The Game Changer: Developing MITRE’s Environmental Scan Service

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MITRE is a private, not-for-profit corporation that operates Federally Funded Research and Development Centers FFRDCs. FFRDCs serve as long-term strategic partners to the government, providing objective guidance in an environment free of conflicts of interest. MITRE works in the fields of aviation, defense, energy, health and human services, space, federal agency modernization, homeland security, and more. FFRDC value is further described on MITRE’s public website in “We Operate FFRDC’s.”

MITRE’s organizational initiatives optimize its ability to deliver on the unique value of Federally Funded Research and Development Centers. MITRE’s evolving; strategic, outcome-oriented approach is designed to advance customer engagement. A component of this approach consists of creating a baseline understanding of our customer’s business environment that is gained through knowledge of their objectives and outcomes.

To do this, MITRE staff needed to collect a substantial amount of information in order to understand the customer environment. This information included:

- Understanding the customer’s mission and origin (Law, Exec Order, policy, etc.)
- Determine the strategic outcomes the customer is seeking to achieve
- Learn who are the customer’s end-users and stakeholders
- Understand the customer’s capabilities, budget/ economic factors, and governance
- Discover factors that influence their outcomes, including innovation and technology
- Understanding the current political, legal, and regulatory trends
- Determine if there are ecological factors
- Understand workforce challenges

MITRE staff needed to understand how to identify resources to answer those questions, collect the information, disseminate, analyze and organize it to better understand their customer environment. A process was needed to build the information picture.

MITRE’s InfoServices stepped in and changed the game.

MITRE’s InfoServices is comprised of information professionals whose goal is to provide access to information resources, both open source and licensed content; perform research and analysis; and steward information in the support of MITRE’s work program. Our analysts are located in Bedford, Massachusetts and McLean, Virginia.
Our service portfolio is supported by three teams.

**InfoDesk Services** is the first point of contact for answers to research questions, document delivery, and other project related work.

**Custom Research and Knowledge Management Services** includes subject matter experts in all areas related to the MITRE work programs. Many of our information analysts are embedded and assigned to specific project teams and provide focused research and analysis on multiple subjects.

**Information Resources Suite** deploys the paid external information resources to all of MITRE. The team negotiates with the information suppliers and ensures that the information resources - an extensive listing of electronic journals, electronic books and databases - are easy to locate and use.

To support MITRE’s engagement goal, InfoServices created an Environmental Scan Service. By repackaging our competencies and knowledge in this service, we are able to support the corporation’s new information needs.

Steps in the Environmental Scan Service include:

- Starting with a question; the first step defines the information MITRE staff need to know about their customers.
- The next step builds a foundation of understanding through the use of current awareness. We promote internal current awareness services and alerting tools.
- Then expand the scope using internal resources and human intelligence.
- Gap analysis is conducted along with topical external research.
- The final step repeats the process building on the information foundation. It is much like building a puzzle, the more pieces added, the clearer the picture becomes.

![Figure 1](image_url)

**Figure 1**
The process, Figure 1, allowed for MITRE staff to collect information themselves and/or work with information analysts embedded across MITRE. As information professionals we intuitively understand the process of constructing information to understand meaning. We created a process that was easy to understand and use and provided the information analyst support needed to accomplish the goal.

Our embedded customer relationships and partnerships were instrumental in understanding MITRE’s information needs to create the environmental scans. Information analysts are embedded across MITRE; their role is to work with MITRE staff to understand their domain area, resources and anticipate their information needs. This in-depth understanding of MITRE’s work programs was helpful in identifying the information needed for an environmental scan. Current awareness products already existed because of the analysts embedded in domain areas. These products created the foundation from which to begin research and further analysis.

Information analysts delivered a portfolio of information and developed SharePoint sites to organize and store documents. We worked with 16 different MITRE teams; the ideal partnership included a MITRE team member, an embedded analyst and a member of the InfoDesk staff. The embedded analyst had the advantage of already understanding the customer environment and could locate the information quickly and easily. Links and information pulled directly from documents was delivered in templates. Lengthy documents were stored in SharePoint. Approximately 20 hours of analyst time was devoted to each of the scans.

InfoServices also developed a Research Guide using SpringShare’s LibGuides, Figure 2 below. The guide provided a starting point for teams who wanted to pull information together on their own, to use the process, and to begin using the pinpointed resources to help them get started.

In conclusion, InfoServices developed a successful service and supporting tools to enable MITRE to accomplish its goals. Our embedded relationship with our MITRE customers is instrumental in understanding MITRE’s information needs, and solid knowledge management
best practice is ensured by involving InfoServices. Our products and services, especially the
development of the environmental scans directly contributed to a shift in perspective within
MITRE that has resulted in new work opportunities. Our involvement directly impacted
MITRE’s ability to accomplish its goals and we were recognized for “changing the game.”