

Many professionals encourage conversation, especially discussion of theories, concepts, and plans. It's a spy's dream come true!

So, remember, on your next trip or during any conversation with a foreign colleague: Be aware of the person with whom you are speaking and where your conversation may be reported. Don't be paranoid, just be careful.

What To Do

If you ever feel that you are being drawn into a conversation that makes you uncomfortable, keep these points in mind:

- You are not obliged to tell people any information they are not authorized to hear; that includes personal information about you or your colleagues.
- You can simply ignore any question you think is improper and change the topic.
- You can deflect the question with one of your own.
- You can give a nondescript answer.
- You can simply say that you do not know.
- If all else fails, you can state that you would have to clear such discussions with your Security Office.

Reporting Contacts

Presidential Decision Directive NSC-12 requires that government employees report all contacts with individuals of any nationality, either within or outside of the scope of the employee's official activities, in which:

- illegal or unauthorized access is sought to classified or otherwise sensitive information.
- the employee is concerned that he may be the target of actual or attempted exploitation by a foreign entity.

Because elicitation is subtle and difficult to recognize, you should report any suspicious conversations to the DHS Office of Security or your local security officer.

To report a suspected elicitation attempt to the DHS Office of Security, please use the contact information below.



Elicitation

Would You Recognize It?



Department of Homeland Security
Office of Security
Phone: (202) 447-5010
E-mail: OfficeofSecurity@dhs.gov



Homeland
Security

What is it?

In the espionage trade, elicitation is a technique frequently used by intelligence officers to subtly extract information about you, your work, and your colleagues.

Said another way, elicitation is the art of conversation honed by intelligence services to its finest edge.

The Dilemma

You never know if elicitation is being used casually to pass the time or if it is being used to gather intelligence data.

Why Elicitation? What is Its Appeal?

- Elicitation is non-threatening. It is hard to recognize as an intelligence technique and it is easy to deny any wrongdoing.
- Elicitation is easy to disguise. It's just conversation among colleagues and friends.
- Elicitation is effective.

Techniques

There you are, at a social gathering, deep into a conversation with someone you don't know very well. There are questions back and forth over a wide range of topics. How do you know when the conversation is merely social and innocent and when it is being conducted for other purposes?

You don't know, really. There are, however, some tried and true techniques of gaining information. These techniques are used by ordinary people in ordinary conversations, as well as by intelligence officers in some not-so-ordinary conversations.

Here are some common techniques you may recognize:

Appealing to One's Ego

Intelligence Officer: "You must have an important position in your agency. Our host seems to think very highly of you."

You: "Well, how nice of you to say so. As a matter of fact, my job isn't all that important. What I do is..."

Flattery often coaxes a person into a conversation that otherwise would not have taken place.

Expression of Mutual Interest

Intelligence Officer: "Oh, you have a background in computers; so do I. Perhaps you'd like to try out the Sun Workstation I have at home. It's really powerful!"

You: "Yes, I'd like to do that. That sounds interesting. I've always wanted to try out a powerful workstation like that. I use a CAD/CAM program, but my computer..."

You have just agreed to extend your relationship beyond the immediate social situation. This works to an Intelligence Officer's advantage. He now has the opportunity to establish a deeper relationship "off-line," in a venue that he controls.

Deliberate False Statements

Intelligence Officer: "Everybody knows, of course, that the Pakistanis have had nuclear technology for only two years."

You: "Actually, that isn't true. They started in 1978 with a program to..."

Such statements have the curious property of producing denials, along with the real facts, out of the listener. This is based on the deep-rooted need that most people have to correct misstatements, to inform people, and to appear to be "in-the-know."

Volunteering Information

(in hopes of getting something in return)

Intelligence Officers are always willing to trade information. Don't feel obligated to respond in kind merely because someone tells you something interesting.

Assumed Knowledge

If your companion talks as if he is knowledgeable about a particular subject (computers, nuclear physics, whatever) or if you have assumed that he is "up" on the subject, then what's the harm in discussing it, right? No, wrong. Assume nothing. Tell nothing.

The Threat

Today's world of openness offers almost unlimited opportunities to gather information through direct personal contact. Each year, thousands of U.S. Government officials and scientists come into contact with foreign colleagues both in the U.S. and overseas.

Intelligence services invest significant resources in identifying individuals who possess the knowledge they desire. The information may not be classified, but it will be useful to their nation's well being.

Elicitation requires patience. Pieces of information collected over an extended period of time can provide the final piece of the puzzle to a complex problem or save the expenditure of scarce research money.

Potential

Keep in mind that a key element in any espionage operation is to make it as easy as possible for the target to share his information. After all, the elicitation is only conversation among colleagues and friends. What is more natural than that? We do it all the time.