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# INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY®

LEADERS & SUCCESS

## **IBD'S 10 SECRETS TO SUCCESS LEARN TO ANALYZE DETAILS; Study Your Competition**

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Every company has competition. Leaders stay ahead by gathering data about adversaries in the form of competitive intelligence. Leading firms do everything from track a competitor's product name online to engage in elaborate corporate war games. Gain a strategic advantage by gathering and analyzing information about rivals and yourself.

### Mine Online

Companies that check the Internet's extensive resources need to prioritize their efforts, says Troy Janisch, founder of Icon Interactive Group. "If you're not ultimately using the information that you collect for some purpose, you've wasted the time spent gathering it," Janisch told IBD. Online information sources Janisch uses include:

\*\* Spyfu.com -- to find out how much companies pay to advertise on search engines.

\*\* The Wayback Machine at archive.org -- to see the history of a firm's site in the form of pages the company has replaced or removed.

\*\* Alexa.org -- to track Web site traffic numbers.

"If you only do one thing, set up Google e-mail alerts based on competitor names, their product names and keywords related to your industry," Janisch said. "It's one of the quickest ways to find out if a competitor is up to something new."

**Leonard Fuld's** competitive intelligence firm, **Fuld & Co.**, carries out corporate war games to give clients an edge. "What war games allow you to do is see scenarios in advance. Then as you see changes in the market, you have a strategy in your hip pocket," **Fuld** told IBD.

The first step is a well-defined situation. A pharmaceutical company might play out what will happen when a drug patent expires. By making the situation as real as possible, war games go beyond the typical executive retreat.

"War games wipe out all the political nonsense and really lay bare the options," **Fuld** said. "It's not just brainstorming. You can't defy gravity here. Your ideas have to work."

In 2006, **Fuld** held an exhibition war game, with MIT and Harvard University playing out the digital entertainment battle among Apple, Microsoft, News Corp. and Verizon.

"We learned that News Corp. would dominate because they were learning very fast that content is king," **Fuld** said. "We also saw Apple's introduction of the iTV seven months in advance."

### Counterintelligence

As you look at your competitors, keep in mind they're also looking at you. Rian Wroblewski, a privacy consultant with RedTeamProtection.com, helps companies seal their own information leaks.

"What happens is people publish things online by accident," he told IBD. "People are the weakest link."

Wroblewski says his most startling online discovery was the psychological profile of a CEO.

Sometimes Wroblewski catches the leak before it's been widely viewed. Other times, it's too late. "If there are 650 hits, we can tell that you have a pretty big problem," he said.

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