

# The Intelligence Basis for War-Games

Monique Eddleton

• • • • •

War-gaming can effectively test strategic plans against likely competitor behavior and help develop contingency plans that address future uncertainty. However, without thoughtful preparation based on intelligence best practices, war-gaming can become a garbage-in / garbage-out process.

The development of thorough briefing books will significantly increase the chances that your company's war-gaming efforts will be successful. At the heart of effective war-games is the ability of participants to model the behavior of competitors and other industry players as accurately as possible. Even if you define reasonable expectations, design the war-game properly, include the right participants, and secure effective facilitation and war-game management, your war-game may fall short without thorough research and preparation that is based on intelligence best practices.

At the heart of sound war-game research and planning is the preparation of *briefing books* -- dossiers on the organizations that your war-game will be simulating. Once you've selected the market participants you wish to model -- such as competitors, customers, suppliers, and other industry players -- the next step is to compile the information that will enable war-game participants to "get into character" and represent the likely behaviors and decisions of the target companies.

How can you ensure that war-game participants are adequately prepared?

1. *Determine what you need to know about each industry player, and why.* Most briefing books will give participants insights into the target company's behavior, strategy, and tactics. It is also important to include information on the company's assumptions and blind-spots. Doing

so will provide greater insight into future moves the company may make and will allow participants to understand the competitor on a psychological level.

2. *Source information carefully.* Ensure that information is collected from a variety of sources including publications, human sources, and your own internal experts. In many cases, the most valuable pieces of information come from internal staff, as these individuals interact with the target companies on a regular basis.
3. *Include only one market player per briefing book.* Doing so allows participants to focus exclusively on their assigned company.
4. *Keep the books to a manageable length.* If the books contain too much information, participants will become overwhelmed and less likely to prepare before the war-gaming exercise. The information should be synthesized and assembled in a well organized manner. Key information should be easily accessible for reference by participants during the exercise. Raw data can be stored in appendices.
5. *Encourage participants to read the briefing books before the exercise.* Fully prepared team members make for a much more exciting and effective session. Due to the fast-paced nature of most games, team members will lose valuable time and develop less effective strategies if they are not familiar with their assigned company, and how to quickly access the information they need during the exercise.

**Monique Eddleton**

Monique is the Vice President of Decision Support Services at Outward Insights, a Boston-area strategy and competitive intelligence consulting firm. She can be reached at [meddleton@outwardinsights.com](mailto:meddleton@outwardinsights.com).

© Copyright 2011 Outward Insights