NOW YOU KNOW

OntosCAI – Competitive Affairs/Intelligence
Analyze, Monitor, Understand your Competitive Environment

[DANIEL HLADKY, ONTOS INTERNATIONAL AG]

„Competition has always been central to the agenda of companies.
Indeed, competition has become one of the enduring themes of our time."

- Michael Porter, Harvard Professor -

Deliberately Using Competitive Environment Information to Outsmart Competitors & Increase Effectiveness Across Many Departments

Central to any business is its ability to sell products or services in a competitive environment, even in highly regulated industries. Business professionals work hard to be competitive, not only on behalf of the whole company but also within their own department or other capacity. Sell more products or services. Increase market share. Differentiate. Maximize shareholder value. Reduce costs. Design and pursue effective strategies. Hire the best people at the 'right' compensation level. Cut the best deal.

Each of these activities requires some understanding of at least one aspect of that organization's competitive environment. Without a consistent flow of useful information, these key decisions are likely based on an "understanding" that is out-of-date and/or inconsistent from individual to individual in the same company. It's no wonder that CEOs frequently rank "understanding competitors" as a top information management problem.

"OntosCAI - Competitive Affairs/Intelligence" is a solution that helps managing information to track and understand specific elements of the competitive environment that affect your ability to succeed

Competitive Affairs (CA) is the process of gathering, analyzing and managing external and internal information that can affect a company's plans, decisions and operations. It is the process of enhancing marketplace competitiveness through a greater understanding of an organization's competitive environment, making use of both internal information and other open sources.

Competitive Affairs & CI, BI, KM; What's the Difference?

Main definitions related to Competitive Affairs:

Competitive Affairs: All activities inside an organization that require an understanding of some aspect of the competitive environment. This can be top-level strategic decisions all the way to front-line tactical daily actions.

Competitive Environment: All things in the "outside" world which can impact an organization's ability to succeed. The most important elements "tie" to the organization, such as competitors, suppliers, large customer groups, regulators, etc., however, other factors can include economic trends, public opinion, industry issues, etc.

Competitive Information: Data, information, word-on-the street rumours, etc. about any aspect of the competitive environment. For ease of use, also sometimes referred to as "competitor information."

Competitive Intelligence: Competitive information that has been analyzed to reveal key implications that matter to the organization. This can be strategic or tactical or both.

OntosCAI supports the knowledge worker by reducing his time and therefore the costs to query, search, pre-process, analyse and visualise the information to the decision makers. All results are shown as cognitive maps (semantic networks) for easier navigation.
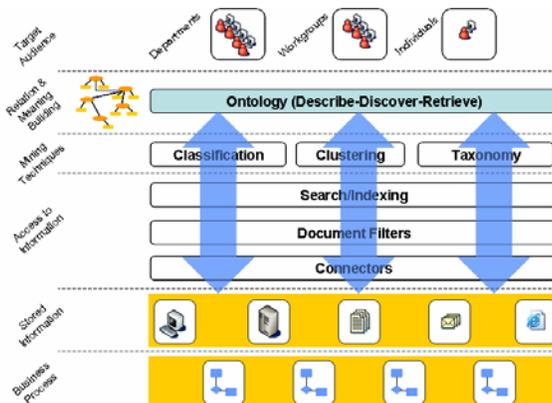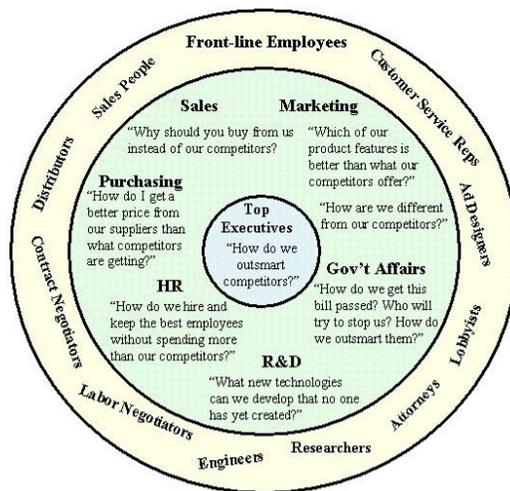
In today's Internet economy, there is no shortage of up-to-date information available to the CAI Analyst, from a wide range of online sources. However, information alone is not intelligence. The challenge for the CAI professional is is to rapidly locate all the information that is relevant, consolidate the results in a single view and then manipulate and analyze the data to produce actionable intelligence.

The primary purpose of Competitive Affairs/Intelligence is to serve the day-to-day information needs of many departments throughout an organization. It is more focused than environmental scanning which involves reviewing the overall external picture. It includes but goes beyond the future-focused analysis of the competitive environment by integrating internal and external information from various sources into one picture for better decision taking support.

OntosCAI will help you to answer the following questions:

↗ What decisions are being made regularly that require an understanding of one or more aspects of the organization's competitive environment?

↗ What specific information could be used to increase the accuracy and effectiveness of those tactical or strategic decisions?

↗ Who inside the organization already has information about one or more pieces of the competitive puzzle? (in files, computers, research, people's heads, etc.)

↗ What does this mean for the growth of new products and services produced by vendors who target the "Business to Business" market?

The OntosCAI assists CAI professionals in locating, retrieving and consolidating online information from disparate sources. The analyst is presented with one view of all the pertinent information and any relationships within the data are visually depicted, enabling the analyst to rapidly develop an understanding of where to focus further analysis. Due to the scalable function of gathering text and data through mining those information can be structured and unstructured.
Such information and analyses about the competitive environment is needed not only for CEOs and top executives, but for other areas of an organization as well. Survey findings specifically call out the importance of support for Sales and Marketing, for example. Companies engage in activities every day that require some level of understanding of their external, competitive environment:

↗ **Executive Leadership** uses it for corporate planning and strategy

↗ **Marketing** uses it for identifying target markets and differentiation

↗ **Sales** uses it to explain 'why I should buy from you instead of your competitor'

↗ **Finance & Legal** use it for due diligence in mergers, alliances and acquisitions

↗ **Purchasing & Contract Management** uses it for supplier and other contracting

↗ **Human Resources** uses it for hiring and retaining the good employees

↗ Public Affairs, Investor Relations, Public Relations, Community Relations, Government Affairs use it to understand community allies and adversaries

- **Research & Development** uses it to identify trends inside & outside the industry

- Accurately identify comparable companies

- Identify and segment companies by industry groups, size or other attributes

OntosCAI will help to collect a large amount of ad hoc, unconnected information on a company level in order to support the collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Analyze Your Competitive Landscape
"I want to understand who competes in my space, and where there's overlap and we have several different products."
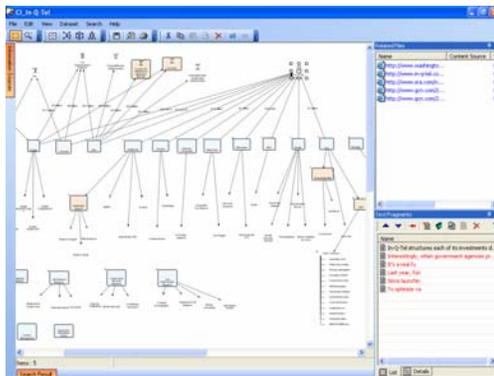
The OntosCAI enables you to:

- Map your competitive landscape – identify who your competitors are, establish their corporate structure, key people, look at their products and patent portfolios and store relevant news articles about them – drawing from business information from valuable online sources

- Unravel complicated corporate affiliations and quickly get company background, payment details, executive biographies and public filings

- Track executives across organizations

Monitor Competitor Activity

"I want to know what news coverage my competitors are getting and how that affects the market dynamic."

The OntosCAI enables you to:

- Monitor events and news to uncover business opportunities or threats

- Explore strategic partnership opportunities and their implications

- Assess the impact of new entrants on the competitive landscape

Understand Your Competitors Product Strategy

" I want to understand my key competitors' product roadmap."

The OntosCAI enables you to:

- Monitor competitors for patent activity

- Look at new technology in the pipeline and understand its potential impact on your business, understand a rival's core competencies in R&D

Understand the Implications of Market Activity

" I want to understand how a recent acquisition by one of my competitors will affect my competitive landscape."

The OntosCAI enables you to:

- Look at what industry commentators are saying about your space

- See how a merger or acquisition changes the whole market dynamic

Patent Research

Patent citation analysis is regarded as one of the most effective ways of identifying potential patent licensing opportunities. Citations are created by the examining officer inside a patent office who lists those patents that come close to the patent application and either support or invalidate it. Patent citations are significant, therefore, because they indicate an important invention in a particular technology area to which subsequent inventions refer. They can also indicate that a number of firms, often competitors, are operative in a field that is very close to the patented invention.

↗ Visually map and understand complex patent portfolios to identify valuable patents and relationships between organizations and investors

↗ Identify potential licensees and licensors, to establish strategic alliances or meet tactical requirements

Know your Customer

Legislation such us the US Patriot Act, Sarbanes Oxley and Basel II require organizations to ensure that potential or existing customers meet criteria laid out in the legislation in relation to both risk management and anti-terrorism. OntosCAI allows you to gather all available information in order to draw the "big picture". If this analysis is not enough you can extend the analysis with Ontos Enterprise Edition for Law Enforcement.

Putting it together

Most of the information about external forces such as competitors, major customers, suppliers, regulators, influential groups, public opinion, industry trends, etc. comes from public sources in the 'outside' world. Ideally, a company also draws from its own existing internal information systems that contain elements which, when added to information from external sources, become extremely useful for Competitive Affairs / Intelligence. For example:

↗ Customer comments regarding competitors logged into a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system

↗ Win-loss statistics regarding sales bids against competitors as reflected in Sales Force Automation (SFA) software

↗ Pricing histories of key suppliers as documented by a Supply Chain Management (SCM) system

↗ Other helpful documents located by a Knowledge Management (KM) system somewhere in the depths of the company's computer files, and so on

↗ Discover Cross-Selling / Up-Selling Opportunitites

↗ Analyze/Discover Innovations and Trends

OntosMiner™- Text Extraction

OntosMiner™ is an innovative solution extracting information from unstructured text by applying Ontology in order to extract the relevant objects and their relation. The technology is based on Natural Language Processing (NLP) and semantic Networks. By using OntosMiner™ within OntosCAI the user can crawl through large amounts of text and generating automatically new cognitive maps in order to visualize objects and relations.
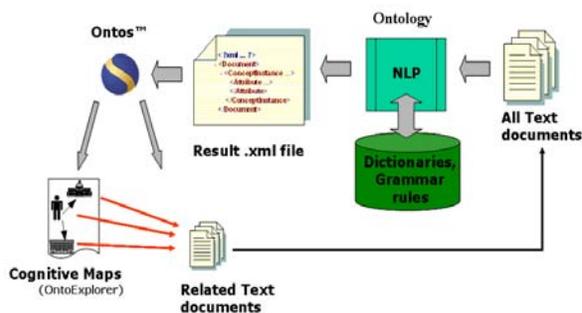
Ontos Enterprise Edition - Corporate Version

Ontos Enterprise Edition (Ontos EE) allows an additional solving of analytical problems. Information from heterogeneous sources (DB, ERP, CRM etc.) can be retrieved and analysed. The principal is based on objects and relations and the user can track down required objects or object groups by their types, keywords or parameter values. Applying filtering and content/fuzzy search mechanism creates more flexibility for the analysis. Different visualization techniques for presenting retrieved information is available. The results can be presented in tables, graphs, diagrams and other kinds of informative imagery in order to make the qualitative/quantitative analysis of data more effective.
By using Ontos EE the OntosCAI can be extended and the company/user can create competitive analysis for:

↗ Revenue analysis (by product, customer etc.)

↗ Win/Loss Analysis

↗ Call statistics

OntosCAI - Competitive Affairs/Intelligence is the logical next step in Productivity

In Summary, Competitive Affairs makes innate business sense. People intuitively 'get' the fact that they need to understand their own competitive environment to succeed on the job, AND most are aware of the large amount of information they already own which goes underutilized or unused entirely. Being able to combine competitive environment information from a variety of sources already inside an organization, then put it to actual use for many departments, is akin to 'found money.' Given reductions in duplicated efforts, elimination of redundant information purchases, better use of information assets that are already owned by an organization, more robust understanding of important competitive forces, and the ability to quickly assess the situation to make more effective decisions -- the ROI or return on investment from deliberately managing Competitive Affairs can be impressive. The bottom line is clear: Increase Marketing effectiveness. Increase Sales revenue while reducing cost of sales. Ensure a 'first to market' position for new technologies. Prevent theft of the company's intellectual property. Focus time and resources on strategies that take advantage of real opportunities in the market. Capture the full value of the company's information assets (use and reuse it in many forms to its fullest). Create a history of „knowledge" in the company about the competitive environment that won't disappear if one or more key employees leave the company.

Is your company ready for Ontology?

Our knowledge is spread across different system and employess...	*Ontology is the foundation to develop a common understanding. The semantic network of knowledge brings meaning to the content and everybody has access to the relevant information.*
We have difficulties to solve problems across business processes due to the missing relations and dependencies...	*With the support of Ontology we bring meaning to complex data/information. Content is linked indepentend of the source and format. Relations are visibal.*
Communication across the value chain is absorbing too much time. Integrating our business partners (supplier, customer) is too complex...	*Ontology helps to link distributed Information-Systems, discovers joint values and brings a meaning to all partners across the value chain.*
We can't convered Public Information from Internet Sources to our advantage...	*With a clear Ontology definition we can crawl, analyse, retrieve and discover sveral public sources (Internet) for relevant information. Thereby we gain knowledge about our competition, Analysts-News and other relevant sources in order to build a competitive advantage.*