



Global Intelligence Alliance

**RECIPE FOR SUCCESS
IN A COMPETITIVE
INTELLIGENCE INTRANET:
Quality Content, User-Friendly
Technology and Culture
of Knowledge-Sharing**

GIA WHITE PAPER 3/2005

Executive Summary

Establishing “Competitive Intelligence (CI) intranets” has become commonplace in international companies. Behind this development is the idea of a “virtual CI community”. By using technological CI tools installed in the corporate intranet, people located around the world share business information in order to make well-informed business decisions.

As is intuitively clear, technology is simply an enabler in this process. What is most interesting with regard to companies and their experiences with CI intranets is how the organizations have

involved and motivated their people to share the information, how they proceeded from merely producing and distributing information to really sharing it for competitive advantage.

This paper deals with how technology, people and processes can be combined in order to establish a functional CI section in a corporate intranet. Alternative virtual CI community development paths and their respective merits and characteristics are discussed within a simple matrix framework.

1. Introduction: Competitive Intelligence Intranet – Much More Than Just Technology

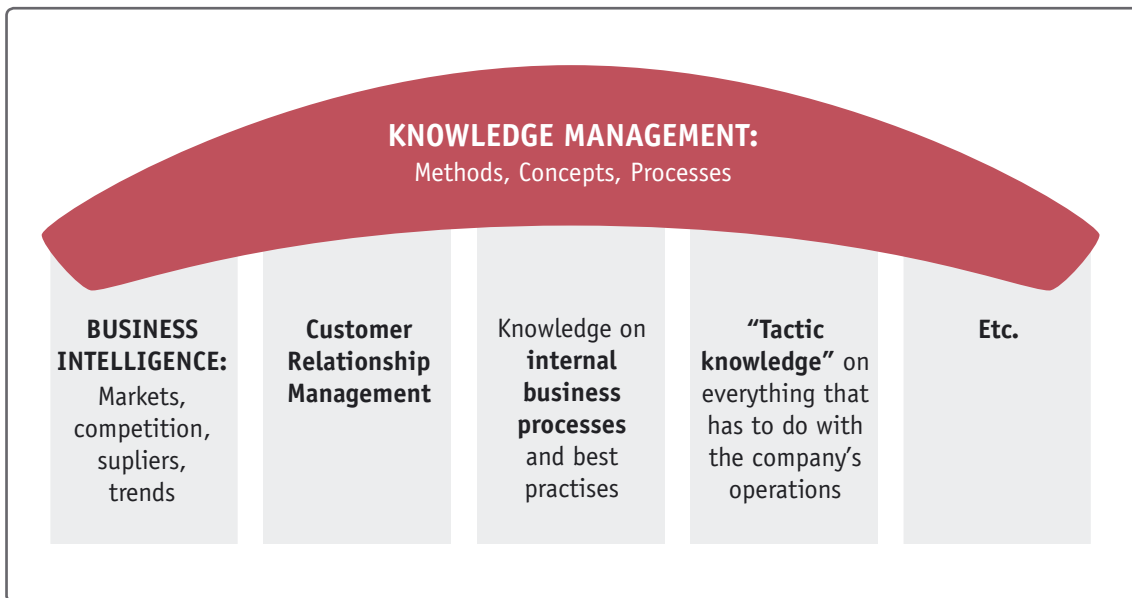
Establishing “Competitive Intelligence (CI) intranets” has become commonplace in international companies. Behind this development is the idea of a “virtual CI community”. By using technological CI tools installed in the corporate intranet, people located around the world share business information in order to make well-informed business decisions.

As is intuitively clear, technology is simply an enabler in this process. What is most interesting with regard to companies and their experiences with CI intranets is how the organizations have involved and motivated their people to share the information; how they proceeded from merely producing and distributing information to really sharing it for competitive advantage.

What is most interesting with regard to companies and their experiences with CI intranets is how the organizations have involved and motivated their people to share the information; how they proceeded from merely producing and distributing information to really sharing it for competitive advantage.

Interestingly enough, this is where the disciplines of Knowledge Management (KM) and Competitive Intelligence meet. The KM lessons on sharing knowledge apply to CI just as they do to sharing knowledge on any issue within an organization. Figure 1 illustrates KM as an “umbrella concept” to the different fields of knowledge within an organization.

Figure 1. Knowledge Management and Different Fields of Knowledge



This paper deals with how technology, people and processes can be combined in order to establish a functional CI section in a corporate intranet. Alternative virtual CI community

development paths and their respective merits and characteristics are discussed within a simple matrix framework.

2. Ideal CI Intranet: Key Characteristics

The goals that companies wish to achieve by establishing a CI section within their intranets can be roughly divided into three categories: quality content, appropriate technology and a smoothly running CI process.

For the CI intranet to work, all elements are required: the CI intranet must deliver timely information that is relevant for decision-making. On the other hand, even good quality information will not find its way to the users if the CI intranet is inconvenient to use or if people simply are not aware of its existence. Therefore, CI project teams typically end up with goals like the ones described below when designing the CI section within the corporate intranet:

REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD CI CONTENT: Timeliness, Reach, and Relevance

- Timely and fresh information reaches all users simultaneously, both at the corporate headquarters and overseas;
- Information filtered for relevancy: the amount of nice-to-know “spam” has been limited to the minimum;
- “Peace of mind” with regard to content: trust in the regular search coverage of all information sources relevant to the company’s business.

REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD CI TECHNOLOGY: User-Friendliness

- Appropriate match with the workflow process;
- Intuitive and easy-to-search user interface;
- Structure is introduced into unorganized information flow;
- Opportunity to receive business information as market signals through one’s e-mail at a desired frequency.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A FUNCTIONAL CI PROCESS: Internal Contribution and Attention to the CI Function

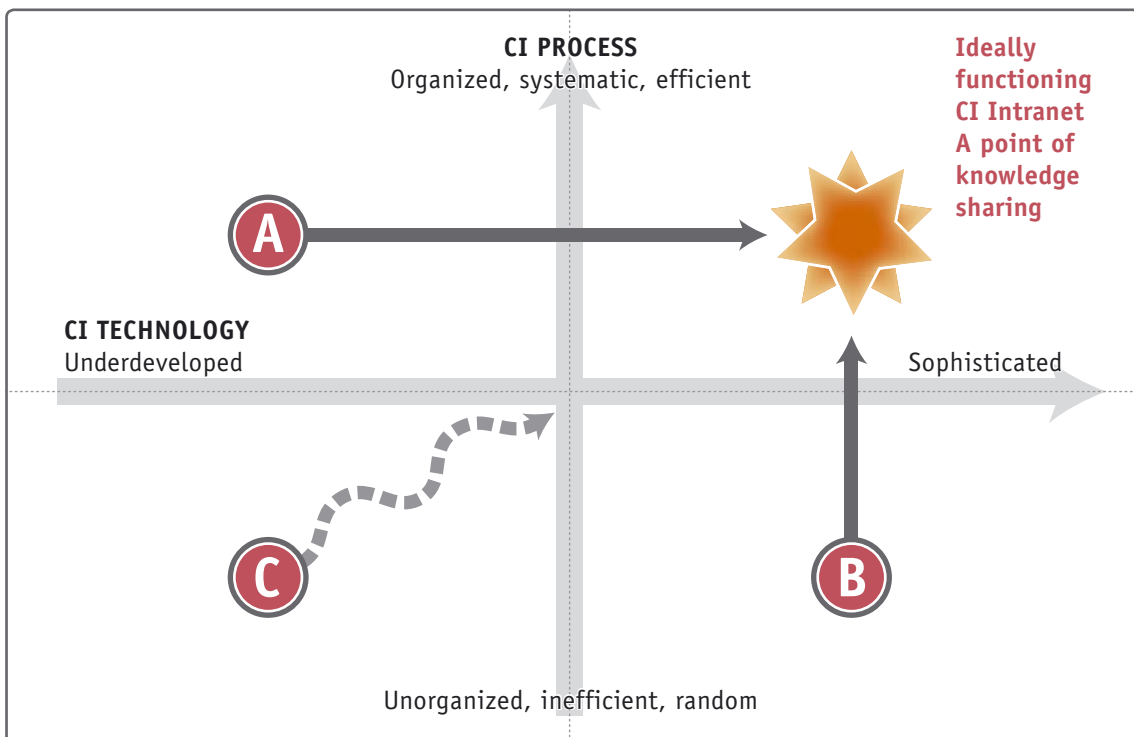
- Configuring information packages in a format that facilitates CI product generation and efficient decision-making;
- Encouraging and facilitating contribution of information from the field: sharing both tacit and explicit knowledge of the business environment more efficiently;
- Raising the status and recognition of Competitive Intelligence inside an organization.

3. Organizations May Differ, But CI Challenges Remain Analogous

Once an organization has set up a CI section in its intranet and trained its first users, it faces the acid test of turning an anonymous piece of technology into a tool that is supposed to justify the amount of resources invested in developing it. The eventual challenges depend on the status of the CI function in the organization at the time of the technology installation. Typical situations that the organization needs to deal with can be examined using the matrix framework depicted in Figure 2.

Once an organization has set up a CI section in its intranet and trained its first users, it faces the acid test of turning an anonymous piece of technology into a tool that is supposed to justify the amount of resources invested in developing it.

Figure 2. Alternative Paths for Virtual CI Community Development: A Matrix Framework



Using the **quality of CI technology** as one axis and the nature and **stage of development of the CI process** as another, three typical starting points can be identified in a process whose aim is the establishment of a CI intranet that is organized, systematic and efficient.

Point A portrays an (unusually) smart organization: Even without the help of any technological tools, it has managed to organize processes that enable systematic gathering and sharing of relevant business information among the decision-makers. Although there are differences in the degree

to which companies have developed their CI processes, this kind of a starting point for CI intranet development is virtually non-existent.

Point B, in turn, is not that uncommon anymore: Advanced CI technology may already be in place, but awareness of it and motivation to use it is not. **CI is, after all, not about what people can do**, but what they actually do. Thus, internal marketing is needed in order to turn the list of process- and content-related “CI Ideals” into reality.

Point C delineates the most typical starting situation: The needs to develop both the CI process and the assisting technology have been identified, but not much has yet been done to advance either. This is where most companies

find themselves when starting to develop CI technology tools within their intranets.

As is clear from the matrix, potential strategies for improving the situation at each of the starting points, A through C, fall under two dimensions: Process development (including the quality of CI content), and technology. **What may not be immediately obvious is that these aspects are also inter-related. Certain technological tools can assist in determining where the process bottlenecks lie, and thus guide the CI coordinators’ efforts into the right directions. CI personnel, in turn, can and should play an important role in developing the structure of the CI technology tool to match the demands of the CI process.**

4. What To Develop – And How?

4.1 (A) CI PROCESSES EXIST BUT TECHNOLOGY DOES NOT

Starting CI intranet development at Point A exemplifies often the fastest and most painless development path: As CI already has a high status in the organization, the challenge at hand is to find a technology tool that matches the organization’s existing workflow processes.

The following qualities are typically regarded as significant when evaluating technological CI tools:

- **State of the art technology** which complements existing Competitive Intelligence systems
- **Ability to meet growing CI requirements** in the future
- Ability to **house all research and requests performed by the users** (primary research reports, secondary research reports, news articles, ad-hoc requests, company and industry profiles, as well as other publications produced internally)
- Must be **searchable** using simple and complex Boolean search strings

- Must accept **multiple file formats** (and search them as well)
- Must be **networkable** and possibly support a **web-browser interface**
- Ability to facilitate **information sharing with agents outside the organization.**

Once a solution has been implemented that satisfactorily matches all of the organization’s technical requirements, the rest is about internally marketing the technology tool.

Once a solution has been implemented that satisfactorily matches all of the organization’s technical requirements, the rest is about internally marketing the technology tool.

4.2 (B) TECHNOLOGICAL CI TOOLS EXIST, BUT WHERE ARE THE SYSTEMATIC PROCESSES?

The situation is far more complex when it is the *CI Process* that calls for internal marketing. The challenge is then to raise the status and recognition of the CI function. In achieving this, good content is an important pre-requisite.

Assuming that the CI content produced and acquired corresponds to preset requirements, then, the main issue is **whether people actually use it** in their everyday work or not. If a company starts developing its CI process from Point B, they seldom do. Listed below are some of the typical problems that companies have come across in their CI intranet projects.

- The technology tool has not been marketed properly to the personnel; **employees just are not aware of its existence.**
- The CI Intranet doesn't have **persons clearly responsible** for maintaining it.
- Even if there are persons responsible for the CI Intranet, there are no agreed-upon measures with which to monitor CI activities. When there are no exact **measures**, it becomes difficult for anyone to take appropriate corrective actions to boost the usage of a CI Intranet.
- **Receiving relevant information requires "extra" effort** such as logging in to a hard-to-find place.
- Employees are not **evaluated** based on how actively they contribute to the CI process. (In other words, internal experts do not have sufficient **incentives** to contribute to the sharing of useful information such as a rumor about a competitor aiming to expand its line of business etc.).
- The information is faceless; there are **no established discussion forums / internal meetings** based on the CI content.
- The CI function does not have **top management's implicit support** (even though the explicit one may formally exist).

Clearly, some of these shortcomings point directly to the need for corrective actions. People need to know about a CI section in the intranet to be able to use it. Thus, someone has to market it, and a functional model is one where one or a few

persons are responsible for keeping the entire CI process up and running.

To achieve these goals, various means can be used:

- workshops
- theme days
- questionnaires
- internal competitions
- CI clubs etc.

Each one's eventual success largely depends on how close the members of the organization feel that the CI function comes to their personal daily business activities. If Sales Manager John Smith contributes to the CI process, does he get enough in return that will motivate him to continue contributing?

CI PROCESS DEVELOPMENT IS WHERE CI AND KM MEET

After all, Competitive Intelligence is a very social process. Typically, people involved in it are relatively ambitious and need social recognition. They also feel the need to belong to an attractive social entity. Moreover, they *need to be able to relate the information received with the people who produced it and with the people who will most likely benefit from it.*

What was just pointed out is not, in fact, purely Competitive Intelligence – it is closely related to Knowledge Management. In this context, it is useful to quote how Charnell Havens and Dylan Haas described in their article *"How collaboration fuels knowledge"* (Melcrum Online) the nature of sharing business-critical information for competitive advantage:

"Great accomplishments are most likely to occur in collaborative environments. The fundamental urge to organize and collaborate derives from people's innate sense that they can accomplish much more together than apart. But, while we value collaboration,

much of our experience discourages it - school examinations test us in competition with our classmates and hard-won "tricks of the trade" give us an edge over our colleagues - thus we learn that "knowledge is power."

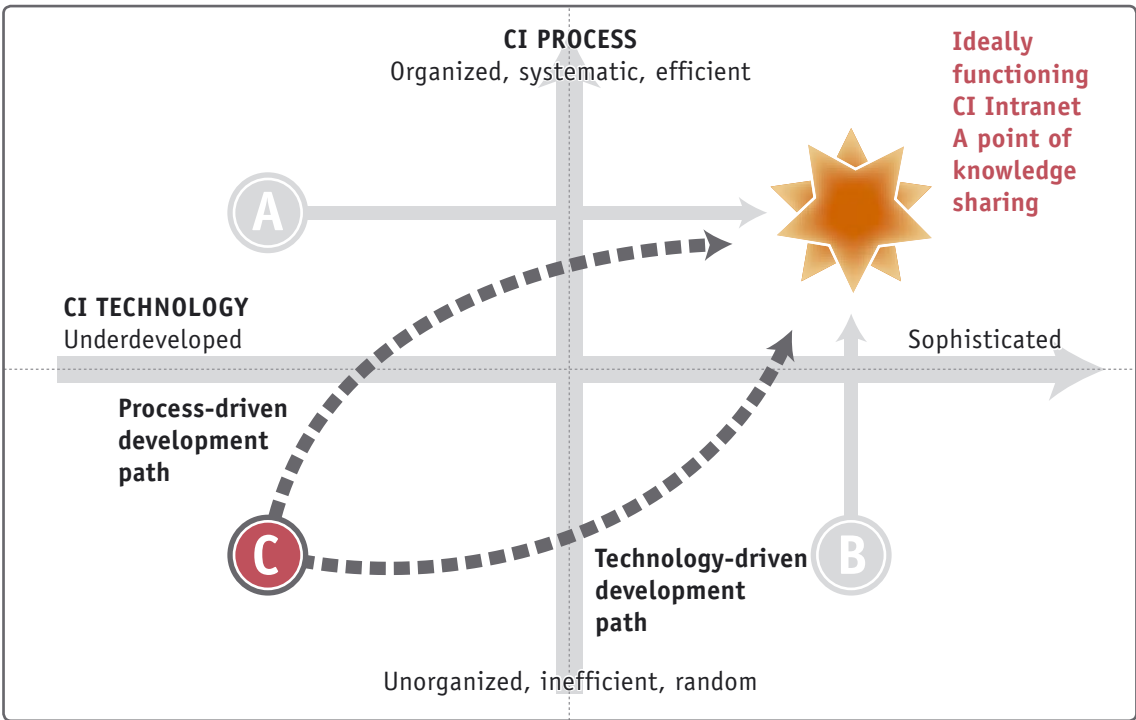
For an organization to foster collaboration it must shift from a culture where hoarding knowledge is power to one where sharing knowledge is power. From the knowledge management (KM) perspective, the great challenge is getting people to share. Sharing is the basis of collaboration among people."

For an organization to foster collaboration it must shift from a culture where hoarding knowledge is power to one where sharing knowledge is power.

The lessons that Knowledge Management teach us about sharing knowledge apply to Competitive Intelligence just as they do to CRM and to all concepts dealing with the flow of information within a social entity.

4.3 © TYPICAL PATH TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL CI INTRANET - BOTH CI PROCESS AND TECHNOLOGY CALL FOR DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Figure 3. A Matrix Framework: Starting From Point C



More often than not, organizations start developing their CI activities with a few enthusiastic CI advocates and with an overwhelming majority of employees who are just interested in getting

the information they need easily and without any extra fuss, preferably without having to contribute much (if anything) by themselves.

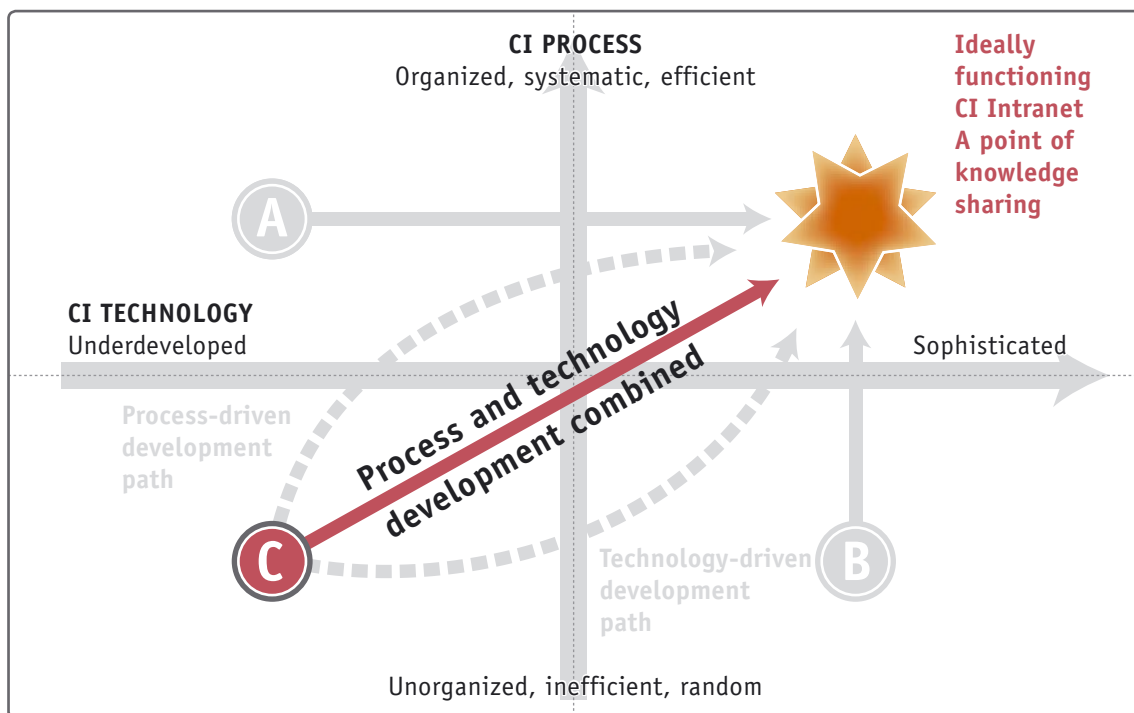
Once the technology is in place, many companies end up wondering why relatively few people actually utilize it.

This leads to the typical situation where, if a decision is made to integrate technological CI tools into a company's intranet, the greatest effort is at first put into the technology part of the project. Once the technology is in place, many companies end up wondering why relatively few people actually utilize it. Internal marketing then steps in, and awareness of the CI function gradually rises. CI processes develop and establish themselves largely by the *iterative method of trial and error*, and finally find their unique forms in every particular organization.

This development may, however, take years. Therefore, traveling along the convex arrow from Point C towards the top right-hand corner of the matrix tends to be slow. As described earlier, the path of only having to develop technology to complement an established CI process is much more painless than is the one of creating an entire "CI culture" from scratch.

The concave (upper) arrow in Figure 4 depicts a situation where technological tools are only implemented after having developed a CI process that actually works in practice - actually involves an active group of people that can be called a "CI community". This path tends to be more frictionless than the technology-driven one, as technology is only introduced once CI processes and the issue of a culture of knowledge sharing are addressed.

Figure 4. Starting from Point C with CI Process Development as First Priority



There is a risk, however, that if CI processes are being developed for too long without the help of any technological tools (that do add a

dimension of concreteness to the operations), the entire Competitive Intelligence process remains a somewhat abstract concept that fails to serve the

By simultaneously combining the earlier-described actions in both CI process and technology development, an organization should be able to find the most efficient path towards an ideally functioning CI intranet.

users of information as efficiently as it should. If there is no common, accessible tool to store and distribute information, it may take sales manager John Smith quite a while to get the background information he needs to make a business decision, even though his organization might have very systematic CI processes in place.

Thus, implementing technological tools at a relatively early stage of CI development can help generate concrete results rapidly. The straight arrow from Point C to the “Ideal CI intranet” in Figure 4 simplifies the situation in the sense that an iterative process never follows one straight line but deviates - taking corrective actions when the need for such has been identified. However, its message should be clear: by simultaneously combining the earlier-described actions in *both CI process and technology development*, an organization should be able to find the most efficient path towards an ideally functioning CI intranet.

4.4 INTERRELATION BETWEEN CI TECHNOLOGY AND PROCESS: SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE HUMAN PROCESS

The earlier described process- and technology-related development tools not only help to develop an ideally functioning CI intranet / virtual CI community. As mentioned in the introduction, technology can assist the CI developer in developing CI processes and culture. While technology alone will not correct any process frictions, it may be of great help in determining why the process does not work, and what could be done to improve the situation.

- In order to measure the results of his/her work, a CI technology developer needs rather accurate and explicit information on *who* uses the CI intranet, *how often*, for *what purposes* etc. For this reason, a **usage monitor** may be of great help.
- Also, advanced technological features can make it much more convenient for employees to utilize the tool and thus, encourage its usage.

For example, **automating the flow of raw information to the CI intranet** can make an administrator’s work more meaningful.

- Establishing a **“Who-Knows-What?” database** will benefit all information seekers within the organization.
- Communication can also be promoted by technologically supporting a **CI discussion forum**.

Naturally, the CI function will always need a few people responsible for coordination and process maintenance. But the above mentioned additional technological features will, for their part, contribute to **cementing the role of a CI intranet as the nodal point of information sharing** for those who produce and utilize Competitive Intelligence.

The GIA White Paper series

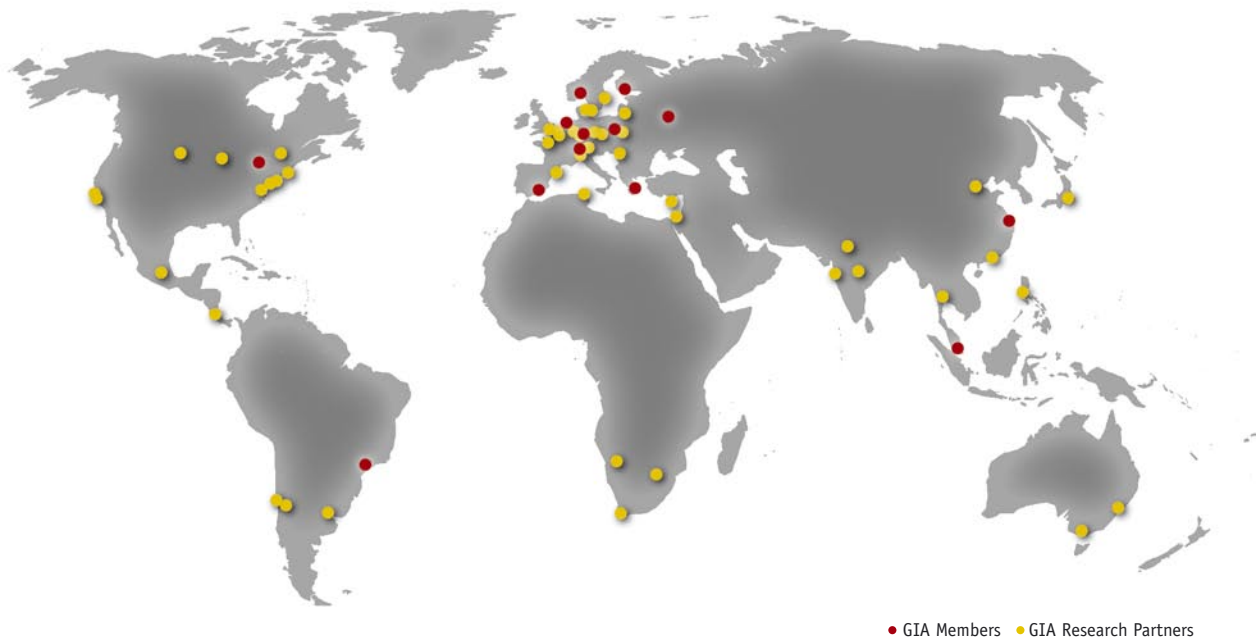
- 1/2004 Introduction to Competitive Intelligence
- 2/2004 Introduction to Strategic Intelligence
- 3/2004 Measuring the Benefits of Competitive Intelligence
- 4/2004 Key Success Factors of Competitive Intelligence
- 1/2005 Developing an Intelligence System
- 2/2005 Building Strategic Intelligence Capabilities through Scenario Planning
- 3/2005 Recipe for Success in a Competitive Intelligence Intranet

About the GIA

Additional information about the Global Intelligence Alliance

The Global Intelligence Alliance (GIA) is a global network of business research and Competitive Intelligence (CI) consulting companies. Leveraging its worldwide reach, the Global Intelligence Alliance provides multinational organizations with a single source for all CI requirements including: process consulting, intelligence services, education, and leading technology solutions.

For further information or assistance in any Competitive Intelligence-related matters, please contact the GIA Member company closest to You, or refer to the GIA website at www.globalintelligence.com.





For more information, please visit www.globalintelligence.com or contact the GIA Member company closest to you:

Helsinki, Finland	Novintel Oy Itämerenkatu 5 A, 00180 Helsinki, Finland	+358-424-956 200 info@novintel.com	Markko Vaarnas
Toronto, Canada	Novintel Inc. 4174 Dundas Street West, Suite 320 Toronto, Ontario M8X 1X3, Canada	+1-416-231 0828 info@novintel.com	Francine Rabbito
Essen, Germany	Gayer Consulting Kaninenberghöhe 50, D-45136 Essen, Germany	+49-201-266 900 info@gayer-consult.com	Carsten Gayer
Amsterdam, The Netherlands	DeskResearch Nederland Pieter de Hoochstraat 18-II, 1071 EE Amsterdam, The Netherlands	+31-20-770 6877 info@deskresearch.com	Philippe Brandts
Zurich, Switzerland	Intag Intelligence Agent AG Oberburg 12, CH-8158 Regensberg, Zurich, Switzerland	+41-43-422 0707 info@intag.biz	Maarit Seppä
Oslo, Norway	InterMedium Gaustadalléen 21, N-0349 Oslo, Norway	+47-22-958 595 info@intermedium.no	Dag Lyster
Shanghai, China	Fusion Consulting One Corporate Avenue, 222 Hubin Road, Lu Wan District, Shanghai, China 200021	+86-21-6122 1037 china@fusionc.com	Jennifer Ding
Singapore	Fusion Consulting 89a Amoy Street, Singapore 069908	+65-6423-1681 info@fusionc.com	Pete Read
Sao Paulo, Brazil	InfoAmericas , Brascan Century Offices Rua Joaquim Floriano, 466 conjunto 2111, Sao Paulo - SP - 04534-002, Brazil	+55-11-3168 9767 info@infoamericas.com	Thomas Rideg
Spain	Infoline Gabriel Miro 34, 03130 Santa Pola, Alicante, Spain	+34-96-669 6060 info@infoline.es	Luis Mira
Russia	Ignatov & Company Group 31,3, 6th Krasnoselsky pereulok Moscow 107140, Russia	+7-916-554 5817 president@ignatov.biz	Alexander A. Ignatov
Athens, Greece	Proactive Strategic Intelligence 4B Agrinoui Str., Athens,GR-104 46, Greece	+30-210-201 7934 info@psiworldwide.biz	Harry Stavrinides
Krakow, Poland	PMR Consulting Ltd. ul. Supniewskiego 9, 31-527 Krakow, Poland	+48-12-413-88-48 szymon.konop@pmrconsulting.com	Szymon Konop