

Tool	Key Actor Profile
<p><b>What It Is</b></p> <p>I don't like that man. I must get to know him better. —Abraham Lincoln</p>	<p>This tool outlines the interests and background of key actors in a conflict. It applies equally to Principal Decision Makers (PDMs), Influencers, and Experts.</p> <p>The format outlines a series of questions that, when answered, are organized into 5- to 10-page document. The main elements of the document are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name and headshot</li> <li>▪ Personal Background</li> <li>▪ Personality Outline</li> <li>▪ Career History</li> <li>▪ Notable Quotes</li> <li>▪ Links to additional resources including pieces the Key Actor authored</li> </ul>
<p><b>What to Use It For</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A Key Actor Profile helps you better understand who the person is and what their interests are.</li> <li>▪ Preparation can improve your ability to empathize and thereby negotiate with them.</li> <li>▪ It can also help you identify ways to influence their decisions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How It Works</b></p>	<p>Step 1. <b>Let your questions guide you.</b> This exploratory research is fueled by empathy and driven by curiosity. What initially piqued your interest in this person? What are you seeking to understand about them? What information could give you a sense of who they are and what they care about?</p> <p>Listing biographical data about someone isn't enough to reveal the intangible motivations that drive their behavior. Find evidence that substantiates their needs, desires, concerns, fears, and aspirations. Avoid cherry-picking and use a variety of data points to shape your understanding of who this person is, what their interests are and how they are influenced.</p> <p>Step 2. <b>Gather information from a variety of trusted sources.</b> Drawing on long-form journalism will save you time and effort. You're creating an internal document that will not be published, so feel free to copy word-for-word. In fact, doing so can help preserve subtleties that might otherwise</p>

get lost in translation. As you read through articles, collect as much text about the Key Actor as possible in one document. It's likely that the amount you gather will exceed 15 pages initially before you review and edit it down.

### Examples of News Sources of Long-Form Articles

#### News

Aljazeera  
 BBC  
 Financial Times  
 The Guardian  
 The New York Times  
 Politico  
 The Washington Post  
 Vanity Fair

#### Magazines

The Atlantic  
 The Economist  
 Foreign Affairs  
 Foreign Policy  
 Newsweek  
 The New Yorker  
 The New York Times (+ NYT Magazine)

Step 3. **Categorize the information.** Once you've collected data from at least 5 trusted sources, read through everything and group the text into broad categories. Useful categories typically include

- **Key Actor's Full Name** and a recent headshot; place this at the top of the document
- **Personal Background** (family, education, formative experiences),
- **Personality** (traits, proclivities, opinions)
- **Career History** (organizations, titles, date ranges),
- **Preferred Sources of Information** (not only what they regularly attend to but also their preferred media for information)
- **Quotes** (by the PDM or about the PDM from someone who knows them firsthand)
- **Articles** (links to pieces they wrote).
- **Interests** (see Step 4, below)

Details and substantiation are important. Validate assumptions and conclusions with evidence and specific examples

- Step 4. **Identify interests that is, needs, desires, concerns, and fears).** The most powerful interests are basic human needs. If you can address their basic needs, you increase the chance of reaching an agreement. Consider the following:
- **Security** (e.g., concern for the safety of their entity, organization, family, and/or associates)
  - **Prosperity** e.g., (the economic well-being of their family, friends, and/or community or organization)
  - **Recognition** (e.g., the celebration – and press coverage and public acclaim – for their achievements)
  - **Fairness** (e.g., concerns for equity, justice, or equality)
  - **Certainty** (e.g., desire for predictability or assurance around coming events such an election or the outcome of a negotiation)
  - **Autonomy** (e.g., unconstrained agency or interference by external actors)
  - **Belonging** (e.g., the experience of camaraderie that comes from being part of a larger collective or particular group)
- Step 5. **Discover patterns.** As you organize the document, pay close attention to patterns that emerge. Consider creating subcategories to spotlight themes. Bold or highlight important details.
- Step 6. **Get feedback and refine.** It can be helpful to share the initial draft with colleagues who can help illuminate your blind spots. They may invite new perspectives or notice additional patterns. If you're creating this profile to inform someone else, they might ask for more detail on specific aspects. Iterate on this profile until it achieves its purpose.

Step 7. **Reflect on their BATNA.** Based on the entirety of what you have learned, reflect on their options, both the ones likely to appeal and the ones they would be likely to reject (and why). Identify their potential BATNA (Best Alternatives to a Negotiated Agreement) in case a resolution is not achieved.

### Timing

Assuming information is readily available, background research and a first draft of a **Key Actor Profile** can be completed in about a day. However, that is just a first draft. You can expect to iterate the document regularly over the course of the work as new information becomes available and as a result of your interactions with Key Actors and others in their networks.

### Keep in Mind

- When researching a Key Actor, use *their* language. Direct quotes illustrate their hopes, dreams, needs, and fears. This will deepen your understanding of what drives them.
- Writing down a Key Actor's interests will enable you to easily remember, prioritize and refine them as you learn new information.
- Once you create profiles for each Key Actor, you can compare their interests and discuss which are shared, compatible or conflicting. This might help you identify the Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA).
- These profiles can strengthen the accuracy of your *Victory Speeches* and help you connect with people on a human level when meeting with them.