

MAPPING AND ANTICIPATING THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

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➤ *Mapping and Anticipating the Competitive Landscape.*

Alessandro Comai and Joaquin Tena Millan. 2006, EMECOM Ediciones, 145 pages. EUR 23.

Mapping and Anticipating the Competitive Landscape is a different addition to the competitive intelligence literature. Although it is short, it is well written and provides a surprisingly profound look at a spectrum of analytical issues.

ANALYTICAL TOOLS IN THE CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT

The book's self-described mission is to link analytical tools to their users in a corporate environment. In fewer than 150 pages, *Mapping and Anticipating the Competitive Landscape* analyzes the competitive environment, dealing with the almost perplexing variety of models and tools that have been generated over the years.

If that were all the book did, it would still be useful, and I would recommend reading it. But it does much more. It takes apart these varieties of models (e.g., strategic issues management, scanning the environment, and the analysis of stakeholders), and explains how they relate to each other.

CHARTING RELATIONSHIPS

Mapping and Anticipating the Competitive Landscape's basic graphics make it look as if the authors are presenting their information directly to you on a whiteboard. By charting the analytical relationships, the graphics help explain analytical issues and the

management of analysis as well as, or in some cases better than, the text does.

Without these graphics, the book would be too academic. With them, the reader is not overwhelmed by the tightly written summaries of the efforts of those, both consultants and academics, who developed these new, differentiated tools to approach a common problem: How do we understand the forces impacting the business now and in the future, and how do we communicate our understanding of these forces to decision-makers?

Many of the analytical tools, such as value chains, Porter's Five Forces model, and SWOT, are well known to competitive intelligence professionals. But *Mapping and Anticipating the Competitive Landscape* provides an overview and a quick but thorough analysis of what each of these tools does and does not do.

SIDEBAR 1: THE 12 ANALYTICAL MODELS

Stakeholder
Five Forces
STEEP (social, technological, economical, ecological, and political) scenario
SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat)
Six Angles of Competition
Wargames
Value Chain
Decision-makers
Historic
Blind Spots
Internal Analysis (Organization or Competition)
Scenario

CONNECTING ANALYTICAL MODELS

One of the most powerful sections of the book shows the interconnections between and among 12 different analytical models (see sidebar). As the authors put it,

...in order to get the maximum benefit from each model a greater knowledge of the process would be necessary and this is obtained by carrying out a preliminary study....[These] models rely on significant contributions of other [displayed] tools in order to perform, for instance, a scenario analysis or business wargaming. (p.95)

I found this to be an extraordinarily powerful section, allowing an analyst to work toward the more sophisticated tools, such as scenario building, by relying on other less sophisticated tools, such as STEEP (an analysis of the general environment, broken down into five factors: social, technological, economical, ecological, and political), as precursors in development efforts.

Chapter 6 adds a somewhat novel approach to the topic of dealing with data collection. It not only covers the kind of data that different sources can provide, but also analyzes how specific the information is, how accessible the information is, and the degree to which some or all of that information is internet-accessible. The last chapter ties together the entire work, linking analytical tools with the development of a competitive early warning process.

AN OVERALL VIEW

I was pleased to see that the authors

relied on a variety of sources, including publications by SCIP members, as well as their presentations at several of our recent international conferences. My only wish is that Mapping and Anticipating the Competitive Landscape included a brief index. Having once read the book, the reader could then dip back into it for the authors' lucid analyses of particular analytical models.

Lacking an index, I resorted to my now familiar bad habit — I dog-eared pages that I wanted to be able to revisit. A quick count shows 14 pages so marked in a book of 145 pages, a very high percentage for any book.

I highly recommend this book for the working competitive intelligence analyst, as well for those who are learning about competitive intelligence.

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