

competitive intelligence corner



David Lithwick and Enrico Codogno

a monthly column devoted to answering questions relating to CI

Dear CIC: What would you say is the toughest challenge you have faced in sourcing CI from the Internet?

Web challenged

Dear Web Challenged: I'd have to say trying to source competitor information on a privately held company. For one thing you won't be able to review their annual report. Another issue is that companies have become Web savvy enough to sanitize their web sites, making them devoid of sensitive product and company information in their web sites. These are excellent examples of how the Internet is limited for CI. In this case we suggest you source some human intelligence to fill the gaps.

Dear CIC: I am struggling whether or not to set up a CI department in my company, and before doing so want to learn why some CI programs fail. Are there one or two reasons that stand out?

Hesitant

Dear Hesitant: Some of the more frequent reasons for failure are a.) because the person(s) assigned to manage the program are too busy with other duties, b.) little if any decisions are being made with the CI and c.) the person who set up the program leaves without training someone else to take over. I think it's very smart not to rush in. It's much bet-

ter to work in baby steps, to allow the time to work through glitches and learn the ropes. Also, it is especially important to have a senior executive (preferably the CEO) champion the use of CI. If the corporate culture is inimical to CI, a senior executive will help you to overcome much of the resistance you may come across.

Dear CIC: I am looking to hire a CI analyst. What skills should this individual have, besides being analytical, a good communicator and having relevant working experience and training?

Hiring

Dear Hiring: Two that stand out are perseverance and organization. Perseverance, because many times you run up against brick walls in trying to source competitor information, so it's important that you look for people who do not give up easily. Organization, because without it, your CI program can easily and quickly unravel if, for example, reports and documents are poorly filed. Other qualities important for a CI analyst include: strong networking (to develop and maintain links with internal and external sources) and intellectual curiosity, because key information may come from unexpected sources and because a CI professional should be prepared to continuously hone his/her craft.

Tip – Don't expand your CI program, until you have worked out **every** glitch. Doing so will ensure you are being efficient and organized, two extremely important skills for CI proficiency.

Please contact Grace Woo (416) 493-4080 if you would like to purchase the *PMRS Competitive Intelligence Manual for Marketing Practitioners*. Drawn from more than 700 CI studies and 200 workshops, this manual for only \$45.00 has been designed for marketing researchers who want to improve how CI is being collected and used within their organizations.

CI Corner is written by David Lithwick and Enrico Codogno. David is with Market Alert Limited and can be reached at (416) 932-9820 or lithwick@market-alert.net.

Enrico Codogno is with the Customer Foresight Group and can be reached at (416) 651-0413 or enrico@customerforesight.com. Email your questions and they will make sure you get the answers you need.