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## **Business Case: Competitive Intelligence Delivers a Wake-up Call to a Technology Provider**

A specialized, vertical technology company that had enjoyed several years of relative market comfort recently opened its eyes to:

--the potential competitive threat posed by a company that was collaborating with its parent,

--the emergence of "technology integrators" that could harness competitive solutions from disparate providers around the globe

--the R&D strategy of one of its parent's major global competitors, which had begun to focus on alternative solutions that could cause a paradigm shift in the business.

How did the company learn of these developments? By engaging the Thunderbird Learning Consulting Network to teach a small team of mid-level managers how to utilize business and competitive intelligence skills.

### **Peering Outside After Years of Market Comfort**

The company, the internal provider of specialized technology to its parent's business units, had recently completed its first truly rigorous strategic planning process. It was beginning to see the potential of a much different future: one in which the parent SBU's might invite competition from outside technology providers and in return, allow the company to compete for business outside the parent.

Either prospect underscored the importance of understanding the external environment—especially other technology providers and the origins of potential breakthrough technologies that might present a competitive threat.

### **Building CI Skills through Applied Learning**

The company initially tasked TLCN to undertake the external analysis, but quickly asked if they, themselves, could be coached through the process of competitive intelligence instead. The company assembled a team of eight managers and technology experts who each dedicated about four hours per week. Working onsite with a TLCN competitive intelligence expert, the company team learned core BI/CI skills sets, applied them to the targeted topic, and presented the findings and key recommendations to a quarterly general management meeting.

### **Improved Eyesight Leads to...**

In addition to gaining a BI/CI mindset, the team learned the following specific skills:

- A methodology to identify, from among many, the external environment challenge with the highest priority for the company
- How to efficiently exploit the web and other secondary source materials for high impact intelligence



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- How to establish and leverage a network of primary sources—both inside and outside the company--for intelligence
- A methodology for conducting a gap analysis to pinpoint missing intelligence needs
- Several analytical frameworks for developing further insight from basic intelligence
- A methodology for how to present their findings in a way that would have the maximum impact on a busy, time-challenged audience

### **...Taking Action to Protect Competitive Position**

As a result of the team's successful presentation to general management, the company took several steps:

- First, it decided to consider restricting the technology and processes being shared so openly with the target company that had been collaborating with the client's parent
- Second, it agreed to build a more rigorous process of external analysis into its strategic planning and to continue monitoring the targeted companies
- Third, it decided to add BI/CI training and awareness for employees who have the most contact outside the company to its menu of change management initiatives

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