

Standardization: a major tool for competitive intelligence

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Overview

- In the contemporary business environment the growing number of companies are treating business like an economic war
- Competitive intelligence has become the “latest weapon in the world of economics”
- We argue, standardization is akin to competitive intelligence, and standardization can be better conceptualized as a “weapon” in economic and strategic battles of firms

Standardization and competitive intelligence (CI)

- Intelligence system is a communication facility serving the conduct of business
- CI process consists of series of business activities for identifying, gathering, developing, analyzing, and disseminating publicly available information on direct and indirect competitors in a range of fields: general business activity, business development, strategy and tactics, markets, IPRs...
- Standardization is a process of making a standard. A standard is a document that establishes a uniform specifications, criteria, methods, processes...
- Standardization is akin to CI, as standardizers have to gather information, deliberate of feasible design solutions, and devise strategy for establishing the standard

Standardization as a tool of CI

- Companies deploy CI to win the economic battle:
 - Create or increase their market share
 - Push their technology as the dominant design / IPR
 - Block the technology / IPR of the others
 - Etc.
- Standardization becomes of the tools a firm uses in CI process
- To win a battle, it is **essential** to have:
 - good weapons (tools),
 - well prepared soldiers (people),
 - a good knowledge of the battlefield (the org. landscape),
 - a good knowledge of the enemies strengths and weaknesses
 - a good strategy
- To win a **standards development battle** all the above applies!

Initiating the process

- Choosing an **involvement strategy**:
 - Develop a de-facto standard alone (MS Windows, iPod)
 - Develop an anticipatory standard through SDO or consortia
 - Become an observer
- Get familiar with the **standardization environment**
- Set up a **team of people** to become the “ambassadors” of the firm and its “weapon” at the same time

Entering the field

- How to participate?
- Match the organizational requirements and setup of different available SDO with firms potential to influence through a variety of channels:
 - Lobby, training, secretariat, service to members
- At which level of SDO to act?
 - Country level representation (ISO, IEC)
 - Representation through industry association/workshop
 - Single person representation (IETF)
- In which SDO is the “future”?
 - Joining one SDO may be forcing the others to do the same
- How much money the firm has for supporting the involvement?
 - Membership fee/ participation expenses
vs. influence opportunity

Play by the rules, play with the rules

- Know the voting rights of the different SDOs
 - per-country vote (ISO/IEC)
 - membership fee based vote (ETSI)
 - Representation through professional organization (BSI)
- Gather information
 - Sources: the attendee list, the agenda, the contributions (their number and origin), the new proposals (NPs), etc...
 - Intelligence on: stakeholders interests, trends, commitments, the expected level of consensus, etc.
- Evaluate the information, report, link systematically as a part of firm's CI process

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influencing standards development

- Standardization arena is one of the best places to influence the choice of the future technologies and practices, as long as the standardizers ...
 - Know the process (rules and procedures)
 - Have necessary qualities of lobbyists and diplomats
 - Have understood the linguistic and cultural differences of the stakeholders
 - And are fully aware of the strategy of their company
- The firm can use the “intelligence” from the standardizer to become the master of the game:
 - Delay or block the choices of others, promote own choices, etc.

Optimizing firms strategy

- Through participation in the process, the firm obtains a better sense of the **timing of technology development**:
 - Know when the standard will be published
 - Know when voting at different stages takes place
 - Know when comments are prepared and consolidated
 - Anticipate the reactions of different stakeholders
 - Have a foresight on the future market
- Through participation in the process, standardizer can meet the competitor, to talk and discuss with the competitor:
 - obtain confidential information in legitimate way!

Challenges in setting up firm's CI and standardization units

- Firm's CI and standardizations units should work in close collaboration
- For successful work certain skills and knowledge are needed:
 - Charisma, recognition by peers, among other...
- Difficult to convince the management on the utility of CI or standardization, on the possibility of influencing and foreseeing the market development
- Both CI and standardization are both of the long-term nature – ROI is difficult to prove

CI and standardization in education

- International Cooperation for Education about Standardization (ICES)
- European Academy of Standardization (EURAS)
- EITSI – chair in Standardization & CI

Thank you!

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