Terrorist cells identified

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My passion is solving puzzles. I start with a massive, jumbled heap of data, and I analyze it to identify people to target. I cultivated my expertise in the daunting field of criminal intelligence, where I developed methods for targeting suspects.

Over the years I have been involved in remarkable cases. The challenges have been steep. But the methods I developed were proven. They helped make the world a safer place.

My colleagues and I have started to apply those methods in a very different field—marketing—so as to greatly improve ways to identify people who are best to target for marketing messages. The result is a huge lift in response rates—including sales, product inquiries, clicks, market share, and retention—and therefore marketing ROI.

The methods are based on SNA (social network analysis) and predictive analysis identifiers of who will do what next. The SNA underpinning means we look for connections in the data. We also predict connections and influence flows between people and things such as addresses, phone numbers, websites, locations, and timings. The methods are described elsewhere (see www.PeerAnalytics.com.au).

The analytical principles I developed and used to create SNA software is now used by TK TYPES OF COMPANIES. But before major companies began using it to effectively target customers, I employed it in the most heart-rending and dramatic case in my career: discerning the identities of the people who committed one of the Asia Pacific's most frightening and impactful terrorist attacks.

The Bali Bombers

The Bali bombings occurred in 2002.

Two hundred and two people were killed when bombs exploded in a populated tourist and nightclub district on the island of Bali, Indonesia. Including Eighty-eight Australians killed, 38 Indonesians, and five Swedish citizens. Another 240 people were injured.

The Australian Federal Police, or AFP, used the SNA-type software I had developed in the investigation. Using our software to analyze mobile-phone data, the Australian and Indonesian police gained a clear picture of the messaging that had taken place before, during, and after the explosions. (As a point of clarification, the data did not reveal the message content, but instead the linking of people and events).

Particularly revealing was information as to who had been involved. With that information came more information, such as the other bombers' identities and the sequence of activities over time, including the detonation of a bomb by one of the mobile phones.

Three principal Bali bombers who were executed in 2008

It was later alleged and supported in court that the architect of the attacks was Al Qaeda's chief representative and senior planner in Southeast Asia. This person was known as Hambali. He was also the operations chief of an infamous terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiya. Hambali was also believed to have been involved in the 2003 Marriott Hotel bombings in Jakarta, and he facilitated a key meeting in Malaysia in 2000 that included two of the 9/11 hijackers, and an associate of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

Soon after the Bali bombings, a recorded voice message supposedly from Osama bin Laden stated that the Bali attacks were in direct retaliation for support of the United States' war on terror and Australia's role in the liberation of East Timor.

Three bombs were detonated: a device mounted on a backpack carried by a suicide bomber, a large car bomb (both of which were detonated in or near popular nightclubs), and a smaller device detonated outside the U.S. consulate.

The police used our software to investigate the incoming data as quickly as possible. They paid particular attention to the mobile phone records of a large number of suspects and many other entities to help identify the key person or persons responsible. Linkage—mobile phone and otherwise—showed that a vast amount of activity had occurred at especially pertinent times before, during, and after the bombings.

When I was later shown the data analysis and the timings of a string of events, it was most impressive and very revealing. The analysis showed which parties had interacted at crucial times and with whom, both directly and indirectly. Most importantly, it enabled the police to identify key suspects who were subsequently tried and convicted.

The three principal terrorists identified by the software (and shown in the picture above) were executed by firing squad in 2008. A person called "the genius," believed to be responsible for detonating one of the Bali bombs by using a mobile phone, was killed in a shootout with police that same year.