Predicting the future of market intelligence: a survey for Global Intelligence Alliance

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The purpose of this thesis report is to identify future trends that are likely to have an impact on how market intelligence (MI) content is produced and consumed. Among the key interest points are the ever increasing automation of information collection and big data.

Emphasis is also put on what market intelligence professionals perceive as essential skills for market intelligence staff, and how these skills should be developed. In addition, comparison between advanced market intelligence programs and average-level programs is made. The difference between user groups with regards to statistical significance is investigated with a chi-square test.

Among the key findings are that automated collection of information is not expected to completely replace human workforce in market intelligence and a related topic big data is expected to have a highly positive impact on the field. Benchmarking is most likely skills development tool for market intelligence professionals while external recruitments is least used to acquire skillset.

The findings presented in this paper are based on Market intelligence trends 2020 survey which was carried out for Global Intelligence Alliance (GIA) between February and May 2014. A separate white paper for marketing purposes was published in November 2014 in addition to this report.

The data for the survey was collected with a self-administered online questionnaire and a total of 139 responses were received. All respondents were either producers of market intelligence content of active users of this content, thus they are referred to as professionals. Theoretical background for different types of questionnaires, especially for the one used in this research is provided. What to take into consideration when carrying out quantitative analysis is also discussed.

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1. Introduction

This thesis report is based on *Market intelligence trends 2020* survey which was carried out for Global Intelligence Alliance (GIA) in 2014. This paper is one of the two reports written based on the survey findings, the other one being a white paper for marketing purposes (appendix 2). The objective of the thesis is to answer to the question "What are the market intelligence trends 2020?"

The most interesting findings are presented in this paper and analysis is provided on different characteristics of responses. More advanced market intelligence (MI) programs are investigated as a focus group, in order to receive an understanding of what the programs with higher influence on decision-makers do differently than the rest.

I, the author of this paper have worked at GIA for two years and possess a rather broad understanding of the field of market intelligence. Thus the information on those parts of this report that provide explanation for MI activities but do not include a literature reference is based on my expertise.

Abbreviations *MI* for *market intelligence* and *GIA* for Global Intelligence Alliance are used in this paper.

2. Company overview

Global Intelligence Alliance Oy is a Finnish market Intelligence company with headquarters in Helsinki, where most of the organization-wide functions are based. Other GIA office locations are London, Essen, Shanghai, Amsterdam, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney, Sao Paolo, Chicago, New York and Toronto.

The key offering of Global Intelligence Alliance is news and signals monitoring service Intelligence Desk®. Content of this service is gathered by GIA's analysts and consultants and disseminated via own intelligence software called Intelligence Plaza®. Product offering in addition to Intelligence Desk® and Intelligence Plaza® consists of strategic analysis and advisory projects for customers, market intelligence seminars and workshops, and market intelligence whitepapers offering best practice knowledge.

GIA has around 145 employees worldwide, out of which approximately 50 are located in Helsinki. The whole group's turnover in 2013 was 14.2 million euros.

Global Intelligence Alliance was wholly acquired by Finnish M-brain in September 2014, but this transaction did not have any impacts on *Market intelligence trends 2020* survey.

2.1   Market intelligence surveys by GIA

In addition to *Market intelligence trends 2020* survey, Global Intelligence Alliance has carried out various other surveys as part of its *Intelligence Best Practices* program. The flagship survey for the company is *Global Market Intelligence survey*, which has taken place in 2011 and 2013, both occasions receiving over 600 responses. In 2010 a prequel survey for *MI trends 2020* was completed to predict future changes of the MI field by the year 2015. On top of these, GIA implements various client-specific surveys on a regular basis.

3.   Market intelligence definition

Market intelligence guides organizations to understand their business environment and to compete successfully so that they can grow. Market intelligence program's task is to collect information regarding the markets, competitors and other strategically important topics, and turn this information into insight for decision-makers' use. Most often MI programs are organizationally placed under strategic planning, business development or marketing departments. (Hedin, Hirvensalo and Vaarnas 2011, 8.)

Market intelligence deliverables can be either ad hoc based projects or a continuous process, for example market monitoring practice that is essential for maintaining awareness over current developments in the marketplace. Ad hoc projects on the other hand are often linked to particular decision-making situations such as entering new market areas. (Hedin et al. 2011, 10.)

Wee and Ahmed (1999, cited in Fleischer and Blenkhorn 2003, 284) state that market intelligence primarily serves the following four purposes:

- Tracking and assessing competitors
- Detecting opportunities and threats on an early-warning basis
- Offering support in planning and implementing strategic endeavors
- Offering support in strategic decision-making.

3.1   Benefits of a market intelligence program

According to Hedin et al. (2011, 11), having a market intelligence program in place will benefit companies in three ways. Firstly, it will enable *better and faster decision-making* through

research-based insights that help seize the opportunities, reduce risks and avoid surprises as sophisticated decisions can be made even under time pressure.

Second benefit, *time and cost savings*, frees up decision-makers' time from searching for the information to making decisions based on the available information. MI programs existence will additionally lead to decreased inefficiencies and unneeded purchase and processing costs of business information.

Third benefit is related to *organizational learning and new ideas*. Spreading market intelligence program's insight organization-wide will create shared understanding as employees will have more timely intelligence content at their disposal. This allows a collective way of identifying emerging opportunities or threats the organization is faced with.

3.2 Differentiating market intelligence from business intelligence

Market intelligence is often confused with business intelligence (BI), and indeed valid reasons for this assumption exist. Where MI focuses mostly on competitor landscape and market developments, BI is used to track internal processes as well. In fact market intelligence can fairly often be part of business intelligence, due to certain overlapping features.

As defined by Moss and Atre (2003, 4), business intelligence is not a product nor a system, but an architecture and a collection of operational and decision-support applications and databases that have been integrated with each other. These functions allow the business community to easily access business-relevant data.

Moss & Atre (2003, 4) list many activities related to BI, among which data mining, forecasting, business analysis, visualization and digital dashboard access are common to market intelligence programs as well. On the other hand, click-stream analysis, balanced scorecard preparation, geospatial analysis and knowledge management are examples of only business intelligence specific actions.

4. Questionnaire as a research method

For the purpose of gathering data that presents the opinions of individual people, the questions asked have to be put in some form where they are easy to answer to. One method of doing so is to create a questionnaire, where survey respondents can conveniently fill in their views. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003, 281) questionnaires work best in cases where questions are of standardized form and researcher can trust that the respondents interpret the questions similarly.

4.1   Different forms of questionnaires

Depending on the characteristics of the survey that is being carried out, researcher has different types of questionnaires to choose from. Saunders et al. (2003, 282) categorize questionnaires as self-administered and interviewer-administered questionnaires.

Self-administered questionnaires most often are filled by respondents independently. Based on how the response collection is being performed, self-administered questionnaires are further divided as online, postal, or delivery and collection questionnaires. Online questionnaires are carried out via email or Internet while postal questionnaire responses are sent back to survey administrator vie mail. Delivery and collection questionnaires are delivered to respondent at one stage and his or her response is collected at a later stage. (Saunders et al. 2003, 282.)

Interviewer-administered questionnaires are recorded by interviewer on a respondent-specific basis. These questionnaires can be either telephone questionnaires or structured interviews that take place both interviewer and interview being present in the same location (Saunders et al. 2003, 282).

Various factors have an influence on the selection of right form of questionnaire. For example the characteristics of approached respondents and sample size required for analysis along with the expected response rate need to be taken into consideration, as well as the particular question types. Also the required number of questions asked and the importance that particular respondents are reached through the survey need to be evaluated. How important is the fact that the questionnaire answers are not contaminated or distorted should affect the questionnaire selection as well. (Saunders et al. 2003, 283.)

Even though interviewer-administered questionnaires often receive higher rate of responses and may include more complicated questions than self-administered questionnaires, they are more time-consuming and expensive to carry out. Furthermore, data gathered through interviews will have to be saved in digital form for analysis, which will further increase the time-consumption and costs. The response rate for self-administered online surveys may remain very low, but on the positive side this method is advantageous due to its ease of administration and low costs, but also because the data gathered via email or Internet surveys is already in a digital form, which makes analysis faster. (Saunders et al. 2003, 283-285.)

4.1.1 Characteristics of an online questionnaire

As online questionnaire was after evaluating the previously mentioned features chosen as the most appropriate survey method for research needs, below are presented the characteristics of this questionnaire.

Compared to other alternatives, online questionnaire is easy to carry out due to the fact that invitations to respondents can be sent via email. Respondents, however, have to be computer-literate (Saunders et al. 2003, 284), which nowadays majority of adults in developed countries are. Still, online survey cannot be constructed as too complicated, and they should favorably be of closed form. The time taken for collection of responses should be from two to six weeks, and the sampling size can be very large and geographically distributed. (Saunders et al. 2003, 283-284.)

4.2 Survey question formulation

Foddy (1994, cited in Saunders et al. 2003, 291) suggests that it is critical to formulate a questionnaire in such a clear way that no misinterpretation can take place in either when respondent is reading the questions or when survey administrator is reading the answers. This can be ensured with careful formulation of questions, and bearing in mind what kind of data is ought to be collected. When formulating the questions, in addition to developing questions of his or her own, researcher can take use of previously created questionnaires by either adopting or adapting their content in his or her own questions. When utilizing content of another researcher, in addition to following different copyright legislation, researcher needs to evaluate whether the questions he or she is going to use will actually fit the research purposes (Bourque and Clark, 1994, cited in Saunders et al. 2003, 291). If they do, utilizing other researchers' content may offer time-saving possibilities and allow comparison with previously carried out surveys.

Questionnaire can consist of either open or closed questions, or it can be a combination of both. In open questions, respondents have no restrictions on how they want to phrase their words, which may offer broader set of responses. Closed questions provide respondents a number of alternatives to choose the answer from. Closed questions are quicker to answer and responses to them are more easily comparable (Saunders et al. 2003, 292).

4.3 Defining the sample of a survey

As the whole population of researched group is often very difficult to target, a sample population has to be identified instead. The sample can be defined by specifying individual units of

analysis and identifying grouping units, which can refer to households or schools, for instance. The geographic boundaries and possibly layers or sub-classes have to be identified as well as the time period of carrying out the survey has to be decided. In addition, some attention has to be put on ethical issues, because at least some level of consent from respondents is needed in all studies. (Andres 2012, 93-94.)

4.4   Administering a survey

When sending an online survey invitation to respondents through email, researcher has to avoid a situation where respondents may think that the sent invitation is a spam message. As highly personalized emails are rather easy to mass produce, appropriate tone in communication needs to be used. Well personalized invitation often uses similar tone as is used in normal business relations. (Dillman, Smyth and Christian 2009, 272.)

How the respondents are addressed in the invitation can also affect the response rate. Dillman et al. (2009, 273) refer to a study by Heerwegh (2005), which states that personalized invitations received 8 percentage points lower response rate than impersonalized invitations in a survey for randomly selected sample of firs-year university students in Belgium. Another study by Joinson & Reips (2007, cited in Dillman et al. 2009, 273) suggests the opposite: University students who received a personalized invitation to join an online survey panel returned 4.5 percentage points higher response rate than those who had received an impersonalized invitation. Personalized invitation means addressing the recipient for instance as "Dear 'First name' 'Last name'" and impersonalized for instance as "Dear student". (Dillman et al. 2009, 272-273). The outcome of different ways of addressing respondents is thus very case-specific

Sending invitation to respondents individually instead of as a mass-send out will increase the level of personalization and indicate to respondents that they are more important for the researcher. What is more, if sending bulk emails, confidentiality issues have to be acknowledged. If the 'to' field in the email message includes the names of all recipients, confidentiality is compromised and invitation will also more likely be considered as spam. For these reasons, mass-send outs of emails should be avoided. (Dillman et al. 2009, 273.)

Reminder emails to invitation recipients are a proven way of improving response rate. Olsen, Call and Wygant (2005, cited in Dillman et al. 2009, 275) in their study of college undergraduates witnessed a 37 percentage points increase in response rate when sending four follow up messages compared to not sending any reminders. Reminders should however not be sent too quickly after invitation, in order to not annoy respondents (Dillman et al. 2009, 280).

Often-used pre-notice letter and participation incentives are additional ways to increase response rate of the questionnaire. Dillman et al. (2009, 275, 280.) however remind that incentives often require postal connection to respondents, which increases costs and time consumed in the survey process, and pre-notice letter or email can likely be left out in the case of a web survey.

5. Quantitative analysis methods

In order to reliably analyze the collected data, some analysis methods need to be clarified. Chi-square test and contingency table, essential for chi-square test execution, as well as introduction to validity and reliability of a survey are provided in this chapter.

5.1 Cross-tabulation

Cross-tabulation, also known as contingency table, allows researcher to find specific data and to examine variables' interdependence (Saunders et al. 2003, 346). Grouping data into an easy-to-read platform also enables further statistical analysis. Cross-tabulation is used to examine the contingent distribution of responses. Because explained values only rarely distribute evenly to different classes, information has to be for the sake of clarity presented using percentage shares of each response (KvantiMOTV 2004).

Table 1 illustrates an example of contingency table at its simplest form with two rows and two columns. Percentage shares have been calculated for each cell for easier interpretation of data.

	Group A	Group B
Yes	10	40
	33 %	44 %
No	20	50
	67 %	56 %
Total	30	90
	100 %	100 %

Table 1: An example of a contingency table

5.2 Chi-square test

Chi-square (X^2) test is a non-parametric test method used to determine if the observed findings from data differ from what could be expected. For example, if some action would be affected by only pure chance, the expected numbers from data series of two independent variables would be equal, or 50% of outcomes would represent option A and 50% option B.

Chi-square test is used to examine whether difference in the outcomes compared to theoretical expectation exist. (Coolidge 2006, 335-336)

The null-hypothesis for performing a chi-square test is the independence of the variables. The test is based on the size of difference between observed and expected frequency. If the differences are large enough, interpretation can be made that the observed differences are not caused by pure chance, but the reason for these can be found from the respondent group (population). (KvantiMOTV 2004.)

The result of the chi-square test is p-value, which reveals the probability of misinterpretation when assuming that the observed differences can be found in the population. If p-value is less than 0.05, the differences are statistically significant and the respondent groups differ from each other for other reason than pure chance. (KvantiMOTV 2004.)

To carry out a chi-square test, cross-tabulation is used to write down the data. In a contingency table, following numbers are needed: Observed frequency, expected frequency, percentage share of each answer out of the total answers, total of each column and grand total of the table. (KvantiMOTV 2011.)

According to Oakshott (2006, 264), the expected frequency (or value in other words) is counted using the following formula:

$$\text{Expected value} = \frac{Row\ Total \times Column\ Total}{Grand\ Total}$$

KvantiMOTV (2011) presents the same with the following formula:

$$E_{ij} = \frac{O_i \times O_j}{N}$$

In which

- E_{ij} is the expected frequency of row i and column j
- O_i is the overall sum of respondents of row i
- O_j is the overall sum of respondents of column j
- N is total amount of observations in the table.

As can be seen in Table 2, expected frequency for each cell has been calculated using the formulas explained above. Calculation for the expected value of Group A respondents answering 'Yes', was as follows: Row Total 50 x Column Total 30 / Grand Total 120 ≈ 33.3.

	Group A	Group B	Total
Yes	10 12,5 33 %	40 37,5 44 %	50
No	20 17,5 67 %	50 52,5 56 %	70
Total	30 100 %	90 100 %	120

Table 2: An example of a contingency table with expected values

With the information found from a contingency table, chi-square test can be executed with the following formula (KvantiMOTV 2011):

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i-1}^{R} \sum_{j-1}^{C} \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

In which

- E_{ij} is the expected frequency of row i and column j
- O_{ij} is the observed frequency of row i and column j
- R is the number of rows
- C is the number of columns

In practice the formula means that the difference between expected and observed frequency of each cell in the contingency table is calculated, and afterwards increased to square. The outcome of this calculation is then divided with the value of expected frequency. Finally all of the cell-specific values are summed and the chi-square figure is found.

The p-value which determines the interdependence of respondent groups is obtained from a table of figures based on this X^2 figure. This chi-square distribution table can be found as an attachment from most of the statistical method guidebooks. From a contingency table, degrees of freedom are calculated by following formula (KvantiMOTV 2011):

(number of rows – 1) X (number of columns – 1).

Statistical software such as Microsoft Excel or SPSS can be used to carry out the chi-square test.

Using Microsoft Excel, p-value of 0.29 for Table 2 can be calculated. As this value is significantly larger than 0.05, conclusion can be drawn that differences in respondent groups are

not statistically significant and the respondent groups do not differ from each other for other reason than pure chance.

Saunders et al. (2003, 358) remind that the chi-square test relies on two factors. Firstly, categories of the contingency table must be "mutually exclusive, so that each observation falls into only one category or class interval." Secondly, no more than 20% of the table cells can have expected values smaller than 5, and if a contingency table has only two rows and two columns, the preferred minimum for the same should be 10.

5.3   Defining validity of a survey and threats to it

Validity in research means that do the findings of the survey represent what they are ought to represent, and is a question appropriate to measure a specific matter in an adequately efficient and comprehensive way (KvantiMOTV 2008). Various factors can have an impact on what the respondent will answer to survey questions, and these need to be considered when designing a questionnaire.

Robson (2002, cited in Saunders et al. 2003, 101-102) lists six common threats to validity. These threats and some examples regarding them are listed next in this paper.

History

What has happened to the respondents lately will impact what they answer to specific questions. For example, should a cost-cutting program have taken place in an organization recently, employees' answers to job security related questions will likely be significantly different than in a normal situation.

Testing

If what is being asked will have an impact on the future operations of a company or an individual, responses to such questions may be affected by this fact. Especially answers to company reputation related questions rather expectedly will be embellished.

Instrumentation

Taking into account the timespan of doing research is important to avoid change in response groups' answers. Respondents may have received new instructions from their employers between testing first and second batch respondent groups, and this will result in divergence of answers.

Mortality

Mortality refers to a situation where respondents drop out from the survey, and this issue is significant in long-lasting studies.

Maturation

In addition to changes caused by *history* threat, changes taking place in respondents' personal lives will have an impact on their answering behavior.

Ambiguity regarding causal direction

When examining the results of a study, researcher may find himself or herself confused of what is the cause for some specific patterns in the findings. In other words, researcher may not understand if a change A taking place in respondent's organization will impact his or her attitude towards issue B, or vice versa. This threat is called ambiguity regarding causal direction.

5.4   Defining reliability of a survey and threats to it

Reliability means that a specific question group in a survey measures always the same factors as a whole, and that different circumstance or occasional flaws do not affect the results. Reliability consists of both consistency and stability, where the first indicates that if a question group that consists of various propositions is split into two groups, both of them will measure the same variable. (KvantiMOTV 2008).

 Stability means that a question will be answered in the same way even as time passes and circumstances change, and that occasional flaws such as different answering behavior due to for instance respondent's mood swings do not affect the results. (KvantiMOTV 2008).

The researcher can assess the reliability with three factors. Firstly, it has to be considered whether the measures will yield the same outcome on different occasions, and secondly would other observers reach the same observations. Thirdly it has to be evaluated whether there is transparency in logic of the raw data. (Easterby-Smith et al. 2002, cited in Saunders et al. 2003, 101)

Robson (2002, cited in Saunders et al. 2003, 101) lists four common threats to reliability. These threats and some examples regarding them are listed next in this paper.

Subject or participant error

Subject or participant error refers to for instance different time of the day resulting into different answers, such as respondents being in a brighter mood at the end of the work week compared to the beginning of the week. This issue can be solved by controlling the time respondents are to answer the questionnaire.

Subject or participant bias

In work environment especially, respondents answers may be affected by what they think their supervisors want them to answer. This is more likely to happen if a threat of employment insecurity takes place or the management style in an organization is very authoritarian. This issue is known as subject or participant bias. Increasing the anonymity of the survey should lead to more honest responses.

Observer error

Observer errors, meaning mistakes made by the researcher, are more probable if the number of observers is more than one. This is because individuals have different approaches to different questions, which will lead to inconsistency in analysis.

Observer bias

Much like observer errors, the chance of observer bias to affect the results is higher if there are many people carrying out the survey.

6.   Carrying out an online questionnaire for Global Intelligence Alliance

6.1   Background information of *MI trends 2020* survey

When inquiring possible topics for my thesis at my workplace Global Intelligence Alliance, the initiative for carrying out a questionnaire (please see appendixes 1 for the questionnaire and 2 for the white paper) was brought up. The topic for the survey, predicting future scenarios of market intelligence, came from GIA's history in researching market intelligence. This *Market Intelligence trends 2020* survey is a sequel for a survey around the same topic, carried out in 2010. Back then the timespan for predictions was from the year 2010 to year 2015, consequently the sequel would now predict what will happen by the year 2020. As *MI trends 2020* survey is not first of its kind, the foundation for practically every aspect of it had been set up

previously. Key people at GIA who had been part of the prequel survey were involved in *MI trends 2020* survey as well.

Survey project was started in February 2014, and the questionnaire itself was launched on April 2014. The time between these dates was spent in brainstorming questions and designing the questionnaire structure. As the project was mostly carried out beside other everyday work, progress was relatively slow.

Questionnaire was sent to 1107 recipients, and 139 responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 13%. Respondents had until mid-May 2014 to return their answers. In addition to administrating the survey, I created a white paper presenting the survey results to public audience. This white paper was released in November 2014.

6.2   Choosing a target group of respondents

The respondents approached were, similarly to prequel survey, already known clients or other contacts that had been in business transaction with GIA. Global Customer Management unit at GIA holds record of certain contact persons that are considered to be market intelligence professionals, in other words people with significant knowledge regarding different MI functions. Usually these people are either producers of market intelligence content, meaning that they work for the MI program (unit) of their organization, or are the end users of the produced content, most often high-level decision-makers. Based on this database, survey invitation was sent to 1107 recipients in April 2014.

Because survey invitees had previously been in contact with Global Intelligence Alliance and their role was known, they were considered to be equal in terms of competences, and for instance segmentation of respondents by gender or their company size was not considered necessary. The fact that an individual is after evaluation included in GIA's MI professionals list is, for the purpose of *MI trends 2020* survey, enough evidence of his or her professionalism on the field of market intelligence.

6.3   Choosing self-administered online questionnaire as survey method

Taking into account that the target respondent group was very large, online self-administered questionnaire was considered as the most fitting alternative as a surveying method. This method had been proven to serve GIA's purposes very well during previous surveys. Not only was there too large number of potential respondents to be interviewed or even contacted personally, this group was also spread around the world. Interviewer-administered questionnaires would have been too expensive and time-consuming to carry out, while self-

administered postal or delivery and collection questionnaires were not taken under consideration due to them being rather old-fashioned methods.

Even if I would have had sufficient amount of time and financial resources at my disposal to carry out interviewer-administered questionnaire, an obstacle for this would have been time constraints at the respondent side. This is because filling surveys or sitting in interviews is not the primary job for any of the respondents, and market intelligence professionals based on experience are often very busy with their own schedules.

6.4   Formulating questions

The core template for the survey was taken from the prequel questionnaire, because certain level of continuity and comparability was targeted, and also because the previous survey had been conducted by the same key people that were assisting me with the current survey. Even though I was the administrator of the questionnaire, I did not have complete freedom over what to include in it. I would not have been able to create as complex questions as required on my own, due to my lack of expertise in given topics, but also because I was not completely aware of the specific points of interest of GIA's marketing department, which would be taking benefit of the survey results in the future.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to find possible new trends of market intelligence which would be presented in a white paper, thus the motive for GIA to commission me to carry out the aforementioned was marketing-drive. Published report would create positive publicity in market intelligence environment and could even initiate new client leads, and in addition it would provide advice on how GIA's offering should possibly be changed in the future.

Due to these characteristics, survey question formatting was somewhat steered. To give an example, in order to keep the questionnaire concise, thorough segmentation of respondents was not included, but only their geographical location and their role as a market intelligence producer or user was asked. Additionally, individual opinions of key people had an influence on what was asked.

As the prequel survey of *MI trends 2020* survey was used as a base for questionnaire, critical examination was undertaken to evaluate what to include from it and what to leave out. Numerous issues in the prequel survey were considered unnecessary or useless questions for current purposes. Even though the questions of the prequel served the purpose in 2010 well, in 2014 some question were already outdated, and some were seen as ones that should not have been asked in the first place. This was mainly caused by differences in viewpoints of individuals.

6.5   Survey administration

Survey was created using Questback's *Digium Enterprise* tool, which allows respondents to receive invitation to the survey via email and then respond to it on Internet via clicking a link on the invitation. For survey administrator this tool allows ways to follow the progress of project by seeing who have responded already, and to send reminder messages for those who have not returned their answers.

Cover letter for the email invitation was created using Digium Enterprise's invitation management tool, thus the invitations were sent as an individual message to all respondents, however using my own company email address. "Dear Sir or Madam" was chosen as addressing method, meaning that the invitations were impersonalized.

After creating the questionnaire in the tool, it was tested by me and my colleague to ensure that there were no flaws or errors and that the questionnaire looked competent and served the purpose. After this, email invitations were sent to respondents on April 8th, 2014 with a cover letter introducing them to the topic. On April 16th, April 28th and May 5th email reminders to those unanswered were sent in order to increase the number of responses. A chance to receive the survey findings prior to public launch was used as an incentive to reply to the questionnaire, but no monetary benefits were offered. The survey was closed on May 12th, 2014.

Digium Enterprise tool allows examining the results on the online tool, but it also allows exporting the data into Microsoft Excel file, CSV file or IBM SPSS file. The data was exported as an Excel file for further analysis.

7.   Validity and reliability of *MI trends 2020* survey

The validity and reliability of Global Intelligence Alliance's *Market Intelligence Trends 2020* survey was examined based on what has been discussed in chapters 5.3 and 5.4 of this paper.

7.1   Validity

Robson's six threats to validity as listed in chapter 5.3 of this paper do not pose significant relevance to *Market intelligence trends 2020* survey. *History*-related factors could perhaps have had biggest impact on respondents' answers, because during the ongoing financially difficult times, many companies experience pressure to execute cost-cutting programs, which

undoubtedly would lay an impact on MI programs. Respondents' answers to questions like "How do you see your company's MI budget developing by 2020?" or "How likely are you to use the external training to develop the skills in your MI program?" could be very different if their company were under financial pressure.

Testing-threat was likely insignificant in the case of market intelligence professionals answering the survey, because no reputational advantage could be gained through the survey due to it being carried out anonymously. *Instrumentation*-threat was also irrelevant, as the questionnaire was filled only once and companies represented by respondents were not dependent to each other. By this is meant that they represented many different industries and their business operations did not have an impact on the proficiency of their answers analysis-wise.

Due to one-time-only answer basis, *mortality* of respondent's was not a relevant threat. *Maturation* could have had a slight impact on the answers, but not as significant compared to history-threat. For example, should respondents have been going through difficulties in their personal lives when filling the questionnaire, they might have perceived questions more negatively. However, this threat is rather universal with self-administered online surveys and therefore does not challenge the validity of *MI trends 2020* survey.

Ambiguity regarding causal direction was not relevant, because the only questions that contained a causal connection were "Which of the following options represent the 3 most important skills for MI programs to possess in 2020?" and "Relating to the previous question, how likely are you to use the following options to develop the skills in your MI program?". The connection between these questions was further analyzed in chapter 8.4.1 of this paper to find out if some specific group favored some development method significantly over others, but rather clear causal direction could be drawn between the responses to these questions, thus eliminating the concern of ambiguity.

7.2   Reliability

Much like validity, the threats to reliability listed by Robson in chapter 5.4 of this paper were rather irrelevant to *Market intelligence trends 2020* survey. *Subject or participant error* can have had the biggest impact on respondents' answers, because the time of the day or week when respondents filled in the questionnaire was impossible to fully control. Even though consideration was put on when to send the survey invitation and reminder messages to improve response rates, the ultimate power when to answer the questionnaire remained with respondents. Time differences globally affected the time of receiving an invitation or reminder email as well.

Subject or participant bias did not pose a major threat to reliability of *MI trends 2020* survey because of the anonymity of the questionnaire and the fact that the survey responses had no chance to affect respondent's work in their organization. It is possible that respondents' superiors did not even know of the questionnaire.

Observer error and bias were not considered to have a large impact on the findings of the survey, because I was the only person responsible of the analysis and only three out of the 15 question were open-ended, the rest being multiple-choice questions with fixed answer options. In addition, very few respondents took the time to answer to the open-ended questions. One bias could have been that in commercial interest of the company those findings which would create benefit would have been highlighted. Some bias may have been unavoidable due to my history of working at the company, but as a separate white paper was created for marketing purposes, this thesis report was able to be created in as neutral manner as possible.

8. *MI trends 2020* survey top findings

This chapter presents the findings of *Market intelligence trends 2020* survey. Among the 15 questions (appendix 1) sent to respondents, the most important findings were chosen under closer examination. The importance of each finding was evaluated based on their timeliness and chance to alter the future of market intelligence. The information gathered from the data can be later used to steer the strategic decisions taken at Global Intelligence Alliance.

Due to the fact that submitting an answer to all survey question in Digium Enterprise online tool was not made mandatory to respondents, total number of responses varies per question. The total number of received responses however was 139.

8.1 Background information of respondents

Out of the 139 survey respondents the majority (58%) were primarily located in Western Europe while North America was the second largest respondent group (28%). Remaining geographies were all represented by less than 10% shares of respondents, as the table 3 illustrates. By geographical location in this context is meant the place where respondents are located business operations-wise, not where they are from.

Geographical location	Number of respondents	%
Western Europe	81	58,27 %
North America	39	28,06 %
Asia Pacific (incl. Australia)	12	8,63 %
Eastern Europe & CIS	3	2,16 %
Latin America	3	2,16 %
Africa & Middle East	1	0,72 %
Total	139	100,00 %

Table 3: Geographical location of respondents

Survey respondents were asked to position their market intelligence program (organizational unit in charge of MI activities) based on its role in assisting organization's decision-making with the following criteria:

- *Information provider*: Primarily involved in the beginning of the process, providing information
- *Research provider*: Primarily involved in the early stages of the process, providing research
- *Analysis provider*: Primarily involved in the middle of the process, providing analysis
- *Insight provider*: Primarily involved in the later stages, providing supporting insights for decisions
- *Decision-maker* influencer: Primarily involved in the end, influencing decisions.

To investigate how the most advanced market intelligence programs carry out MI activities, the two groups from the end stages of decision-making advisory (insight providers and decision-maker influencers) were selected as a combined focus group in the analysis. Only the most advanced group, decision-maker influencers, would ideally have been examined independently, but as seen in table 4, due to small number of respondents, insight providers were included to have sufficient amount of responses. For clarity, this combined group will be from here on referred to as *decision-making advisors*, while term *information and analysis providers* will be used to describe the remainder of the respondents.

MI program's primary position	Number of respondents	%
Analysis provider	46	33,33 %
Insight provider	33	23,91 %
Research provider	26	18,84 %
Information provider	21	15,22 %
Decision maker influencer	12	8,70 %
Total	138	100,00 %

Table 4: MI program's primary position in the decision-making process

Compared what was anticipated before receiving survey results, the large difference in the number of respondents between insight providers and decision-maker influencer was surprising. One reason for such a big difference is perhaps caused by respondents being too hesitant to rank themselves in the most respected category.

8.2   Impact of automated collection and analysis of information on MI

Constantly advancing technology will alter the ways of doing business, and indeed machines have been replacing human workforce in different business sectors for decades. As advanced operating systems and software become more common, knowledge workers may experience the same threat of being replaced by advanced tools. Market intelligence professionals, especially those whose tasks consist mainly of information gathering are expectedly most heavily affected by these changes, because the simplest MI tasks can somewhat easily be automated.

GIA's *Market Intelligence Trends 2020* survey data does not directly support this statement, even though 65% of all respondents expect their organizations' MI programs to move either somewhat or strongly towards automated *collection* of information by the end of the decade. When examining the difference between decision-making advisors and information and analysis providers, it can be seen that 76% of the most advanced MI group expect automated collection of information to happen, while the respective share for the information and analysis providers is 60% (figure 1).

Contrary to automated collection of information, only 27% of decision-making advisors and 38% of information and analysis providers expect to move towards automated *analysis* of information either somewhat or strongly. The share for all respondents of the survey is 34%.
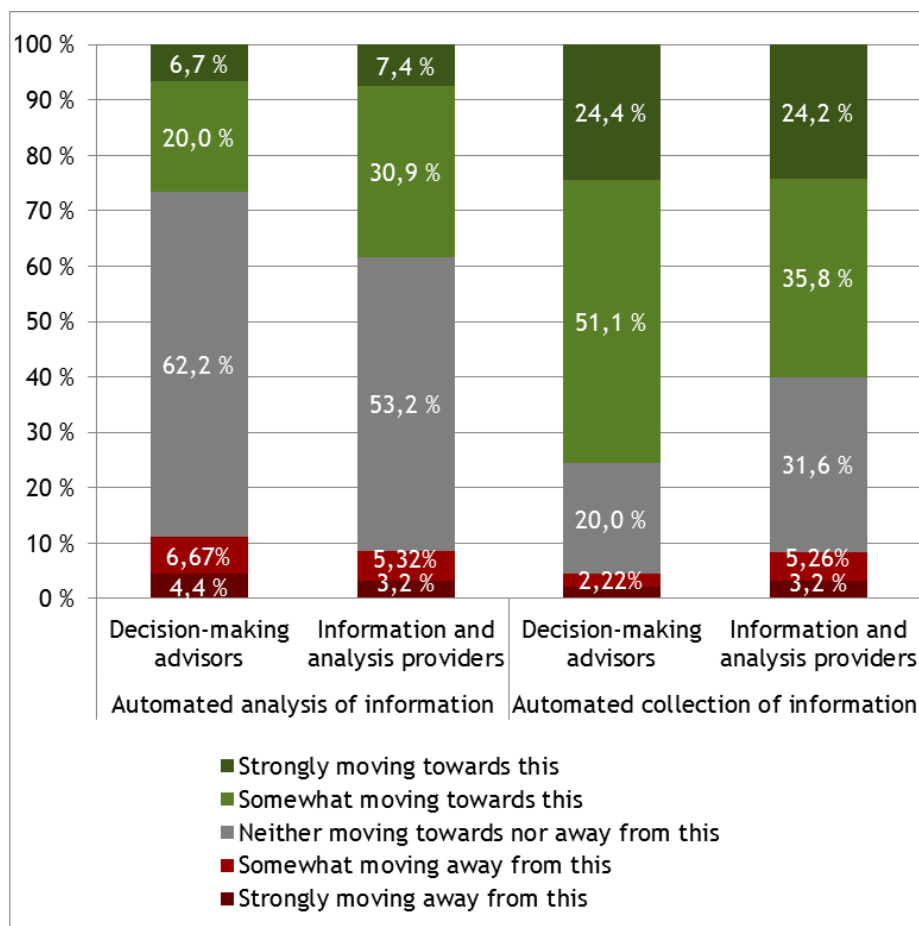
Figure 1: Automated collection and analysis of information, decision-making advisors and information and analysis providers

Higher than the rest share of decision-making advisors saying information collection will be automated, combined with smaller than the rest support for automated analysis, suggests that more advanced market intelligence professionals see this trend in a more opportunistic way. While automated information collection is seen by this group as a possibility to release MI staff's time from gathering information to more demanding tasks, not much confidence is laid in the option of replacing professional workforce with computers in the analysis phase.

These facts suggest that with advanced information gathering tools market intelligence programs can grow their influence through allocating resources towards analysis and influencing management, instead of spending time on the process of searching for the information.

The observed differences between decision-making advisors and information and analysis providers are not statistically significant. As explained in chapter 5.2 of this paper, chi-square test was used as a tool to research whether the two respondent groups in statistical terms differ from each other for other reason than pure chance. P-value 0.408 for automated col-

lection of information and p-value 0.734 for automated analysis of information were calculated, and as both values are higher than 0.05, no other reason than pure chance exist.

8.3   Impact of big data and wearable technology on MI

Big data and wearable technology were chosen under closer examination due to them being very current topics in various business fields, market intelligence included.

Big data means high-volume, high-velocity and high-variety information resources which offer improved insights and decision-making through cost-effective and inventive information processing tools (Gartner, no date). Through big data, much more sophisticated information can be mined, but this will also have to be transformed into insights.

Big data is a phenomenon that closely relates to automation of information collection. From intelligence professionals big data and related tools will require high extent of information technology skills. Despite of the fact that computer software gather the data and analyze it into an apprehensible form, good analysis skills when interpreting this information will be required.

When *Market Intelligence Trends 202*0 survey respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of different pre-listed phenomena, big data was considered as most impactful out of nine alternatives. 78% of all survey respondents ranked big data to have either high or very high impact on market intelligence by the year 2020.

When differentiating decision-making advisors and information and analysis providers from all responses, it can be noted that even higher share (82%) of the first mentioned see big data as the most impactful phenomena (figure 2). For the latter group, respective share is 76% (figure 3). Information and analysis providers rank overflow of information and visualization as an information dissemination tool higher than big data. While information and analysis providers rank big data only third most impactful phenomenon, 30% of them say that big data has *very high* impact on market intelligence, and based on this value big data would rank first for this group as well. Information and analysis providers' 30% share of *very high impact* responses is also significantly higher than the respective 22% share of decision-making advisors.
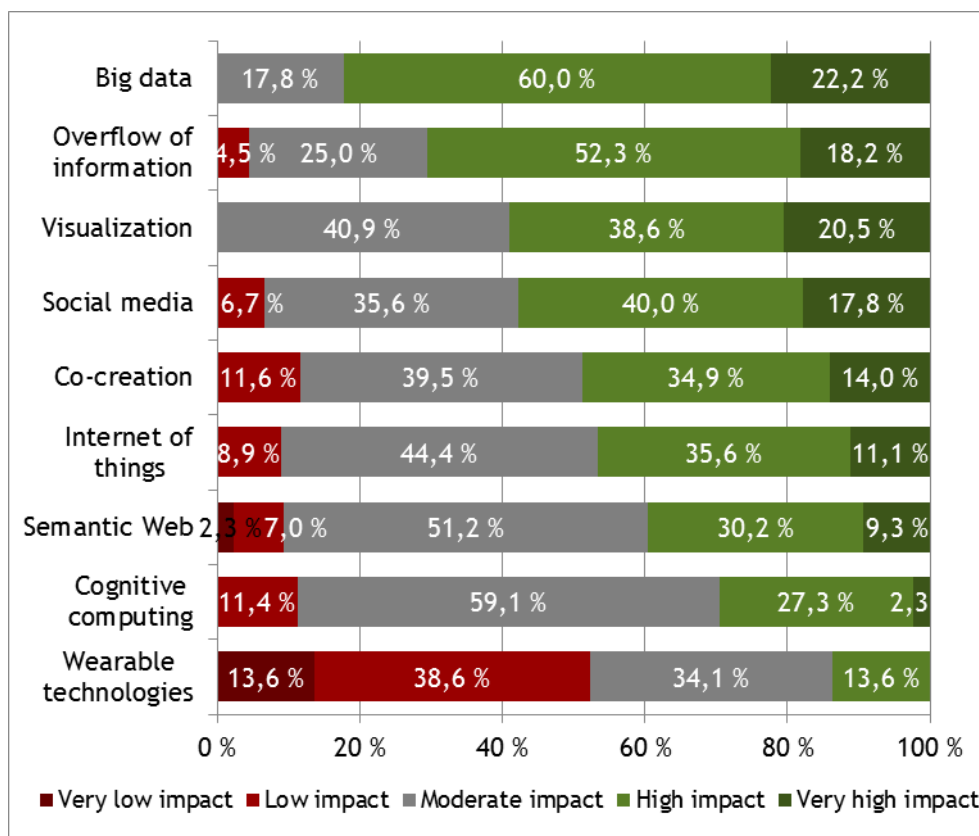
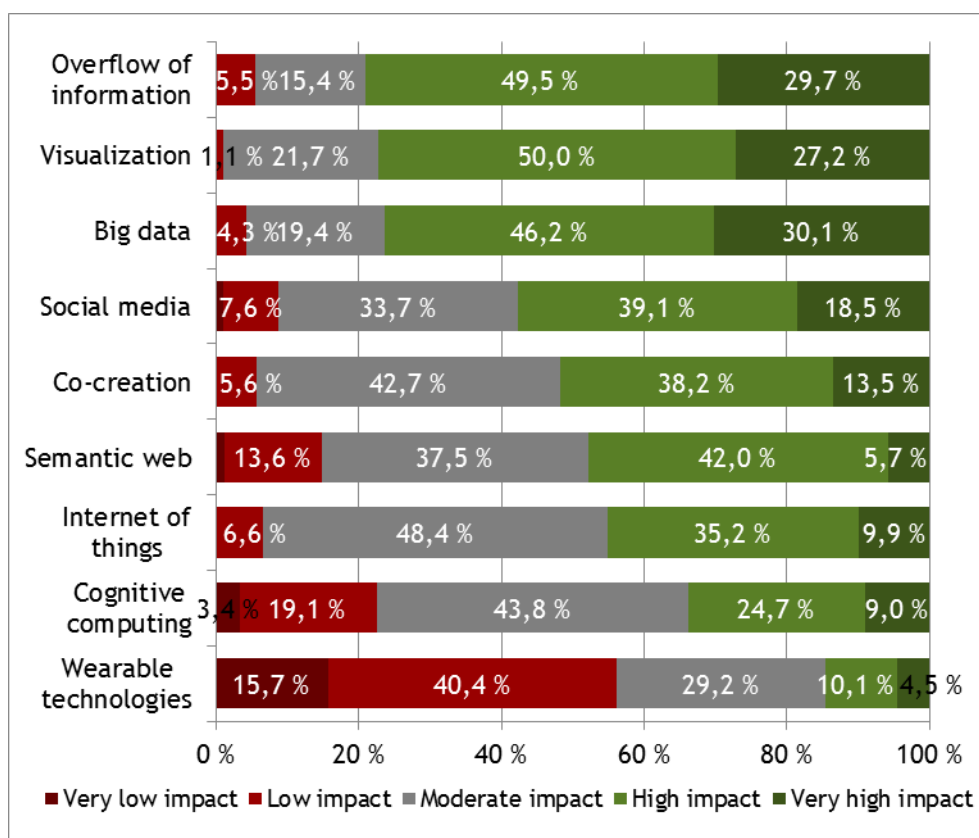Figure 2: Impact of different phenomena, decision-making advisors

Figure 3: Impact of different phenomena, information and analysis providers

The least impactful phenomenon out of the nine alternatives is considered to be wearable technology by all respondents as well as decision-making advisors separately. Only 14% of all surveyed market intelligence professionals consider wearable technology to have a high or very high impact on MI activities, while 55% of them think the impact will be either low or very low. 52% of decision-making advisors say the impact will be either low or very low and 14% think the impact will be high. The share of 'very high impact' for decision-making advisors was 0%. Information and analysis providers are aligned with these views.

Wearable technology refers to technologies such as Google Glass display-incorporated eyeglasses or smart watches that can display information from mobile phones or even function independently. According to GlobalWebIndex survey (2014, cited in Lipman 2014) 64% of Internet users globally have worn a wearable technology device or are interest to do so in the future. In general the image of this new technology is very business-to-consumer oriented. It can be expected that the respondents indeed are aware of the potential that lies in wearable technology, but do not know how this could be taken to use of in the more business-to-business oriented market intelligence tasks.

The differences in responses between decision-making advisors and information and analysis providers are very small. This is statistically proven by results of a chi-square test. The calculated p-value (as explained in the chapter 5.2 of this paper) for big data is 0.285 and for wearable technology 0.620. Both values are higher than 0.05, which means that the differences in answers are in statistical terms caused by pure chance.

In addition to size of the impact of the pre-listed phenomena, *MI trends 2020* survey respondents were asked to evaluate the quality of the impact on the same phenomena, with a range from very negative impact to very high impact (figure 4). Respondents altogether considered big data to have a positive impact on market intelligence work, while for wearable technology respondents could not choose whether the impact will be positive or negative. 72% of all respondents evaluate big data to have either somewhat or very positive impact on market intelligence by the year 2020, which ranks this phenomenon second most positive after visualization as an information dissemination tool.

72% of all survey respondents ranked wearable technology to have neither negative nor positive impact on MI, while 16% see it to have somewhat or very positive impact and 12% somewhat or very negative impact. The considerably high proportion of *neither negative nor positive* responses is another indication that potential applications of wearable technology for market intelligence are not clear to MI professionals yet.
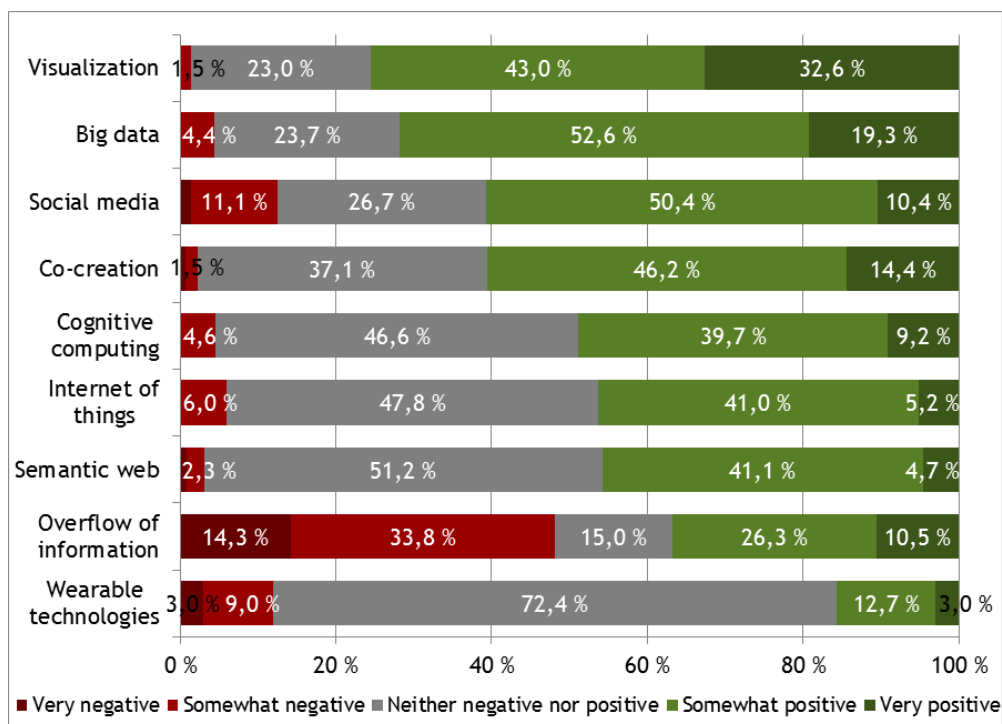
Figure 4: Quality of impact, all respondents

8.4 Different skills development methods for MI programs

Market intelligence professionals often work in a back-office role, which lays certain features on their competence development. The return on investment for MI staff development can be difficult to see as direct customer interaction might be missing. In addition, MI programs are often situated within organizations as remote units which may not have unambiguous budget-holders who would finance the staff development. Due to these difficulties, different methods for improving the MI staff's talent were chosen under closer research.

By comparing the most and least likely development tool, a conclusion can be drawn that cost-effectiveness has a significant relevance behind the answers of surveyed MI professionals. Using *benchmarking* from either other or own organization is the most likely used staff-development method by all respondents, while *external recruitments* are most unlikely to be used to acquire skillset. 82% of all survey respondents say they would be either somewhat or very likely to benchmarking as a staff development method, while 4% are somewhat or very unlikely to use it. Respective figures for external training are 30% and 40% (figure 5).
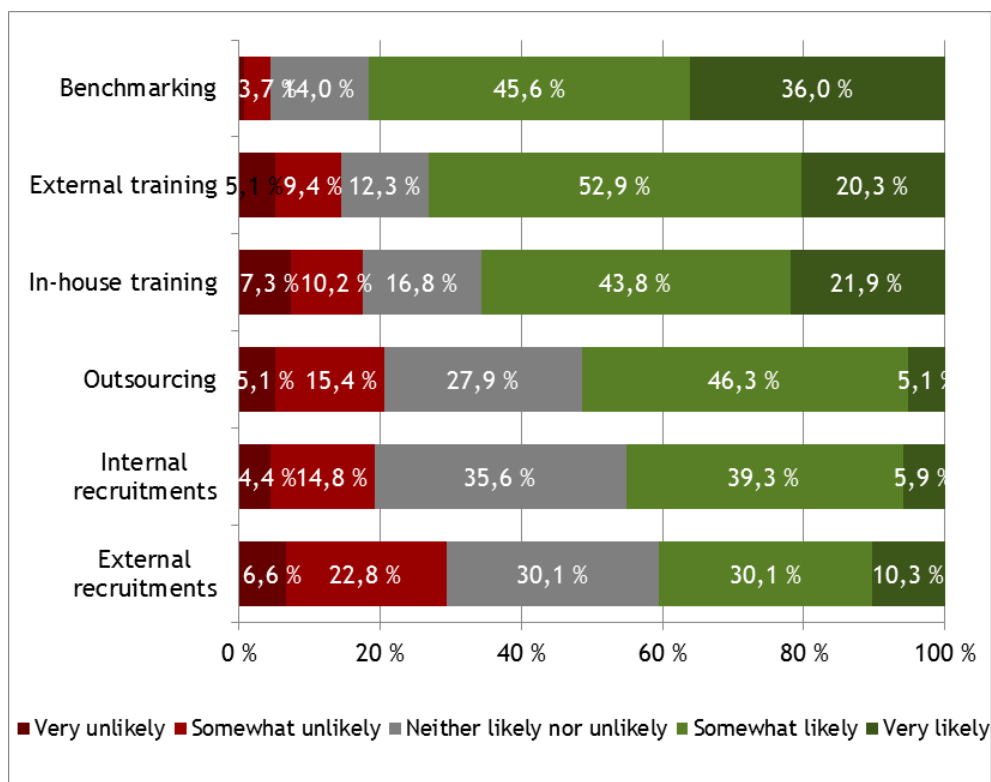
Figure 5: Likeliness to use different skills development methods, all respondents

Benchmarking at its simplest can be used by one person taking part in a workshop or a seminar, and the knowledge gathered can then be passed on to the use of whole market intelligence program. This is very cost-effective compared to external recruitments. The process of acquiring new workforce, starting from the recruitment and leading to often long-lasting job training consumes resources from many employees. Compared to internal recruitments, no previous company-specific know-how can be leveraged, which makes external recruiting the most expensive staff-development method out of the alternatives.

Decision-making advisors' opinions do not differ from information and analysis providers in terms of the ranking of the likeliness, with the exception of small difference in views towards *outsourcing* as a development method (figure 6). The finding that decision-making advisors are less willing to use outsourcing, even though the difference is not significant, suggests that these respondents from more advanced MI programs with more influence in decision-making see more potential in their own personnel. 47% of decision-making advisors are somewhat or very likely to use this tool while the respective share for information and analysis providers is 54%.

Contrary to this, decision-making advisors are more willing to use external recruitments (44% somewhat or very likely) than information and analysis providers (39% somewhat or very like-

ly). Additionally, decision-making advisors are more likely to use internal recruitments than information and analysis providers.
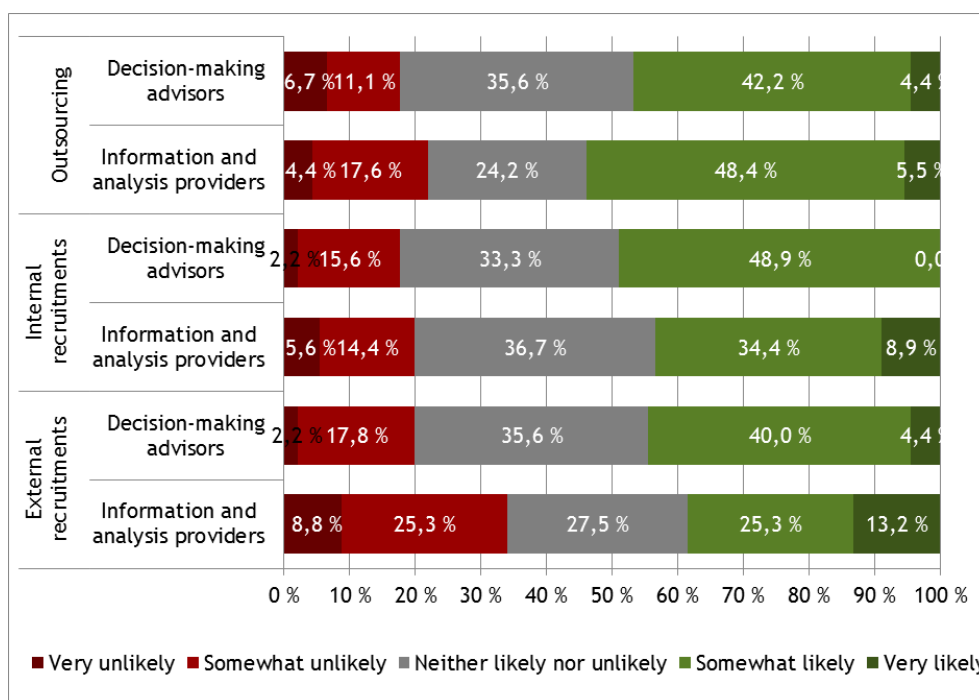

Figure 6: Likeliness to use outsourcing or internal or external recruitments, decision-making advisors and information and analysis providers

Reasons for these findings may lie in the fact that the first mentioned respondents, through their more advanced status within organization, are able to think farther ahead to the future than the latter. Even though outsourcing in some occasions, especially in a short time span, may be more cost-effective solution than recruiting new members to the MI program, in the longer period of time the costs will even out. Own staff might ultimately also be more adaptive to react to changes than an outsourcing partner.

As in other findings presented in this paper, the differences between decision-making advisors and information and analysis providers did not differ from each other due to a statistically significant reason. Calculated p-value (as explained in the chapter 5.2 of this paper) for outsourcing is 0.588, for internal recruitments 0.167 and external recruitments 0.101. All values are higher than 0.05, which means that the differences in answers are in statistical terms caused by pure chance.

8.4.1   Divergence in skills development methods of different sub-groups

MI trends 2020 survey respondents were asked to evaluate the most important skills for MI programs to possess by the year 2020 (figure 7). Based on the responses to this question, respondents were split into sub-groups to find out if some causality existed in how support for different skills affects the likeliness to use different staff development methods.

Out of a list of eight alternatives, survey respondents were asked to choose three skills and indicate with percentages which of them they perceive most important, with figures having to add up to 100%, for instance 50%-30%-20%. Due to a fault in setting up the questionnaire in Digium Enterprise online tool, maximum number of selections per response was not limited to three, even though the percentage limit per question was set at 100%. This resulted in a situation where many respondents had split their responses under more than three selections, which caused more dispersion and increased the occurrence of two selections having the same percentage as the majority response.

Should the limit have been set at maximum three selections, selections with two equal highest percentage shares, such as 40%-40%-20% or 35%-35%-30% could have occurred as well, but their amount would have been smaller. For clarity, only those responses which indicated a majority percentage for only one skill were selected when dividing respondents under subgroups. This resulted in discarding 34 responses, as the ultimately most desired skill could not have been interpreted amongst two or more equal responses.
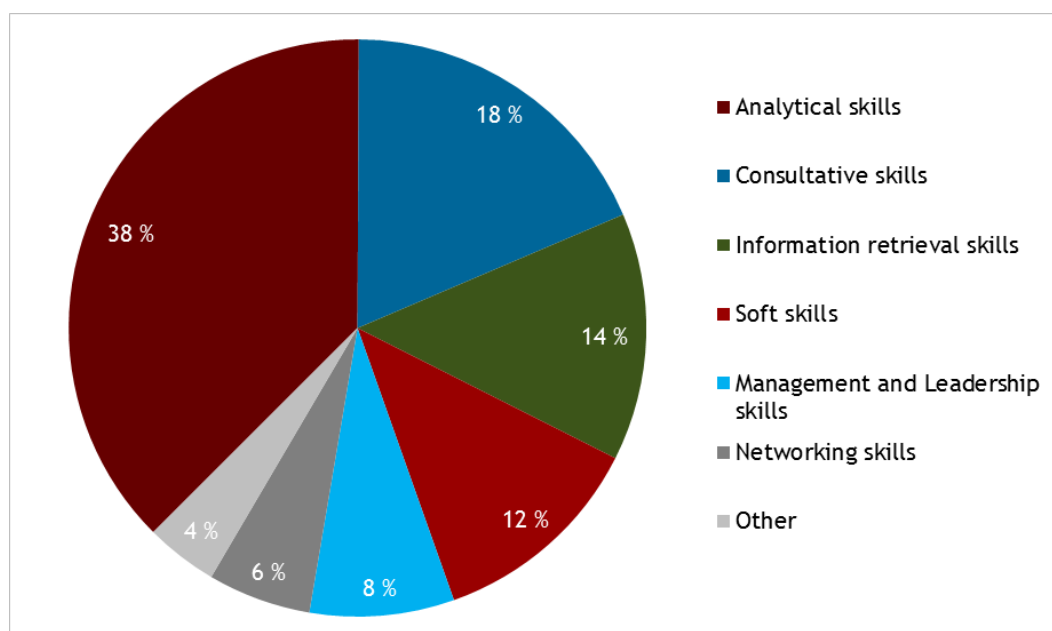

Figure 7: Most important skills for MI programs to possess, all respondents

Percentage shares for likeliness in tables 5 and 6 have been calculated by adding together the responses for *somewhat likely* and *very likely* to use a specific method to develop MI skills.

Respectively for unlikeliness, the responses for *somewhat unlikely* and *very unlikely* to use a specific method to develop MI skills were added together. The answering option *neither likely nor unlikely* was excluded. As figure 7 presents, respondents had more pre-listed skills to choose from than the four included in tables 5 and 6, but due to some alternatives receiving low number of responses, they were excluded from the comparison as these findings would not have been statistically reliable.

Soft skills in *Market intelligence trends 2020* survey refer to skills on areas such as communication, presentation and relationship building. When positioning different methods in correct ranking in the tables (tables 5 and 6), primary significance was on the amount of likeliness. In occasions where two methods were very close to each other in terms of share of likeliness, share of unlikeliness was used as a deciding factor. In order to keep the analysis simple, the weight of *somewhat likely* and *very likely* was equal, as respectively was the weight of *somewhat unlikely* and *very unlikely*.

Respondent group	Most likely method	% of likeliness	% of unlikeliness	Number of respondents
Analytical skills supporters	Benchmarking	83,72 %	9,30 %	44
Consultative skills supporters	Benchmarking	88,89 %	0,00 %	18
Information retrieval skills supporters	In-house training	64,71 %	5,88 %	17
Soft skills supporters	Benchmarking	84,62 %	0,00 %	14

Table 5: Most likely skills development method, different sub-respondent groups

When examining how respondent sub-groups perceive the most likely skills development method, most visible difference between the groups is that majority of *information retrieval skills supporters* would rather use in-house training than benchmarking, which is the favorite method by rest of the sub-groups (table 5). In addition, information retrieval skills supporters are less unanimous in their opinions, because while other groups show over 80% support for their top method, 65% of respondents of this group rank *in-house training* as their most likely method and benchmarking ranks second with 59% likeliness.

Consultative skills supporters are most likely of all sub-groups to use benchmarking. For this group, not only is the percentage share of likeliness the highest out of all three groups supporting this method, but also none of the respondents are unlikely to use this method. Another sub-group that shows no unlikeliness for benchmarking is *soft skills supporter*s.

	Least likely method	% of likeliness	% of unlikeliness	Number of respondents
Analytical skills supporters	External recruitments	37,21 %	37,21 %	44
Consultative skills supporters	External recruitments	55,56 %	22,22 %	18
Information retrieval skills supporters	External recruitments	23,53 %	35,29 %	17
Soft skills supporters	Outsourcing	28,57 %	21,43 %	14

Table 6: Least likely skills development method, different sub-respondent groups

When reviewing the respondent sub-groups' views in terms of unlikeliness, soft skills support-ers differ from rest of the groups (table 6). For soft skills supporters outsourcing is the least likely method based on the share of likeliness, while other groups perceive external recruit-ments as the least likely.

In the case of consultative skills supporters it can hardly be said that external recruitments would in fact be an unlikely skills acquiring method, as over half of the respondents are still likely to use this while only 22% are unlikely. This specific group is in general the least reluc-tant to use any of the methods available, as the average percentage share for unlikeliness to use different skills development methods was 11%, compared to the average of 21% for rest of the respondent sub-groups (all of them combined).

As shown in figure 7, *analytical skills* are the most important market intelligence skills by big-gest share of respondents. Reflecting to this, supporters of this skill do not stand out from other sub-groups in neither likeliness nor unlikeliness. In fact, the responses by this sub-group match with the views of all *MI trends 2020 survey* respondents to the highest extent.

As mentioned in chapter 7.1 of this paper, the causal direction and possible ambiguity in spe-cific responses needs to be clarified. Taking the differing responses in tables 5 and 6 under examination, rather clear connection in both cases can be seen.

In the case of most likely skills development tool, information retrieval skills supporters are more expected to choose in-house training over benchmarking because even though the gen-eral guidelines of market intelligence work can be similar in different organizations, infor-mation gathering requires more specific approach. Though the tools used to collect infor-mation may be widely used in other organizations as well, the scope of what is being searched for and the procedures connected to this are very company-specific knowledge. These facts lead to a conclusion that as benchmarking is about learning field-wide best prac-

tices, company-specific knowledge can best be passed on through the means of internal train-ing.

The causal direction in the case of the least likely skills development method is not as clear as it is in most likely method, but a reason for outsourcing being less likely than external re-cruitments can be found. As soft skills refer to communication, presentation and relationship skills, which all emphasize the human intervention more than other skills, it can be expected that supporters of these types of skills are more eager to be in charge of training own staff themselves instead of acquiring knowledge from an external party. This conclusion is based on the assumption that the supporters of soft skills are more competent in these skills and thus have higher confidence in their ability to reach better outcome through being responsi-ble of development internally.

The statistical difference of each divergence explained in this chapter was examined with chi-square test (as explained in the chapter 5.2 of this paper), which was carried out for each divergence case to find out if some respondent sub-group differ from other groups for a rea-son other than pure chance. In the case of information retrieval skills supporters using in-house training as a most likely skills development method, p-value of this group compared to respondents of rest of the sub-groups is 0.362. P-value for consultative skills supporters' high share of benchmarking is 0.345 and for soft skills supporters ranking outsourcing as least likely method 0.263. These figures indicate that the differences in each of the mentioned case are in statistical terms not significant enough to be caused by a reason other than pure chance.

9. Conclusion

The emergence of new developments on the field of information technology lays prominent challenges on the stability of market intelligence as a profession. However, technologies such as big data can completely revolutionize the way MI content is created for strategic decision-making purposes, and the developments described in this paper should be taken as an oppor-tunity to strengthen the status of market intelligence programs within organizations. As pro-fessionals surveyed for *Market intelligence 2020* survey suggest, despite the trend of increas-ing automation in the information collection, human workforce will remain essential in the analysis and interpretation stage as well as in the dissemination of the insights.

Survey respondents on average take a positive attitude towards different phenomena that are expected to have an impact on the market intelligence work. Some topics, mainly visualiza-tion of intelligence content and big data receive somewhat unanimous support while overflow of information rather expectedly is considered as a highly negative development. Phenomena that respondents are not sure whether positive or negative existed as well: Wearable tech-

nology was perceived as a very neutral topic. Those companies which are able to pioneer in developing MI applications based on wearable technology may gain significant competitive advantage over competitors.

By comparing the responses of decision-making advisors against information and analysis providers, some conclusions can be made regarding how more advanced market intelligence programs operate. Respondents from these programs are able to see a wider picture in for instance how to develop the skillset of MI staff. These respondents overall seem to be less open-minded than the rest of the respondents towards new phenomena.

The findings of Market intelligence 2020 survey provide insightful predictions for the next years of MI. The findings can be used to advice on the future service and product development of Global Intelligence Alliance, and the white paper created alongside this thesis report serves as a useful marketing tool. As the white paper is available free of charge, companies aiming to develop their market intelligence programs have a low barrier to gain benefit of its findings.

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Figures

Tables

Appendixes

Appendix 1: List of questions of the MI trends 2020 survey

1. **In which geographical area are you primarily located?**

   Alternatives:

   a) Africa & Middle East
   b) Asia Pacific (incl. Australia)
   c) Eastern Europe & CIS
   d) Latin America
   e) North America
   f) Western Europe

2. **Which option best describes your MI program's primary position in the decision making process?**

   Specification:

   Please choose only one option - the phase where most MI activity is carried out in your company.

   Alternatives:

   a) [Information provider] We are primarily involved in the beginning of the process, providing information
   b) [Research provider] We are primarily involved in the early stages of the process, providing research
   c) [Analysis provider] We are primarily involved in the middle of the process, providing analysis
   d) [Insight provider] We are primarily involved in the later stages, providing supporting insights for decisions
   e) [Decision maker influencer] We are primarily involved in the end, influencing decisions

3. **To what extent do you see your MI program adjusting to the following trends?**

   Alternatives:

   a) Automated collection of information
   b) Automated analysis of information
   c) MI program as a management consultancy
   d) Sharing of budgets and resources with other units
   e) Integration of the MI program with other organizational functions

   Range:

   - Strongly moving away from this
   - Somewhat moving away from this
   - Neither moving towards nor away from this

- Somewhat moving towards this
- Strongly moving towards this

4. What other trends that will have an impact on your MI program come to mind? How will you adjust to them?

Alternatives:

Open ended question

5. **What does the geographical scope in your MI program look like today?**

Specification:

Please indicate with percentages how much your MI program is concentrated on the different geographical levels. Figures must add up to 100.

Alternatives:

a) Global focus
b) Regional or Multi-country focus
c) Country-specific focus

6. **Which of the following geographical regions will be the key focus areas of your MI program?**

Specification:

Please choose only your top 3 regions and indicate with percentages how much focus will be awarded to each of those regions. Figures must add up to 100.

Alternatives:

a) Africa & Middle East
b) Asia Pacific (incl. Australia)
c) Eastern Europe & CIS
d) Latin America
e) North America
f) Western Europe

7. **In your business environment, which of the following will be the most important focus areas?**

Specification:

Please choose only the top 3 actors and indicate with percentages how much focus will be awarded to each of them. Figures must add up to 100.

Alternatives:

a) Suppliers

b) Competitors
c) Distributors
d) Customers (B2B, direct customers)
e) End users (customer's customers or consumers)

8. **In 2020, decision makers will need MI program's input...**

Specification:

To what extent do you agree with the following?

Alternatives:

a) to produce ad hoc surveys for basic information for tactical short term decisions
b) to produce ad hoc surveys for analyzed topics for tactical short term decisions
c) mainly for regular updates on markets and competitors
d) for explaining what the collected data means
e) for help with strategic decision making
f) for structured thinking and analysis
g) to facilitate workshops to increase the level of insights
h) for confirmation or second opinion on a decision
i) to understand the changes in the market
j) to avoid risks

Range:

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

9. **In your opinion, which of the following options represent the 3 most important skills for MI programs to possess in 2020?**

Specification:

Please choose only 3 skills and indicate with percentages which of the skills that are most important. Figures must add up to 100.

Alternatives:

a) Analytical skills
b) Consultative skills
c) Information retrieval skills (e.g. collecting information from Big Data, Social Media and atypical sources)
d) Software related skills (e.g. programming)
e) Facilitation skills (e.g. workshops and meetings)
f) Networking skills
g) Management and Leadership skills
h) Soft skills (e.g. communication, presentation, relationship, etc.

i) Other, please specify

10. Relating to the previous question, how likely are you to use the following options to develop the skills in your MI program

Alternatives:

a) In-house training
b) Formal external training
c) Benchmarking (forums, user groups, conferences, networking etc.)
d) External recruitments
e) Internal recruitments
f) Outsourcing
g) Other, please specify

Range:

- Very unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

11. For each of the phenomena listed below, how big is the impact on Market Intelligence by 2020?

Alternatives:

a) Social Media (incl. Mobile)
b) Cognitive Computing
c) Big Data
d) Internet of Things
e) Co-Creation
f) Visualization as a mean to disseminate information
g) Semantic Web (more intelligent structure and common standards on the Web)
h) Wearable Technologies (e.g. Google Glass)
i) Overflow of information (increased need for quality assurance)
j) Other, please specify

Range:

- Very low impact
- Low impact
- Moderate impact
- High impact
- Very high impact

12. In relation to the previous question, how positive or negative do you think the impact of the following will be (in terms of quality of MI)?

Alternatives:

a) Social Media (incl. Mobile)
b) Cognitive Computing
c) Big Data
d) Internet of Things
e) Co-Creation
f) Visualization as a mean to disseminate information
g) Semantic Web
h) Wearable Technologies (e.g. Google Glass)
i) Overflow of information (increased need for quality assurance)
j) Other, please specify

Range:

- Very negative
- Somewhat negative
- Neither negative nor positive
- Somewhat positive
- Very positive

13. Which mediums or channels of information do you think will be most important for your MI program in 2020?

Alternatives:

Open ended question

14. How do you see your company's MI budget developing by 2020?

Specification:

Please indicate a percentage change, negative if applicable

Alternatives:

Open ended question

15. In your opinion, what will be the key change in your organization's MI functions between now and 2020?

Alternatives:

Open ended question

Appendix 2: GIA White Paper, November 2014: Market Intelligence Trends 2020

Global Intelligence Alliance

Market Intelligence Trends 2020

Global Intelligence Alliance (GIA) conducted the Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey to ask market intelligence professionals around the world for their opinion regarding how market intelligence will develop before the end of the decade. Besides showcasing insightful findings, this paper delivers concrete advice on how the best potential of future developments can be grasped. In addition, examples of companies with an established market intelligence program are provided, as well as guidelines from GIA's intelligence best practices experts.

Executive Summary

Like many other industries, market intelligence (MI) programs are forced to adapt to various changes in the business landscape. To find out more of what's ahead, Global Intelligence Alliance (GIA) surveyed 139 global market intelligence professionals to draw insightful conclusions from their viewpoints. Some of the highlights of the survey results have been summarized below.

1. MI organizations' support in strategic decision-making will remain essential.
2. Ad hoc surveys for basic information will not be vital, but ad hoc research to support strategic decision making will be needed.
3. Automated collection of information will likely happen, but analysis will be done by professionals.
4. MI programs are expected to be integrated with other organizational functions in the future.
5. Big Data will offer a myriad of opportunities for market intelligence programs.
6. Importance of good visualization of MI content will grow.
7. MI professionals can't make up their minds on the implications of wearable technology.
8. Consultative and networking skills will become ever more important.
9. Benchmarking is seen as the most appealing staff-development method.
10. MI budgets are expected to grow.

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In this paper, the term "Market Intelligence" (or "MI") refers to functions and programs in companies and organizations that help them to understand their business environment, compete successfully in it and grow as a result. As a program, Market Intelligence collects information about market players and strategically relevant topics and processes it into insights that support decision-making.

In this paper, the term "Market Intelligence" is used as an overarching term for terms such as competitor analysis, customer insights, technology analysis or strategic analysis. Concepts such as Competitive Intelligence or Market Insight, should be regarded as synonymous with "Market Intelligence" in this report.

About this survey

The way business is conducted around the world changing at an ever increasing speed, and market intelligence professionals are at the center of all changes. For example, constantly developing technology provides prominent opportunities to improve everyday market intelligence. These opportunities can range from social sharing of content and its wider and faster dissemination, to automation of different processes and analysis of vast amount of data, which can only be processed with super-intelligent computers. Simultaneously, the forementioned leads to increased unawareness in terms of how to react to the changes and how to make the best use of them. Market intelligence programs exist within organizations for the primary purpose of supporting decision-makers, and this fact obliges MI professionals to absorb new trends and developments without delay.

The core function of market intelligence programs is to effectively support the decision making of the management. However, the way this task is executed in different organizations differs. MI programs have different maturity levels and their roles inside organizations may be perceived differently in accordance with the projects they carry out. As such, the market intelligence professionals' perceptions of future developments often differ.

In this paper, a closer look is taken at the viewpoints of those market intelligence professionals who have closer access to decision makers. These professionals' views, when compared to the overall responses, reveal insights into how the most influential MI programs differ from the average. After all, market intelligence potential is best put to work when the people behind it have sufficient organizational power in their hands.

The *Market Intelligence Trends 2020* survey is the second part of an ongoing *Market Intelligence Trends* survey series by GIA, the first being conducted in 2010. For the survey at hand, GIA invited shortlisted market intelligence professionals to participate in an online questionnaire, and a total of 139 responses were received. Geographically two largest respondent groups were Western Europe (59%) and North America (28%), while the remainder divided rather equally between Eastern Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa, Middle East and Latin America.

The respondents of GIA's *Market Intelligence Trends 2020* survey are divided into three categories based on their role, and the maturity and sophistication of their organization's MI program. We use these respondent segments to draw some conclusions. The three categories are:

1. **Information providers**, whose main task is to provide information and research for the use of decision makers, but who are not in the position of delivering concrete analysis on what the data means.
2. **Analysis providers**, who build on the foundation of the previous group by supporting decision makers with more sophisticated suggestions on what to draw from the information provided.
3. **Decision making advisors**, who represent the most trusted segment of MI professionals and whose word decision makers listen to and who can influence the future direction their company is being headed with their work. When conducting the survey, this group consisted of two separate sub-groups, *Insight providers* and *decision-maker influencers*. These two are regarded as one single group with common characteristics.

As decision making advisors are considered to be the most sophisticated MI professionals with highest influence, they were chosen as a reference group in this paper. Case companies Shell and Fortum were selected as examples because their MI programs are known to have significant leverage to decision-makers.

Exhibit 1. Survey respondent breakdown by *primary position in the decision making process*

- Info providers
- Analysis providers
- Decision making advisors
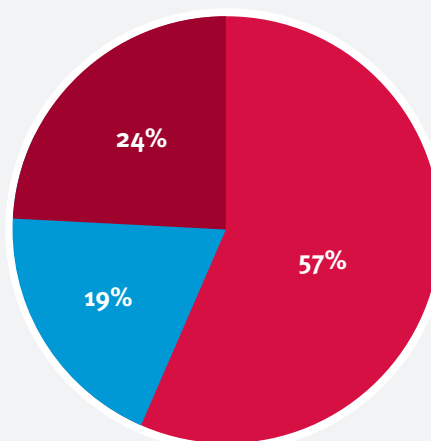
Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance

Key Findings

1. MI organizations' support in strategic decision-making will remain essential

A significant 96 % of all the survey respondents agreed that **MI organizations' support in strategic decision-making** will remain essential for decision-makers (see Exhibit 2). We refer to the essential information, analysis and advisory that decision makers need to make insightful decisions to gain advantage over competitors and to succeed in changing market conditions. This function is seen as a continuous and established process.

2. Ad hoc surveys for basic information will not be vital, but ad hoc research to support strategic decision making will be needed

To emphasize this, only 53 % of respondents thought that MI program's input will be needed to **produce ad hoc surveys for basic information**, i.e. information provided to react to already occurring changes instead of delivering insights beforehand to avoid them (see Exhibit 2).

Still, a decent amount of ad hoc surveys carried out by MI professionals per decision makers' request does in fact try to answer questions that have significant strategic importance. Such deliverables should be seen as part of the strategic decision-making support. Ad hoc surveys for basic information represent the very foundation-level information delivery that should be a continuous process in any sophisticated MI program.

Simon-Erik Ollus, Vice President, Industrial Intelligence and Investment Analysis at Fortum, a Finnish energy company with annual turnover of 6.1 billion Euros, is a strong believer in the necessity of providing answers to ad hoc questions. According to Mr. Ollus, a successful MI program needs to be able to quickly respond to key requests, and a market intelligence program that never gets ad hoc requests from management could in fact be fully outsourced as such a program does not represent major strategic value.

3. Automated collection of information will likely happen, but analysis will be done by professionals

Constantly advancing technology will alter the ways of doing business, as machines have been replacing the human workforce in sectors such as manufacturing for decades. In the wake of

Exhibit 2. **Where decision makers will need MI program's input in 2020**

Strategic decision making	96%
Understanding market changes	95%
Structured thinking and analysis	87%
Risk avoidance	79%
Regular MI & CI updates	78%
Data explanation	71%
Ad hoc surveys for analyzed topics	70%
Second opinion on a decision	69%
Workshop facilitation	68%
Ad hoc surveys for basic information	53%

Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance

advanced operating systems and software becoming more and more "business as usual", knowledge workers may experience the same phenomenon. Market intelligence professionals, especially those whose tasks consist mainly of information gathering are expectedly most heavily affected by these changes, because the simplest MI tasks can rather easily be automated.

Data from GIA's Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey does not definitively support this statement, even though 65% of all respondents and 76% of decision making advisors expect their organizations' MI programs to move towards **automated collection of information** by the end of the decade (see Exhibit 3). Contrary to this, **automated analysis of information** is seen as a likely development by only 34%, and by even fewer 27% of decision making advisors. These facts reflect the development that with advanced information gathering tools, market intelligence can become a more influential function which allocates its resources towards analysis and influencing management, instead of the time-consuming process of searching for information.

This can especially be seen in the advisory-level MI professionals' comments. Automated information collection is an opportunity, while there is not much trust in the possibility of replacing the professional workforce with computers in the analysis phase. Through automated information procurement, insightful professionals' time is freed up for more advanced duties. This statement is underlined by statistics which show that decision making advisors strongly believe that information collection will be automated, but analysis is not.

4. MI programs are expected to be integrated with other organizational functions in the future

As market intelligence functions and the way insight is created change, MI programs have to adapt their organizational positions accordingly. 64% of all professionals surveyed by GIA (67% of decision making advisors) expect MI programs to be **integrated with other organizational functions** in the future (see Exhibit 3). To give an example, should automation of information collection take pace, integrating MI programs with technology-based business units

would be beneficial. These units often have larger budgets at their disposal and their skill pool is more tech-savvy, which will allow market intelligence programs to share costs with these units, while being able to leverage from their staff's IT expertise. MI professionals can focus on their core strength, providing analyzed insights to decision-makers. Specifically we see market intelligence being further integrated into business intelligence (BI) operations.

Exhibit 3. Extent to which MI programs will adjust to predictable trends by 2020

	Moving towards this	Neither moving towards nor away from this	Moving away from this
Automated collection of information	65%	28%	7%
Integration of the MI program with other organizational functions	64%	29%	7%
MI program as a management consultancy	63%	33%	4%
Sharing of budgets and resources with other units	54%	35%	11%
Automated analysis of information	35%	56%	9%

■ Moving towards this   ■ Neither moving towards nor away from this   ■ Moving away from this

Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance

According to *Joost Drieman, Vice President of Intelligence Best Practices with Global Intelligence Alliance*, market intelligence programs should develop towards a Hub-and-Spoke system. This refers to organizational structures where market intelligence is run from a central organization that provides general information, such as macro-economic developments, for the whole company in a centralized manner.

More industry-specific questions that require a deeper hands-on approach and complex industry knowledge on certain products or services are answered through the spokes, which represent remote members of the MI program. These 'subject-matters-experts' produce content for the MI program via their own business units. In this way, more sophisticated issues can be handled with the appropriate skillsets.

Simon-Erik Ollus of Fortum believes his organization's successful development of its market intelligence program is the result from merging all market and investment analysis functions under one group function that through a matrix model that serves all relevant business lines. "*Key success factors for such a matrix to work are to stay close to business lines, and remains business critical and cost efficient in all deliveries*". Mr. Ollus continues, "*Courage to stop delivering nice-to-have information and to only focus on business relevant issues is also needed.*" For a company such as Fortum, which operates on different legislative environments in the Nordic and Baltic region, as well as in Russia and Poland, keeping its MI program close to the everyday business is undoubtedly critical.

5. Big Data will offer a myriad of opportunities for market intelligence programs

A phenomenon that closely relates to automation of information collection is **Big Data**, which refers to the collection of data sets that are so large that they cannot be processed with traditional data processing applications. Big Data will offer a myriad of opportunities for market intelligence programs, but without skillful and technology oriented staff to analyze the outcomes, the benefits will not be realized.

When Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of different phenomena, Big Data was seen as having most impact out of nine alternatives. 78% of respondents considered it to have high impact on market intelligence by the year 2020 (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4. **Impact of these phenomena on market intelligence by 2020**

	High impact	Moderate impact	Low impact
Big Data	78%	19%	3%
Overflow of information	76%	19%	5%
Visualization	71%	28%	1%
Social Media	58%	34%	8%
Co-Creation	51%	42%	8%
Internet of Things	46%	47%	7%
Semantic Web	45%	42%	13%
Cognitive Computing	32%	49%	19%
Wearable Technologies	14%	31%	55%

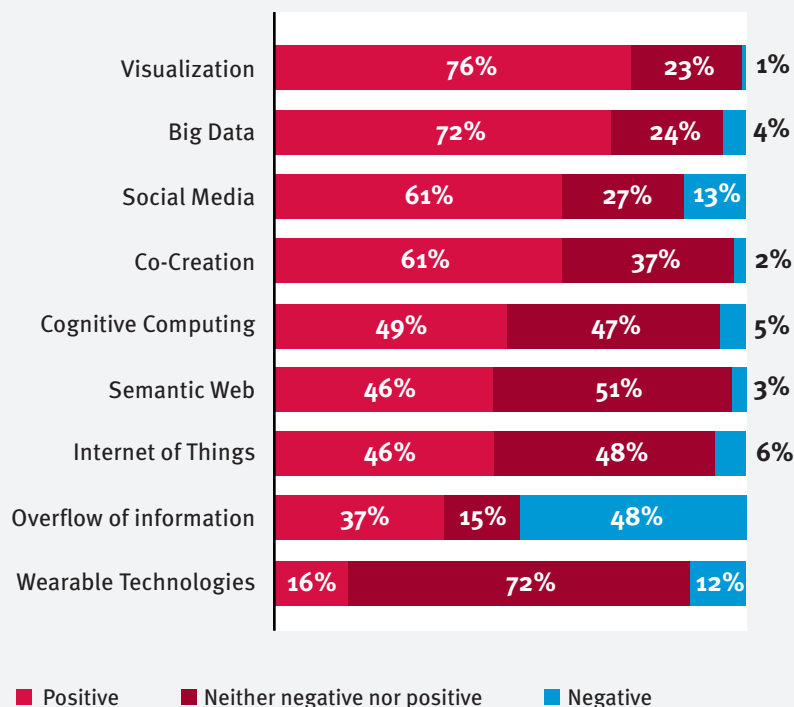■ High impact   ■ Moderate impact   ■ Low impact
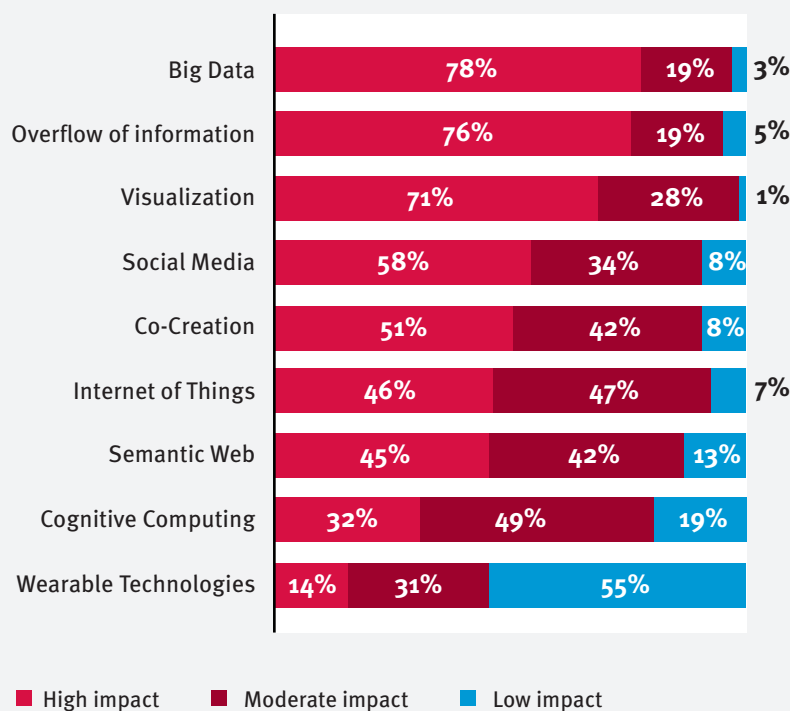
Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance

6. Importance of good visualization of MI content will grow

When asked to evaluate whether this impact was positive, Big Data ranked second after **improved visualization of MI content**, with 72% and 76% of respondents saying the impact will be positive, respectively (see Exhibit 5).

An important factor should be kept in mind when considering how to generate insight from Big Data. The data should not be collected only for the sake of collecting it, but data that actually creates insight and adds value has to be found. Through Big Data, much more sophisticated information can be mined, but this will then have to be transformed into insights. For intelligence professionals, this requires proper understanding of cognitive computing systems. But as computers collect data, good analysis skills when processing this information will be most essential.

Exhibit 5. How positive these phenomena will be for market intelligence by 2020

Phenomenon	Positive	Neither negative nor positive	Negative
Visualization	76%	23%	1%
Big Data	72%	24%	4%
Social Media	61%	27%	13%
Co-Creation	61%	37%	2%
Cognitive Computing	49%	47%	5%
Semantic Web	46%	51%	3%
Internet of Things	46%	48%	6%
Overflow of information	37%	15%	48%
Wearable Technologies	16%	72%	12%

■ Positive   ■ Neither negative nor positive   ■ Negative

Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance

7. MI professionals can't make up their minds on implications of wearable technology

Wearable technology (such as Google Glass or smart watches) was considered the least impactful phenomenon. Only 14% of surveyed professionals considered this to have a high impact, while 55% think the impact will be low (see Exhibit 4). When it comes to evaluating the quality of impact, respondents were united in confusion; 72% chose to answer 'Neither negative nor positive impact' to this question (see Exhibit 5). This is an indication that wearable technology's potential applications for market intelligence are not clear to MI professionals yet.

This uncertainty may be caused by the fact that the majority of the survey respondents represent business-to-business markets, and so far wearable technology has mainly embraced consumer products. According to a 2014 survey by GlobalWebIndex, 64% of internet users globally have already worn a piece of wearable tech or are keen to do so in the future, and Nielsen says in its Connected Life Report that 15% of consumers own a wearable device. These numbers underline wearable technology's potential in vastly popular consumer products, while the possible B2B end-use implications are not equally clear yet.

8. Consultative and networking skills will become ever more important

The changing skills required of market intelligence professionals will grow to be ever more critical. To find out more about this topic, GIA asked the Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey respondents to evaluate what skills they see as most essential for MI staff, and to indicate how these skills should be further developed in their organizations.

Analytical skills were seen as the most desired quality among MI professionals, with a 38% of respondents rating them as most important. For decision making advisors, the respective share was 35%. An interesting notion is that the two sub-categories within decision making advisors, insight providers and decision-making influencers, see this topic in a very opposing way

Exhibit 6. Three most important skills for MI professionals to possess by 2020 (Decision making advisors)

- ■ Analytical skills
- ■ Presentation and communication skills
- ■ Consultative skills
- ■ Rest
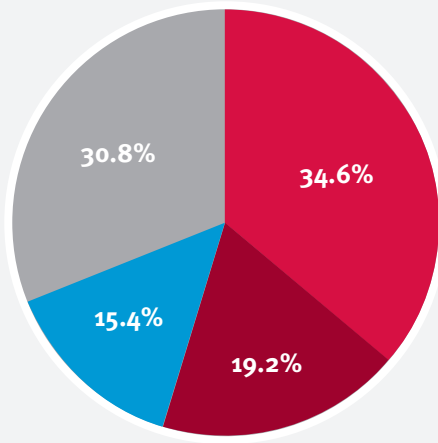
*Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey,
Global Intelligence Alliance*

compared to each other and the overall average. Insight providers appreciate analytical skills even higher than overall sampling, with 40% of respondents rating it as most important skill, while only 24% of decision-maker influencers share this opinion (see Exhibit 6).

One reason for the small share of decision-maker influencers who consider analytical skills as the most needed MI skill may derive from their management consultant position. For these professionals, it is not enough to be able to provide insightful information and to analyze it thoroughly, but the way in which this knowledge is presented to top management is equally important. On the other hand, the fact that insight providers, whom on average do not differ significantly from decision-making influencers, see analytical skill as more important than the latter is more likely to be in charge of managing the MI team.

Decision-making influencers' higher-than-average support for **presentation and communication skills, consultative skills** and **management & leadership skills** emphasizes this statement. These skills are considered especially important for management consultants, such as decision-maker influencers.

An interesting finding regarding **networking skills** can be made: Even though these skills are not considered as the most vital one by an especially large share of respondents, the fact that 6% of professionals think so is an indication that these skills cannot be discarded when hiring and training MI staff. If market intelligence is seen as management consultancy function, as it should be, networking skills are crucial when raising MI's status in the organization and becoming advisors to the top management. Also, in many cases today, MI units find themselves fighting for their existence with ongoing cost cutting and operational streamlining. In this scenario, good networking skills are a welcome addition to MI professionals' skillset.

A situation where networking skills may become even more required is when MI units are merged with other business units. In many organizations, it will then be up to the market intelligence professionals themselves to negotiate an advantageous position for their unit. This is because market intelligence programs unfortunately are often seen as support units for other divisions, instead of true strategy units with an established status.

9. Benchmarking is seen as the most appealing staff-development method

The universal characteristics in staff development in any role or business unit apply to market intelligence staff too: constantly developing employees to enable them to possess the required skills is a difficult and costly process that takes time.

Exhibit 7. Most important skills for MI professionals to possess by 2020 (All respondents)

- ■ Analytical skills
- ■ Consultative skills
- ■ Information retrieval skills
- ■ Presentation and communication skills
- ■ Management and Leadership skills
- ■ Networking skills
- ■ Other
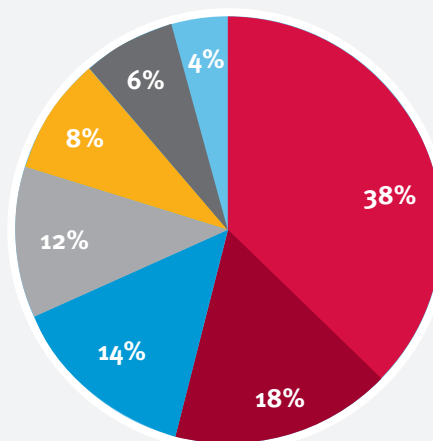
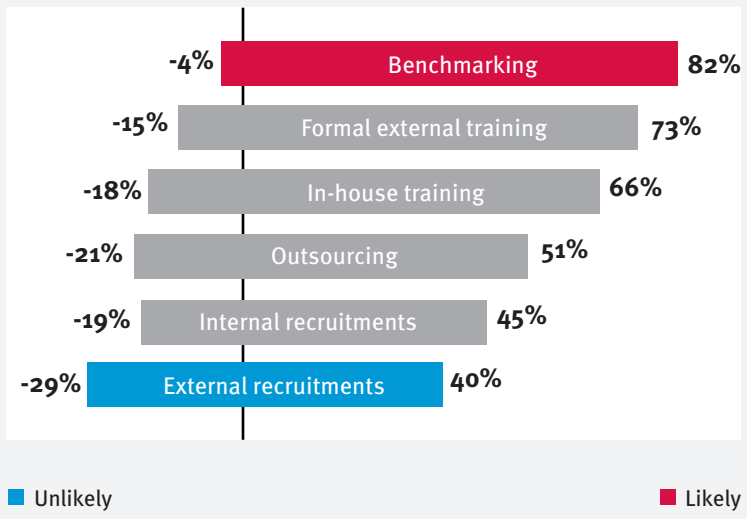*Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance*

MI professionals often work in a back-office role, which may restrict some aspects of their competence development. This fact may even be a barrier for establishing proper development programs for market intelligence professionals. As the return on investment is the commonly used meter for any organizational activity, MI professionals face the risk of being left without training programs. The ability to see the long-term picture when investing in market intelligence employees is truly required from organizations' budget holders. It is vital for budget holders to understand that even though evident benefits may not be seen immediately, let alone be measured against ROI, a competent MI program will help any company to make decisions that will result in better performance. A separate survey by GIA, the 2013 Global Market Intelligence Survey, shows that well executed market intelligence generates real value for companies. In fact, companies with world class market intelligence operations saw their share prices grow by 16.2% on average in 2012, when global stock markets grew by just 7%.

Cost effectiveness seems to be driving the opinions of surveyed MI professionals, as **benchmarking** from either other organizations or within one's own was regarded as the most likely staff-development method. All together, 82% out of all survey respondents said they would use benchmarking for developing their current staff, while only 4% of them were unlikely to do so (see Exhibit 8). Decision making advisors were aligned with the overall opinion, 80% saying they were likely to use benchmarking. After all, there is no need to re-invent the wheel, but instead best practices can be learned from other, even competing, organizations. This is made possible by different conferences and roundtable discussions that offer a great way for MI professionals to share their knowledge and gain something in return.

Despite the fact that a strong percentage (40%) of surveyed MI professionals would be willing to use **external recruitments** as a skills acquisition method, this option also received the biggest reluctance from survey respondents. We see that 30% of respondents are not likely to recruit external people to strengthen their MI program, as this is a costly method compared to other possible alternatives. Training existing staff externally or in-house demands resources as well, but this builds on the existing knowledge of staff, making it more attractive and affordable.

These signs of trust towards the capabilities of one's own employees are naturally great to observe. With the help of constant development, the most gifted individuals can grow to become trusted advisors for top management.

**Exhibit 8.** Market Intelligence staff development methods by 2020

-4%	Benchmarking	82%
-15%	Formal external training	73%
-18%	In-house training	66%
-21%	Outsourcing	51%
-19%	Internal recruitments	45%
-29%	External recruitments	40%

■ Unlikely   ■ Likely

Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance

10. MI budgets are expected to grow

A positive indicator of development of market intelligence by the year 2020 is the predicted **growth of MI budgets**: 69% of all respondents of GIA's Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey expected their MI budgets to grow, while only 5% believe that the trend will be towards decreased resources. In the face of long-lasting economic difficulties, such a strong trust in the future growth of MI is a signal that MI professionals are confident in their own work and seem to have sufficient commitment from their organizations' decision-makers.

Exhibit 9. How companies' market intelligence budgets will develop by 2020

Over 75% growth	26-75% growth	1-25% growth	No change	1-25% decrease
10%	19%	40%	26%	5%
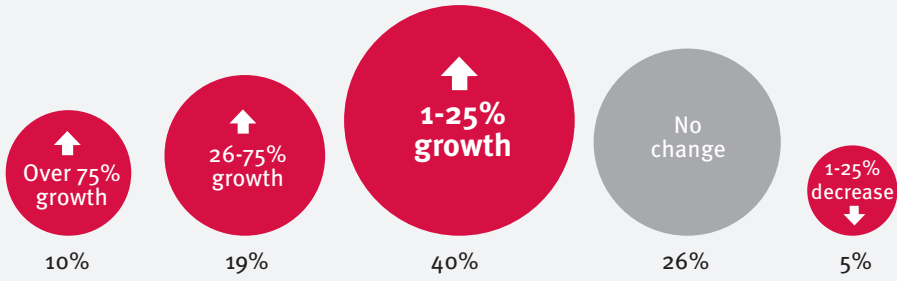
Source: Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, Global Intelligence Alliance

How to develop market intelligence programs that create the most value

A key success factor in developing any intelligence program to become trusted management advisors is that intelligence professionals truly understand the needs of decision makers. As data providers often settle for simply answering questions that are asked, decision making advisors realize that every query from their stakeholders includes a "need behind the need". This means that a decision making advisor wants to understand and find out why the stakeholder is asking a specific question, and how the answer to the question will be used. This understanding will allow MI professional to provide insight that will resonate with the stakeholder. Consultative skills are vital in achieving this stage of offering.

Related to this, the ability to give straight answers to straight questions is another vital feature of efficient and trusted MI staff. According to Joost Drieman of GIA, intelligence professionals very often tend to overproduce material when answering even the simplest questions. In some occasions, more complex data can add further value for stakeholders, but the risk is that the core of the answer gets lost in the mass of other, less essential pieces of information. Again, consultative skills help MI professionals to understand what kind of answer will best serve the needs of the decision-maker.

Paul Schoenfeld, Manager of Market Intelligence & Special Projects at global energy and petrochemicals company, Shell, shares this view. Mr. Schoenfeld wants his MI team to be able to deliver sound insight with associated recommendations, as well as to be transparent with what information it has or doesn't have. The key to achieving this is to always be one step ahead of stakeholders and to anticipate their questions.

Taking the skillset requirement under closer examination, GIA's Joost Drieman, who through his work as an intelligence best practices consultant has faced various different MI programs in many different companies, emphasizes the balance between three key skill areas. These areas are **technical skills**, **soft skills** and **management skills,** and they are complementary to each other.

Technical skills are the heart of market intelligence skills, the very essential analysis, synthesis, research and data collection skills that are needed to efficiently produce insights. Soft skills add a layer to this foundation: without soft skills even the most brilliant insight cannot be presented to a decision-maker in an understandable way, so that he or she understands what this means for the company. Mr. Drieman offers a concrete example of these two skills in action. If a MI professional is considered to be a painter, technical skills mean that he or she knows how to paint a house in blue color. Adding soft skills, he or she can go towards a consultant approach to suggest why the house would look better in red instead of blue, and even further, what kind of paint is best for the surface.

The third aspect of a balanced market intelligence skill set, management skills, then ties everything together: knowing how to manage MI people, projects and stakeholders requires a proper balance between technical skills and soft skills. How one develops these skills depends on where one is in the development stage. Joost Drieman uses the widely-known model of three E's to illustrate the talent development. Without any skills, a person needs to be **educated**. When this person has a moderate set of skills, **experience** is needed. When enough experience is gathered, the person needs **exposure**, so that he or she can become visible to other people, and his or her ideas reach the appropriate audience.

According to Global Intelligence Alliance's Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey, a common character in many organizations' MI programs is to put the majority of MI focus on examining what competitors are up to. Over 40% of survey respondents named **competitors** as their most important focus point, but GIA's Joost Drieman disagrees with this focus. Looking only at competitors can be a signal of weakness, as most successful companies consider following their **customers** and **markets** as the more important function, because this will allow them to understand and anticipate what will come up next. According to Mr. Drieman, it is more important to know what customers want to buy in the future, rather than to look at competitors

and trying to copy them. Very often, a company that puts too much focus on catching up to the competition ends up falling behind, as it cannot anticipate the future development effectively.

This, however, is a reflection of what companies should do on a *strategic level*. Following competitors on a *tactical level* is of vital importance.

Checklist for success

Based on the findings from the Market Intelligence Trends 2020 survey as well as our interviews with companies with world class market intelligence programs, the following is a checklist for an efficient and trusted market intelligence program:

1. Keep always a close eye on all the market changes, but avoid becoming blind by focusing only on competitors.
2. Be ready to provide ad hoc insights to stakeholders, but make analysis an ongoing process.
3. Don't be afraid to incorporate automation tools in information collection, but remember that human intervention will still be needed for analysis and insight dissemination.
4. Big Data will likely be a game-changer for MI, but data should not be collected for the sake of having data; more is not always more.
5. Find a balance between the skillset of MI people, more specifically technical, soft and management skills.
6. The rule of three E's, education, experience and exposure, serves as a career development guideline.
7. Understand the needs behind the needs of stakeholders' requests and try to be one step ahead.
8. Give straight answers to straight questions, and do not overproduce content to simple requests.
9. Networking skills, along with consultative skills, allow you to raise the status of your MI program.
10. Market intelligence programs may be integrated with other business units, but this must be seen as an opportunity, not a threat. This will allow MI to focus on its core competences.

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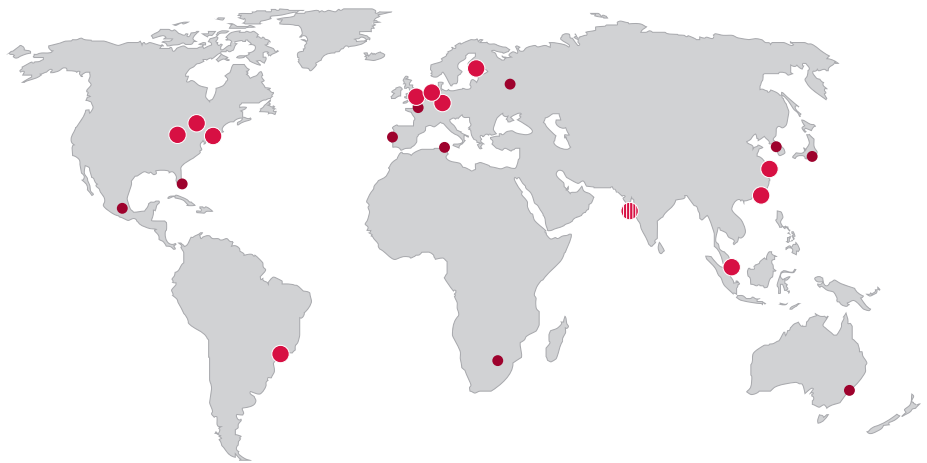
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