What is meant by “organizational intelligence?”

It is both

- a product, ”not only knowledge and learning, but also know-how, knowing how to adapt, how to innovate and how to adopt”
- a process, the means by which information, broadly defined, is acquired, processed, evaluated, stored and used as the basis for action

Intelligence is distinguished from other forms of organizational knowledge by its compelling bias to action

Why should organizational intelligence processes be codified?

- Codification enhances transparency and accountability.
- It enables the identification and emulation of best practice.
- It improves the transmissibility of information and reduces costs.
- It commodifies tacit competencies and makes them appropriable.

But!!

- Not all intelligence processes are susceptible to codification
- Important elements of intelligence practice are organization- and even group-specific
- For these reasons, attempts to improve the performance of intelligence practitioners must address its tacit, contextual elements and complementarities as much as its explicit procedures.

The Intelligence Cycle

- Task Planning
- Data Collection
- Briefing and Reporting
- Evaluating Data for Reliability and Credibility
- Integration, Analysis, Synthesis and Interpretation
The environment of intelligence

- Intelligences processes take place within a culture, or even within multiple cultures
- Intelligences processes also take place within a structure

An Information Perspective...

What is done with information, be it ever so clever, and therefore what results from what is done, is influenced – sometimes even determined – by the nature of the good... [An information perspective] sees information as the primary concern in any issue.

(Macdonald 1998, Information for Innovation, pp.1-2)

Standard descriptions of the intelligence cycle fail in several respects......

Collection of intelligence: assumptions#1

- There is a common context between analyst and client, and between information source and client
- That information richness and local knowledge can be communicated in standard formats without knowing where such information goes, who will find it relevant, who will use it and how it will be applied
- That needs and relevance criteria will not change over time

Collection of intelligence: assumptions#2

- That the emotional state of client and intelligence professional is irrelevant to the search
- That computer data is more reliable and relevant than interpersonal information
- That politics don't influence the collection process

Intelligence analysis

- Although there are many standard techniques for analysing intelligence, in essence Analysis is about producing a persuasive and intellectually rigorous version of events. It is about telling a story in order to generate insight.
- Analysis involves judgement and can be affected by the immediate environment
- Analysts use phrases like “the picture is morphing on you all the time”; “our work is like quantum physics – the mere act of observation changes the object”; “the process is holistic”; “we are post-modernists”.
Dissemination of intelligence

- Has a political dimension. "Good" intelligence can lead to more funding, broader organizational support and increased professional respect and standing.
- The ability of clients to understand and make use of it, or their willingness to ask for assistance to do so, is assumed.

Dissemination of intelligence

- Resistance to intelligence findings may lead to the marginalisation of the analyst's position, particularly if he or she is seen to be empire-building or exceeding the bounds of their professional role.
- Recommendations may also be unwelcome because, once on the record in a soundly reasoned intelligence report, it would be hard to justify why they were ignored.
- Analysts may know more about a particular phenomenon than their client.

Dissemination of intelligence

- Analysts prepare reports knowing what is likely to be acceptable or what their impact is likely to be.
- Intelligence analysts are not the only source of advice available to the client on important matters. Other parties have access to many of the same sources of information as the intelligence unit and may draw from them quite different conclusions. This may lead to an adversarial relationship with the other party which sometimes results in exaggeration or suppression of information.

Dissemination of intelligence

- Many organizations take care to provide an effective physical infrastructure to support the timely delivery of intelligence, but overlook such critical elements as attitudes towards openness or concealment, community values, networks of trust, cultural traditions and organizational authority structures.
- These attitudes and values are elements of the organization's information culture, its orientation towards information.

Dissemination of intelligence

- Information cultures may be open/closed, geared to facts and reason/favoring rumor and intuition, directed to the internal environment/externally focused. In complex organizations, these cultures can co-exist in different pockets or units.
- Dissemination occurs within a particular political and organizational milieu which affects the degree to which intelligence products are acceptable, just as the client's receiver competence will limit the extent to which those products are understood.

Dissemination of intelligence

- Intelligence may be resisted because its conclusions are unwelcome.
- Intelligence has to compete with other information inputs.
- Intelligence can serve purposes other than decision making.
- Intelligence analysts have mind-sets too!
Organizational intelligence is...

- Embedded in people
- Embedded in processes
- Embedded in structures
- Embedded in cultures
- Its tacit elements defy complete codification in training, in manuals or in IT.