

# Seven European Nations



## A Profile of Current CI Practice

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The practice of competitive intelligence (CI) is growing across Europe. In 2004, SCIP's *Journal of Competitive Intelligence and Management (JCIM)* invited leading practitioners, consultants, and academics to provide commentaries on the current competitive intelligence situation in their country. This article provides an overview of these contributions from authors in seven European nations: Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, and the UK.

Varying levels of competitive intelligence knowledge, practice, and longevity between countries does not permit a "side-by-side" comparison but this overview highlights the key CI themes from each country. Readers who require further information on competitive intelligence practice in these countries can refer to the full articles published in *JCIM* in volume 2, issues 2 through 4. Individual references are given at the end of this article. Additional country

specific articles have also been published by *JCIM*. The full complement can be found at [www.scip.org/jcim.asp](http://www.scip.org/jcim.asp).

### FINLAND

Competitive intelligence has been practiced in Finland since the early 1960s. Modern CI practice has become more prevalent as a consequence of a small domestic market (population five million) and the over-arching necessity for exports. In the mid 1990s, this drove business to seek assistance in any way they could to maintain profitability. Changing trading relationships with the former Soviet Union, a recession in the early 1990s, 500,000 job losses and unemployment at 20% did not help.

Finland's accession to the EU in 1995 brought about a change in ambition and attitude, and competitive intelligence came to the fore in this more positive environment. The

**TABLE 1: FINLAND**

Finland Before	Finland Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CI has been present since the 1960s, but modern practice is increasing due to small domestic markets, (population 5m) and the over-arching need for exports.</li> <li>Changing trading relationships with the former Soviet Union, recession in the early 1990s, 500,000 job losses and unemployment at 20% didn't help.</li> <li>Accession to the EU in 1995 brought about a change in ambition and attitude as new and old industries started to employ CI techniques in the search for increased revenue and new markets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Burgeoning telecoms sector leads the way (led by Nokia) with global markets requiring robust risk assessment.</li> <li>Outsourcing is common yet marketing managers and strategic planners can be heard referring to competitor monitoring, decision-support, strategic intelligence and the preferred business intelligence on a regular basis.</li> <li>Firms in Finland are working hard to understand complex international markets and master the art of turning CI into competitive strategy – watch this space.</li> </ul>

**SIDEBAR 1: CI – THE EUROPEAN SITUATION**

Terminology usage differs: competitor vs competitive, business vs economic intelligence, but does anybody care?

Most countries can claim a long heritage in intelligence gathering, Europe being no exception.

Interest is growing at a far greater pace than most external commentators acknowledge:

- education and training in CI is growing
- consultancy activity is growing
- support services and software capability is growing

**SIDEBAR 2: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF CURRENT PRACTICE**

If carried out at all, in the way in which we would understand it, CI is conducted largely at the tactical level.

While there is awareness of the need for CI at a strategic level, only a few star performers practice it.

There are differing levels of sophistication in terms of attitude, gathering, use and location.

It is all too easy to see CI as data collection when analysis, use, and action is its real purpose.

The fear of cost and a culture to measure everything can (and does) hinder widespread CI adoption.

telecommunications (telecoms) and information technology (IT) sectors grew rapidly and the more traditional manufacturing industries started to employ CI techniques in their search for increased revenue and new markets.

Prior to 1995, little or no external competitive intelligence services existed. CI operations either grew from existing activities or were taken on by departments seeking to expand their sphere of influence. The burgeoning telecom firms led the way with Nokia at the head. The global market place for their products required a much more robust attention to detail and risk assessment than had previously been required by domestic orientated firms.

By the end of the 1990s, competitive intelligence professional services were available to help companies develop their own CI capabilities. Currently outsourcing is now common, with everyday CI tasks being handled by specialized firms, often after the firm had made an initial investment in an internal CI operation.

As competitive intelligence starts to become more accepted within the firm, executives may prefer in-house

capability with a view to long-term and more permanent return on investment. The most explicit evidence of growing CI acceptance in Finland is the use of CI terminology in everyday business language. The involvement of military intelligence or retired law enforcement personnel in competitive intelligence is minimal but military experts are invited to speak at CI events where their approaches to problems are usually received with interest.

Both the public and private sector in Finland tend to refer to it as *business intelligence* rather than *competitive intelligence*. This corresponds to several European countries where there is a reticence to use the term *competitive intelligence* which can sometimes convey an overly aggressive stance.

Finnish firms have yet to master the art of quickly turning competitive intelligence into competitive strategy as large scale changes to the strategic plan are less common. This

**TABLE 2: GERMANY**

**Germany Before**

- There is a tendency not to use the words competitive intelligence. They mean little to non-English speaking managers who prefer terminology related to in-depth analysis of the competitive landscape.
- The political system institutionalized proven military structures and encouraged the use of commercial intelligence gathering. Ex-military personnel saw this as a new career, although they were not welcomed into corporate Germany.

**Germany Today**

- Significant leaning toward, and skill in, quantitative methods of analysis.
- CI's cause is not helped by press articles which refer to its practice as, among other things, the US version of corporate espionage.
- There are 12 CI consulting firms in Germany (>3 FT staff) and countless self-employed individuals who think they are in the same business but their assignments (if they have any at all) tend to center on secondary research projects, web-monitoring and clipping services.

### SIDEBAR 3: COMMON THEMES

CI is most commonly located in the marketing department.

Disclosure law differences can result in false expectations.

Questions of cost, effectiveness and measurability will constantly be raised but few consider the cost of not carrying out CI.

CI throughout Europe is being championed by passionate practitioners who wonder why others can't see the light.

CI training and genuine experts are thin on the ground.

could be attributed to the incredibly complex international markets within which Finnish firms operate. Even within Scandinavia itself, there are significant cultural, economic, and competitive issues which require more than superficial consideration.

Business executives view competitive intelligence as a holistic function incorporating people, processes, technology, and information. This is indeed a fairly advanced view but it contrasts with the current desire to outsource CI activities. Having said that, competitive intelligence is considered to be a critical function and one which is set to play a major role in the day-to-day operations and long-term strategic management of Finnish firms.

### GERMANY

The term *competitive intelligence* means very little to non-English speaking managers. Practitioners prefer to use terminology relating to an in-depth analysis of the competitive landscape. As a consequence, the competitive intelligence function in Germany is usually located within the marketing or market research department.

Using competitive information to establish competitive advantage has a long tradition in Germany. A political system which institutionalized proven military structures has encouraged commercial intelligence gathering. Ex-military personnel wanting to leverage their intelligence gathering skills saw CI as a new career, although they were not welcomed into corporate Germany.

Competitive intelligence practitioners in Germany lean towards more quantitative methods of analysis. Key German language texts promote the use of intelligence systems as a prerequisite for competitive advantage, early warnings, and bottom line success, but again, few of these texts call it *competitive intelligence*.

The popular press refers to competitive intelligence as a *new phenomenon* and *the US version of corporate espionage*. Neither view is especially helpful in promoting CI activities in the German corporate environment.

The private firm Denkfabrik Institute of Competitive Intelligence offers a range of CI workshops and professional CI certification in an effort to promote the legitimate activities of the profession. In 2000, twelve German firms, each with more than three full-time staff, offered fully developed CI consultancy services. Countless smaller firms and self-employed individuals carry out secondary research assignments, web-monitoring or clipping services.

### LITHUANIA

Recent accession to the European Union and intensifying international competition has created favorable conditions for introducing and developing competitive intelligence in Lithuania. As one of the former Soviet countries, it has undergone significant changes which emphasize the more Western approaches to business activity. Although articles, seminars and business school courses promote CI and awareness is increasing, Lithuania is still far from fully developed as a CI proficient nation.

Since Lithuania experienced 50 years of a planned economy, the words *competitive* and *intelligence* usually carry a negative connotation. When placed together they mean something entirely different from the western business world's definition. Previously, gathering intelligence was the preserve of the secret services and was targeted at capitalist societies.

An early form of intelligence gathering was through mutual company visits to share experiences. From such visits, benchmarking began to be practiced, as did product copying and idea stealing. Firms within the same industry started to learn how to protect their secrets and limit information accessibility.

### SIDEBAR 4: WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN AN ENLARGED EU

Welcomed and utilized but English is essential.

Unlike the US, military connections do not and will not impress European business executives. In fact, it would be more likely to do positive harm to your relationship.

Clear evidence of business success and practitioners with records of genuine operational ability, not rhetoric, is essential.

Consultants need to offer credibility and unique local knowledge beyond the web, a track record, and trust.

**TABLE 3: LITHUANIA**

Lithuania Before	Lithuania Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accession to the EU and intensifying international competition provide favorable conditions for CI.</li> <li>• As a former Soviet Union country, Lithuania strives to adapt to Western approaches to business activity.</li> <li>• With 50 years of a planned economy the words competitive and intelligence usually carry a negative connotation.</li> <li>• Mutual company visits, with the aim of sharing experiences, gave rise to product copying and idea stealing.</li> <li>• Counter-intelligence was essential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles, seminars and business schools promote awareness but Lithuania is far from being a fully developed CI nation.</li> <li>• Firms are not considered to be strong in the analysis of external information and there is a tendency to adopt the easiest, not always the most ethical, methods for competitor monitoring.</li> <li>• Attitudes toward information exchange are rooted in the history of living in a country dominated by distrust.</li> <li>• Demand for CI is slowly increasing but an understandably high degree of scepticism will hinder progress.</li> </ul>

A key task for competitive intelligence style activities then was to gain access to decision-makers in competing firms and understand their raw material purchasing habits, type of processing equipment, and technological capabilities. In an environment of little surplus product, being able to satisfy demand was the prime objective.

It was not until Lithuanian independence in 1990 that business executives could travel outside the Eastern block. The country has recently been flooded with Western products. Without necessarily realizing it, Lithuanian firms started to employ CI practices to compete with such imports.

Formalized competitive intelligence teaching reached Lithuania in 2000, as a direct result of an academic visit to Lund University where Robertas Jucevicius met Stevan Dedijer, one of the founding fathers of CI in Sweden. This resulted in developing the first CI course for MBA students at Kaunas University of Technology. A recent collaboration with the Knowledge Society Institute launched a CI process implementation project in one of Lithuania's larger firms. Apart from security services and news agencies, there are not thought to be any other providers of competitive intelligence services in the country.

Lithuanian firms are not considered to be strong in analyzing external information and tend to adopt the easier (and not necessarily ethical) methods for competitor monitoring. The general approach towards information exchange is rooted in a residual attitude of a country environment dominated by distrust. This makes the wholesale promotion of CI difficult.

There is a demand for competitive intelligence type activities and the need for Lithuania to become more westernized in its approach to information exchange. The development of CI will be a slow process with an understandably high degree of scepticism to be overcome before CI takes its place in everyday business practice.

## RUSSIA

Under the former USSR, intelligence activities within the business community were not encouraged. All intelligence gathering was carried out by the state, and the resultant information was owned by the state. All firms at that time were state-owned, so any individual intelligence operation was a challenge to government authority.

Having a strong military and government intelligence (MGI) history, Russian competitive intelligence was perceived as operating at the blurred boundary between ethical practice and economic espionage. Almost all Russian CI professionals have either a military, intelligence, or police background. New entrants to the profession are not immune, as the only educational and training available for competitive intelligence in Russia is taught by the state-owned military and intelligence academies.

A highly sophisticated military style operation within the Soviet government had the principal objective of gaining access to the most advanced Western *know-how* in industries

## SIDEBAR 5: HOW CI CAN GROW IN EUROPE

Recognition of the CI role, critical mass, and willingness for firms to 'come-out' on their CI activities.

Examples from European firms of benefits and best practice, all within a relevant context.

Teach CI in Business Schools and to CEOs but acceptance of CI and strategy management as a profession requires a recognized governing body and a qualification process where membership is earned not simply paid for.

**TABLE 4: RUSSIA**

Russia Before	Russia Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the former USSR, business intelligence work was not encouraged, all such activity was conducted by the state with the resultant information owned by the state.</li> <li>• Almost all Russians calling themselves CI professionals have either a military, intelligence or police background.</li> <li>• 1991 saw job losses as hundreds of former KGB agents sought an outlet for their skills in the commercial world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MGI/KGB officers are still present but a national “reality check” has forced firms to evaluate their practice.</li> <li>• Commercially, rather than militarily, trained younger managers are forcing firms to recognize ethical standards and realize that CI is more than commercial espionage.</li> <li>• Economic expansion, greater exposure to Western trading behavior and the desire for global partners allow the new breed to displace the old guard.</li> </ul>

key to the Soviet economy. In 1991, Boris Yeltsin instigated reform of the former KGB which resulted in the job losses for hundreds of secret service officers, who then sought an outlet for their abilities in the commercial sector. Most found positions in private security and state-owned firms.

In the mid-1990s nearly all non-defense related companies were privatized and firms started to initiate their own intelligence systems. They were still dependent on the old MGI/KGB staff and attitudes. Many of today’s CI professionals in Russian acknowledge this situation and their part in it. Recognizing that Russia could become a victim of its own activity, a national *reality check* forced the country to examine its ethical behavior. The influence of MGI/KGB officers is being diluted by new stakeholders such as well educated, young people with analytical approaches. Greater attention to ethical standards is starting to question the old mindset.

Competitive intelligence in Russia is now serving a wide range of businesses and is taking its place alongside the more traditional functions of accounting and manufacturing. Larger firms are recognizing CI as something more than commercial espionage.

The continued expansion of the Russian economy will bring with it a strong demand for competitive intelligence. Changed trading behavior, greater expectations from trading partners, and the desire for global markets will require firms to be more diligent in their procedures than ever before. As the new breed of business graduates move up the corporate ladder they will gradually displace MGI personnel. Exposure to different trading behavior will also encourage best practices.

**SPAIN**

Competitive intelligence in Spain goes by a variety of names, including technological intelligence, economic intelligence, company intelligence, or business intelligence. The process of all these activities are still instantly recognizable to CI practitioners.

As with many other European countries, the competitive intelligence literature in Spain is sparse and has surfaced through strategic management publications only since the 1990s. The evolution of CI in Spain has gone through several cycles. Starting in 1991, the initiation phase saw a few scholars demonstrating the importance of business intelligence. In 1994 during the information phase, experts recognized the role of external information to a firm. From 1998 to 2001 the technology phase highlighted the importance of technical intelligence.

While the emphasis in the previous three phases had been on information collection, the current phase is more concentrated on usage. Since 2001 competitive intelligence has begun to take its place in the strategic process. A Spanish consulting company recently launched *Puzzle*, one of the few CI dedicated magazines ([www.revista-puzzle.com](http://www.revista-puzzle.com)). Writers are also increasingly referring to competitive, business or economic intelligence as specific terms in relation to information acquisition.

A few small competitive intelligence consulting firms (less than three employees) operate in the areas where technologically driven firms are located: Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia and the Basque Country. Universities and colleges in the major cities offer CI courses, often associated with institutes of marketing and technology. Research reports no universal framework for CI activities in Spanish companies and significant differences exist between industry sectors. The most common location for CI activities is within the marketing department with support from information technology.

The dominance of small and medium sized enterprises in Spain encourages the reliance on a large number of trade associations, all claiming to provide intelligence services to its sector. There is significant potential for information to be over-generalized, duplicated and untimely. The cost of developing an in-house competitive intelligence operation is probably beyond the resources of all but the largest domestic or multinational firms in Spain.

**TABLE 5: SPAIN**

Spain Before	Spain Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CI practice has gone through a life cycle pattern:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>initiation phase 1991</li> <li>information phase 1994</li> <li>technology phase 1998</li> <li>strategic phase 2001</li> </ul> </li> <li>First three phases concentrated on information collection, the final phase on usage.</li> <li>One of the very few CI dedicated magazines 'Puzzle' has been launched in Spain and carries practitioner focused articles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite observations that many firms of varying size had precise guidelines for gathering strategic information, Spanish firms tend to rely on internal information which makes CI less of a priority.</li> <li>A few small (&lt; 3 staff) CI consulting firms exist, operating in areas where high tech firms operate – Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia and the Basque Country.</li> <li>SME dominance leads to reliance on Trade Associations.</li> <li>CI active firms report the absence of a universal framework in Spain.</li> </ul>

## SWEDEN

Intelligence gathering has a long history in Sweden, and competitive intelligence has gone through four decades of development there. Before 1980, fledgling competitive intelligence activities took place within government and export orientated firms albeit in a sporadic, non-structured manner. The government provided information to firms primarily through Swedish technological attachés in foreign locations. Pioneering firms such as Volvo, Ericsson and Tetra Pak were developing in-house, centralized CI analysis units.

The 1990s saw steady growth in the diffusion of competitive intelligence practice within Swedish firms. Informal groups increased awareness and promoted learning from intelligence gathering. More firms began to integrate CI activities into their business processes. Competitive intelligence began to be recognized as a true profession with CI managers and firms engaging in CI training courses. In the early 2000s though, CI activity declined with the general economic downturn and poor company performance. Paradoxically, this is the time when CI is most valuable.

In common with many managerial trends, just as the private sector moves away from a particular activity,

the public sector picks it up as a *new idea*. In Sweden commercial firms have begun to focus their efforts on more targeted primary work such as trends and scenario analysis. Charitable organizations such as the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children Foundation and the Church of Sweden have also shown interest in intelligence gathering. The number of competitive intelligence suppliers has also grown. Training courses and conferences proliferate to produce what is possibly one of the most mature and competitive CI industries in the world.

Stevan Dedijer, a SCIP Meritorious award recipient, played a significant role in the development of competitive intelligence in Sweden. His passionate championing of CI, from his first published work in 1972 through some 150+ papers and reports written in the field of intelligence and security, created a legacy of inspired individuals whom he taught and who are now continuing his work in the competitive intelligence arena.

Professor Dedijer also taught seminar-based business intelligence courses in the 1970s at Lund University. They became general courses offered to undergraduate as well as post graduate management students. CI is now taught in nine

**TABLE 6: SWEDEN**

Sweden Before	Sweden Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possibly the most advanced European CI nation.</li> <li>Started with the early Vikings in 13th century and continued with well known international names such as SKF, Ericsson, Alfa Laval and Electrolux in the 21st.</li> <li>Pioneering firms such as Volvo and Tetra Pak took advantage of government support but also developed in-house capabilities.</li> <li>Economic downturn in 2000 and poor company performance has adversely affected the growth of CI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The legacy of Stevan Didijer, who published over 150 papers and reports and inspired the individuals he taught, endures.</li> <li>Organizations such as BISNES and the Swedish Intelligence Centre drew the attention of the US military intelligence community.</li> <li>Attempts by the Swedish military to institutionalize the concept of intelligence failed and CI is flourishing due to the efforts of activists.</li> <li>While the concept of CI in Sweden is mature, the activity is still struggling to gain full acceptance.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 7: UK**

United Kingdom Before	United Kingdom Today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 1985, over 16,500 managers are known to have received CI training, plus countless others on degree programs and one-off courses.</li> <li>• Chasmic divide between UK government and business but SMEs fare better for support in intelligence gathering.</li> <li>• Little evidence that CI has a strategic role.</li> <li>• CI related job titles do occur in international firms, typically pharmaceuticals, but in the mainstream, more likely to be an “added-extra” to a traditional job role.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To retailers, CI is price checking, to bankers it is product matching, to manufacturers it is product stripping – all tactical activities.</li> <li>• CI is often confused with market research, customer management, web searching or environmental scanning.</li> <li>• Insufficient attention is given to product launch analysis, competitor offering analysis, patent analysis, scenario and what-if profiling.</li> <li>• Differing levels of sophistication in terms of attitude, gathering, use, and location.</li> </ul>

Swedish universities, five colleges, four private companies and five government institutions. Doctoral studies are also being conducted in the field of intelligence.

Didijer was also behind a private sector organization launched in 1992, Business Intelligence & Strategy Network Scandinavia (BISNES). The Swedish Intelligence Centre, a spin off from BISNES, drew the attention of the US military intelligence community. However attempts by the Swedish military to institutionalize and monopolize the concept of intelligence failed and a collaborative opportunity was thus lost.

Without the efforts of CI consultants, service providers, universities and other interested organizations, competitive intelligence would not have flourished in Sweden in quite the way it has. Sweden is a country that is mature in CI terms, with many educational courses, CI active manufacturing firms with global names, and quality CI consulting firms.

While the concept of CI in Sweden is mature, the activity is still struggling to gain the same acceptance as traditional business activities such as marketing, strategy and finance. As the worst effects of the economic downturn recede, graduates with formalized competitive intelligence training will provide a more holistic approach towards intelligence gathering and will seek its integration into all business functions.

## UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom (UK) has been actively involved in competitive intelligence since 1985. During 1984 four articles published in the UK Journal *Long Range Planning* drew attention to the phraseology. Although work of a CI nature was being undertaken, before then competitive intelligence was not separately recognized, was inaccurately labeled as market research and, for the most part, was housed within a firm’s marketing department.

Competitive intelligence as a distinct discipline in the UK continues to grow. Practitioners largely reject the importation of US focused gurus, consultants, and academics who seem to have little understanding or empathy with the UK business environment and its laws. Practitioners are more likely to use the term competitor than competitive intelligence, as it is largely competitor research and not the wider macro-environmental issues which form the focus for CI in the UK. Similarly, CI is frequently confused with market research and the uninitiated think it is spying.

There is little evidence that competitive intelligence has a strategic role in UK businesses. CI related job titles do occur in international firms (typically pharmaceuticals), but the mainstream role is more likely to be as an *added-extra* to the traditional task of marketing, finance, or manufacturing. Some larger UK firms have introduced job titles such as CI manager or BI co-ordinator, but they are more likely to be in multi-national firms where the CI activity has been imported, rather than home-grown. Thus, UK best practice examples are in short supply.

The divide between UK government and business is significant and co-operation is minimal. Firms which operate in sectors such as water supply, electricity, telecommunications, gas and other utilities operate under regulators who make rules about the release of information, and participation in mergers, acquisition, pricing, service provision, territory and the like. A notable exception is the support given to exporters and small businesses. The UK government actively encourages export activity via a series of booklets outlining information sources on target countries and provides country specialists to help exporters.

Only a few dedicated competitive intelligence consultancies currently operate within the UK. A recent addition to UK activity has been the launch of a new CI magazine focused on competitive and strategic intelligence

within Europe. *Critical Eye* is a subscription-based magazine and website but it also offers networking benefits.

The market for competitive intelligence in the UK is still growing and has far greater potential than most external commentators acknowledge. Over 16,500 managers have been trained in CI. In addition, the CIMS team at Leicester Business School offers competitive intelligence as a dedicated module.

If competitive intelligence is carried out at all in UK companies, it is likely to be at the tactical level. To retailers, CI is price checking, to bankers it is product matching, to manufacturers it is product stripping – all tactical activities. Some are aware of the need for CI but most do not knowingly practice it, consequently, there are differing levels of sophistication in terms of attitude, gathering, use, and location.

Perhaps the single biggest barrier to competitive intelligence being seen as a legitimate, recognized and distinct profession within the UK is a misunderstanding of how it can improve business performance. Until CI is seen as a legitimate and important practice for businesses it will not develop into a separate discipline in its own right. CI practitioners in the UK will describe themselves as business information analysts or marketing intelligence managers in preference to competitive intelligence manager, when in reality, that is the job that they are doing.

## CONCLUSION

Competitive intelligence across Europe is being championed by passionate individuals rather than organizations. Notwithstanding the number of businesses, levels of population and GDP, Western European countries have buoyant economies. Economic difficulties in the widened European Community, the US, and Japan have seen increased competition from emerging nations and non-traditional areas.

The subsequent need for swiftness of action and market sensing should be a superb platform for an exponential rise in competitive intelligence activity. This seems to be happening in Western European countries, but in others practitioners are still struggling to grow from being a decision-supporter to a decision-maker. CI has made its way to the strategic level in some firms, in some countries, but for the most part there is a long way to go.

The role and acceptance of competitive intelligence would be improved if the activity widened and received greater recognition. Competitive intelligence suffers from being viewed as a support-only function with the real power being in the hands of marketing intelligence, strategic planning and accounting. In this context, we should separate people calling themselves CI professionals and the CI activity – the two are not synonymous. An active program linking the information, knowledge management, and marketing

communities is required. Essentially, if CI is to become a recognized profession across Europe then its practitioners need to first recognize themselves.

Key individuals are speaking on many different occasions, attracting audiences of up to 400 in the UK, 200 in Germany and into the thousands through workshop attendance. The time is ripe for a surge of support activities and recognition of competitive intelligence as a key element for improved business performance. Empirical research has proved that a thirst for CI exists. Informal discussions with CI active peers and colleagues confirm this and workshop attendance demonstrates this.

The art of competitive intelligence has a great future in Europe, albeit under another name. In fact, it hardly matters what it is called, just as long as the work is taking place. Success will come for CI practitioners when the skills of those currently practicing in large, multi-national environments, are diffused to domestically orientated firms. That would provide a platform for continuing development and greater acceptance of CI work, with real benefits being observable by decision makers and stakeholders.

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