



The Academy's faculty offers you wide-ranging views and deep expertise in the field of competitive intelligence. Coming from the broadest background of CI experiences, we cultivate the deepest variety of perspectives on what works and what does not work in competitive intelligence. Remember: one size does not fit all organizations, industries, or personalities, so tailor the advice to your situation. With that caveat, we present to you ACI's own periodic table.

PLANNING

Start each project with five fundamental questions: Who, What, When, Why, and How. Who wants to know the answer? Who is the project about? What is the goal for the assignment? When do you need the assessment? Why do you need the analysis? Is it for a pricing assessment, a potential merger, formation of an alliance, long-term planning? How do you want to see the analysis – just a conversation, spreadsheets of financials, PowerPoint presentation? – *Leonard Fuld* **1**

Create an Action Plan and keep it to one page. The KIT Action Plan is essentially a communication "vehicle" between the CI organization and the intended users of the intelligence. A one-page Action Plan, which can be perfected and agreed upon by both parties, is the most effective. – *Jan Herring* **2**

Prepare a budget. After you've determined what decisions will be influenced by the intelligence, ask for a time budget commensurate with the importance of the decision. Once your overall time line is established, you need to break it down so that most of your time is allocated to conversations with people who know what's happening in the market. Time spent on secondary research should be kept to a minimum since it will add little value to your analysis. – *Mike Sandman* **3**

Start off small. Don't overstaff, at least at the beginning, when you don't know what you don't know. By throwing yourself into an assignment you will quickly learn what areas need to be explored deeper and may require expertise you currently lack. When you have figured out the list of to-dos, then hire or add personnel from elsewhere in your organization. – *Leonard Fuld* **4**

Establish a check point midway through the project. Set a time to meet with your internal intelligence customers about halfway through the assignment. Such planning helps avoid surprises and lets you make sure that you're on track and that the objectives haven't changed. – *Mike Sandman* **5**

Write questions, not questionnaires. Intelligence interviewing is generally not fixed. You circle around the potential universe of answers, not knowing exactly which will prove insightful. Your approach should mirror this dynamic. – *Leonard Fuld* **6**

Maintain time sheets – they are your research memory. The next time someone asks you for a similar project in half the time, you can review the time sheets and tell the client it can't be done exactly the same way. It will force you to scale down the assignment, and perhaps make the client respect the reality of the intelligence hunt. – *Leonard Fuld* **7**

Periodic Table of CI Elements™

COLLECTION

Appreciate Google for what it is. Free data, no matter how good your search skills, is generally something everyone else has and offers little competitive advantage – at least in its raw form. Look at Google and Yahoo! as offering you names, springboards to the experts where the really valuable information lies. – *Leonard Fuld* **8**

Build a base of internal experts you can call on for advice – advice on where to find sources and on how to interpret what you learn. – *Mike Sandman* **9**

Collection is not a panacea. If management got each and every one of its questions answered, would it make a difference? My take is: not one bit. Have you asked yourself why? A lot of time answers to management questions could not possibly come (ethically) from collection. Rigorous analysis, on the other hand, has no such bounds. – *Ben Gilad* **10**

Don't confuse volume with value. Literature searching is valuable, but should not represent more than 5-10% of any intelligence assignment. Reams of paper rarely translate into competitive insights. Those attempting to fill in every box tend to collect too much data, thus delaying decisions. The world is not perfect, nor is your competitor. But wait too long, add two weeks of collection, and your less-than-perfect competitor may jump and eat your lunch! – *Leonard Fuld* **11**

Don't wait for perfect knowledge – act on intelligence. Your management needs to make decisions in a timely manner. Wait to fill in every blank and you may miss an important opportunity or incur damage from a threat that has already arrived at your doorstep. – *Leonard Fuld* **31**

Less is bliss, more is a trauma. Too much data and "facts" can actually be harmful. Pretend you are writing a "case study" on your industry five forces (including Rivalry). If you exceed 25 pages, including charts and financials, you are in overkill mode. – *Ben Gilad* **12**

Provide competitive advantage through Humint (Human intelligence). Although all your competitors have the same access to secondary sources, only you can use your own employees and external contacts to collect unique, value-added Humint that both supplements and goes beyond your secondary sources – thus providing your organization a true competitive advantage. – *Jan Herring* **13**

Learn about your own processes before studying the competitor's. Arrange for a tour of your manufacturing facility or whatever operation you're comparing to competitors. Firsthand knowledge is always best and serves as a clear benchmark in your assessment. – *Mike Sandman* **14**

Stay clean (pun intended) in information collection. Use your brain not your brawn to collect information. Dumpsters are for garbage, not information. Sure, you've heard the stories. More than likely, if it's in the garbage there's a reason: it's trash. – *Leonard Fuld* **15**

Find your strategy while you seek intelligence. While strategy and intelligence generally evolve in parallel, if you had no strategy, you'd have no intelligence. The two are so intimately tied that if your company lacks a clear strategy, there is no point in having intelligence, however incredible it is. The reverse is NOT true: great strategy does not require a complete and accurate knowledge of competitors or even customers. Just read about Charles Schwab. – *Ben Gilad* **32**

ANALYSIS

Analyze from a distance. The biggest challenge for analysts is not lack of knowledge but too much knowledge – entrenched beliefs, myths and taboos that come from being too close to the issues or too close to the executives. Try to analyze your industry as if you've just joined it. When in doubt, call on an outsider's perspective – someone new to the company, a trusted friend, an outside consultant – to validate your thinking. – *Ben Gilad* **16**

Avoid cardinal sin #1: mirror imaging: Mirror imaging is when you attribute your own intentions and actions to your competitors, which obviously creates a distorted analysis. – *Jan Herring* **17**

Avoid cardinal sin #2: mixing collection and analysis: When CI analysts perform their own collection, the possibility of biasing the results – consciously or subconsciously – is greatly increased (including information that supports their analysis and rejecting that which does not). Government intelligence services are well aware of this pitfall and actually separate the two functions to avoid it. In the final analysis, however, it is the responsibility of the CI analyst to ensure objectivity. – *Jan Herring* **18**

Blend your analytical skills. Intelligence analysis is different than business analysis or technology assessment. We can train effective business analysts but good intelligence analysts are born. Their minds are a unique blend of various attributes, including such non-cognitive skills as pattern thinking and the ability to perceive discontinuities and trend inflections where the average individual does not. The best competitive analysis is achieved with multi-disciplinary teams that include both business and intelligence analysts. – *Jan Herring* **19**

Recognize that analysts are everywhere. Some of the best analysts are people who would run from the Porter model or a regression scatter-gram, but who have an intuitive knack for reading people and situations, even if all the facts are not known. Recruit your analysts from your company's talent pool – whether or not they ever worked on Wall Street, or have an MBA. – *Leonard Fuld* **20**

Harvest a CI program's many benefits: A CI program is capable of providing a variety of critical intelligence services, including: early warning, decision support, inputs for both strategy planning and competitive strategies; guidance on new product development and roll-outs; and counterintelligence that protects the company's trade secrets and intellectual property from competitors' CI operations. – *Jan Herring* **33**

Don't hide raw data from the client. Clients will often read something into a piece of data that you will overlook. Over-analyze and hide the data and you can unintentionally mislead a client. Find out what data is most important to the client to avoid flooding him with the wrong data. – *Leonard Fuld* **21**

Follow the analysis Golden Rule. The more sophisticated the analytical techniques, and the more quantitative, the more tactical the implications. The simpler and more intuitive the analysis, the bigger the payoff. In other words, insight is so obvious sometimes that only clear-eyed people can see it. – *Ben Gilad* **22**

Study strategy. The ingredients for a superior strategy are simple, straightforward, and intuitively appealing. Without an understanding of what makes a strategy superior for your company in your industry, analysis is a meaningless exercise in ad hoc crack thinking. It can often do more harm than good, as a company can easily dilute its strengths on a million so-called "opportunities." Study strategy texts, not analysis techniques, and your analysis will follow almost naturally. – *Ben Gilad* **23**

Models and spreadsheets are tools, nothing more. Strategic models can become crutches and fillers when you don't have enough data to corroborate your thinking. Spreadsheets, by contrast, can become massive data repositories devoid of thinking and meaning. Neither a hollow model nor a spreadsheet full of numbers is enough by itself. Creative analysis is essential to bridge the gap and deliver significant findings. – *Leonard Fuld* **24**

Make decision makers "play" with intelligence. While reports and presentations are important, it's more important that you involve decision makers in a live discussion, such as a war game. War games create arguments, and arguments force executives to face the implications of their decisions. By assuming the role of a rival or new market entrant and applying intelligence from a new vantage point, you may see options formerly ignored or rejected. – *Leonard Fuld* **34**

DISSEMINATION

Be creative. The primary objective of intelligence dissemination is to get the CI in the users' heads, not just in their hands. Be creative. Use graphics, interactive graphics. But get the "essence" of your intelligence findings and conclusions into their minds. – *Jan Herring* **25**

Build an understanding; don't drop a bombshell. All too often you will deliver bad news. Good or bad news, use whatever time available to prepare your audience for your assessment. Involve them, wherever possible, in the analysis itself. Enter the arena like a Biblical prophet with a doom-and-gloom assessment, without preparing your audience for the message, and your findings may never reach management. – *Leonard Fuld* **26**

Face decision makers in person. Every expert in CI will tell you the preferred way to communicate CI is face to face, but few will tell you how to get to that level with senior executives. Make it your goal to talk your way into meetings where top executives participate. Don't lie, steal or kill, but do whatever else it takes to sneak your way into those meetings. A short memo or e-mail to senior parties after the meeting can be used to incredible effect. – *Ben Gilad* **27**

Keep it short. Opinions vary on this one but my take is an incredibly insightful 5 forces analysis should take no more than half a page. You may find it much more difficult to cut down on material than adding it. Reinforce the written word with a single graphic whenever you can. That tends to focus all the users' attention in one place. – *Ben Gilad, Jan Herring* **28**

Know your audience and how they absorb intelligence. Find out how your clients want an analysis – hallway pick up meetings, PowerPoint slides, great oratory (face-to-face talks sans the electronics). It's trite, but shoving a square peg through a round hole just won't work. – *Leonard Fuld* **29**

Place your conclusions first when you report results. Edit them down to an executive summary no longer than two pages or three PowerPoint slides. – *Mike Sandman* **30**

Raise the issue of blindspots at every meeting. If you understand the concept of blind spots, you realize CI cannot be blamed for lack of top management actions or decisions, and actionable intelligence is not a panacea. But CI can be blamed for not doing enough to overcome the blind spots. At a risk to your career, raise the issue of blind spots at every meeting you go to. It can also save your job, your boss' job, and a few thousand others. – *Ben Gilad* **35**

DECISIONS AND ACTIONS