o 1 Office level SIA
  - o 3 Analysts
  - o 1 SIO
  - o 1 Editor and Production Manager

- o Focus group to test out themes
    - o 1 team lead
    - o 1 team chief
    - o 3 analysts
    - o 2 SIO's
    - o 3 analyst/SIAs
- o 3 DID staff
- o 1 ESO staff
- o 1 PEB staff
- o DI Analytic Ombudsman

Observations:
- o ESO Synchronicity meeting (daily account holder meeting)
- o TOR group meeting (meeting where analysts' propose topics to SIA's and SIO's)
- o Review of products with track changes