



**Does anyone in Tricorn Corporate Analytics  
know what it is that they actually do?**

Harassed intern, Lucy Brewerton, is about to  
find out.

## The Analyst's New Codes

As her eyes focused on the glossy panorama that rolled itself out in front of Tricorn's fifteenth floor offices, Lucy felt her mind drift. Her elevated view-point presented the city as highly coloured and miniaturised, as if it had been designed by a Lego-obsessive. It looked clean and orderly, but she knew that the truth, at street-level, was somewhat different.

She took a deep breath. The moist underarm, heart trilling pervasive sense of panic that she had become used to ever since accepting the internship at Tricorn was returning.

Daniel's voice barked at her from the end of the corridor, making her jump.

'Lucy! We need to go over the Peverill Account!'

She wiped away the bloom of sweat that had appeared on her top lip. 'Coming Daniel.'

'Quickly, I've only got five minutes to talk you through the prep for the meeting at 3.'

She trotted down the corridor and into the air-conditioned comfort of his office. 'So, what do you want me to do for the meeting?'

He looked at her and frowned. 'What do you think?' he said, impatiently, 'I've done the analysis and I need you to tabulise the indicators and strategise a summary.'

'I,' she hesitated, should she say it? She had to. 'I'm sorry but I'm not sure I have quite got my head around this area of work, I've only had a brief induction, and I've not got a good level of understanding yet.'

Daniel sat down in his leather swivel chair with a grunt. 'We've got a long waiting list of people who want internships here, if you don't think you're up for it, there's plenty of people who are.'

She felt herself colour; she wasn't stupid, her university result proved that; but the work they did at Tricorn felt like a dark-art. With every question she asked to try to get clarity, the more layers of complexity and opacity she uncovered. 'I just feel I might need a little more...coaching on this?'

Daniel glared at her and ran a tanned, manicured hand through his thinning light-brown hair. 'Apply S.M.A.R.T to it. That's my advice.'

'I'm sorry, I'm not great on acronyms, can you remind me what that stands for?'

He went to say something then stuttered slightly. 'Serious.' He said, finally. 'Mindful...Analysed...Real Targets. Just apply them.'

'Oh, ok.' That really didn't sound right to her. 'Thanks.'

'I've emailed the spreadsheet to you. It needs a bit of tidying up, but I've done most of the work. I've decided *you* can present it,' he said, airily, 'be a good CPD opportunity.' He flashed an insincere, joyless grin then dismissed her with a wave of his hand.

The hot air in the open plan office was filled with the urgent noises of phone-chatter and keyboard clicks. Lucy tried to concentrate on the spreadsheet in front of her; but although, independently, the words made sense – words like 'learning', 'profile', 'focused' and 'collateral'; together they seemed to morph into a language that might as well have been Klingon, or Elvish. What, for example, was an 'Implementation matrix' or a 'gap-analysis framework?'

She struggled on, time moved remorselessly forward, and with each passing minute her sense of panic increased. Her breathing became thin and strained, her mind seemed to have turned into blancmange, she was sure she could smell something acrid coming from her armpits. She looked around her in despair, no-one looked back; everyone else seemed to understand what they were doing. Could she really be the only one? *Why oh why did I choose this internship?* She thought for about the hundredth time that month. As she continued to debate this, and stare, with unseeing eyes, at the spreadsheet on the screen in front of her, she had an epiphany. It came over her with a delicious shudder; and when it did, it made such sense that she simply couldn't believe she hadn't thought of it before. She turned back to her laptop screen with a new sense of vigour and motivation.

When she entered the board-room she looked around the table at the procession of cleanly shaven faces; from the taut and young to the old and sagging, and smiled brightly. Daniel stood to introduce her.

'Everyone, I would like to introduce you to Lucy Brewerton. Our most recent intern. She is going to present Tricorn's analysis of Peverill's future progression opportunities. And don't worry,' he wagged a finger at them, 'I didn't leave such an important piece of work to a mere intern,' there was a low ripple of laughter, 'I strategized it myself and have just asked Lucy to pull it into presentable order.' He looked up at her sharply. 'Isn't that right Lucy?'

Lucy glanced back at him and smiled sweetly. 'Oh yes, Daniel, absolutely. This really is entirely your work. Word-for-word.' Daniel nodded, sat down and wiped his forehead with an ironed handkerchief.

'So!' Lucy plugged her laptop into the overhead projector. 'If I can just ask you gentlemen, to look at the screen.' There was a silence, punctuated only by the soft whirring of the IT equipment, and then a brightly coloured chart appeared. 'So, as you can see, I have adopted a different presentation model for today. It's called a brain-map-code-o-

graph.' There was a ripple of approving noises from around the room. 'I've taken Daniel's original spreadsheet and collateralised it into an information-hub model,' she paused, 'as you can see?'

Daniel nodded enthusiastically. 'Yes, excellent, Lucy. I had been thinking of using one of those myself but hadn't got around to downloading the software yet with all the deadlines recently.'

There was a flurry of activity by the glass door to the board-room as a young woman, pushing a trolley full of coffees and pastries backed into the room.

'Thank you, ' said Daniel, irritably, 'please set it up in the corner.' There was a clatter of china as the drinks trolley went over the projector cables. 'And *quietly*, if at all possible?'. The young woman looked at him blankly. She was chewing gum and had headphones in her ears. Daniel turned back to Lucy. 'Carry on, please do, Lucy.'

'Thank you, Daniel. So,' she pointed at the central bubble on her chart; 'I've taken Daniel's core indicators; the "now" and "then" of the analysis, if you like;' she glanced round at the group expectantly; an air of taut concentration had filled the room. 'And then,' she pointed to the slightly smaller bubbles connected off to right and left by double-ended arrows, 'I've over-sighted the granular indicators of *risk*, *importance* and *market relevance*.' A few heads nodded sagely. 'You could say I've taken a light-touch to this, but I thought it was important to properly profile the behaviour-functions in terms of the increasing obesity of the markets. I think you'll agree, that Daniel was very wise to include these assessment codes into his initial analysis?'

'Oh yes,' said the Tricorn CEO. 'Very wise in the circumstances.'

A thin man, to Daniel's right; held his hand up tentatively. Lucy beamed and brandished her pointer at him. 'Yes, you have a question?'

'Erm, yes. Lucas Smith, Systems Director.' There was a silence as the man adjusted his glasses and peered down at his notes. 'Can you tell us more about the bubble to the top right? The one labelled *organisational outcome generator*?'

'Ah, I'm glad you asked me that. Although that isn't in the central cortex of the plan, it is still fundamental to the analysis, as Daniel's spreadsheet made clear to me. In order to mobilise a focused approach to our market diversity profiles and ensure value for money; it's important to ensure our indices of progress are aligned to Peverill's strategic vision. Hence the outcome generator.' She stared at Lucas eagerly.

There was a short, breathless silence, and Lucas loosened his tie. 'Yes, yes of course!' he finally conceded. 'Very good idea, Daniel.'

Daniel shrugged and raised his eyebrows. 'Well you know, been in the old business a long-time now Lucas. Nothing gets past me!' Daniel

glanced at her then, and his startled expression reminded her of a fox's face, caught in the sweep of a car's headlights on a dark road.

Lucy turned back to her laptop and tapped through to the next slide. 'So, in summary, a table outlining the embedded culture required to fuel our strategic functions –'

'Excuse me.' The girl's slightly nasal voice caused every head in to turn. No-one had noticed, until now, that she was still in the room. She stood with one hand on the handle of a coffee pot, the other on her hip. Her head-phones had been removed and hung around her neck, and her jaw was moving rhythmically to the chewing of gum. 'Sorry, but what you're saying. It don't make any sense.'

Lucy smiled at the young woman but said nothing in reply. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Daniel shifting in his seat.

'I mean, I know I didn't go to university or nuffink, but I speak English, and this ain't English. What's it mean anyway? What does any of it mean?'

'Ah,' said Lucy, dramatically. 'The million-dollar question. What does any of it mean?'

'It's like,' the girl went on, fitting her words between chews on her gum, 'it's like someone wants to sound clever, but they ain't really. Like they're saying something really important; but really they're saying nuffink at all.'

'Ha ha!' blurted out Daniel, 'very funny. We can serve our own coffees, thank you. No need to stay. These are very complex areas, and we wouldn't expect you to understand.'

Lucy shook her head dramatically. 'But you understand, don't you Daniel?'

'I, yes, yes of course I do.'

The Peverill CEO turned to Daniel. 'Perhaps you should finish off for us then Daniel, summarise?'

She could have stayed, she could have taken perverse pleasure in watching him squirm, but instead, she got up, nodded her goodbyes to the men and left the room. Out in the corridor she noticed the lift door was open. She ran over to catch it and found the coffee girl in there, pinned up against the back wall of the lift by her trolley.

'You made it all up, didn't ya?'

Lucy smiled and nodded.

'Ain't you going to tell them?'

'What's the point, they already know.'

'But if they already know, why are they still there? Why are they still talking?'

Lucy shrugged. 'Because they need to feel that what they do is important?'

'It was like the Emperor's New Clothes.'

'Sorry?'

'Y'know, the fairy story. My gran used to read it to me. This stupid, vain Emperor gets tricked by a con-man into thinkin' he's made him this amazin' new outfit, out of gold thread, and rubies and things; but really he's got nothin' on.'

Lucy laughed. 'I remember that! Everyone goes along with it because they don't want to seem stupid, and then a little boy shouts out that he's naked and suddenly everyone admits it and they jeer at him.'

'So, do you think that's what they're doing now? Taking the piss out of him?'

Lucy shook her head. 'I doubt it. They're all part of the same club. If you show one up, you show them all up.'

'What about you? Will you get fired?'

'I don't know, maybe I could keep going and making things up, and then...?'

The young woman smiled craftily. 'You should try it, see how far you can go?'

Lucy smoothed down her skirt and thought for a moment. 'Maybe I should.'

When the lift hit the ground-floor Lucy got out first so that the young woman could push the trolley out. She smiled. 'It was nice to meet you.'

'And you. Maybe I'll see you soon...if you come back.'

Lucy smiled, then crossed the lobby, pushed through the heavy glass doors and stepped onto the street. She took a deep breath. The city smelt good.

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