



Chapter VIII

Awareness and Assessment of Strategic Intelligence: A Diagnostic Tool

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discuss the need for organizations to raise the level of awareness about strategic intelligence. It argues that improvement of awareness and scanning practices could be done by developing a diagnostic tool. The diagnostic tool is an expert system that makes the existing strategic intelligence practices and underlying processes more explicit and contributes to improved awareness of strategic intelligence practices. Furthermore, the author hopes that presenting a diagnostic tool will help increase the level of awareness and provide an assessment framework about strategic intelligence practices.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are affected by every facet of their external environment (Aguilar, 1967; Garg, Walters & Priem, 2003; Peteraf, 1993; Raymond, Julien & Ramangalahy, 2001). They need to be more conscious of their external environment and of how it may affect them. Management relied on many systems including management board, organizational systems, and strategic systems. One such strategic systems, strategic intelligence, is a recognized way of anticipating changes. Strategic

intelligence could be defined as the output of the informational process by which an organization stays attuned to its environment in order to make decisions and then act in pursuit of its objectives. Even if strategic intelligence is around for many years (Aguilar, 1967; Sun-Tzu, 1994), it is still an abstract and a relatively unknown concept.

A managerial problem faced by managers and consultants is how internal and external participants can help organizations with their strategic intelligence practices. Intervening with organizations could take place in different

settings. The organization is aware or not of the benefits resulting from strategic intelligence. The organization can or cannot describe their actual strategic intelligence practices. The organizations on those settings have different needs regarding their strategic intelligence.

The general perspectives of this chapter is on awareness and assessment of strategic intelligence practices. The paper is based on the assumption that an organization will be better off if it uses strategic intelligence as a management tool. Before setting up those strategic intelligence practices, managers should be aware of the benefits. They should be able to evaluate how their existing practices and where to focus their resources for improvement.

The objective of the chapter is to underline that strategic intelligence need a level of awareness from managers and external consultants to fulfill its role and that an assessment could improve awareness and scanning practices. More specifically, the chapter will identify the problem of awareness and assessment face by organizations, define the awareness and assessment concepts, state the importance of both awareness and assessment of strategic intelligence practices, describe a solution to adress both problems, and propose some future trends on the issues discussed.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The second section provides some background information with definitions and conceptual frameworks for strategic intelligence. The third section summarizes both awareness and assessment concepts of strategic intelligence practices. The fourth section presents a possible solution, a diagnostic tool developped in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) context. The fifth section proposes some future trends on the issues discussed, and the final section presents conclusions.

BACKGROUND ON STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

A strategic intelligence system is an important tool for managing the future (Tsoukas & Shepherd, 2004). The main issue is the survival of the organization, which is threatened by uncertainties created by the changing environment. Strategic intelligence can be defined as the result of the informational process by which an organization stays attuned to its environment in order to make decisions and then acts in pursuit of its objectives. Through strategic intelligence, an organization monitors information from its external environment that is relevant to its internal environment (Aguilar, 1967; Bourgeois, 1980; Daft, Sormunen, & Parks, 1988; Elenkov, 1997; Fleming, 1998; Thomas, Clark & Gioia 1993). Terms used to describe concepts similar to strategic intelligence are business intelligence, competitive intelligence, environmental scanning, and strategic scanning. As the terminology is still in flux (Brouard, 2000), in this chapter “strategic intelligence” and “strategic scanning” are used interchangeably as comprehensive terms that include both results and process.

Strategic intelligence or strategic scanning can be viewed as a global process that is divided into four more specific processes (Brouard, 2000; Martinet & Ribault, 1989):

- **Technological scanning** is concerned with the technological dimension of an organization’s product, service, or production process.
- **Competitive scanning** is related to actual and potential competitors.
- **Commercial scanning** involves the clientele and supplier dimensions.
- **Socio scanning** is concerned with all other elements, including demographic, economic, socio-cultural, political, and others.

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