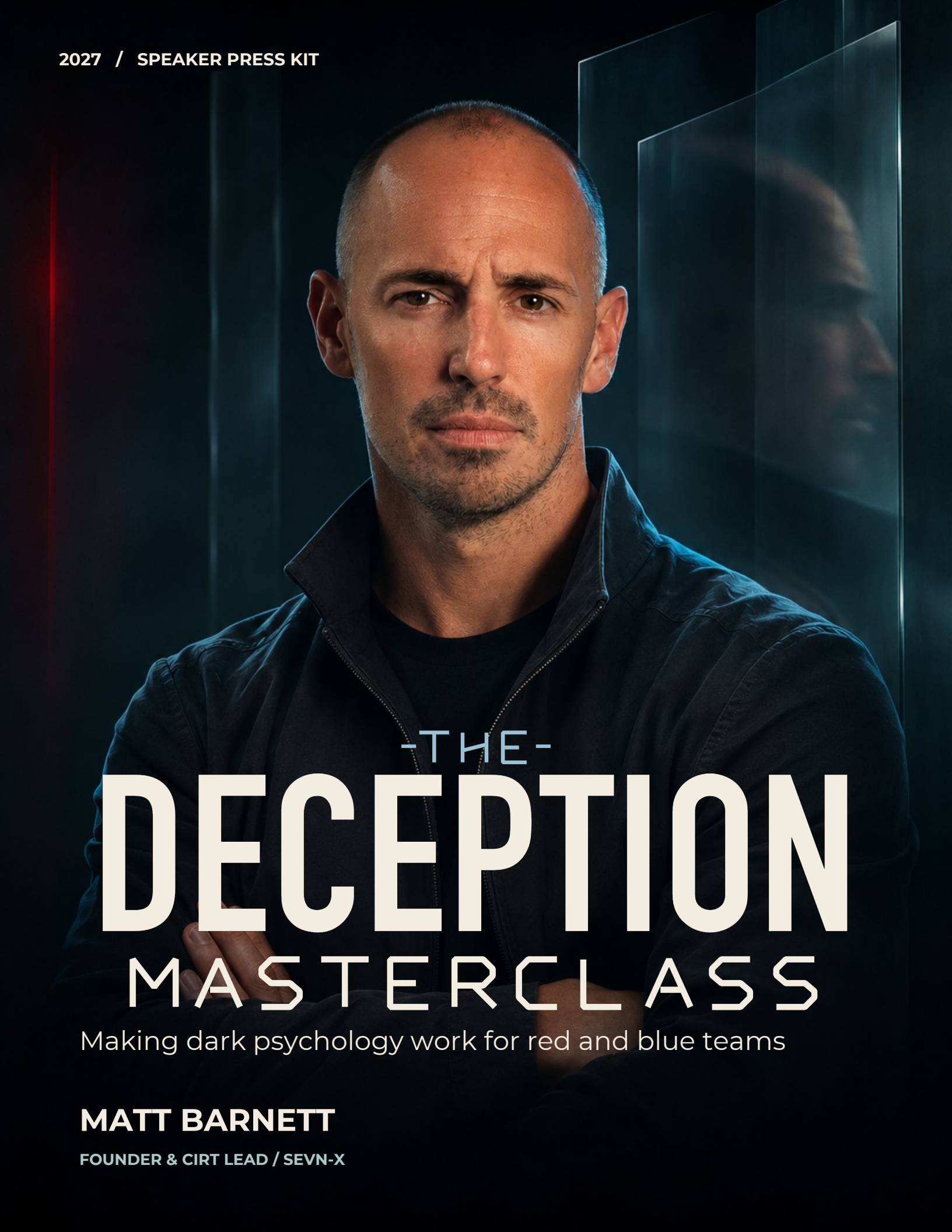
2027 / SPEAKER PRESS KIT



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DECEPTION MASTERCLASS

Making dark psychology work for red and blue teams

MATT BARNETT

FOUNDER & CIRT LEAD / SEVN-X

THE SESSION / 50 MINUTES

The Deception Masterclass

Making dark psychology work for red and blue teams

Abstract

After years of phishing and physical social engineering engagements (plus a career in law enforcement spent being lied to professionally), I've learned that deception rarely beats our logic. The Deception Masterclass looks at the psychology behind why smart, skeptical people still hold the door, click the link, and read out the MFA code, and why most of us are far worse at spotting lies than we think. Building on research from behavioral science and real-world tradecraft, this talk teaches defenders how to recognize and resist manipulation and teaches red teamers how to weaponize it.

Session description

Most of our decisions run on autopilot: fast, intuitive judgments that feel like thinking but skip the actual work. Careful, deliberate reasoning is slow and effortful, and we avoid it whenever we can. Almost every successful phish, pretext, and con is built to keep its target on autopilot.

This talk covers deception from both sides. On offense, we'll break down the mental shortcuts attackers exploit. Urgency and scarcity short-circuit deliberation. Authority stops people from asking questions. Familiar logos, fluent language, and expected context make a lie feel right. And we're wired to assume people are telling the truth until something forces us to stop. Each principle is paired with real, sanitized examples from red team work and current threat actor tradecraft, including AI-assisted pretexting. Red teamers will learn how to put this dark art to work deliberately: building pretexts, timing approaches, and recovering when a target starts to question them, all to raise social engineering success rates.

On defense, we'll flip the model. Lying is mentally expensive, so the liar is the one doing the hard thinking. We'll cover research-backed techniques that exploit that burden, and explain why gut-feel "tells" fail, given that people spot lies at roughly coin-flip rates.

ATTENDEE OUTCOMES

What the audience takes away

01 Why manipulation targets how we think, not what we know

02 The mental shortcuts behind successful social engineering, and how to catch them in the moment

03 Why we default to trust, and what triggers skepticism

04 How red teams can engineer pretexts that keep targets on autopilot and improve SE success rates

05 Evidence-based techniques for evaluating truthfulness that don't rely on body-language myths

06 How to design controls and training that force a deliberate pause where it matters, instead of just telling people to "be more careful"





SPEAKER PROFILE

Matt Barnett

Founder & CIRT Lead / SEVN-X

Matt Barnett is the founder and CIRT Lead of SEVN-X, a cybersecurity company specializing in incident response, adversary simulation, security tooling, and advisory services. Across his career, one of his passions has always been understanding how the human brain works, why people trust who they trust, and how attackers turn that trust against them.

Throughout Matt's career, he has focused on exploiting psychology for red team engagements as well as high stakes ransomware negotiations, where the fate of companies is often at stake.

On stage, Matt has built a reputation for being as entertaining as he is insightful. He is a popular and highly requested speaker nationally, known for captivating talks that blend behavioral psychology, real-world war stories, and humor, with practical takeaways audiences can use the next day. He is also frequently featured as a cybersecurity expert on NBC10 Philadelphia, where he helps viewers make sense of breaches, scams, and how to avoid becoming a victim.

2026 speaking engagements

Hershey Tech Connect
InfraGard Central PA Summit
ISC2 Oklahoma City Chapter Meeting
BSides Tampa
BSides Detroit
BSides Salt Lake City
BSides Boulder (CO)
BSides Philadelphia
Boardwalk Bytes (Atlantic City)
GrrCON (Grand Rapids, MI)
ISACA Philadelphia Spring Conference

Media & booking

NBC10 Philadelphia / Recurring cybersecurity expert

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