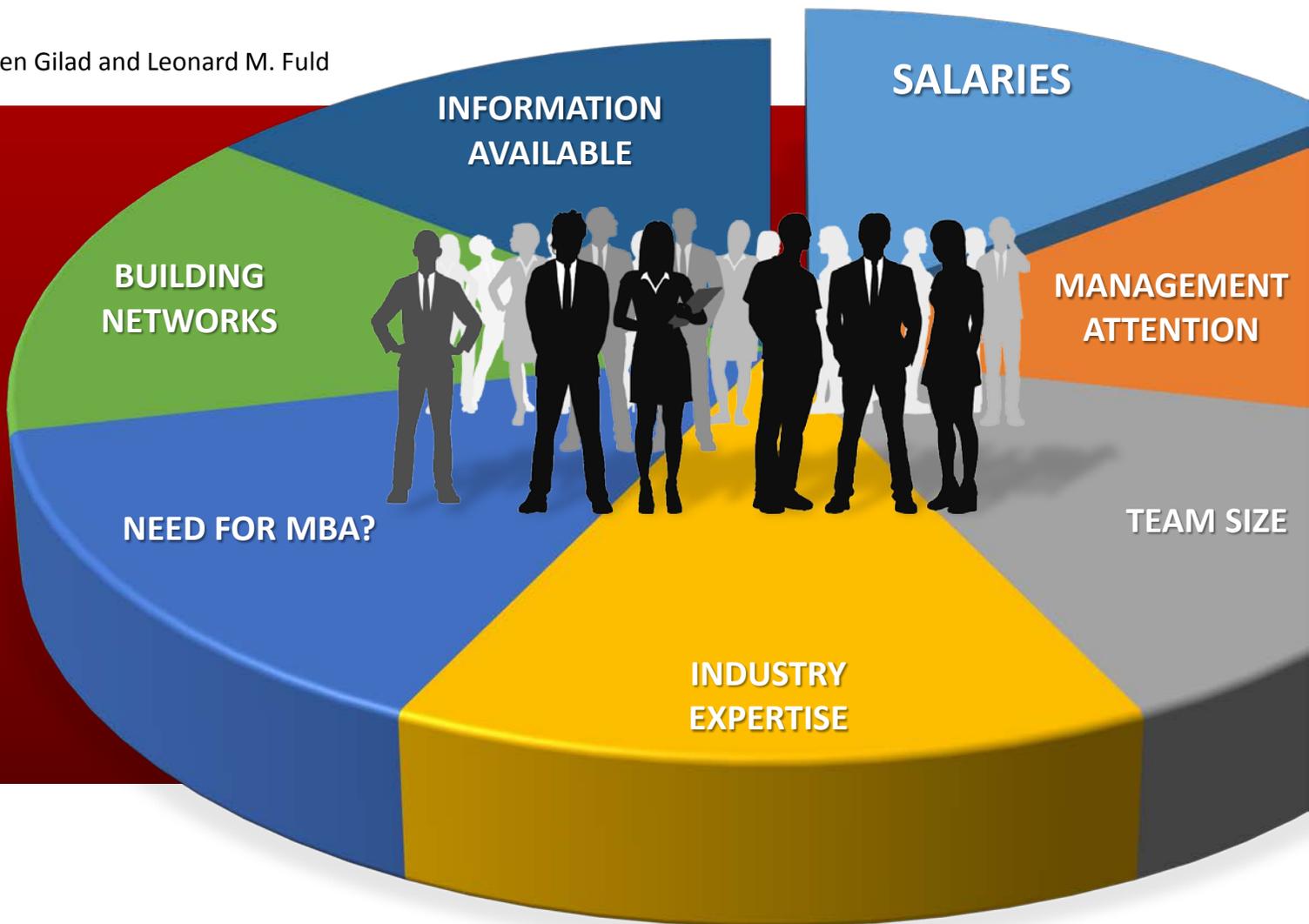


# MY WHOLE CI LIFE

## An ACI 2015 Alumni Survey

### Report and Analysis

Dr. Ben Gilad and Leonard M. Fuld



FGH  
**ACADEMY OF  
COMPETITIVE  
INTELLIGENCE**

Educators in CI for over 30 Years

This survey and report will serve as a companion piece to the Academy of Competitive Intelligence 2013 survey (Who Are the Most Successful CI Professionals?) The 2013 survey profiled the factors that affect successful CI careers. Its secondary objective was to assess the contribution of CIP™ certification to that career. Among the findings in the 2013 report were:

- There is a Superstar group whose members were promoted three or more times that in part was the result of a high level of training and professional education. Nearly one-half (44%) had a Masters in CI (CIP™- II Certification)
- CI skills are transferrable to other jobs
- Healthcare was the industry that demonstrated the highest number of promotions among respondents (64%), followed by Aerospace (57%)

**The 2015 study** surveyed this same population of ACI alumni. This time we shifted our focus from understanding the value of certification and education to examining this group's entire "CI Life." Our ultimate goal was to collect data from this audience to help frame a more complete picture of the CI professional. We wanted to understand their current job experience and expectation working as a CI professional, as well as the impact their service has on their companies.

The 2015 survey yielded 236 responses. The findings are reported below. In addition, comparative analysis is performed for several variables judged critical in understanding the findings, and when available, statistically significant results are highlighted.

Some results were intriguing. CI practitioners have advanced a great deal from just a few years ago. In particular, they are more involved in strategy, early warning and even executive decision making. The most intriguing of findings, though, involved a few simple steps which can make CI more impactful and which we believe should be pursued by everyone in this field. We recommend you present these findings to your management.

## CI is Global

As the leading global training institute in competitive intelligence and strategic risk management and the ones who created the standard training curriculum in the field back in 1999, we have taken upon ourselves the role of not only providing managers with the necessary skills of CI, but following and shaping their careers for more than a decade.

We've watched our graduates move up and around in their companies, and we heard from them about their successes as well as their struggles. One of the questions we've been asked over the years is how CI and its practices and career path differ globally.

Since we have alumni from 58 countries we have been in an excellent position to answer this question. In this latest endeavor, a global survey we dubbed "MY WHOLE CI LIFE", we deliberately dug deeper into all aspects of the professional life of our alumni from around the world.

We hope you enjoy this report. Most important, we hope we have provoked you to examine the real life of a CI professional and to encourage others to enter into this intriguing and challenging career.

Dr. Ben Gilad, President

Leonard M. Fuld, Chairman

## Report Highlights

- Salaries in competitive intelligence are rising, particularly for more senior level positions
- Competitive intelligence professionals have found management's ear with a large percentage no more than one or two reporting levels below the company's senior executives
- Small CI teams dominate. Bigger doesn't mean better
- Those with a great deal of CI experience have ambitious career goals within strategy or senior management
- PhDs or non-MBAs in a CI role are as likely to report to senior management as a CI professional with an MBA
- Building both internal and industry networks is a CI force multiplier
- Full-time CI professionals believe their organization has more either externally- or internally produced information than it needs to make a good decision

Highly-salaried CI professionals as well as those with deep industry expertise coming into the job are more likely to run war games, be involved in resulting decisions, and engage with management as part of this process than more junior or less experienced CI professionals. That is an encouraging finding that suggests as the CI professional accumulates experience, his or her influence rises.

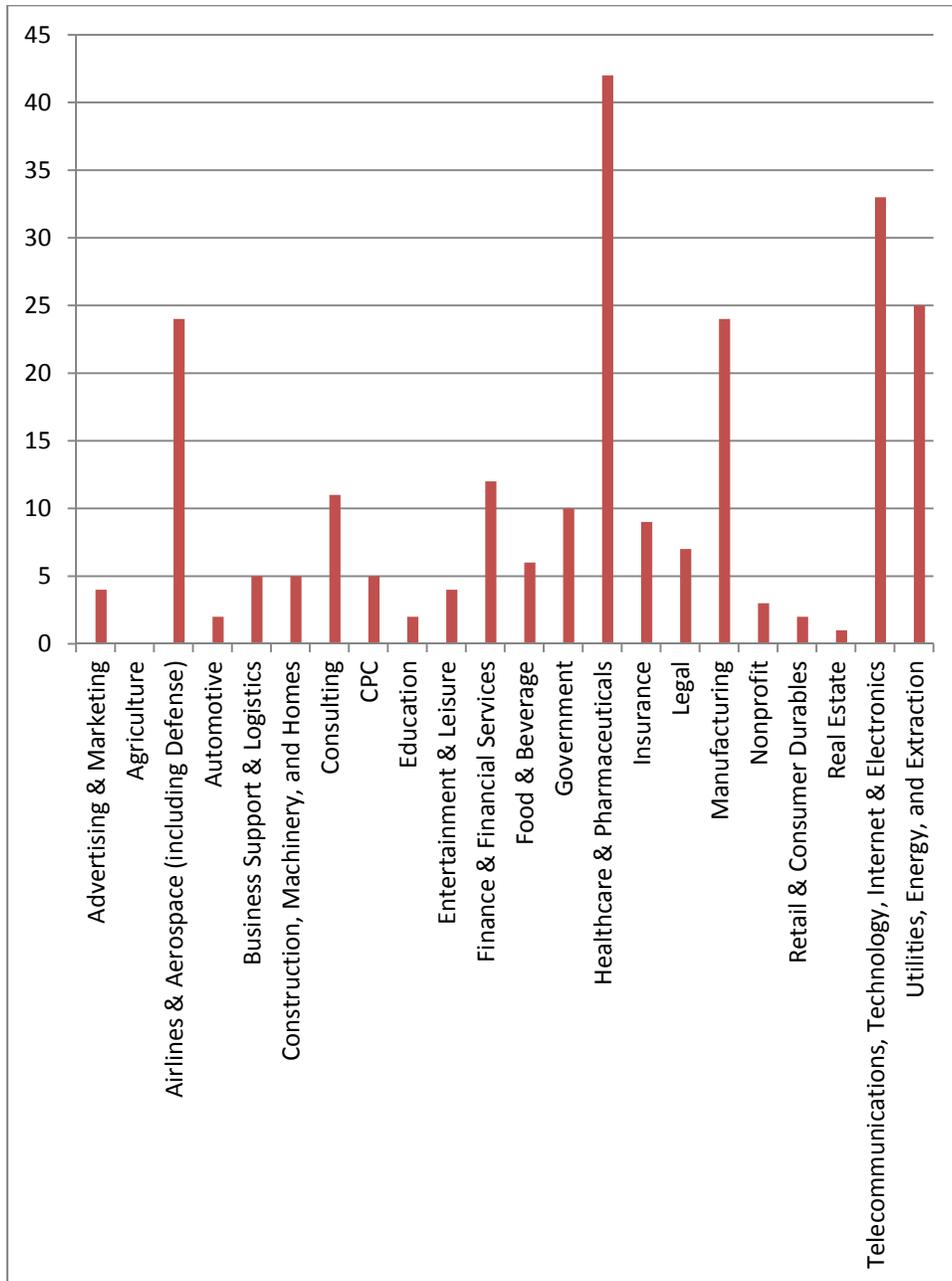
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## Demographics

1. This survey captured mostly “new blood”: 70% were certified after 2012. In our 2013 survey, 56% of respondents were certified before 2012.
2. The dominant industries remained the same, though: healthcare/pharma, telecom/tech, energy, aerospace/defense and manufacturing. Post 2012, however, we experienced an influx of managers from the large consulting firms who seem to have wised up to the value of CI, plus several independent consultants who figured certification is a way to raise credibility with clients (they are right. Why would anyone hire a CI consultant who is not even certified in the basic techniques?). Thus, attendance from consultants tripled. New industries also popped up: legal tripled, and real estate and leisure/entertainment made an appearance.

Chart 1: Where is your industrial home?



## Encouraging Developments

Even though many companies outsource their information needs, ACI alumni are doing better than ever. Despite the raft of mega-mergers and heated industry consolidation across the industrial spectrum forcing layoffs and career stagnation for many, the status and compensation for those working in competitive intelligence appear to be improving.

- **Salary is moving up!**

The over \$200K category *doubled* from the last survey while 44% of the respondents earned more than 125K and 66% earned more than 100K compared with 36% and 55% respectively for 2013. This is a promising upturn and good news indeed for those just entering the CI job market wondering what future opportunities lie ahead.

Table 1: Salary/Income Range – 2015 Survey

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Over 200K a year	11.2%	20
Between 125-199K a year	33.1%	59
Between 100-124K a year	21.9%	39
Between 80-99K a year	12.9%	23
Between 60-79K a year	10.7%	19
Between 50-59K a year	3.4%	6
Below 50K a year	6.7%	12
<b>answered question</b>		<b>178</b>

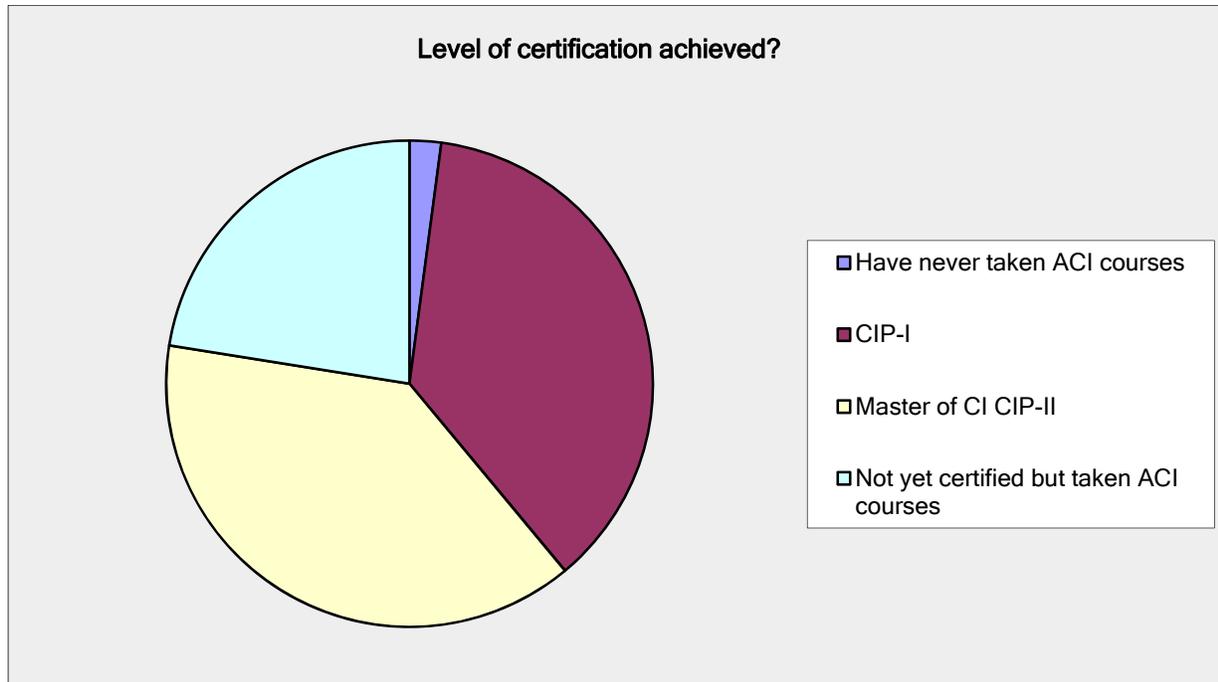
Table 2: Salary/Income Range – 2013 Survey

Salary/Income Range? 2013 Survey data		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Over 200K a year	5.5%	19
Between 125-199K a year	35.9%	123
Between 100-124K a year	18.7%	64
Between 80-99K a year	17.2%	59
Between 60-79K a year	12.0%	41
Between 50-59K a year	5.0%	17
Below 50K a year	5.8%	20
<b>answered question</b>		<b>343</b>

- **CIP-II Catching up to CIP-I**

There is a watershed number of first-level CIP-I graduates hoping to complete the advanced, Master of CIP-II certification. It seems that this trend is accelerating: in this survey, the two groups are matched in numbers (unlike the 2013 survey, where CIP-I dominated). The reasons? Based on the higher salary range reported above and the greater demands made of those receiving salaries of \$200,000 or more, we believe that quite a larger number in this CIP-I “watershed” group are compelled to complete the Masters training over the next few years.

Chart 21: Certification Breakdown



- **Functional location - CI is spreading!**

The biggest news is that CI is becoming a desired skill in many functions.

Table 3: Is CI Your Full Time Job?

Is CI your full time job?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	58.4%	101
No, it's just part of my "day" job	41.6%	72
<b>answered question</b>		<b>173</b>

While reporting to Marketing/Market Research still dominates in Pharma and Tech, other industries are showing signs of maturity; reporting into Strategy and Business Development, which calls for long-term planning and guidance, is now in the lead. More in-depth review shows CI as a *part-timer skill* penetrating finance, IT, R&D, and BD.

- **Reporting distance from the top – surprisingly robust**

As expected the vast majority of respondents work for units or companies with more than 1 billion in sales. One would expect in such large organizations, CI will be far removed from the decision makers, but we were delighted to see that 71% of the respondents were within 3 steps from the top, and a whole 47% within 2 steps! The “I am the top dog” is a bit misleading, in part because it may reflect independent consultants working for themselves. If you eliminate the 14 respondents who might be self-employed, the percent that reports within 1-2 steps of the top rises to over half the respondents. That’s huge!

Table 4: Are you close to the executive suite?

How many levels down from the top executive of your unit are you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	20.2%	36
2	27.0%	48
3	24.7%	44
4	13.5%	24
5 or more	6.7%	12
I am the top dog	7.9%	14

- **Location, location, location - European professionals are at a salary and an operational disadvantage**

Most survey respondents are located in the US. The second largest location is Europe (about 24%). In comparing the responses of our European and American alumni one difference stood out: the Europeans earn significantly less: 26% of the Europeans in the sample earn less than 80K. Only 8% of Americans earn less than \$80K.

Far more Europeans are kept in the dark about the reasons and the context for a particular management request (40%) than their US counterparts (23%). This is a troubling result. How can a CI professional who needs context and meaning in order to process a request deliver a useful set of recommendations if he or she does not understand the reason for the request? Our advice to our European alumni: Use the results of this study to present a revised vision of CI to your direct bosses and in turn to your senior management. You need to apply the lessons from this study to educate about the ability of CI to improve company strategy and decision making. This study should be the standard against which a company should benchmark its current program.

- **Experience – we are more experienced**

The median time working in CI is skewed to the right like a log normal distribution (not a normal bell shape we are all used to). Complete newbies (1-3 years) declining and the median seems to move to 5-6 years. A sizeable group (about 20%) exceeds 10 years of experience.

- **Lone rangers rule! But do larger teams include too much “busy work”?**

The average CI team size remains skewed heavily toward small functions. While the absolute number of large functions (10 or more people) in this survey actually grew compared with the last survey, this is due to our extensive work in recent years with large Aerospace/Defense contractors where we have been training hundreds of people. The mid-size departments (4-9 people) are a disappearing act.

Table 5: What is your intelligence team size?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1-3	61.0%	144
4-9	28.4%	67
10 and above	10.6%	25
<i>answered question</i>		<b>236</b>

When we analyzed the difference between large and small teams in assignments, it appears that larger teams carry out more low-level off-the-shelf activities such as competitor profiles, newsletters and database maintenances than lone ranger or very small CI teams. About 21% of teams with 1-3 members find themselves heavily involved with this type of work, but more than 30% of large CI teams with more than ten members are. This is a telling difference. Since the data doesn't show causality, it may be that large companies that can afford large CI teams can also afford in-house "busy work" and smaller teams are forced by circumstance to focus on more strategic roles.

- **Education level high, but which type of education is truly important?**

The level of education in the field is astonishingly high: 73% of the respondents have graduate degrees compared with 72% in 2013. That reflects the growing gap between those performing information roles (search technicians) and those doing sophisticated competitive intelligence.

Table 6: The highest level of education completed or the highest degree received

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
MBA	34.8%	62
PhD	9.0%	16
Graduate degree but not MBA	29.2%	52
Undergraduate degree in business	9.0%	16
Undergraduate degree not in business	16.3%	29
Other	1.7%	3
<b>answered question</b>		<b>178</b>

We are occasionally asked by our students if an MBA is necessary or advantageous in this field. Our answer is "it depends". Certainly it is not a prerequisite for doing CI, as intelligence is probably the most cross-disciplinary discipline there is.

Compare the following stats. The percentages below represent those that report *one or two-levels* below senior management.

- MBA 49%
- PhD 62.5%
- Grad degree (non-MBA) 44%
- Undergrad business 31%
- Undergrad non-business 48%

A CI professional with a liberal arts degree has nearly the same likelihood to report directly to the senior executive as does the MBA degree holder. PhD's blow both out of the water with close to two-thirds of these grad degree holders reporting to senior executives.

As Table 7 below suggests, the absolute advantage of having an MBA seems only paramount in escaping low paying (research?) roles. But even there, an undergraduate degree is not far behind. In short, if you are thinking of going to graduate school, go for an MBA. But if you hate the thought of seeing calculus again, don't worry about it.

Table 7: Who brings home the “big bucks”? Make sure you appreciate the differences

	Over 100K a year –	Between 50-99K a year –	Below 50K a year –	Total –
(A) MBA	77.78% 49	19.05% 12	3.17% 2 Significantly different than answer C	35.80% 63
(B) PhD	75.00% 12	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	9.09% 16
(C) Graduate degree but not MBA	51.92% 27	34.62% 18	13.46% 7 Significantly different than answer A	29.55% 52
(D) Undergraduate degree in business	62.50% 10	37.50% 6	0.00% 0	9.09% 16
(E) Undergraduate degree not in business	72.41% 21	24.14% 7	3.45% 1	16.48% 29

## Going into the job: expectations vs. reality...and career stepping stones

- **Not well prepared for the new job**

Table 8: Skill self-assessment

Did you believe you had the skills you would need, when you were offered your first CI job?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, I had a lot of experience doing CI informally	7.6%	13
To some extent, but needed refinement	39.2%	67
To some extent but not the critical skills	39.8%	68
No, not at all	13.5%	23
<b>answered question</b>		<b>171</b>

What you see in Table 8 is a recruiting failure: 13% were thrown into the job without any preparation, 40% without having the critical skills. This is good for us at the Academy, but it is symptomatic of companies where CI is yet to take root and be used appropriately.

As we have seen many times over the years, CI professionals often move into other careers within the corporation. Across the board, the vast majority of respondents – whether CI experienced or not – want to move into a position involving strategy or corporate M&A. The very pleasant career-ambition surprise came from respondents with a great deal of CI experience: More than 38% of this group is aiming for a future position in the executive suite. This is a far higher percent than found in the other experience categories. Maybe it’s just seniority or maybe the accumulated experience and perspective on the competition prepares these seasoned analysts for their next step.

- **And the critical skills are...**

Table 9 shows strategy (including scenarios, war game) and analysis dominating by far the need for new skills reported by the respondents as they were asked to do the job. Even more telling, the need to understand the process itself was high on their list. Collection was less of a challenge, and ethics not an issue!! That is both good

and bad. It is good because this group realizes the importance of good, solid analysis and seems to be of high initial integrity; it's bad because this same audience we have discovered in our courses are also poorly trained and sometimes isolated from doing good collection – the raw material for all good analysis.

Table 9: Gaps in skill, self-assessment

<b>Which type of knowledge did you feel you needed the most help with before beginning your first CI role? (mark as many as relevant)</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Collection	29.8%	51
Analytical techniques	66.1%	113
Understanding strategy	45.6%	78
Intelligence process	53.8%	92
War Gaming	40.9%	70
Scenario development	40.4%	69
Communicating to executives	35.7%	61
Ethics and legal status	15.8%	27
<b>answered question</b>		<b>171</b>

- **Dreamers hit by reality...Networkers hit the jackpot!**

People who go into CI jobs with passion and high expectations for major impact, may find out corporate reality is not pretty (surprise!). Compare the two set of findings in Table 10: 38% expected to have *major impact*; only 8% achieved it. On further analysis (not shown below,) of those 8%, Pharma was the worst in terms of dashing prior expectations, and manufacturing was the best in allowing for their realization. CIP-II had a higher presence in this group of impactful professionals (but 8% sample is too small to make any statistical conclusions). Cross tabulating (not shown here) showed those in strategy and BD had the highest impact, and those who mastered their internal and external networks also achieved better results.

Table 10: Comparing expectation of impact and realization of impact

<b>What kind of impact did you originally believe you would have on management decisions?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Significant impact on both tactical and strategic issues	38.6%	86
Some impact, mostly at the tactical level	48.9%	109
Little impact given the culture and location of the function	12.6%	28
<b>answered question</b>		<b>223</b>
<b>As best and as objectively as you can determine, do you believe your input on major management decisions made</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
A major difference	8.1%	17
Some difference enough to improve the decision	47.6%	100
Some difference but not enough	37.6%	79
No difference	6.7%	14
<b>answered question</b>		<b>210</b>

Still, what surprised us was the overall high percent of respondents who say they did have an impact even if it was just to improve decisions (58:42). That's encouraging.

- **Having impact has nothing to do with technology or budget...it's all about ingenuity, the right skills, analytical capability, communication and process**

The group that reported major impact was too small (17 respondents) to run statistical tests on. One can still analyze the results of comparing its answers on several questions to the rest of the sample. Be careful *not* to take it as "representative" of the population of those who achieve impact, but the results for these 17 people are very much *in line with what we teach at the Academy* (i.e., *common sense*).

No one among these respondents claimed that big budget or more technology was the key to their impact on the organization. Clear lines of communication with management, providing cogent analysis, and assuming the career risk of making hard-nosed recommendations that comes with open dialog is what has made them successful.

- **Here is the full list that *correlates* to achieving high impact** based on this group responses compared to the rest of the respondents (no cause and effect can be inferred!).

Read carefully- you might already suspect the truth behind these simple common sense aspects of impactful CI, but this will give you final confirmation:

1. To have a major impact *most* of the info requests must come from the top (VP and above)
  2. Even more important – very frequent feedback must be provided
  3. Requests for CI must be provided with full context
  4. BIG difference between this group and others in requests for recommendations and perspective
  5. Little or no time is spent on distributing mere information
  6. Private networks are used extensively, vendors are used judiciously
  7. Social media has little or limited role in contributing to analysis
  8. Internal reports are made available to the analyst
  9. Management *asks* for big picture views
  10. Analysis is *always* part of the delivery
  11. Reports are mostly or always calling for proactive moves
  12. Sign-off authority is vested in this group more than in others
  13. Strategic early warning is a *formal* part of the job description
  14. This group tend to run war games
  15. Which meeting you are asked to attend makes a difference
  16. Having an MBA definitely helps (other graduate degrees don't!)
  17. Years of experience too, so there is hope
  18. Excluding those who are "the Boss", those who make a difference are twice as likely to be within 2 steps from the top as those who don't
- **Company size matters:** significant lower impact in midsize companies.
  - Of all the variables above, **getting frequent feedback and full context** when CI is requested were *the* major factor in having an impact.
  - **A simple authority to sign off on major decisions makes a significant difference in impact.**

- **Those who are thrown into the job who felt lacking in critical skills (not collection!) were almost twice as likely to end up having no impact on decisions.** In other words, who HR recruits for the job matters. They just don't get it...

None of the above findings should surprise anyone. We've been claiming it at every one of our courses for close to two decades.

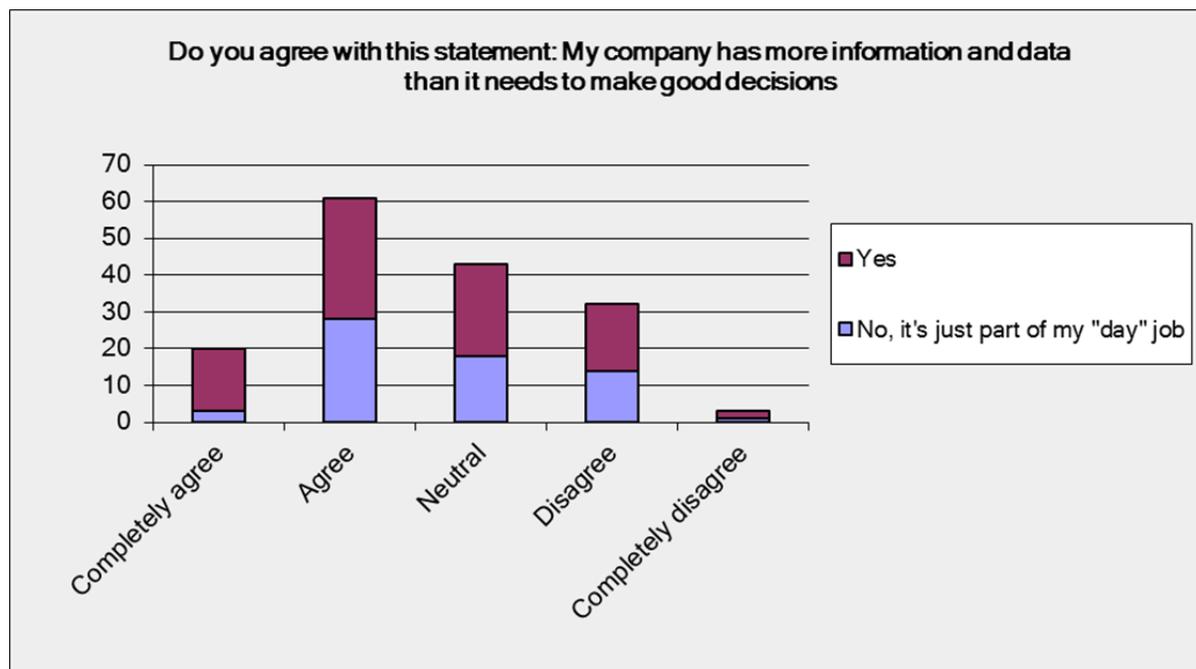
The amazing picture emerging from this study is that small changes in how the process is organized in a company can make a huge difference in affecting companies' performance. Seventeen people may sound like a small sample, but think of it as 17 case studies in using CI correctly and you see the power of these studies. Instead of "benchmarking" superficial factors, use this to change the effect of CI in your company.

- **PT/FT- The only difference...**

The influx of managers from other disciplines to the Academy to acquire CI skills has been on the front of our initiatives for the past 5 years as we believe every manager facing the environment needs CI skills to perform his or her jobs more effectively. We were curious: Is there a difference in responses for those who are dedicated CI managers and those who are using CI on other jobs?

There were some common sense differences between the two groups such as what meeting they attended and was early warning part of their job (not for PT), but the one statistically significant difference we found most amusing was on the "completely agree" answer to this question below (the red portion of the bar are full timers):

Chart 3: Assessment of noise level - full time vs part time CI practitioners



And here is the even more amusing part: apparently doing CI as part of another job can whet one's appetite for the field: *18 PT expressed an interest in making CI their future career!*

- **On the power of war games**

As seen in Table 11, the vast majority of respondents haven't got a chance to run a war game:

Table 11: war games

Have you ever been asked by management to run a war game?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	24.5%	50
No	75.5%	154
<b>answered question</b>		<b>204</b>

That's not surprising. War games are a different level of responsibility and visibility for CI analysts. However, unlike other variables that affect the manager's impact and job satisfaction, war games are to a degree under his or her control. You may not be able to move from Europe to US or change industry to where salaries are higher, but you can pester your boss long enough to allow for a small, quick, efficient war game. We have run a comparative analysis of the answers of those who ran a war game with those who didn't on selected variables we deemed important for job satisfaction, and that showed statistically *significant* differences (at the 95% confidence level). Here are our findings:

Those asked to run war games were:

1. Significantly less clueless on management decisions (Q 35)
2. Had significantly more open management (Q 36)
3. Were significantly more involved in product development stages
4. Had significantly more impact – triple the percent (Q 39)
5. Significantly higher on sign-off authority
6. Three times as likely to have SEW as formal part
7. Are clearly in more competitive industries
8. Are under more pressure to predict (Q47) but less pressure to send “nice to know” data
9. Not surprisingly- are likely to be full time CI'ers in large CI teams
10. *Three times as likely* to be in the top income bracket
11. Had intimate knowledge of the industry before taking the job
12. Took war gaming course (of course)
13. Get most of their requests from top execs (Q 19)
14. Twice as likely to be asked more than 60% of their time for recommendations and perspectives (Q22)
15. Significantly more likely to have private networks and not need to go through channels for info (Q 26)
16. Significantly more involved with financial issues (Q 28) and Big Data Analytics (Q30)
17. Significantly more likely to be invited frequently to present to top executives
18. Twice as likely to be asked for the Bigger Picture (Q 32)
19. Twice as likely to always add their analysis (Q 33)

- **A simple thing of asking about the big picture—**

**Question 32 on the survey asked: “If you do present to top executives, how often are you asked about a big picture perspective?”** We found out this simple “cultural” aspect of the use of CI in companies makes a difference as follows:

1. Makes a significant difference in decision to make CI a career!
2. When management asks for the big picture, it hardly ever acts *contrary* to the CI recommendation!
3. Not surprising, management that asks for the big picture involves their CI in market strategy significantly more than management which doesn't
4. Also gives CI more “sign-off” authority (Q 42)

## Summary and suggestions

The 2015 survey covered a lot of topics relevant to the CI practitioner (whether full - or part time). We will present more in-depth analysis including statistical tests in a series of posts on our website and LinkedIn group. Follow these as they will show shared experience (“What frustrates you most?”), shared impact (“Can you provide an instance of making a difference”), and shared realities (which meetings are important to attend, what tasks reduce effectiveness of the role, and more).

Finally, we believe that as companies look to improve their CI effectiveness over time, you can and should use the findings from this study to advance a better use of CI in your company. Management reacts to “benchmarking”. They will learn from comparing their organization and performance against the larger corporate universe. We believe this report will move your agenda ahead and, most important, improve the performance of CI in your companies. As always we encourage dialogue and welcome discussion. Feel free to contact us. Good luck!

∞

**MISSION** The Fuld-Gilad-Herring Academy of Competitive Intelligence (ACI) is an educational institution dedicated to training managers and companies in better managing risks and anticipating new market opportunities through the use of superior competitive intelligence (which encompasses such terms as competitor intelligence, market intelligence, marketing intelligence, and strategic intelligence). It is the only institution to offer an accredited Competitive Intelligence Professional (CIP™) certificate program – a complete intelligence program – from basics to advanced analysis – developed and led by the leading thinkers and educators in the field – Leonard Fuld, Dr. Ben Gilad and Jan Herring.

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