The Business Intelligence Advantage

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As a young US Air Force Intelligence Officer I quickly grew an appreciation for intelligence and how it can help with planning and can help save lives, money, and secrets. I now develop business automation software that creates data warehouses for companies to store their business intelligence. I don't think we are in the life saving business, but we certainly help companies to guard their secrets, find new sources of revenue, and maximize their profits.

The military wants to discover the mind of the enemy, businessmen want to discover the mind of their customers and their competitors.

Intelligence in business is used much the same way the military uses intelligence. **Sun Tzu** said in the **Art of War** to know your enemy. If Sun Tzu was a businessman he would encourage everyone to know their competitor.

Before any company spends any money on marketing they should harvest as much intelligence as possible about their competitors and their customers.

Military uses spies, satellites, communications technology, and other means to harvest intelligence.

Businesses use Google, marketing services, loyalty programs, data warehouses, and other means. Bottom line is that a concerted and sustained effort must take place for an intelligence program to be effective.

Patience is definitely a virtue in the intelligence world. Look what happened with CIA Director **George Tenant** when he recommended to the President that weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was a "**slam dunk**". It could be argued that impatience and lack of discipline even led to the current war in Iraq. The point is you have to be comfortable that your intelligence is quality information before you act on it. Don't be afraid to diligently question the integrity of all data you receive.

Intelligence personnel usually hold the highest levels of clearance due the price at which much of the information has come. "**Loose lips sink ships**" was a saying during World War II and they were referring to idle chatter that resulted in the enemy harvesting their unfair share of the intelligence. The highest levels of secrecy and discipline must prevail in business intelligence or you risk reducing the credibility of the information and also relinquishing the advantage you gain by keeping it to yourself.

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