Global Intelligence Alliance

Market Intelligence for Customer Processes

GIA White Paper 3/2007

This White Paper looks into what "keeps sales and marketing directors awake at night", and discusses concrete Market Intelligence methods and tools that can support companies in selling their products and services out to the market.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This White Paper discusses the kinds of Market Intelligence support that the corporate customer processes (marketing & sales planning and management, marketing process, sales process, and the account management process) typically require both on a continuous basis and periodically. The essential focus of the paper is on looking into what "keeps sales and marketing directors awake at night" and on what kinds of concrete Market Intelligence methods and tools can help companies to sell their products and services out to the market.

The MI needs in customer processes typically range from highly strategic brand and media planning to understanding on a very concrete level, how the company's marketing and sales productivity could be further leveraged in different market areas. This paper classifies the supporting MI tools and methods into three categories based on the level of their focus: Macro analysis, market analysis, and customer and competitor analysis. Towards the end, individual tools and methods have been described under each category.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is one of several upcoming White Papers that discuss how Market Intelligence can be linked with different business processes. The White Paper 1/2007 focused on integrating Market Intelligence with the strategy and planning process; the next White Paper will explore the links between MI and the product and technology processes.

Customers are the most important external factor for any organization. Without a thorough understanding of the present and future needs of customers, it is difficult if not impossible to run a successful business operation. Four different sub-processes are presented in this White Paper which interact under the umbrella of "customer process": marketing and sales planning and management, the marketing process, the sales process, and the account management process, all of which can be supported through systematic Market Intelligence.

Figure 1
Market Intelligence for the Customer Processes

A number of Market Intelligence methods and products are presented in this White Paper as tools that support the customer processes. These products combine a past, present and future-oriented approach to an organizations' business environment. Future-oriented methods like customer trend analysis and scenario analysis are combined with more narrowly focused market analysis as well as customer and competitor analyses.

This White Paper will also describe how IT tools such as CRM systems and intelligence technology, combined with Current Awareness systems, can be used in order to obtain and maintain a knowledge advantage in the customer processes. The most advanced companies have a process for this that has been institutionalized and which will be illustrated through a number of case examples.

The term "Market Intelligence" will be used throughout this White Paper. "Market Intelligence" refers to the activity of building an understanding of the present and future business environment that supports proactive decision making. Terms such as competitor analysis, technology analysis, customer insight, etc. will be used under the overarching term "Market Intelligence". In this context, "Market Intelligence" should be seen as being synonymous to terms such as Competitive Intelligence or Business Intelligence.

2. CUSTOMERS IN FOCUS

Ever since Theodore Levitt wrote his seminal article about marketing myopia in 1967, companies have understood that successful business requires a thorough understanding of present and future customer needs. In his article, Levitt argued that companies had a myopic understanding about their customers. Much has happened since then, and today companies attach significant importance to understanding the role of customers.

Many companies now aim to develop customer partnerships and customer intimacy which are based on mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. The development of the internet has also made the current customer process increasingly interactive compared to just a decade ago. This applies to both B2B and B2C companies. Today's business environment demands a comprehensive system for managing risks in the external business environment. Understanding and managing risks related to customers is no different.

Elements of the recent Market Intelligence in Large Companies – Global Study 2007 underscored the importance of the following aspects related to customers and competitors:

- Customers and competitors were the most important elements in the organizations' environment. Most intelligence operations focused on matters related to these players.
- Analysis models for understanding customers and competitors such as SWOT, benchmarking and profiling where the most frequently used methods for Market Intelligence.
- Sales and marketing units together with strategic planning and business development topped the list of organizational units using MI.

Source: Market Intelligence in Large Companies – Global Study 2007 (www.globalintelligence.com)

3. LINKING MARKET INTELLIGENCE AND THE CUSTOMER PROCESSES

The customer process can be divided into several sub-processes: Marketing and sales planning process, marketing communications, sales, and account management.

Figure 2
The Customer Processes

Market Intelligence (MI) needs to support the entire marketing and sales planning process and the supporting processes. There are many stakeholders involved in these processes. Their activities and objectives differ and so does their need for MI. The following direct stakeholders and their MI needs and benefits can be identified.

Figure 3
Benefits of Using MI in the Customer Process

Marketing Director & Marketing Managers

- Support for developing marketing strategies
- Support for developing marketing messages
- Improved timing of marketing activities

Sales Representatives

- Thorough understanding of customer needs and competitive offerings
- Increased sales and market share with higher margin opportunities
- Higher self-confidence in customer meetings

Sales Director & Sales Managers

- Improved understanding of customer needs and competitive offerings
- Motivated and confident sales force
- Easier to motivate urgent adjustments to product offering

These processes are conducted on a daily basis, and in many organizations they are carried out 24 hours a day and even 7 days a week due to global presence and/or automated sales systems. Since many internal stakeholders are involved in the customer process, it is important to tailor the Market Intelligence support to the different stakeholders, depending on the part of the customer process on which they focus.

This paper presents a conceptual framework that will support these groups with appropriate customer knowledge in order for them to conduct their jobs in an effective and professional way. It focuses mainly on business-to-business (B2B) markets, but many aspects of it can also be applied to the business to consumer (B2C) context.

4. REQUIREMENTS FOR MARKET INTELLIGENCE IN THE CUSTOMER PROCESSES

In the light of the above discussion, several conclusions and suggestions regarding how to improve the existing customer processes can be made.

The requirements for Market Intelligence in the customer processes can be broken down into four distinct areas: Marketing and sales planning and management, marketing communications, sales, and account management.

Figure 4
Market Intelligence Needs in the Customer Processes

4.1 MI Needs in Sales and Marketing Planning and Management

In order to conduct effective sales and marketing planning (that naturally directs all marketing, sales and account management activities), companies need systematic Market Intelligence support. Understanding the existing and potential customer segments, competition and applications is vital for developing sustainable sales and marketing strategies, as is building a solid view over how the market dynamics in the competitive environment will affect the company.

Researching new potential market territories is one of the most typical and obvious Market Intelligence needs in organizations today, given the globalizing world where increasingly many companies view the entire world as their playing field. Developing insights into the customer needs in different cultural environments is a natural prerequisite for entering any new markets, and the competitive environment and the future market trends will also need to be analyzed in a structured manner.

4.2 MI Needs in the Marketing Process

Positioning the corporate marketing message in an optimal way obviously requires Market Intelligence support so that the right message will find its way to the right target groups in the marketplace. Monitoring different media and analyzing the available media options naturally falls into this category, and systematically tracking the company's own visibility along with that of the competition will also be necessary in order to gear the marketing message at the right directions.

Analyzing the company's brand value and perceptions in different market areas is becoming increasingly important as the marketplace evolves into the direction of virtual value creation. While the above described MI needs under the marketing process are relatively continuous in nature, analyzing the company's brand is more tightly linked with strategic marketing planning and the need for it therefore tends to emerge periodically in conjunction with the planning process.

4.3 MI Needs in Sales Activities

Sales process is probably one of the most concrete areas where Market Intelligence can directly support business generation if the needs have been properly identified and are being catered to. Identifying target companies, tracking public tenders, or increasing current awareness about both the customers' decision-making processes and about how to sell against competition are all areas where effective MI can help conduct proper sales planning and management.

The target customers or customer segments can then be contacted and influenced through discussion or with a proposal. MI should then provide sales arguments in order to show the benefit of the company's own product or service compared to that of their competitors. Post-sale analysis is also an important issue here. By learning from past sales successes and failures, sales tactics and the product can be improved to give better future results.

4.4 MI Needs in the Account Management Process

Market Intelligence is also required for the account management process so that a company can develop a better understanding of the existing customer and therefore develop and implement account plans. In this process, it is important to identify internal stakeholders in the form of units, projects and/or persons that will affect present and future sales. Competitor products and solutions must also be monitored on a continuous basis. The development of the account is then measured in terms of sales, customer meetings, customer support etc. with the support of the CRM system.

4.5 MI in Providing Quality Assurance for Decisions and Business Processes

All these steps require different types of MI support as different decisions are to be taken throughout the processes. Some organizations use MI for quality assurance in the decision process. They state that a final decision regarding the marketing mix, for example, cannot be taken without having first conducted the appropriate MI analysis. Some organizations ensure that this "decision-point" or "toll gate" methodology is included in all or at least their most important business processes.

5. MARKET INTELLIGENCE METHODS AND TOOLS FOR THE CUSTOMER PROCESSES

Having set out the needs in detail in the previous chapters, we are now better equipped to design a comprehensive intelligence system for the customer processes. Figure 6 illustrates how organizations can utilize different analysis models to develop a first-class capability of understanding the present and future needs of the customers and meeting and exceeding sales targets.

Figure 5
MarketIntelligenceMethods and Tools for the Customer Processes

Admittedly, this is a comprehensive approach that cannot be conducted without the investment of time, money and other resources. However, since the result of this approach will have a profound impact on the company's future success, progressive organizations would be well served to invest resources in building and maintaining a Customer Intelligence capability. Operating a large organization in the 21st century without such a capability would be akin to walking into the future blindfolded.

The different sub-processes to the customer process will now be further explained, and this particular White Paper will underscore the importance of combining different analytical approaches in order to construct a coherent picture of the customers' situation. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that these concepts have been proven in practice in many projects relating to intelligence and the customer process.

The users of the Market Intelligence products that support the customer process can be found on many levels in the organization. Users can be the board who are developing the company mission statement, the executive team who are developing the corporate strategy, business area managers who are developing sales strategies for their business units or a product manager who is developing a product strategy. Sales representatives and sales managers are last, but not least, two of the most important user groups of Customer Intelligence.

5.1 Macro Analysis, Market Analysis and C3 – Three Levels of Customer Analysis

Marketing, Sales and Account Management each needs to be supported by Market Intelligence activities. These activities, however, need to be conducted on different levels since the objectives and focus differ throughout the various processes.

For high level planning purposes, the MI activities should be clearly future-oriented and identify and analyze macro issues that might affect the market and the customers especially in the long-term future. There is therefore a need for some sort of macro analysis.

It is also important to focus on the market and on market development issues. This focus is required both for macro level planning but also for effective market and customer segmentation. Focusing on the market and on market development issues is essential to ensure that sales and marketing activities target the customers/customer segments that have the potential to be most beneficial to the organization.

The table below provides an overview of the customer analysis approaches.

Figure 6
Overview of the Different Analysis Levels

	Macro Analysis	Market Analysis	Customer & Competitor Analysis
Objective	Decide on strategic focus and risk level	Decide on customer segmentation and sales focus	Close individual sales and meet sales' targets over time
Means	Acquire knowledge of the customers' future in broad terms	Acquire knowledge of existing and potential markets for planning, market strategies and customer segmentation	Acquire detailed knowledge of the customer and knowledge about competing offerings in relation to your own product
Scope	Broad focus on the whole macro environment High degree of future orientation	Focus on the industry and the markets Substantial focus on the present environment in combination with historical facts	Focus on the customers and competitors as well as your own organization Focus on the present environment
Internal stakeholders	Management	Marketing Director, Sales Director, Management	Sales managers, Sales representatives, Account managers, Management
Analytical framework	Customer Risk & Opportunity Analysis	Market Analysis	The Strategic 3C Triangle (Customers, competitors and your company)
Analysis methods (examples)	PESTEL analysis, Customer trend analysis, Customer scenario analysis, Customer risk & opportunity analysis	Market size and share analysis, Market segmentation, Media monitoring and media analysis, Industry landscape review	Customer & competitor profiling, Key success factor analysis, Identification of customer leads, SWOT & VRIO analysis, Benchmarking & positioning analysis
Supporting tools	MI system including current awareness and Early Warning/Opportunity analysis	MI system including current awareness and Early Warning/Opportunity analysis, CRM system	CRM system, MI system including current awareness and Early Warning/Opportunity analysis

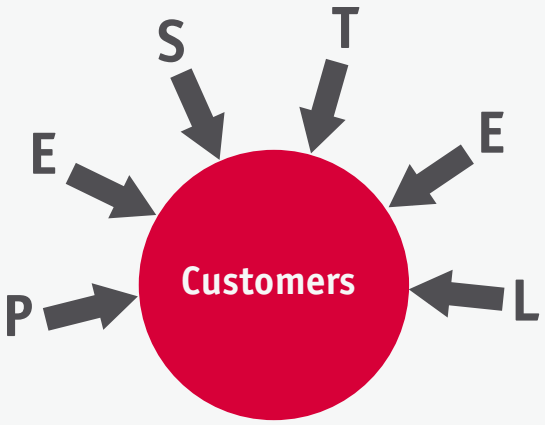
The processes also differ from each other in terms of continuity and timing. The macro analysis and the market analysis approaches are normally conducted as part of the planning process, whereas the customer and competitor analysis should be carried out frequently over the course of the year.

5.2 Market Intelligence Support for the Customer Macro Analysis

The first steps of the sales process involve sales planning and customer identification and segmentation. At this stage, it is vital to understand customers and customer segments from a broad macro-level perspective. The reason for this is that we want to appreciate which customers may be the most appropriate for our organization to target and be aware of the direction in which these customers are heading. In order to acquire this knowledge, it is important to analyze and understand what issues are affecting them at present what issues will affect them in the future.

A macro analysis model for understanding customers is proposed and detailed below. This model combines the following proven analysis models: PESTEL, scenario analysis and trend analysis. The result is a framework for customer risk and opportunity analysis.

Figure 7
The PESTEL Analysis Framework



PESTEL
Politics, Environment, Society/Social, Technology, Economy, Legal

Input
Basic facts regarding the macro environment

Method
Workshop where the different forces are identified, discussed and analyzed

Output
- Identification of trends for the trend impact analysis
- Identification of uncertainties for the scenario analysis
- Evaluation of business risks

This White Paper will not go into in-depth descriptions of these different types of analysis methods at this stage. The reader is instead referred to other GIA White Papers for more information to this effect. The FactBoxes below will provide a basic summary of each analysis method.

FactBox
PESTEL Analysis

Purpose	Identify trends and critical issues in the external business environment.
Scope	Macro level. Focuses on political, economical, social, technological, ecological and legal issues.
Future orientation	Medium/high. The focus is normally on the present environment with a 2-5 year future outlook.
Work process	The PESTEL analysis looks at trends and uncertainties from the following perspectives: political, economical, social, technological, environmental and legal. A PESTEL Analysis includes in-depth primary and secondary research to predict significant changes in the business environment. The importance of different trends from the company/customer point of view can be assessed, for example, through a trend impact matrix showing the most influential and probable trends.

A PESTEL analysis can often be used as preparation for a scenario analysis and a trend analysis in order to identify trends and uncertainties. The trends in the PESTEL analysis are used in the trend analysis and the uncertainties are used in the scenario analysis. As such, these three analysis methods can be triangulated very effectively.

FactBox
Customer Trend Analysis

Purpose	Identify present and future trends and their impact on business.
Scope	All levels. Macro trends might be as important as micro trends. Trend analysis can be unfocused as well as focused. A focused trend analysis concerns a specific issue, whereas an unfocused trend analysis is general and investigates trends which may have a general impact on society.
Future orientation	Medium. A trend, by definition, is something we can identify today. However, it is possible to identify structural trends which will have an impact on society over a very long period of time.
Work process	Define the subject of the analysis (general, company level, product level, BU level, etc). Identify trends that will affect the subject in a positive way and trends that will affect the subject in a negative way. Determine the strengths and the probability of these trends occurring. Conclude how the trends will affect the issue based on the categorization above. Use the result as an input to the sales process planning in general.

Trend analysis provides a good overview of present and future trends inside and outside a company's industry. It is often a good way of resolving business blind spots that may have developed within your own organization, and many companies are now intensifying the analysis of general trends which may affect their industry directly or indirectly.

FactBox
Customer Scenario Analysis

Purpose	Identify possible future outcomes for your customers, the industry, a business unit or a product, etc.
Scope	Works both on macro and micro level.
Future orientation	High. Scenario analysis works best with a future timescale of 3-30 years.
Work process	Identify present and future uncertainties in the business environment. The results from the PESTEL analysis are an excellent source of input into the customer scenario analysis. Develop an uncertainty impact matrix. Develop scenario lines for the most important uncertainties. Develop hybrid scenarios by combining 2 uncertainties. Establish names for the four scenarios which have now have been developed. Refine the scenarios by enriching the content. Could be written as a story, a newspaper article, etc. Verify the result by sending it out to stakeholders, or run another seminar. Match present and future strategy options with the different scenarios in order to find the most flexible and/or robust strategy.

Scenario analysis often provides a broad picture of the future business environment. An excellent way of following up on a scenario analysis is to identify key indicators for each scenario and then to track these with an Early Warning System. Scenarios can also be used as a basic framework for value chain analysis, war games and/or competitor analysis.

FactBox
Customer Risk & Opportunity Analysis

Purpose	Identify potential risks in order to analyze their probability and how they can be avoided.
Scope	Covers all levels.
Future orientation	Medium/high. Future orientation depends on the tools used for the analysis itself.
Work process	Identify risks based on the previous analysis or identify them from scratch in a Risk Analysis project. Categorize the risks by: organizational risks, financial risks, external business risks, technology risks and physical risks. Analyze the risks based on how they will impact on the organization and how likely they are to occur. Identify possible countermeasures to mitigate each risk. Use the analysis as an input to the strategy process and/or for testing established strategies.

Formal risk analysis is an effective way of drawing conclusions for all the different analysis methods. It provides a high-level summary conclusion of the different customer analysis methods that have been described in this chapter.

Conducting the Analysis – The Workshop Approach

The aforementioned analysis methods can be conducted effectively through the workshop method. People from different groups of the organization should participate in order to provide their perspectives on the customer situation. The customers themselves could also be included in parts of the workshops so that an organization can acquire a greater understanding of their priorities. Workshops to which different parties contribute are of far greater value than scenarios in which individual analysts or groups of analysts brainstorm amongst themselves and present a product based on their own knowledge and on secondary source research.

5.3 Market Intelligence Support for the Customer Market Analysis

Once the broader aspects of the business environment have been covered in the macro analysis, the more market-related aspects of the customer processes must be studied. The overarching objective here is to acquire an understanding of how the different markets and market segments are developing.

The growth of various customer segments and markets is essential for the establishment of reliable sales prognoses, the identification of new customer targets and the development of sales plans in general. Without proper Market Intelligence input, sales planning will be guesswork or simply a repetition of the plan from the previous year. The major benefit of market analysis for the account management process is that it allows organizations to acquire an understanding of how the individual accounts in different segments are developing and what future strategies each client might select. This knowledge is important in order to facilitate the development of effective account plans.

Details are given below of a number of analytical models which can be used in the market analysis approach.

FactBox

Market Attractiveness Analysis

Purpose	Define attractive market segments in existing and new markets.
Scope	Micro level. Focus is on one or several geographical markets or market segments.
Future orientation	Medium. Mostly focusing on previous and existing market environments with a moderate future timescale.
Work process	Prioritize markets/segments to be included in the analysis and carry out region-, country- or segment-specific research to support the evaluation of opportunities in the selected market areas. Contents of the analysis may include, for example, macro-environmental facts (PESTEL), industry structure, market size, distribution channels, presence of competitors, local production & trade and pricing. Once the external analysis is complete, evaluate the resources required to obtain a preferred market position. Decide on which market/segments to ideally focus.

Market attractiveness analysis is required so that an organization can decide on the markets in which it wishes to compete in the future. The idea is to obtain either a favorable position in an interesting market or a market niche.

FactBox
Market Size and Market Share Analysis

Purpose	Identify market size and market share for various market segments. This normally also includes past and future growth opportunities. Normally a part of the market attractiveness analysis.
Scope	Micro-focus relating to analysis of different market segments.
Future orientation	Moderate. Normally includes past and present market size and share with a forecast related to the future market size and market share.
Resources needed	Moderate. High profile markets are normally analyzed by banks, industry analysis firms and management consulting firms. However, in-depth analysis must normally be conducted on a case-by-case basis.
Work process	Start with an analysis of previous market size figures and market share figures. Estimate future market size growth based on supply and demand-related scenarios, trends and forecasts. Estimate future market share based on competitors' objectives, strategies and strengths. Secondary sources as well as expert insights gathered through interviews are key sources of information for conducting market size and market share analyzes.

Market size and market share are issues which most companies focus rather heavily on. They are issues of paramount importance in organizations' strategic communications to investors and other stakeholders. Market share and the related sales targets are also criteria by which both sales people and the executive team can be evaluated.

FactBox
Industry Landscape Review

Purpose	Provide a high-level overview of the industry landscape.
Scope	Micro analysis focusing on the business area. Normally includes an industry analysis, value chain analysis, competitor analysis, customer analysis, technology roadmap analysis, market size and market share analysis.
Future orientation	Low/Medium. The focus is normally on the past and present business environment.
Work process	Define the appropriate scope of analysis (e.g. to focus primarily on the competitor landscape, or have a broader focus on the whole value chain or value net) and select applicable models. Selected models to be used to collect information and conduct analyzes.

The purpose of an Industry Landscape Review is to provide a broad analysis of the industry. The Review normally takes the form of a comprehensive fact pack that should be used as input for the strategy process. The Industry Landscape Review is also often used as a tool for bringing everyone up-to-date with the external business environment. Without this overview, executives, managers and other employees will have a fragmented picture of this environment. Analytical models which can be used for industry landscape reviews include the Value-chain analysis, Porters 5 Forces or any other analytical models that take a broad overview of the industry.

FactBox
Forecasting

Purpose	Estimate market development.
Scope	Multiple levels. Macroeconomic forecasts are as common as market share and sales' forecasts.
Future orientation	High. Often 1-10 years.
Work process	Cause-and-effect analysis is the core technique used for modeling and factoring the problem into sub-problems. Statistical analysis is applied when there is a sufficient volume of high-quality data available to make precise estimates. Judgmental analysis is used for qualitative portions of the forecasting problem. Gathering available analyst forecasts and consensus estimates can be a part of the forecasting project.

Experience has shown that relying solely on forecasting is not very effective. This is especially true for long-term forecasting. Forecasting works best in stable industries operating with a low uncertainty level.

FactBox
Customer Theme Impact Analysis

Purpose	Provide an overview or deep dive regarding a specific issue that is of importance.
Scope	Could be any level of analysis.
Future orientation	Medium/High. The focus is normally on the present and future business environment.
Work process	The intelligence cycle is normally used as the basic work process. Someone identifies an issue which requires further elaboration. Development of key intelligence topics and key intelligence questions to be answered is normally a first step in this process. Information collection from internal and external information sources. Analysis of the information which may also include conclusions and recommendations.

Having covered the macro analysis and the market analysis, we now need to ensure that the Market Intelligence is detailed enough in order to win deals on an operational level.

5.4 Market Intelligence Support for Customer & Competitor Analysis

This section shall focus on the more operational side of intelligence as an input to the customer processes. This approach is often partly handled by the marketing function and the intelligence unit in an uncoordinated fashion which leads to existing customer and competitor knowledge being under-utilized.

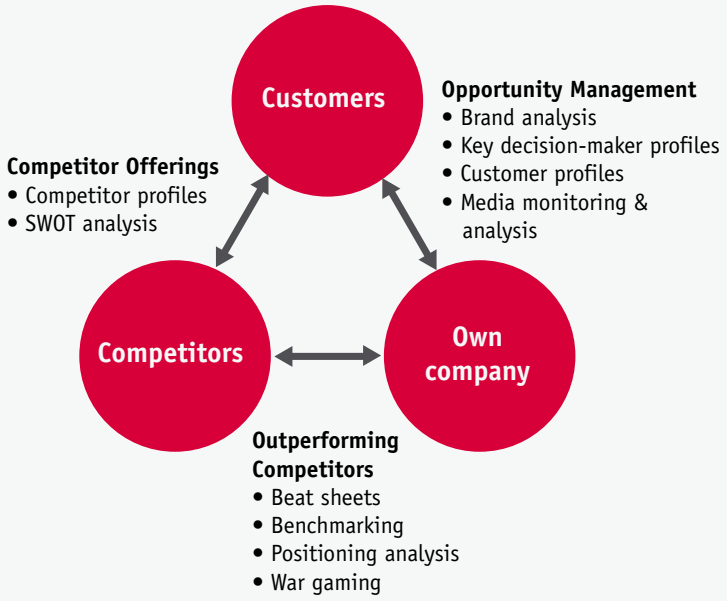
Organizations require detailed knowledge about competitors' products and customers' needs so that they can effectively position their own products in relation to competitor offerings. Product/customer attribution analysis is one of the methods used for this purpose. Detailed benchmarking combining SWOT, VRIO analysis and positioning analysis is then required in order to identify aspects of the organization's own product which are unique.

An in-depth understanding of customer needs and competitor products is also vital so that an organization can position and communicate its own product in the best possible way. The sales representative needs appropriate intelligence so that s/he can prepare for a sales meeting, and develop winning offers.

Customer analysis is vital so that an account plan can be developed and so that knowledge can be acquired of how the account best can be developed. Detailed customer analysis is required so that knowledge can be obtained of both present and future key issues which will concern the client, and the key decision makers who will be making important decisions regarding purchasing.

The strategic triangle concept is used to show the important relationship between your organization, your customers and your competitors. This relationship will be relevant to organizations which do not have a monopoly on their own services.

Figure 8
The Strategic 3C Triangle



The 3C triangle demonstrates that the customer processes do not take place in isolation. Other competitors are always present and have an impact on the customer.

In this case, the relationship between your company and the customer is seen as an opportunity as the customer is or might be interested in purchasing products, services or solutions you have to offer. Your task is to manage this opportunity and obtain new business or maintain an existing business relationship. This can be carried out by developing a "customer attack/approach" strategy. This strategy consists of providing a product that is attractive to the customer. Identifying customer key success factors and which of your own weaknesses you must avoid are essential steps in this process.

To outperform the competitors you need to develop "beat sheets" which will show you how to position your product in relation to the competitors. This is done by benchmarking the different products using methods such as SWOT, VRIO and positioning analysis.

Product positioning also requires a thorough understanding of the relationship between the competitor and the client. In addition, it is important to know what the competing products will look like, to be fully aware of the past and present relationships, and to know which products are likely to be put on the market, etc.

When you have taken these parameters into account, you should be in a position to deliver a competitive product that is more attractive to the customer than those of your competitors.

The FactBoxes below describe a number of analysis methods that can be used in this process.

FactBox

Leads Generation: Identifying Potential Customers

Purpose	Identify potential customers that meet the requirements identified in the planning and market segmentation phases.
Scope	Micro level. Focus is on companies and customer segments that might be potential customers.
Future orientation	Low – Mostly focusing on potential customers.
Work process	Identify companies based on market presence, market size, product needs, previous purchase patterns, etc. Secondary source research using global or country-specific company databases is normally the first step in this process in order to obtain a list of potential companies belonging to specific segments of interest. These companies may then be targeted in different forms of marketing campaigns. In a B2C industry, potential customers are often selected based on age, income level, address, areas of interest, etc.

1.) The letters in "VRIO" stand for four distinct strengths that an organization should have against its competitors: 1. Is the strength Valuable from a customer perspective? 2. Is the strength Rare from a competitive perspective? 3. Is the strength difficult to Imitate?, and 4. Is the strength efficiently Organized?

This type of research is conducted in order to identify potential new customers. Successful market segmentation is a key activity that needs to be conducted prior to the identification of new customers.

FactBox
Profiles

Purpose	Provide basic information regarding a phenomenon/issue/company/person. Necessary as input to a benchmarking process.
Scope	Macro and micro level. Examples: Competitor profiles, customer profiles, country profiles, market profiles, etc. Normally includes a basic description of the features of the phenomenon.
Future orientation	Low. Most profiles depict a past or present situation.
Work process	Intelligence cycle as basis for collection process: Intelligence needs analysis to determine profile content. Information collection. Structuring the information according to the profile content. Analysis if required. Include profiles in a report, PowerPoint presentation or database.

The use of Profiles (on competitors, customers, countries, markets, etc.) has been somewhat debated over time. Some say that they are of little value whereas many others assert that it is important to develop a common view on a subject and that profiles are effective mechanisms for achieving this objective. One disadvantage of not working with harmonized profiles is that an organization will most likely end up with many different profiles created by different people about the same topic. It would therefore be more efficient to have a centralized profile database that is structured and regularly updated in order to save time and cost. Profiles often function as fact-packs which support more sophisticated analysis.

FactBox
Customer Focused Key Success Factor Analysis (KSF)

Purpose	Identify the factors which the customer perceives as valuable. This is then to be used in the sales process in order to position the service/product as effectively as possible.
Scope	Focusing on the client or a broader group of clients.
Future orientation	Low – Focusing mainly on past and present key success factors.
Work process	The creation of a basic customer profile in order to understand basic strategy is the first step in this process. Secondary source information is then to be collected in order to identify statements, press releases, etc. from the company regarding the specific area in focus. Interviewing industry experts and the potential client company would then be the next step in order to identify the most important KSF. Discussion with people who will actually use the service/product, including those who won't is essential.

Why is it essential to identify customer-focused KSFs instead of placing your confidence solely in what you believe are the KSFs from your own company perspective. Well, the customers' perspective will most likely differ from yours. Individual KSFs will also vary among different customers, and even with just one client company, the KSF might differ depending on whom you are talking to. The chief engineer is likely to have his own set of KSFs which will most likely be different from those of the client's marketing people or purchasing department. Identifying KSFs on an individual level might therefore be an important task in a sales process.

FactBox
SWOT Analysis

Purpose	Identify strategies on a company or product level.
Scope	Can be conducted on a company or product level.
Future orientation	Focus on present environment.
Work process	The focus here is on an organization's or product's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks. Strengths and weaknesses are internal to the organization and opportunities and risks arise from outside the organization. For the ideal product, a combination of primary and secondary source research needs to be conducted.

According to the Market Intelligence in Large Companies - Global Study 2007 conducted by the Global Intelligence Alliance, SWOT analysis is the most used analysis method for MI. It is an extremely flexible method which provides an understanding of how to match strengths and opportunities, and which weaknesses need to be improved and which risks should be avoided.

FactBox
VRIO Analysis

Purpose	Identify unique strengths and capabilities so that the sales strategy and sales arguments can be focused.
Scope	Can be conducted on a company or solution level.
Future orientation	Focus on present environment.
Work process	When applying the VRIO framework, you look at each strength and try to verify the uniqueness by asking 4 questions: 1. Is the strength Valuable from a customer perspective? 2. Is the strength Rare from a competitive perspective? 3. Is the strength difficult to Imitate?, and 4. Is the strength efficiently Organized? Sustainable competitive advantage is possible if the answer to all these questions is Yes.

VRIO analysis is an excellent extension to the SWOT analysis as it provides a more in-depth approach to analyzing the strengths. With the VRIO analysis, you will find that many of the strengths which you may think are very valuable will have to be redefined as basic strengths which many companies have.

FactBox
Benchmarking

Purpose	Understanding similarities and differences between different organizations and competing products, etc.
Scope	Benchmarking can be applied to many different scenarios.
Future orientation	Low – Focuses on the present environment.
Work process	In the customer process, the sales process and, more frequently, the product or service supplied to the customers are normally benchmarked. Based on the KSF identified from a client perspective, the product or service can then be compared with competing offerings.

FactBox
Positioning analysis / Portfolio Analysis

Purpose	Show how companies or products differ across a range of aspects. The positioning analysis is beneficial in that the results immediately highlight the differences.
Scope	Broad – Benchmarking can be applied to many different scenarios.
Future orientation	Low – Focuses on the present environment.
Work process	The benchmarking data is used in order to visualize in a matrix model how companies or products differ from each other regarding certain variables.

The positioning analysis may take many forms. The most well known are the product/market matrix, the McKinsey / GE model and the BCG portfolio analysis (with stars, cash cows, dogs and question marks). One of the key advantages with this analysis is that it is visual and as such makes it possible to understand complex situations with many issues involved.

FactBox
Customer/Product Attribution Analysis

Purpose	Identify sales arguments based on attributes of importance related to competitive positioning.
Scope	Focus on customer needs and competitor product strengths in relation to your own product.
Future orientation	Focus on the present environment.
Work process	Identify which attributes the customer rates as important, of medium importance or of low importance. Benchmark your product's position against the competitors for each attribute. The attributes which are strong compared to the competition are your sales arguments.

This is basically a combination of KSF analysis, SWOT, benchmarking and positioning analysis on a product level.

FactBox
Media Monitoring & Media Analysis

Purpose	Understand events that affect your clients by monitoring both news in the general press, the business press and on the Internet and databases.
Scope	Flexible – Focus can be on customers, competitors, regulating bodies, etc.
Future orientation	Low – Media monitoring mostly provides information regarding past events. These events may of course provide input to future activities.
Work process	The first thing is to identify what should be monitored. Customers, competitors, suppliers, etc. are normally included. The next step is to identify possible sources to monitors and finally to set up a process to obtain information from the sources.

Media monitoring is a key item in your current awareness system. This will be described in further detail later in this paper.

FactBox
Tender Monitoring

Purpose	Continuous monitoring of tenders.
Scope	Micro level, focus on customers.
Future orientation	Medium/high.
Work process	Tender databases listing future tenders in various industries can be monitored. Contact with the purchasing departments of present and potential clients is also a method of ensuring that you do not miss out on any tenders. This tender monitoring should naturally be included in your CRM and current awareness system.

FactBox
Brand Monitoring

Purpose	Continuously track the visibility of particular brands (either your client's own or those of competitors or both)
Scope	Micro level, focus on products.
Future orientation	Low.
Work process	Brand monitoring goes beyond media monitoring as it can incorporate primary research (interviewing distributors or end-users) and outdoor and in-store observation. Results can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

FactBox
Win & Loss Analysis

Purpose	Understand the reasons for losing or winning a deal in order to improve future sales activities.
Scope	Customer focus.
Future orientation	Low: This focuses on the present sale.
Work process	Ask the client why the deal was lost. A structure for analyzing why a deal was lost is normally included in a CRM system which states possible reasons for losing/winning a deal, such as: price, product features, service, existing relationship, not meeting RFP requirements, etc.

The Win & Loss analysis should be handled through the CRM system of your organization. Honest input of reasons is key to understanding existing products. Sometimes this analysis is also handled by a third party supplier who will interview existing and lost clients.

FactBox
User studies

Purpose	Understanding how customers are actually using the product or service.
Scope	Customer focus.
Future orientation	Focus on present or past usage.
Work process	The key here aspect is to actually see how the customer is using the product or service or allow them to describe how it is used.

User studies are required in order to obtain a thorough understanding of how customers are using the product. The knowledge acquired through this process can often be used for product development as well for improving existing sales' and marketing processes.

FactBox
War Game / Future Game

Purpose	Understand potential and probable actions by competitors and other important stakeholders in the business environment.
Scope	Micro level. Focus on customers, competitors and other industry players.
Future orientation	Medium/High. Works best on a future timescale of 1-3 years.
Work process	The idea is to "become" the competitors and customers and think from their point of view when conducting the analysis. Define the purpose for the war game. Create teams which have a comprehensive knowledge of the different competitors. Provide background information to the teams about the war game exercise as well as information about the competitor they have been assigned. Identify interesting future scenarios/events on which the teams shall respond. Allow the teams to present their responses to various scenarios and present a business/product/marketing plan, etc. for the organization. Post-workshop analysis and verification of the result. Use the result as an input to the strategy process relating to possible actions and counteractions which the competitors will make based on your strategic intent.

A war game is an interactive event which is ideal for acquiring knowledge about competition on short- to medium-term future activities. Competitor profiles, trends and scenarios serve as an excellent input to the war game process. War games/future games which focus on competition normally work best on the basis of a 2-5 year timescale. War games are an extremely effective way of involving people in and creating insight and a high level of morale within the organization's intelligence work.

Case:
Nycomed's Imaging Battle (War Game) provided valuable input to the product launch process

Nycomed needed to understand how the market and competitors would react to a forthcoming product launch. They decided that a War Game would be the ideal way to find out this information. During the War Game, five competing teams played the roles of existing major competitors, a minor competitor and competitor X, a fictitious competitor. There was also a team representing the Food and Drug Administration. The War Game illustrated that the competitors were most likely to react differently to the imminent product launch. This finding gave them vital input to their marketing and sales process. The product launch was then conducted with a high degree of confidence. (Source: Jan Fikkan, Senior Vice President, Strategy)

FactBox
Mystery Shopping

Purpose	Understand how the sales process is conducted in your own company by your sales agents/distributors and/or by competitors.
Scope	Micro level. Focus on your own company, competitors and other industry players.
Future orientation	Low. Focus is on the present environment.
Work process	The idea is to purchase the product or service and identify how the product was marketed and sold. By acquiring this knowledge, you can improve how you make sales and thus outperform the competitors.

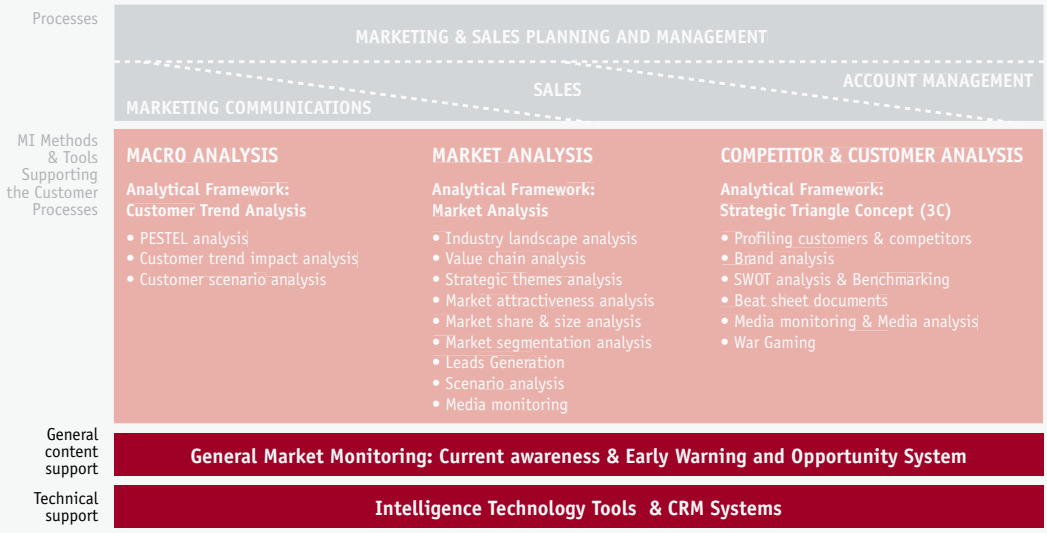
Mystery shopping is often conducted in order to obtain a better understanding of how your own products or services are communicated and sold. The focus of this operation may then shift to look at how the sales team is operating or how the sales department takes care of any reported problems. Competitors or suppliers may also become the focus of this analysis. Furthermore, mystery shopping is sometimes a prelude to a benchmarking project.

A number of analysis models and approaches have now been suggested in order to utilize Market Intelligence in the customer process. Since one needs to repeat these studies over time and given that a significant volume of market information data needs to be analyzed, tools are required to support the customer process. The following section will describe how to utilize IT tools in order to ensure that market information and Market Intelligence are collected, stored and shared in an effective manner.

5.5 Support Tools for the Customer Processes

The future oriented work described earlier and the strategic decisions that were made during the planning process now need to be followed up in order to identify precisely which of the scenarios, risks, and forecasts will actually materialize. If there is no comprehensive follow-up system in place, the strategic analysis which has been conducted will have been nothing more than an intellectual exercise. The Early Warning/Opportunity System is the appropriate solution. A tool with greater operational capacity is also required in order to store and structure all the existing and potential customer contacts available within the organization. A customer relationship management system (CRM) is required for this purpose.

Figure 9
System Support for the Customer Processes



5.5.1 Current Awareness & Early Warning / Opportunity Systems

Organizations need to be kept up to date with current developments in their industry. Such developments can relate to customer and competitor actions as well as legislative matters. Employees previously had to find their own information relating to the external business environment as it was senior management who mainly had access to external intelligence reports and industry briefings. This has now changed and many employees do now have access to these kinds of current awareness systems.

The ideal situation is when each individual can receive information customized to his or her needs and this is the principle behind the current awareness system. This system is of a more general nature and individual decision makers need to decide for themselves how each item of news affects customers, and whether this is positive or negative for their own organization.

Factbox
Current Awareness System

Purpose	Provide a continuous flow of information regarding the external business environment in order to generally update and increase the awareness of all employees.
Scope	All levels. Normally used to monitor developments based on various analysis methods conducted in the future monitoring and/or business planning phases. Examples of EWS could be monitoring of trends, scenarios, technology monitoring and other strategic issues. Any strategic theme that is of particular importance should be included in the EWOS analysis.
Future orientation	High – Differentiates itself from reactive intelligence solutions by its future orientation and proactive principle.
Work process	Identify a sequence of events (SOE) relating to a specific issue which requires advance warning. Output from the scenario analysis is an excellent way to start up the EWS. Identify indicators for the various SOEs (Example: Number of new patents for a new technology). Conduct indicator reliability tests to validate the indicators. Monitor the indicators through selected information sources. Analyze deviations from the "norm" or analyze which scenario is likely to materialize. Provide an alert by issuing a warning or an opportunity identification message. Develop a decision making process so that warnings can be acted on. Update scenarios, trends or other applicable Future Monitoring or Industry Analysis processes as events evolve.

The formal early warning/opportunity monitoring focuses on identified indicators and issues which require constant monitoring. The general principles are described below as well as each of the Early Warning/Opportunity "Products". Each "Strategic Theme" may have its own EWOS monitoring.

The win-loss analysis is one simple form of EWOS. This analysis illustrates whether we have been losing a lot of deals in a specific customer segment or market, for example, or whether we have repeatedly lost against a specific competitor. Unfortunately, the signals do not arise early enough to prevent us losing each individual sale, but the trend might be picked up soon enough so that the appropriate changes can be made to the product, service or marketing mix in order to improve the situation.

Factbox
Early Warning/Opportunity System (EWOS)

Purpose	Provide early warnings and opportunity identification in order to enable proactive decision making and action.
Scope	All levels. Normally used to monitor developments based on various analysis methods conducted in future monitoring and/or business planning phases. Examples of EWS could be monitoring of trends, scenarios, technology and other strategic issues. Any strategic theme that is of particular importance should be included in the EWOS analysis.
Future orientation	High – Differentiates itself from reactive intelligence solutions by its future orientation and proactive principle.
Work process	Identify a sequence of events (SOE) relating to a specific issue which requires advance warning. Output from scenario analysis is an excellent way to start up the EWS. Identify indicators for the various SOEs (Example: Number of new patents for a new technology). Conduct indicator reliability tests to validate the indicators. Monitor the indicators through selected information sources. Analyze deviations from the "norm" or analyze which scenario is likely to materialize. Provide an alert by issuing a warning or an opportunity identification message. Develop a decision making process so that warnings can be acted on. Update scenarios, trends or other applicable intelligence products as events evolve.

Only organizations which have a high quality intelligence process will be able to conduct a comprehensive EWOS approach that covers many strategic themes. Attempts to set up an EWOS when this intelligence process is not available will more than likely to fail due to lack of experience, resources to analyze strategic themes and intelligence users who are familiar with using intelligence as an input to the decision making process.

It is important to have a process in place to further analyze and act upon the outputs of the EWOS. Below are some examples of how this could be managed.

Factbox
Customer Alert

Purpose	Issue a warning or opportunity identification message based on the indicators monitored.
Scope	Micro and macro level.
Future orientation	Medium/high. The focus is normally on the present business environment and future issues.
Work process	Identify indicators for the strategic themes. Monitor these indicators. Issue an alert when indicators deviate from the norm in an unexpected way. Analyze the indicators and make conclusions regarding the new status of the strategic theme in question.

Factbox
Customer Themes Review

Purpose	In depth review of the customer themes. The main purpose is to determine whether the strategic issues are developing as expected or if change is imminent.
Scope	Micro and macro level.
Future orientation	Medium/high. The focus is normally on the present business environment and its future outlook.
Work process	Determine update interval of the customer themes. Determine format of the review, i.e. content of the intelligence product. Assign responsibility for the review. Ensure feedback is obtained from internal and outside experts before presenting a final version. Communicate with appropriate target groups.

Factbox
Customer Themes Workshop

Purpose	Elaborate on customer themes in a workshop.
Scope	Micro and macro level.
Future orientation	Medium/high. The focus is normally on trying to understand how the theme will develop in the future.
Work process	Provide background information regarding the theme/themes in question. Introduction regarding background and present situation. Group work or group discussion regarding future development of the strategic theme. Presentation of agreed conclusions. Analysis/discussion about what impact the theme will have on the organization. Identification of possible alternative courses of action. Next steps: further analysis, decision making, etc.

Workshops on customer themes are valuable since they provide the opportunity for persons from different units in the organization, with different experience and specialist fields, to get together and discuss strategic issues. This is often a way of identifying new creative products or new opportunities. The combined knowledge of several people is the key here and in this context, rather than trying to take control of proceedings and focus the workshop on his/her expert topic(s), the intelligence professional should act as a process facilitator.

This is essentially advanced current awareness monitoring. The level of analysis can differ enormously. Some organizations have created a very thorough indicator analysis with thresholds. When an indicator deviates from this threshold, the analyst should alert the organization. S/he should then follow up with an analysis showing the reasons for the indicator deviating from the norm. In addition, the analyst should present the expected implications for the industry in general and for his/her own organization in particular.

Some organizations have a less rigorous approach where they monitor the strategic themes on a more general and superficial level. In this case, the process might take the form of amore general current awareness monitoring procedure instead of a thorough Strategic Themes alert with an EWOS approach. We would also recommend that certain customer themes are reviewed regularly and that workshops on customer themes are conducted on a permanent basis.

5.5.2 Intelligence technology tools

Current Awareness and Early Warning & Opportunity Systems are best supported by intelligence software tools that can be used as a platform for structuring all MI-related information such as:

- News feeds
- Reports from the field
- Internet monitoring
- Library of strategic analysis documents
- Profiles and benchmarks of customers and competitors
- Information source list

Key benefits of using intelligence software:

- All MI-related information in one place. Less time wasted on duplicated individual research
- Faster and better decision making since everyone has access to the same background information
- Continuous intelligence process
- Personalized alerts provided through e-mail

5.5.3 CRM Systems

In general, there are three different types of CRM systems; operational CRM, collaborative CRM and analytical CRM.

Operational CRM provides support to "front office" business processes, including sales, marketing and customer services. Every interaction with a customer is generally added to a customer's contact history, and staff can retrieve information on customers from the database when necessary. An operational CRM system aims to increase efficiency and quality by having information stored, updated and shared in one place.

Collaborative CRM covers the direct interaction with customers. This can include a variety of channels, such as Internet, email, or automated phone answering systems. It can generally be equated with "self service" channels. Collaborative CRM has broad aims which include cost reduction and service improvements.

Analytical CRM analyzes customer data for a variety of purposes, which include the planning and execution of targeted marketing campaigns to optimize the execution of customer campaigns, general marketing effectiveness and the analysis of customer behaviors to aid product and service decision making (e.g. pricing, new product development, etc.). Analytical CRM generally makes significant use of predictive analysis and customer segment matching.

The content of any CRM system may differ in view of the nature of the business and the type of CRM system being used. Most CRM systems, however, provide a structure for the following content:

- Customer data
- Marketing campaign data
- AM process description
- Sales statistics
- Win/loss analysis
- Beat sheet information

It is important to note that the tasks of the Market Intelligence function are a) to assist management in creating robust customer strategies and b) to challenge these strategies by providing evidence of old strategies potentially not being successful in the future business environment. This might be a politically challenging task. An institutionalized process is therefore necessary in order to raise awareness of any market evidence of risks or opportunities that the company management should act upon.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This GIA White Paper argues that organizations need a comprehensive set of methodologies and analysis models as well as systematic management of information in order to provide meaningful input to the customer process.

This White Paper has provided a practical framework that will apply to industries with varying levels of uncertainty and changes of pace. Summarized below are some of the main points proposed in this White Paper.

- Ensure that MI is integrated into the customer process. This paper has provided you with input on how to facilitate this.
- Use the brain of the organization – involve people internally through the use of war games and scenario and trend workshops. Also, regularly utilize the analysis of objective, unbiased third parties in the marketing and sales planning process in order to avoid corporate blind spots. Invite the customers to participate. They will have a clearer idea of their future sooner than you. GIA recommends that the MI manager should be an experienced workshop facilitator in addition to or even rather than being an isolated information generator.
- Organize a current awareness process in the organization to serve as a basis for all Market Intelligence activities. A centralized intelligence software tool for the entire organization with resourced content input will serve this purpose. The centralized tool should also be used to capture and share tacit market knowledge possessed by the organization's members.
- Ensure a process is in place for continuous reviews. The Market Intelligence process should challenge the existing customer strategies on a regular basis.

It is important to note that the tasks of the Market Intelligence function are a) to assist management in creating robust customer strategies and b) to challenge these strategies by providing evidence of old strategies potentially not being successful in the future business environment. This might be a politically challenging task. An institutionalized process is therefore necessary in order to raise awareness of any market evidence of customer-related risks or opportunities that the company management should act upon.

For comments, questions and further information regarding this GIA White Paper, please visit www.globalintelligence.com, or send e-mail to info@globalintelligence.com.

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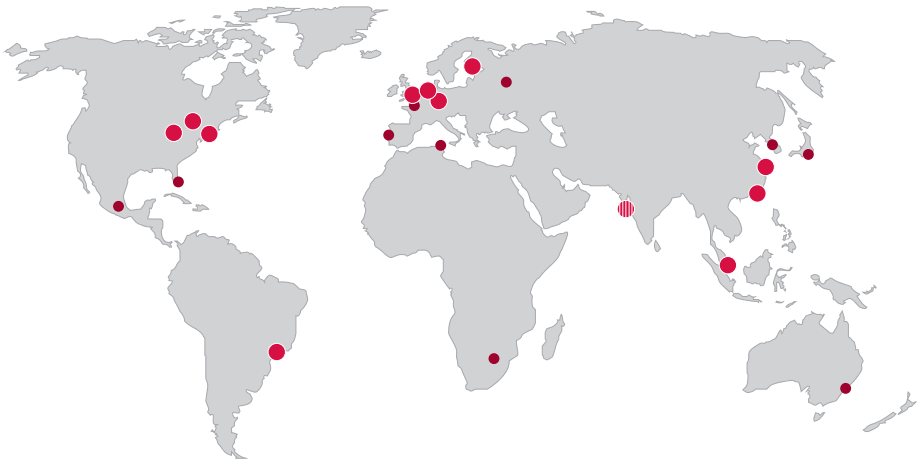

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