



You're Up, Coach! Winning the Competitive Game

What does it take to win the competitive game called "business"?

You've been appointed as the new head coach of a professional basketball team. What's the first thing that you might do?

Obviously you'd want to get all the information about your team. How would you go about it?

You might set up a practice game between your players or watch replays of previous games. All these in an effort to gather data about your team.

You look at your players. Who fits their current positions? Who needs to train up their free-throws? Who is the most likely to score that game-winning three pointer when you need it?

Does your team have the right training gear and equipment to make sure they are in top shape? Is your gym equipment in good working condition?

Are the players familiar with different plays? Do they know how to execute a full court press? Is their teamwork good?

When you have determined that your team is fit and has

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had proper training and are familiar with different strategies, you are well on your own way to being a successful team. But then, is that enough to become a winning team?

Running a business is similar to being a basketball coach. In a business you have manpower (the basketball team), infrastructure or equipment (training gear or a gym), and processes (plays and strategies) and all of that come together to help achieve your business goals.

Relying on star players can only go so far (it wasn't Michael Jordan on his own that gave the Bulls five consecutive NBA championships back in the day, it was a team). Having the most cutting edge training equipment and regimen also don't guarantee a win.

Competitive intelligence could be the key to helping your business have that edge against the competition.

A coach can do all that's necessary internally to make sure their team performs but what can bring that team from simply a functional one into a competitive one? What can a business do to perform better than the competition?

If you as coach know beforehand the next opponent in an upcoming match, what would be the first thing you would do? Whether it's basketball or any sport, you would probably learn all you can about your competition, right?

What's their win-loss rate? Who are their star players? How aggressive or defensive is their coach when it comes to directing plays. All this information would be readily available through replays, news sites and player information data banks. A careful study of the competition can help the coach and his team get that win.

If this practice is done in the sporting world, why is it often neglected in the business world? Why are businesses not gathering information about their competitors (of course all these must be done ethically and legally) and formulating strategies that help their own companies to succeed?

With information about other companies readily available from the internet or even first-hand testimonies of users found on social media, companies are in a better position to gather information about their competitors. This insight might just transform a functional business into a successful one.

Intelligence is about using legal and ethical means to gain information about a markets and competitors, analyzing that data, and formulating strategies to help business leaders to take action that would benefit their company in relation to their competition. It goes beyond mere market and marketing research where specific questions are answered to address a specific corporate need like customer preferences, product pricing, or general market description. CI, however, spans the whole breadth of those as well as knowing the direction by which the competition will go, what the market leader is planning next to maintain its position, or what strategy will a company that sells a substitute to yours take to grab more from your market share.

There's a reason why the term "scoping the competition" is often heard in the sporting arena. Knowing your opponent is key to winning in a competitive sport. When done legally, ethically and smartly, competitive intelligence could be the key to helping your business have that edge against the competition.

CI uses both secondary and primary research to gather data; market, business, industry and competitive analysis to process information; and implications workshops, scenario planning, or wargame sessions to draw out key insights. To generate the right yet elusive information you need to win, your team may attempt to employ those methods but on grounds that are numerous such as long learning curves and lack of real expertise, doing so may take away from you the time, effort, and resources that should be focused on what you do best. Thus, like in the sporting arena, you as a coach should measure up to what it takes to win that competitive game. Do you have what it takes?

The ball is in your court.

Actelligos is a market and competitive intelligence company with 20 years of experience in the Asia Pacific region.

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