

2 Executive Perspectives on Global Business Intelligence

Implications on Corporate Management

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Introduction and Rationale

Companies worldwide can benefit from additional literature on the impact of global business intelligence on the management of corporations. In this chapter, the author gathers the views of senior business executives in order to shed light on viable corporate approaches for global business intelligence.

Companies use business intelligence in different ways. Some firms prioritize data gathering and analysis; others ignore it. Multitudes of companies take the middle ground and use business intelligence in a specific business area or during occasions where competitive or market information is critically needed.

The convergence of the internet, computer and mobile phone technologies, software applications, and social media facilitates easy access to millions of global data. The challenge for individuals, companies, and governments is data management. Key issues to consider include: data acquisition and filtration, information reliability, data security, data analysis, efficiency in information processing, and workforce competence and preparedness, among others. With the global nature of data and information, the level of complexity expands.

This scenario offers both challenges and opportunities for companies. Managing, analyzing, and strategizing through a large pool of information can be a barrier for many firms. Some firms do not have the talent or the resources to be effective in business intelligence. While countless barriers exist, so do opportunities. Companies that do an excellent job in business intelligence can outsmart their competitors, delight their customers, and quickly respond to market changes.

In this chapter, the author gathers the views of three corporate leaders in order to gain clarity on the notion of global business intelligence, understand how it is applied in contemporary corporate management, and identify viable business practices. The author would like to thank Millikin University students Blake Davis and Rob Leonard for their assistance in the interview process.

Executive Interviews

The author developed a 12-item questionnaire for senior corporate executives to answer. The interviews were conducted in the period from May to September 2016. Highlights of the executive interviews are presented below.

John N. Lechman President, Nova Solutions Inc.

Interview

1. What is global business intelligence in your viewpoint?
Converting data into useful information to make informed business decisions.
2. Is there a need for companies to conduct business intelligence on a global level? Why or why not?
Yes, there is a need. The internet and technology have provided access to global markets unlike any time in history. Any business transaction whether domestic or global should be executed utilizing the best available information.
3. What do you think are barriers to the effective practice of global business intelligence?
The resources, know how, and capability to collect and analyze the appropriate information. This is especially true for small business.
4. Where do opportunities in the practice of global business intelligence exist?
It appears that most companies offering global business intelligence services are large public accounting firms specializing in this area of consulting. At times, this concerns career opportunities. From a commerce perspective whether the opportunity is outsourcing goods and/or services or exporting the same, the transaction should be conducted utilizing the best available information.
5. What would be an example of a company that did their global business intelligence right? Why so?
Apple! They have the resources to analyze emerging global opportunities whether it's the successful utilization of outsourcing or penetrating emerging and existing markets. They must be taking full advantage of the information they are converting into intelligence.
6. What attributes should companies possess in order to be effective in the practice of global business intelligence?
Whether the organization is utilizing business intelligence software to analyze the data or they are outsourcing on a consulting basis, the key attribute is understanding the need of good information.

7. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Planning?
Any good plan requires forecasting. A forecast requires a clear understanding of the market, external and internal capability, distribution channels, lead times, shipping, and the economic environment.
8. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Leading?
A good leader should utilize the best information available to make the decision necessary to move their vision in the direction their cause requires.
9. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Organizing?
Assuming organizing is referring to organizational development, the purpose of any organization is to fulfill the vision and purpose of the company. Having access to the best information is required to build an organization and even more critical to be sure it is efficient and profitable while achieving the vision and purpose.
10. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Controlling?
A clearer understanding of the business cultures and the associated risks in the markets in which you are doing business.
11. What resources do you think companies need to excel in global business intelligence?
The best alternative would be to professionally outsource the capability until the organization has a clear understanding of the benefit. Then resource allocation can be planned accordingly.
12. What do you think is the future of global business intelligence?
Organizing and analyzing information to best serve the cause of any organization is the future. Our economy has become global and long-term stability and success will hinge on who wins the information assembled from the raw data.

William A. Rendina
Chief Executive Officer, Valor Systems, Inc.

Interview

1. What is global business intelligence in your viewpoint?
Gathering and analyzing data for which a company can determine where strategic attention should be focused. Global intelligence is based on a company's product and service offerings, as well as their competitor's position in a particular market. For generations, companies considered demographics and consumer behavior for building their marketing plans. Today, demographics extend worldwide for many products.

2. Is there a need for companies to conduct business intelligence in a global level? Why or why not?

I believe global business intelligence is paramount in developing strategic long-term plans for business. The internet has made our world even smaller, creating a need for understanding global consumer behavior, strategic growth, competition, procurement laws, and in our company's area of expertise, security.

3. What do you think are barriers to the effective practice of global business intelligence?

Various countries have different procurement laws, and it's important to understand the practice prior to fully engaging in a particular region around the world. For example, where a US-based company may have a US-based customer who has facilities in China, it is not trivial to add on the China location on the existing US contract. The US-based solution provider must utilize a China agent or resource to procure and support the product under different Terms and Conditions. This practice may hinder the flow and control of intelligence back to the US.

4. Where do opportunities in the practice of global business intelligence exist?

Where many companies depend on global business intelligence for developing marketing plans, delivery logistics, and financial projections, Valor Systems' solutions generates global business intelligence and helps companies protect their brand, assets, and people. Valor Incident Management System, (Valor IMS) is a software solution that helps companies manage security incidents around the world. Having global business/security intelligence helps companies understand physical security vulnerabilities and allows them to prepare for incidents in a proactive manner. If a customer has a Global Security Operations Center (GSOC) in any given country, it may manage physical security incidents at multiple facilities across numerous countries. The GSOC can gather intelligence from all of the countries and determine where and when additional security resources are needed. Gathering global security intelligence allows a company to refine their security processes throughout various regions. A process may include response plans, Standard Operating Procedures, premise data, internal and external resources, and mass notification, all reducing on-scene arrival time with more information to minimize a would-be disaster. Global security intelligence illustrates incident trends at any level. Today's offender may have been yesterday's suspect. In summary, global business/security intelligence is the kernel for developing a company road map. Whether analyzing data for marketing purposes or security purposes, both have a direct effect on the future of the brand, assets, and people of that company.

5. What would be an example of a company that did their global business intelligence right? Why so?

Steve Jobs once said the iPhone® should maintain a smaller screen size, and there would be no stylus. Some now say Steve was incorrect to

maintain that mind-set. In reality, Steve was spot on for the era of which he was designing and developing. As technology and applications continued to evolve, the need for a larger screen became a demand that consumers lined up to buy. Apple certainly relied on global consumer-related business intelligence to develop their road map for larger iPhones and larger, yet lighter iPads® with a "great" stylus. It doesn't end there. With access to global business intelligence, Apple realized the entire world was not looking for a larger iPhone. In recent weeks, Apple announced a new iPhone with a form factor of their older, smaller-version iPhone. While most of the global market was waiting in line for a larger form factor, the Chinese consumer market wanted something smaller. These decisions are not made on a whim. They are decisions that are based on global business intelligence, and having the wherewithal to respond to consumer demands.

6. What attributes should companies possess in order to be effective in the practice of global business intelligence?
A personal tag line I created for our company: We listen. We learn. We deliver. These attributes have helped our company understand customer needs from a marketing perspective, as well as a solution perspective. Companies must have access to global business intelligence, but they must also be immersed within their customer's environment to truly learn and deliver solutions that create a great user experience. It's not just about analytical numbers.
7. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Planning?
In order to deliver, our company must produce realistic, forward-thinking product road maps.
8. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Leading?
Our company must work as a team to execute on a vision to take solutions to the next level. There must be a leader who takes charge, and makes everyone on the team believe in this product road map as much as the leader. A leader must be capable of making adjustments along the way, while keeping the vision clear to all involved.
9. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Organizing?
While the development of the product road map is in full motion, there must be organization among the entire team. Goals and objectives must be met along the way. Objectives may need to be altered along the way to stay on track of the ever-changing global business intelligence due to global economy, global behavior, and other competitive concerns.
10. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Controlling?
As new product road maps are being developed, new ideas, functions, internal and external ideas based on global business intelligence will surely get in the mix. New ideas and global business intelligence may

certainly force a company to reassess the goals and objectives along the way, but it is crucial to maintain control and avoid "scope creep," delaying the delivery date of a new product launch.

11. What resources do you think companies need to excel in global business intelligence?

Companies need specialized, well-rounded team members who share in the company vision. Global business intelligence is gathering and analyzing data, but it is much more than statistical numbers and graphs. What are these numbers telling us? How do we respond to this intelligence, and better yet, how do we leap ahead of our competitors based on the global business intelligence? A company needs to be agile, and be capable of adapting within a day's notice. A company cannot control a global economy based on world events, but a company can control how it responds to a global economy and world events.

12. What do you think is the future of global business intelligence?

Global business intelligence is far more advanced and available than it was 20 years ago. To learn about certain companies and markets, one method was to conduct research through Moody's Manual of Industrial and Miscellaneous Securities or Standard and Poor's, two-inch hard-bound books. Perhaps somewhat relevant, but quickly outdated. Today, the internet offers tremendous, virtually real-time data through various sources. Global business intelligence may be as simple as reviewing Google Analytics for your company's specific website hits, Google Scholar, and even tools with analytics for competitors' website activity. Online press releases notify us of current events within our competitive landscape. Online services are available to learn who is going out for bid in the next year. Social media such as LinkedIn offers industry specific links and related news, trends, and open conversation among strangers who are connected to industry groups. Much like the example cited earlier regarding security intelligence, companies may utilize internal applications to monitor company-specific data and trends through dashboards and reporting utilities. Internal applications may have the capability to create ad hoc queries and filters to gain a snapshot of global business intelligence to help define resources needed in a particular region of the globe, or to develop product road maps.

The future of global business intelligence will continue to evolve as more disparate systems integrate. Linear data is limited in value, and must be enriched through association and relationship of integral data elements from multiple sources.

A company needs to know how to take advantage of the available tools, decipher the information, and execute a plan based on global business intelligence.

(Reference note: Apple, iPhone, and iPad are registered trademarks of Apple, Inc. The cited example of Apple-related products is based on the interviewee's perspective. Google Analytics and Google Scholar are registered trademarks of Google, Inc.)

Marty Schoenthaler

Chief Executive Officer, Tate Boys Tire & Service

1. What is global business intelligence in your viewpoint?
It is the mining of global data to improve business decision-making.
2. Is there a need for companies to conduct business intelligence in a global level? Why or why not?
Yes. If a company is a global company, then by definition a company should use BI globally. It has proven to be a very effective means of supporting improved and accelerated decision-making.
3. What do you think are barriers to the effective practice of global business intelligence?
Clearly you have to have the data to practice BI. So, if you don't have access to the data, you're toast. Once you have the data, you must have the knowledge/skill to work with it to enable effective BI to take place. These skills are often hard to come by since so many companies are driving accelerated BI plans. Finally, you have to have the right tools to mine your data effectively as well.
4. Where do opportunities in the practice of global business intelligence exist?
In my mind it's primarily in areas where having accurate or precise data can help drive more efficient or effective decisions along with allowing business leaders to do more analyzing and "what-iffing" their business lines.
5. What would be an example of a company that did their global business intelligence right? Why so?
Wal-Mart. From the beginning, they have done a great job of capturing the appropriate data at the point-of-sale, then turning around and using it to drive and steer their future decisions. They have been doing this since before BI was in vogue.
6. What attributes should companies possess in order to be effective in the practice of global business intelligence?
First of all they must have curiosity—wanting to know what is different and what decisions could be made differently. They also must have courage in order to do things differently, once their data tells them so.
7. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Planning?
It needs to become a key function that is driven into all levels of global planning.
8. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Leading?
It will undoubtedly cause changes to how things are looked at, run, etc. so business managers must be willing to lead change, otherwise BI will become irrelevant.

9. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Organizing?
BI can help organize functions more effectively by showing where there are logical connections, etc.
10. What are the implications of global business intelligence in the management function of Controlling?
Accelerated closing of books monthly/quarterly/annually as well as providing improved analysis of key business problems.
11. What resources do you think companies need to excel in global business intelligence?
People who have curiosity and people who can know where the data is and bring it to life.
12. What do you think is the future of global business intelligence?
It will quickly no longer become a function that is in vogue; it will become a required function for all companies and departments. Just like accounting, HR, etc.

Findings and Conclusions

The interview findings highlight important organizational standpoints and approaches. Noteworthy findings include:

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Perspectives</i>
Perspective	Data conversion for informed decisions; gathering and analyzing data to determine strategic direction; mining global data to improve decision-making
Rationale	Utilize best available information; essential for long-term planning; improve and accelerate decision-making
Barriers	Resources and know-how; capability to collect and analyze information; reliable information; right data and accessibility; knowledge, skills, right tools
Opportunities	Leverage best available information; protection of brand, assets, people; security, resource optimization, timely action; strategy formulation; effective decisions through accurate and precise data; enhanced analysis
Success stories	Apple (conversion of information to intelligence, high response to consumer demand); Wal-Mart (data capturing that drive business decisions)
Key attributes	Understanding the need for good information; listening to customers and understanding their needs; focusing on solutions; curiosity; courage to do things differently

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Perspectives</i>
Planning	Forecast alongside thorough market understanding; realistic, forward-thinking product road map; use as key function with a global approach
Leading	Utilize best information to make informed decisions; teamwork and collaboration; adaptation and adjustment; lead change and change perspectives
Organizing	Organize for efficiency and profitability; vision alignment; meet goals and objectives; change course as needed; global perspective and behavior; establish logical connections
Controlling	Clear cultural understanding and effective risk assessment; reassess goals and objectives; accelerate tasks and enhance analysis
Resources needed	Allocate appropriate resources; outsource to professionals and experts; specialized team members and consultants; skilled and curious team
Future trends	Organizing and analysis of information is the new competitive battlefield; winners extract the best information from raw data; growing analytical conveniences; importance of social media; innovative internal applications; continuous evolution; emergence of new data gathering and analytical tools; required function used in all companies

The findings suggest that corporations would be well served by pursuing a five-point strategy:

Acquisition and Application—organizations need to efficiently gather and analyze global business information. Acquisition of data is one thing, and how it is processed in a sensible and useful manner is another. Acquisition and application need to be planned in tandem.

Technological Assimilation—investing in technologies covers only one side of the equation. Effective global business intelligence entails matching up-to-date and relevant technologies with the appropriate organizational structure and framework. Organizations need to consider forming Geopolitical Strategy Teams, appointing a Geopolitical Strategy Officer, hiring consultants, or both to assist in geopolitically sensitive projects and endeavors.

Resource Preparation—corporations need to be prepared to develop their people and invest in appropriate technologies to get global intelligence done right. Effective intelligence is a product of combined access to talent and resources. It might make sense for companies to create Global Business Intelligence Teams, appoint a Global Business Intelligence Officer, or hire experts and consultants to move the agenda forward.

Rapid Intelligence—business intelligence has an expiration date. Great intelligence delivered after the time when it was needed is useless.

Acquiring, processing, and acting on gathered information in a timely manner is critical.

Strategic Integration—business intelligence must not be perceived as simply one facet of business. It has to be thought of holistically and integrated into the fabric of the organization. It needs to be ingrained in the culture and woven into the company's strategic plan.

Global business poses countless risks and challenges. However, companies out there are succeeding through effective global business intelligence and well-executed management functions of planning, leading, organizing, and controlling.