A three-page excerpt from our II-page Best Practice Guidebook:

Building a Sustainable Companywide Intelligence Network



Best Practice Guidebook

Building a Sustainable Companywide Intelligence Network

GUIDEBOOK SUMMARY

Firm: Cintas

Industry: Business Services

Headquarters: Cincinnati, Ohio, United States

Geographic Footprint: Global

Ownership: Public

Revenue (2011): \$3.8 billion USD

Problem:

Cintas must optimize limited resources and harness employees' competitive intelligence insights to help the company win new business and defend existing accounts.

Solution:

Cintas builds a self-sustaining competitive intelligence (CI) network that involves the entire workforce. This program includes:

- Acquiring a bottom-up perspective on existing CI usage to establish the program's framework
- Developing a companywide CI network that capitalizes on stakeholder capabilities and captures explicit and tacit knowledge
- Maximizing network productivity by aligning CI roles to day-to-day responsibilities
- Driving awareness and participation among Cintas' 30,000 employees with a tailored marketing campaign
- Creating intelligence deliverables that balance CI program resources with stakeholder needs
- Driving network usage of a customized intelligence portal



Business Results:

- Enhanced internal information-sharing
- Improved response rates to competitive activity
- Increased sales efficiency

Resources Required:

- Full-time CI Director
- Cl vendor
- Customized intelligence portal

Applicability of Best Practice to Executive Functions:

Function	Applicability
Competitive Intelligence	
Sales Leadership	

Cintas builds a companywide competitive intelligence (CI) network to complement its one-person department

CI Network Development Process

Establish a CI **Program Framework**

Develop a **CI** Infrastructure Encourage Network **Participation**

Generate Intelligence

Maximize CI network

Shape an **Intelligence Portfolio**

Drive Portal Adoption

Objective

Determine the current state and future direction of CI

Key Activities

- · Interview highperforming sales/service representatives who are using CI effectively
- · Assess sales force CI needs

Output

 Establishment of the CI structure and focus

Objective

Create an integrated, flexible intelligence infrastructure

Key Activities

- · Develop a tiered intelligence network to produce and consume competitive insights
- Establish an intelligence process: collect, analyze, decide, act
- Create a centralized intelligence portal

Output

• A companywide intelligence network supported by an intelligence process and portal

Objective

Generate awareness of and engagement with the CI program

Key Activities

- Conduct a CI "Roadshow"
- Communicate an C-Suite

"Early Win" to the

Output

 Active companywide CI participation at least 20% of intelligence leaders regularly contributing content to an intelligence portal

Key Activities

Objective

productivity

- · Focus frontline employees on gathering relevant competitive information
- Task managers with filtering information and adding competitive insights
- Submit key information to the intelligence portal

Output

· Relevant and actionable competitive information

Objective

Create a portfolio of CI deliverables that balances program resources with stakeholder needs

Key Activities

- Collect formal and informal stakeholder feedback
- Develop a suite of CI deliverables

Output

An array of

deliverables that

intelligence gaps

addresses key

Objective

Promote intelligence portal usage

Key Activities

- Limit portal access to 1.600 intelligence leaders
- Feature employeegenerated content
- Revoke portal privileges for insufficient activity
- Provide customized features

Output

- Enhanced information-sharing
- Improved response times to competitor activities
- · Increased sales force efficiency

Note: Definition of Competitive Intelligence—The continuous monitoring of a company's competitive environment to identify, analyze, and disseminate intelligence on opportunities and threats.



KEY TAKEAWAY: Scope program needs by learning how front-line employees use competitive intelligence

The CI Director in 2007 evaluates existing CI efforts and program needs by conducting cross-company interviews of leading sales and service representatives

IMPLICATIONS OF A ONE-PERSON CI FUNCTION

A one-person CI function necessitates the creation of an employee CI network. By limiting the size of CI to a "Director" role, intelligence consumers must share information in order to receive information (i.e., become producers). By involving every employee in the intelligence process, Cintas can capture explicit and tacit intelligence and foster an intelligence-focused culture.

Assessing the Current State and Future Direction of CI



Determine CI Structure and Focus



Capture Existing CI Insights



Establish the CI Program's Framework

CI Program Mission

The program must support revenue generation and serve the sales force as its primary client.

Resources

- A single CI Director to develop and oversee Cintas' CI processes
- One vendor to focus on analyzing publicly available competitive information

Objective

- Engage the entire Cintas workforce to help generate the intelligence
- Tap the competitive insights of successful sales and service reps



Identifying High-Performing Reps

The CI Director works with sales/service managers to identify high-performing reps who demonstrate consistent success in selling or defending their product/service against a specific competitor.



Conducting One-On-One Interviews

The CI Director interviews high-performing reps to gain insight into their use of CI. Questions include:

- What kind of competitive information is most valuable to you?
- What are Cintas' unique competitive advantages against Competitor A, B, and C?
- · How do you win/defend business?
- How do you prefer to access competitive intelligence?
- How often do you search for competitive information?

Operational Focus

 Concentrate on operational competitive insights, as opposed to strategic ones, as sales/service reps need tactical information to help defend or pursue accounts on a daily basis

Sales Force as CI Producer and Consumer

 Focus on meeting the needs of the primary producers and consumers of competitive intelligence

Segment the Producers

 Divide Cintas employees into groups with different CI roles based on capacity and capabilities

Kick-Start the CI Program

 Designate CI Champions from the sales force to galvanize the CI program



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