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## **Selling to the United States Intelligence Community: A Primer**

*This material is copy written by Venona Consulting, LLC*

### Purpose of This Paper

This brief overview is intended as an introduction for American manufacturers of high technology products who desire to enter *or* to ‘increase their share of revenue’ taken from the sixteen agencies that are generally classified as part of the US intelligence community (IC).

### A Top-Down View

Even a casual observer, from his hometown newspaper, has noticed the extensive changes in the core intelligence community over the last five to six years. Terrorist attacks in September of 2001 have provided deep and profound motivation to change some of the fundamental ‘ways and means’ of how our IC agencies accomplish their missions.

This is good news for a new entrant because it means there are changes taking place, and anytime there are changes, *there is opportunity*. The most important thing to remember is that outsiders desiring to become insiders need to work in harmony with the changes; there is a consensus among practitioners that the more you know about the community and the specific portion that you’re calling into, the better prepared you’ll be to serve their changing needs. And yes, it may take a little bit longer for the deals to come to fruition. This is not Wall Street and the IC does not behave like a corporately motivated profit-and-loss entity.

As the global war on terror (GWOT) has become better understood by our nation’s Executive Branch, Congress and the US Military, it has morphed the IC members into a collection of collaborative teams that (believe it or not!) work towards the same goal—or, at least at a level of cooperation never witnessed before. Instead of about a dozen, fairly separate organizations, focused on only their piece of “the mission”, a wide scale effort has begun that is streamlining inter-agency processes, forcing collaboration and reinventing much infrastructure in these organizations. This is much harder to accomplish than the average corporate citizen might realize; and this is primarily due to legal restrictions that exist for each of these entities. For example, the very concept of sharing information is historically counter-culture to the IC, let alone honed into a vetted procedure and legal motivation to do so. From an outsider’s view, you may be tempted to say, “why don’t they just share with each other?” but there are a myriad of historical, legal, cultural, mission-related and funding reasons why this has not taken place. Unlike a corporation, leadership is seldom aligned and pulling in one direction. This is simply not the nature of our Federal Government, let alone the intelligence agencies. The first order of business is to begin understanding this market and appreciate the complexities that make it tick.



The Second Order of business is understanding their respective roles as they are currently broken down; here is a description of each agency's primary mission-breakdown:

<u>Parent Agency</u>	<u>Consolidating Most Activities Involving:</u>
• NSA.....	Signals Intelligence / Electronic Intelligence
• CIA.....	Human Intelligence Gathering and Analysis
• NRO.....	Satellite Operations
• NGA.....	Imagery Production and Image Intelligence
• FBI.....	Civil Law Enforcement and Interface
• DEA.....	Drug Interdiction, Trafficking and Monitoring
• State Department.....	International Negotiations and Interface
• Homeland Security.....	Support of States, Territories, and Citizens
• Energy/NNSA.....	Protection/Development of Nuclear Arms
• US Army.....	Ground Troop Support and Intelligence
• US Navy.....	Sea Based Intelligence
• US Air Force.....	Airborne Platforms for the IC
• US Marine Corps.....	Strike Force Support and Ground Intelligence
• US Coast Guard.....	Drug Interdiction/Coastal Monitoring
• DIA.....	Coordination of Cross-Military Support
• Treasury.....	Financial Crimes and Large Dollar Transactions

Keep in mind that these are parent agencies, not the definitive list of organizations; for instance, Army Intelligence is headquartered in the agency named Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) however, be aware that there are subordinate entities that report to the INSCOM organization. This is true across the Federal government but especially in the IC—where the very existence of certain agencies is unknown to most Americans! And this does not even consider the Combatant Commands, the Joint Staff of the Department of Defense or the Unified Commands. The most important take-away from this chart (above) is that your technology may be commonly used by all agencies (as many commodities are) or may be predominantly used by one or two. If your company sells satellites for spying, as one obvious example, either the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) or the Air Force is your obvious first choice for a hyper-focus. The NSA does not design, build, launch, or maintain these and probably won't for a long time. Yes, they analyze output from satellites on a regular basis, but they have, in recent years, tried to eliminate overlap compared with what other agencies already do—build, launch and maintain satellites. So, as you begin to understand the broader IC, it should become obvious where you want to begin your sales efforts.

### How Do Things Really Get Done?

In a drastically oversimplified explanation, it is vital to know that money falls into two



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pots, across the entire Federal Government. They are 1) operational and maintenance funds and 2) program funds. The focus of most IT spending is in the program side of this equation. A program is a congressionally mandated and funded goal, that has legal backing behind it; by this, we mean, a Program Manager, employed by the federal government, has a fiduciary responsibility to deliver exactly what he has been directed and funded to deliver, and if he fails, he will have to defend very poignant questions from the interested Congressman (...and if you've ever been called to testify before a Congressional Committee, you'll understand why this is taken seriously!) Clearly, as programs grow to hundreds of millions of dollars and many, to over a billion in value, this is a very weighty matter.

For the technology company, you may want to direct your questions towards discovering those new programs that are spending money in your niche; as politely and persistently as you can, ask, "who, what, when, where, how and why" on every program that could exist that potentially uses your solution.

Also weighing heavily are the systems integrators. There is no question that they capture the lion's share of dollars in the IC and you'd do well do learn how they think, operate and win business; your solution may need to be one that they will purchase and simply deliver to the IC-member agency; this is an entire discussion for later, however, any business strategy seeking revenue from the IC will aggressively court and win-over the short list of systems integrators at a given agency. You ignore them at your own peril.

### Strategies to Penetrate The Intelligence Community

It's all about trust. This is most obviously expressed in the granting of security clearances. But there is a powerful nuance that goes beyond the security clearance. For example, sales professionals can make headway without a clearance if they are patient, credible and offer a compelling product. Alternatively, just because your hot-shot sales professional has a clearance, this does not guarantee success—there are a list of things that need to come together to allow him/her to accomplish his/her mission. All things being reasonable, having cleared representation into the IC is not a bad place to begin. Perhaps the second most beneficial aid is an insider who can help guide your efforts. This may be a retired executive from the Community who is ready, willing and able to provide that direct (or indirect) coaching; or it could be a systems integrator with whom you have struck a value proposition and can validate and support some or all of your goals; in either case, there is no substitute for (somehow) gleaning an inside view of the target agencies that your team is calling into. It's even better if your retired executive has a broad view of the Community and can roll up his sleeves and help the sales team engage. This can collapse eighteen months of pavement pounding into six, if properly executed.

In addition, there is the standard list of techniques such as

- Conducting pilots to show-off your technology;



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- Carefully selecting tradeshow and related events;
  - Networking in and around the Community;
  - Follow-through on all commitments;
  - Entering Agency “front door” organizations such as the Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (SADBU) Office;

The main point to remember is that the IC does things their way, for their own reasons. Like it or not, you need to adapt your commercial sales techniques and time lines to their methods if you expect to be successful.

### Conclusion

This brief look at the US Intelligence Community only gives you a peek at the challenges. The IC budget is publicly documented to be over \$43 billion but most folks-in-the-know, place it at well over \$60B; it’s easy to believe, after a moderate level of research, that the IT budget from the IC forms the largest share of this, perhaps between \$15B to \$20B annually given the complexities that exist and services required to implement the solutions. Clearly, this is a market worth pursuing, even for a small company, assuming you can chart a rational course. The key is to be efficient and flexible as you pursue... and leave your preconceived corporate tendencies aside. It may take a bit longer to reach your goals but the result is worth the extra effort.

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