

CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE AND CRIMINOLOGY IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Negative marketing: The “wicked arts” to try to discredit the competitor

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Normally when we speak about criminology what comes to mind are the basic specialties of forensic science such as graphistics and documentoscopy, fingerprinting, ballistics, forensic analytic, accident and arson analysis. Not many years ago computer forensics was also included in criminology and now with the expansion of the internet and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, criminologists have had to renew their research skills in the behavior on the net, converging aspects of anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, and graphoanalysis so as to be able to catch the motives, maneuvers or strategies, and the camouflaged true identity of the ideological author, being that it is very well known that criminal organizations have progressively developed their activity on the net at an alarming rate.

Putting products at eye level to promote them in a supermarket is legal and forms part of a concept in marketing which is accepted even by consumers. Submitting a curriculum vitae in which we visually organize information so as to place priority on some information, be it academic or professional, for example by reversing the chronology so as to put emphasis on a more recent title and position, also forms part of fair and ethical marketing. This product location is simply an attractive presentation aimed at the selector in the same way as someone who prepares an attractive, creative curriculum vitae for jobs that require inventiveness, originality, design capacity, etc.

But what would we say if we want to hire someone and discover that their curriculum vitae is “padded” or full of lies? A few days ago the director of an important multinational hotel expressed his anger after having interviewed a candidate that was sent to him by a headhunter. The candidate’s curriculum vitae declared his competence in various languages, but during the interview it became clear that this was not the case. It is clear that exaggerating on curriculum vitae can initially attract interest for a specific candidate; however lying has very negative repercussions when it is discovered. Correctly so, many companies require candidates to fill out and sign a questionnaire while waiting to do the job interview. This questionnaire includes a section stating that all of the

given information is accurate and true and that this is a condition affecting the validity of any possible contract.

Exaggeration, aggrandizement or embellishment is committing an error, but if the bad faith is done with malicious intent like in the case we once found, in which all of the curriculum vitae was a word for word copy of a curriculum vitae of another person who was suitable for the position, changing only personal information, then we have a criminal act. Interestingly, this individual was able to pass the psychometrical tests and the interview. However, suspicions were raised by the graphology which caused detectives to go through a fact checking process. What began as nothing more than a pre-labor report, turned into a full blown private investigation upon finding so many falsifications. In reality, this was a case of industrial espionage, the miscreant wanted to be hired by the company to take advantage of the first few days of work to copy all of the company's digital information before the company could discover his falsifications.

Unfortunately, it is much easier to capture a liar within an institution than out in the open. There are freelance professionals with no scruples that have learnt these "wicked arts" and are capable of including belonging to institutions, associations, and even having degrees or responsibilities; all of which are not true, in their submissions. Such was the case of a woman who was successful in

entering a federation of associations under the pretense of being a coordinator of a Master program, while never having even taken said Master. Or another woman from Bilbao who in her dictum presented herself as a member of the AGC of Spain when it was not true. Or a young man who presented himself on the net as a graduate of the BAU and when I called him asking him what class he was from because I did not remember him, he told me that it had been a mistake. However, one of our partners was already considering contracting him for a research position under the assumption that this young man had been a former student of the BAU. Fortunately this partner contacted me beforehand and did not end up hiring this individual.

How many times have we heard the following phrase? "I don't know this person, but since he is a friend of a friend of mine I befriended him on Facebook". Later it turns out that the person who originally accepted him doesn't know why he befriended this individual either and doesn't have any guarantee about him, but now the entire group is already contaminated. This situation confirms the saying that "the friends of my friends are not necessarily my friends" This is even more relevant in the applications of some professionals or marketing firms which use search programs and contacting applications based on specialties; then because of the good manners of those contacted, some of their petitions are accepted in a term popularly called *follow back*. Clearly professionals

who manipulate the situations this way in order to find clients or gain credibility, demonstrate a lack of moral and ethical principles.

We have seen how we can go from a simple attractive way of presenting the truth, to an embellished or touched up biased version of the truth (exaggerating positions held or the degree of importance or even the omission of information; for example in the case of companies where the employee had some conflict or was fired), up until the case of falsifying a curriculum vitae with the intention of committing industrial espionage. In another case we identified an individual who did not forge a curriculum vitae, but rather had the patience to build the trust of others by acting as a “sleeper” until the time came to “inform” an international criminal organization which was clearly very well organized. Here this was no longer a question of personal gain or even that of a small or medium sized business.

Going on, postmodernism and the social networks have brought about new methods of that which is referred to as negative marketing. That is: trying to besmirch the image of those who are considered as possible competitors, in order to emphasize that “greatness” of themselves or being chosen in the end, as the maliciously tainted competitor has been eliminated.

This not so new practice in the United States is something that took us by surprise in Europe. However, as in all things related to the Internet, it obliges one to quickly retrain and relearn and in the end it is as if we had done an intensive practical Master in delinquency in the social networks. From a criminalistics point of view in the social-professional area we have been able to transcend that what would be a simple “*Troll*” (a provocateur who gets pleasure out of making others angry through insults or someone who says something negative just to get a reaction out of others without any business interest) and contrast this with, for example, the subtle criminal activity of unethical competition, understanding how they identify those possible competitors, how they get their resources and contacts, and finally how they go about discrediting the reputation of others.

In essence, we could consider from a criminalistics point of view, three degrees of negative marketing that set out to discredit the reputation of the competitor:

1st) Look for the weaknesses, the negative aspects that can be found either directly or indirectly, sometimes by utilizing the enemy of a competitor. In this case these negative aspects of the victim are emphasized and become public knowledge.

2nd) A greater degree, when unable to find any negative or damaging information. A trap can

also be set to see if the victim falls into temptation and then later blackmail the victim.

3rd) In those cases where honesty and firm moral and ethical convictions create an unsurmountable barrier for the criminal, it is easy for them to create rumors or stories that can diminish the good reputation of the victim. One example can be to try to make others think that the victim is unfaithful; so the others take for granted that the victim has had a number of affairs. We even know of a case of an older African American man, ex-apprentice of tricks in the US Navy who currently is a scout and preparer of tricks to gain access to personal data by request of individuals who are truly racist, but it is good for these people to be in charge of a slave. So it looks as if the victim has had an affair with this black man, something completely ridiculous if one investigates the story, but in the moment that it hits the Internet it can appear credible. Such was the case of a photo of President Obama's wife when the people and media were completely wrong when speaking of her anger due to her husband laughing with another woman at Mandela's funeral. The objective of this is to put in question the honor of the victim and at the same time break his spirit, provoking depression, something which in those individuals who do not have a great inner strength and who are going through a rough period in their lives can even bring about suicide. On the other hand when the victim has high self-esteem and is able to be persistent, this method backfires on the aggressors as it is based on a lie without any consistency and in the end the attackers are discredited.

The Internet has created a need and no professional or business can go without virtual communication. Google manages some 25 million gigabytes of information each day and in this context of *big data*, new strategies in relations and new offenses are emerging. We have seen a facet of the dark side in the Snowden case, but we also know that in some more constructive cases the analysis of these data bases are turned to, to fight epidemics. For example, for a specific illness or a serious virus in which the WHO calls for the help of those Internet giants to find areas where some focal point might appear and could be discovered based on the type of questions asked about certain symptoms or medications in the different search engines and their geographical locations.

Impunity for rising criminal activity on the net with virtual information is leading many to cry out for some definite regulation. Authorities in the Justice Department, such as the eminent international jurist Ramon J. Moles, have been trying for some time to open roads to legislation and international cooperation being that until internet users have the veracity of the people's identities guaranteed or said identities registered in respect to many actions that remain anonymous, the abuses, attacks, etc. will worsen under the cowardly disguise that many delinquents and individuals with inferiority

complexes act.

In this sense and from **criminal intelligence as a specialty of criminology** we can also examine the progressive seriousness in marketing with respect to profiles:

1.-Acceptable case of marketing and advertising: Using your friends and family to promote yourself. In this case it is like that of showing a product in the best light or that of paying an advertising agency to place an ad that highlights the best that you have to offer.

2.-Cases which are no longer considered ethically acceptable, which enter into the area which jurists categorize as an offence. Recruit and pay anonymous individuals to visit a forum and write favorable or supporting remarks for the contracting party. More and more internet users are becoming suspicious of inflated figures of "visits" or of "friends" as there have been real public information campaigns on the issue of renting or hiring people in bulk. Some politicians have used these methods which have in some cases ended up being a double edged sword. These methods can work against one because at times it becomes quite clear that the profiles are of individuals who are in third world countries; these people do not really understand anything, but allow themselves to be bought for a little food on their plates. Criminals also develop what is known as "profile farms", which in general are either false or distorted online profiles. It should be noted that recent sociological studies have shown that currently 86% of internet users are suspicious of these figures and that the remaining 14% can easily be impressed by these kinds of figures, or have little skill on the Internet, or that their user level is so downright low that they can be influenced by any trend.

3.-Cases that are clearly criminal: recruit individuals without their consent or "zombies", indirect collaborators or "shoes", or invent people who do the dirty work. In this case we are not talking about speaking well of the director of the list or forum, but rather trying to discredit the competition. Such was the case, for example, in the early stages of forums or distribution lists in which by forensic socio-linguistics it was clearly seen that certain pseudonyms or names were false as they coincided in their manner of speaking with that of, for example, the very own director of the list or forum. Later, as even the perpetrators noticed that their multiple personalities were too obvious, even more so with the arrival of Facebook and Twitter, a new phenomenon, which has been extensively studied by sociologists, occurred - the hiring of individuals for this dirty work. Surprisingly, as there are many older people in the United States who have problems with their retirement pensions it becomes easy to get them to carry out these tasks at a low cost, almost as if they were in a poor country. We are now seeing that adolescents are being tempted into these positions so that they can pay for drugs and alcohol. Last year we detected both types of these cases with retired people and young people. While it is bad to take advantage of people in the third world it is even more deplorable to do so with people with Down Syndrome whose previous contact was carried out through entities or associations promising false help or collaboration. For example, the case of the former member of the US Navy that entered the clan through another member of the Armed Services, later dedicated to *Toastmaster*, whose dirty tricks that were learned in the Navy were applied to stealing information utilizing the Internet.

A few days ago the previously mentioned criminal organization that has the support of an internet radio station and an English group with a presence in Facebook boasted about getting, in very little time, more than 15,000 contacts (it goes without saying that knowing this sector, it is impossible that they were able to achieve this in a legit manner). The promoters are in the United States with their objective being to discredit some competitors in a subtle manner. They suggested a theme such as jealousy of one's children in respect to their parents; one of the people in charge in Spain marked that he "*liked*" it. Later a contact from India linked this to a first name. The end result was that outside observers who followed the steps had the sensation of a connection between "sons' and daughters' (children's) jealousy" and a leader of a profession who has two children who now run that business and these people received all of the negative considerations derived from this interrelation that arose in an almost quasi subliminal manner.

One not so subtle method is that of psychological torture tried by some fans of criminal marketing by means of anti-coaching. For example a delinquent from Bilbao took interest in posting, on specifically important family dates such as a wedding anniversary, a kind of anti-congratulatory message consisting of images that implied unfaithfulness as a reminder to the victim about her harrier. The intention was to ridicule her, cause public ridicule encouraging her competitors to collaborate in the abuse so as to try and make the victim feel harmed. Really it is like Nazi psychology which tries to crush the spirit and any psychological resistance. The weak of course end up giving up, getting sick, falling into depression, and even self-harm.

Less subtle but equally pernicious is the strategy used by another one of the components of the clan, who was recruited for his predisposition to betray his country, like most of the subordinates that serve. In this case the individual in question, who also took part in the previously described radio program, specialized in contacting the people who "like" some material that a leader in Graphopathy in Argentina usually posts. This material tried to negatively influence others about the victim. Fortunately the above mentioned leader really existed, and people told him about the different attempts to discredit him by the collaborationist from the clan. In addition, this collaborationist insisted in a sick megalomaniac narcissist way within his degenerate vicious circle, which in the end became his self-consolation that converted him into his own vile refuge. The aforementioned traitor of the profession is already known by the main entities and utilizing Spanish and Catalan resources has acted as a university authority without actually being one and thus has obtained the consideration of foreign associations.

In this modality we can also find the "renting" of the profile. For example, people are given promises to lead the delegation in another country but then have to relinquish the possibility of managing their

own profiles so that their contractors or collaborators can post whatever they want. Not long ago we detected an Argentinean woman who was always writing with mistakes and with outbursts. After renting her profile to the director of the list she then appeared to be a cultured, thoughtful person with self-control who of course spoke very highly of the director of the list. Again not so long ago, an Indian woman suddenly befriended almost everyone in Facebook and then began using expressions that did not correspond to either her gender or her culture. There was however one detail: in her area there was a serious tragedy and instead of speaking about it, she made jokes about the sexuality of a pig which seemed more like an expression from an old drunken sailor than an Indian woman. We therefore insist that by forensic socio-linguistics one usually discovers the mastermind behind the statements from the impersonated identity of another.

The same thing is happening in regards to the duplication of identities in emails, which has been far too common in criminal groups acting on the internet. Just last year we detected an attempt of duplication in the university, which like handcrafted virus attacks came from California (a county very near Los Angeles). There, the investigators located one of the bosses of the previously mentioned crime family who carry out unfair competition and are linked to a number of business ventures and organized crime. This group works among crime novel writers, Toastmasters, musicians, coaching psychologists, family councilors, graphologists, and experts in documents in question, and criminologists. In collusion with other criminals from Hawaii (an ex-partner of the group who also works with a self-declared atheist from Israel who has shown signs of betraying his own people, both of whom are in favor of jihadists). These groups work in Venezuela, Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Peru, England, Holland, Canada, India, Pakistan, Eastern Europe, and several countries in Africa always with either family members, their spouses, or delegations and contacts. For example, they work in Germany and Eastern Europe through the mediation of the children and their spouses, although the African American ex-navy man and his ex-girlfriend, a Croatian, both residing in Hawaii, also serve. Through criminal means they are able to enter other people's computers by, for example, appropriating cookies. In fact we always warn our colleagues to take special caution when using certain resources such as Dropbox. Recently the earlier mentioned list director "gave away" an antique book that he had found on the internet but anyone who wanted the book had to sign up for Dropbox. In this case the objective was not to get praise for providing this book but rather to sign up naïve individuals whose computers would later be hacked by information thieves.

Elaborating on those steps, beyond mere negative marketing, it is also worth noting that last year in October 2013; a website of professionals who collaborate with the university was redirected, tricking the robots of Google. We detected that this came from the Ukraine, adding to the list of their other activities. This matter has been properly channeled through the courts and is pending the results of

the Rogatory Letters in order to continue the process at an official level, at the same time we are aware of another attack from a similar association in Madrid and the IP once again was localized in the U.S., England, Germany and countries of Eastern Europe, coinciding with the places where certain elements of the aforementioned gang are active and moving normally.

Within the previous modality we also discovered a subspecialty that exploits international criminal organizations, like the one previously mentioned, trying to get the natural enemies of the victim in their area; acting for the organization they encourage them or provide indirect support and give them data or information that is the spark of motivation. Sometimes this can be a good thing, but the intention is to increase a sense of competition to instill the fear in the victim that he can be overshadowed or removed. Ultimately it is the direct competitors, or those who are considered as such, who attack the victim. Logically, such competitors are not conscious that they are being used by an organized clan at first and will surely, in another moment, become the victim or subjected to blackmail; which has also occurred. In our experience we have seen this phenomenon, but as we have already mentioned, on the Internet one learns very quickly, so these competitors realize that they are being used and the majority of them decide to move away from these unethical practices. This makes matters worse as it only empowers the criminal clan and not them. As anyone with a bit of foresight can image, few want to be permanently labeled as collaborating with organized crime. In this sense what we have seen in Argentina is very encouraging and we are confident that other countries are taking due note and will not make the same mistakes.

The lack of action by those who should help alleviate such actions quickly means serious damage in this profession. It makes them doubly responsible and practically moral accomplices, especially if they are part of any ethical federation. Thankfully there are only a few cases in which the individuals do not end up collaborating with the Police and Justice Department.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our colleagues who altruistically and discreetly are collaborating in this research, which thanks to all of you, is uncovering this whole network. Professionals know that this sad reality, even though virtual, can have serious effects. These professionals act quickly to neutralize the damaging claims intended to topple leaders and prominent centers, usurping their contacts and resources and impersonating or replacing the leadership and attempting to dominate the market in various countries that are developing a good level of professional activity.

(*) Member: World Jurist Association, and: International Police Association



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