



# CI Corner

## David Lithwick & Enrico Codogno

**Dear CIC:** I have been assigned to start a CI program. What are the pros and cons of using sales reps to help collect CI? *Newbie*

**Dear Newbie:**

On the plus side, you have a readily available group of people to help versus paying someone to collect CI.

On the flip side, some reps will end up biasing their findings to suit their own agenda, while others may inadvertently provide misinformation, either because they have not taken the necessary steps to weed out incorrect information or because they have failed to triangulate their findings.

You should have your reps comment on how confident they are in their findings (e.g., is this rumour, conjecture or hard fact?) and ask them if they have corroborated their findings with a second source.

**Dear CI Corner:**

For the last few months, I have been trying to get our reps to help collect CI. They were enthusiastic for the first four months, sending weekly updates that were detailed and insightful, but for the past few weeks, I have received very little CI. Why do you think their productivity has fallen off?

**Confused**

**Dear Confused:**

Usually, productivity in such cases falls off for one of two reasons: asking for information detracts from the reps' sales calls, or they are not getting feedback from management on the value of the CI they provide. Either way, CI is not getting the recognition it deserves.

Here are four strategies that companies use to get around this.

1. Simplify the process by setting up templates for reps to follow.
2. Make sales managers responsible for having their reps gather and report CI.
3. Schedule CI debriefings at monthly sales meetings.
4. Make gathering and reporting CI part of your sales reps' job description.

**A monthly column devoted to answering questions relating to competitive intelligence**

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