



Research Wizard Business Intelligence Brief

"Finding Good Information and Making it Better"

Secrets of Competitive Intelligence

Competitive intelligence is knowledge about anything that affects your company's ability to compete.

Competitive intelligence is more than just knowing who the other companies are that share your line of business. It is also staying on top of their suppliers and customers. You want to know if your competitors are getting better pricing from their vendors. You cannot afford to miss the news that your competitor's major customer is expanding when your top customer happens to be downsizing.

Competitive intelligence also comes in the form of learning about government regulations that may cause more problems for you than for your competitor. Or it may be knowledge of new technology your competitor just purchased.

There are many venues for competitive intelligence. Gathering information that can impact your company's ability to compete is hard work that goes well beyond just building a list of competitor names, addresses, employees and sales numbers.

The dollar amount of your major competitor's sales last year is a piece of competitive intelligence, and it is only that — a small part of a very large pie. Numbers alone will not make your company's strategy more competitive.

A Competitive Intelligence Scenario

DATA: My major competitor, ABC Company, has 300 employees. Last year they had 325.

INFORMATION: ABC Company has had moderate employee losses consistently for the past five years. Their sales have increased. A few other companies in the industry have similar histories.

ANALYSIS: The information suggests that ABC Company may be having problems. On the other hand, their sales are holding up and the industry is performing well.

INTELLIGENCE: ABC Company and a few of its competitors have improved their productivity so they need fewer employees. They are doing well and my company must follow suit or distinguish itself in some way so as to be more competitive.

"From Wishes to Possibilities to Realities"

Competitive intelligence is the product at the end of a sequence of events. First, you collect data and information — the raw material. Then you analyze it, look for patterns and find connections between cause and effect. Through the process, you gain insight so that you can come to conclusions and create strategies for action. At this point you have intelligence.

Most of the information you need about your competitors is not secret! Ninety five percent of useful competitive intelligence comes from public information — even where small private companies are concerned. This may seem surprising but it becomes more evident when you consider that real intelligence is derived from how you manage and interpret the information you find.

The business researcher hopes that he will find sales, production and distribution details for his competitors. Unfortunately this is not often possible, but with the right skills, information that is available can reveal a great deal.

These secrets of competitive intelligence are within your reach!

We have identified over 40 pieces of competitive intelligence that can be located and measured with publicly available resources. Use our resources to find...

- ◆ **Company Sales**
- ◆ **Employment Growth**
- ◆ **Product Line Details**
- ◆ **Exporter/Importer Activity**
- ◆ **Company Counts**
- ◆ **New or Expanded Operations**
- ◆ **Technology Developments**

Although private companies do not usually report sales, several sources provide estimates. Examples include Dun & Bradstreet in their various databases that cover most U.S. companies and Reference USA. Both of these sources also contain estimated number of employees.

These sources furnish detailed information on product and service lines for most U.S. companies, indicate any corporate connections, such as branches, headquarters, and foreign parents, and also indicate export and import activity.

Since the information in these resources is in database format, they can be queried to get company counts by industry, by company size and by geographic region. Another good source for company counts which happens to be free is Dun & Bradstreet's Zapdata, at www.zapdata.com. Try it!

Take a look at the Small Business Administration's web site for unexpected information on private companies, at http://dsbs.sba.gov/dsbs/dsp_dsbs.cfm. Sources for news about new operations and technology include Business Source Elite and Business Newsbank databases at www.tulsalibrary.org. Or, let Research Wizard find the best sources for your competitive intelligence goals.

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Tulsa City-County Library System
400 Civic Center
Tulsa, OK 74103

Phone: 918-596-7991
Fax: 918-596-2598
Email: wizard@tulsalibrary.org

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to Meet
Your Business Needs"**

