



BTAC BULLETIN

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE | THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT | LAW ENFORCEMENT & COUNTERINTELLIGENCE | CYBERSECURITY | EMPLOYEE LABOR RELATIONS

OBJECTIVE REPORTING

INSIDER THREAT (InT) BEST PRACTICE

Insider threat (InT) analysis is often indirect, reliant on the compiled observations, data, and reporting of others, and therefore on the accuracy and utility of the information communicated through the reporting process. Effective threat assessment and management require objective observational reporting, which is factual, unbiased, and contains a verifiable account of verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding any personal opinions, interpretations, or judgments. These observations are based on concrete evidence, such as direct quotes, observable behaviors, and measurable details, rather than subjective interpretations or beliefs that may not accurately communicate risk. By focusing on first-person objective accounts, InT reports can contribute to a documented, defensible, repeatable process that can support employment actions, reduce risk, and withstand legal scrutiny.

Objective reporting and associated documentation can help:

- ▶ Identify deviations from baseline behavior that may warrant attention.
- ▶ Enable the development of effective, individualized mitigation strategies, facilitating earlier interventions that are accurate, tailored to that individual's concerns, and place mitigation or corrective action plans earlier along the critical pathway to InT.²
- ▶ Minimize legal risk by reducing reliance on unclear or subjective reporting, ensuring credibility of information.
- ▶ Support the adjudicative process with clear, evidence-based, defensible, reports.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Objective versus subjective reporting, allows InT professionals to achieve improved accuracy through well informed analysis, track changes in behavior more reliably, and provide the most appropriate and effective mitigation strategies tailored to that individual/incident. The key characteristics of this type of observational reporting are:

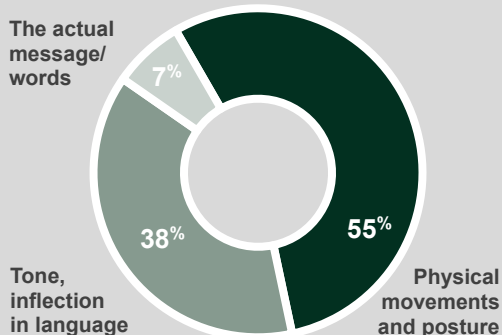
- ▶ **Factual:** Verbal and non-verbal descriptions of behavior as opposed to assumptions or interpretations of what happened.
- ▶ **Unbiased:** Free from personal opinions, biases, or emotional responses.
- ▶ **Concrete detail:** Descriptive of specific actions, words, and appearances rather than vague concepts.
- ▶ **Verifiable:** Confirmable if viewed by another observer, who should be able to validate the same facts.

Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ)

SPJ tools are decisional guides that provide an organized framework and process for gathering, documenting, and analyzing information that helps to improve objectivity and create a repeatable method for assessing threats. Objectivity is also improved by using other tools, like standardized questions for reporting, as well as through individual training on cognitive/decision making errors and objective observational reporting skills.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION¹

While real-life situations may show slightly different ratios than the lab-controlled results below, what is clear is that a significant portion of communication about attitudes and feelings is non-verbal, lending value to in-person objective observations to give meaning and context to behavioral threat analysis.



	SUBJECTIVE STATEMENTS	OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS
Sight	She was happy. He was anxious.	She smiled. He shook his leg frequently.
Sound	She responded angrily. He was uncomfortable	She raised her voice in response. He cleared his throat before answering questions.
Smell	She was intoxicated. He is a smoker.	She smelled of alcohol. The house smelled like cigarette smoke.
Taste/ Touch	The house was a mess.	Surfaces in the house were sticky to the touch.



¹ Mehrabian, A., & Wiener, M. (1967). Decoding of inconsistent communications. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 6(1), 109–114. ² Lenzenweger, M. F., & Shaw, E. D. (2022). The Critical Pathway to Insider Risk Model: Brief Overview and Future Directions. *Counter-Insider Threat Research and Practice*, 1(1)