

# **Trace the Sound: The Workbook**

## **The MICE Practice Guide**

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## What this is

MICE stands for Metacognitive Interceptive Creative Enquiry. It asks one question of whatever is already ringing in you: where is the sound coming from?

The book makes the case for that question. These six pages are the practice. One sound, traced from the first tightening to the last line, in about ten minutes.

Nothing here asks for a cushion, a quiet room, or a free evening. A pen and one sound will do. It works on a bus.

And none of this is required. MICE is normally run in the head, on the move, in the time it takes to cross a street, and that is the way it is meant to live. These pages exist for two kinds of occasion: for people who think better with a pen in hand, and for the first few times, when starting is the hard part and a blank line helps more than good intentions. Once the question runs on its own, the paper can go in a drawer. It will not be offended. Print it, or fill it in on screen. Then do it again tomorrow, on a different sound. The traffic will vary. The protocol will not.

One note before you start. This works on good sounds too, and that may be the most underused page in the book. A sudden lightness, a warmth, a moment when the world briefly fits: trace that as well. Not to audit it, but to find where it comes from, and stand there a little longer.

## The Method on One Page

### A short vocabulary

The signal is what happened: the unanswered message, the pause in a conversation, the bus pulling away.

Neutral, silent, meaning nothing yet.

The sound is what it became in you before you were consulted: the tightening, the flatness, the sudden warmth, the here we go again.

The inspector is the part of you that closes cases fast, from thin evidence, and files the result as fact. He works around the clock, free of charge, and he is usually right. He is not on trial here.

The shelf is where a conclusion goes once it stops being the news and becomes one version among several. It is the one piece of furniture this method installs rather than discovers.

### The four steps

1. Hear the sound. Something rings. Name the loudest in one word. Without a name, nothing can be traced.
2. Trace it. Where is this from? Whose voice, since when, on what evidence? At the source there is almost always a sentence. Congratulate the inspector, sincerely, and shelve it. First, noted. Not only.
3. Walk in, then build company. Ride the dark version past its own last stop until it acquires details, because details have sizes and sizes can be looked at. Then give it neighbours: the reasonable ones, the golden ones, the ridiculous ones from the far end of the shelf. Give each one its second of body.
4. Return to the present. Take a version deliberately, the way a captain chooses a heading, or take none and let the case stay open. The day will testify when it is ready.

*Worksheet I runs steps one and two. Worksheet II runs step three. Worksheet III runs step four.*

# Worksheet I: The Trace

Date and time: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. The sound

What is ringing right now? One word: fear, heaviness, flatness, warmth, relief.

\_\_\_\_\_

Where in the body, and when did it clock in? \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. The signal

What actually happened, in the plainest words available. Only what a camera would have caught. No adjectives, no meaning yet.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 3. The sentence at the source

Trace the sound, and write down whatever you find waiting there, in its own wording, exactly as it phrases itself.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Change its title

Before a single further question, one thing has to happen, and it has to happen out loud. That sentence is not the news. It is a version: one hypothesis, from one desk, submitted first. Every word of it stays. Only the title changes, and the title was doing all the work. Write it again under its new title.

Version one: \_\_\_\_\_

Now the congratulation, and not as a formality. It arrived in under a second, from what was at hand,  
unprompted and free of charge, from a department with a long and respectable record. Fast work. Thank you.  
Onto the shelf, face out, papers and all.

**First, noted. Not only.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

### **5. The three questions**

Now, and only now. These are asked of a document on a shelf, not of you. Three questions, and they end:  
answered, filed, done. If the asking has no bottom, that is a different game.

Who drafted this? Whose voice, from where?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Since when? When was it first heard?

\_\_\_\_\_

On what evidence? Include the parts that came from someone else's story.

What for, and in what state? Not is it true, but what did the drafter want, and under what conditions: tired,  
hurried, late at night, etc?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Worksheet II: The Shelf

*The shape of this page is borrowed from intelligence work. In Richards Heuer's Analysis of Competing Hypotheses, written for the CIA, the analyst lists every hypothesis including the improbable ones, lays them side by side, and walks each piece of evidence past all of them at once. One difference: Heuer wants his hypotheses mutually exclusive, because a finding must choose. The shelf is not a finding, and versions here may be true together.*

## 1. Walk into the dark one, all the way

Take the hypothesis from Worksheet I and ride its own line past the terminus. What happens after the worst thing? And after that? Keep going until it acquires details, because a fear with edges has a size.

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## 2. Build company, and give each version a second of body

H1 is the first hypothesis, copied over from Worksheet I. H2 is a reasonable alternative. H3 is a golden one. H4 comes from the far end of the shelf, where the telescopes live. Four is the number of lines that fit on a page, not a quota, and the order is a suggestion rather than a rota. Take as many versions as come, in whatever order. The shelf has never once complained about the seating. Write one line per version, present tense, with something in it you could see, hear or taste. The cake is lemon. A version that stays a word on a list is furniture.

H1: \_\_\_\_\_

H2: \_\_\_\_\_

H3: \_\_\_\_\_

H4: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. The evidence walk

List what you actually have, then mark every version against every piece. **C** if consistent with that version, **I** if inconsistent, **N** if it says nothing either way.

|    |  | H1 | H2 | H3 | H4 |
|----|--|----|----|----|----|
| E1 |  |    |    |    |    |
| E2 |  |    |    |    |    |
| E3 |  |    |    |    |    |
| E4 |  |    |    |    |    |

Which version collected the fewest I marks? In Heuer's method the one to watch is not the best supported version, it is the one with the least evidence against it. Any piece that scored the same in every column sorted nothing: it was atmosphere doing the work of a witness.

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# Worksheet III: The Heading, and the Gap in the Archive

## 1. The signature

*A captain sails the same sea as a piece of driftwood, and often in the same weather. The entire difference between them is that one of them has a signature on the course.*

Which version am I taking, deliberately, for today? Or none, and the case stays open?

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Why this one, what it is for, and what it will cost?

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And the costume that comes with it. Inside this version, how do I stand, what do I ask for, what do I dare?

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Signed and dated: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. The gap in the archive

Shortage files itself, in bold, the moment it happens. The other side arrives unrecorded, because the inspector's standing orders never said log the sunlight. So this last box is not a task. It is filing.

One thing from today that went right, or was given, or simply fit. Write it with a body: the cup, the chair, the light on the wall, the particular fullness of an hour when nothing at all was missing.

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Now trace that sound too. Where did it come from?

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*From Trace the Sound by Dee McSimon, MD, PhD. The method is MICE: Metacognitive Interceptive Creative Enquiry.*