

competitive intelligence corner

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a monthly column devoted to answering questions relating to CI



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This issue covers a range of topics from the role that CI managers play in companies to finding out the number of Canadian companies having full time CI departments and what Wargaming is.

Dear CIC: What is the ideal role for the CI manager within an organization? Is it only to provide information on competitors? *Role Seeker*

Dear Role Seeker: CI professionals are not only providers of information but also users of information, the latter coming from the creative interpretation of information they provide. In reality, CI professionals are risk managers. They take raw information and transform it into actionable intelligence, enabling their employers to identify and minimize risks that result from a variety of factors (competitor actions, demographic changes, legislation, economic upturns and downturns, new technologies, etc.). Among the results from the intervention of CI professionals would be revisions in marketing and operational strategies. Therefore, the value from CI professionals is not only in the information they provide but rather how they use information to interpret the need for changes in business activities, that is, they have to answer the "So what?" question. For more information on this question, one can read "The Next Step in the Evolution of Competitive Intelligence" by Ben Gilad.

Dear CIC: How many Canadian corporations have full service CI departments? *Question Mark*

Dear Question Mark: That's not an easy question to answer. I'd say fewer than 20, because, for the most part, the CI function is handled by 1 individual who has other responsibilities assigned as well. In

fact, I suspect that the number of CI departments has been scaled back compared to four or five years ago, due to mergers and corporate layoffs.

Dear CIC: I have been asked to set up a CI group in my company. Should I look at CI departments at other companies, and use them as model? *New CI Manager*

Dear New CI Manager: I believe that a CI Manager should be more knowledgeable about the competitive environment than anyone else in his/her company. Accordingly, it will not be helpful to use CI groups in other companies as a benchmark for your CI group. Older CI groups tend to be more bureaucratic and less entrepreneurial. As a new CI Manager, I encourage you to develop a CI group suitable to meet your company's corporate culture and can deal with your industry's business environment.

Dear CIC: What would you say is the toughest challenge you have faced when working with clients? *New Supplier*

Dear New Supplier: I'd have to say when a client insists on changing the project scope after the proposal has been signed, without agreeing to extend the timelines or budget. The way to get around this is to put a clause in your terms addressing this issue and then having the client read back these terms after they have signed off on the study.

Dear CIC: I am interested in learning more about Business Wargaming. What is it and how do companies apply it? *Wargamer*

Dear Wargamer: Business Wargaming is an excellent exercise that puts you in the

TIP

If you are unsure about your findings then make this clear to the reader. It's better that they are made aware versus finding out by themselves that your results were not as accurate as they had assumed.

shoes of your competitors. Jay Kurst, President of Kappa West has written an excellent, comprehensive five page article in the November/December 2002 issue of 'Competitive Intelligence' magazine. He explains that, "Business wargaming is the adaptation of military wargaming to a business environment: it helps a company with strategic, operational and tactical planning and execution. A war game is a role-played simulation of a business situation, usually one that involves a set of teams representing a market or customer, asset of competitors and a series of other uncontrollable factors. It involves a series of rounds reflecting a specific period of time of a phase in a plan. There are a number of rounds, and all teams act concurrently, each without information from the other teams. After each round, the teams discover the effects of its decisions and actions when they learn of the other teams' decisions.

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E-mail your questions and they will make sure you get the answers you need.