

# The Annual Israeli Competitive Intelligence Conference 2018: Human Intelligence in the Digital Era

by Avner Barnea



The annual Israeli CI conference was taken place in Tel Aviv on November 7, 2018, and the workshop was held the day after. In the conference, there were approximately 100 participants while at the workshop, we have seen approximately 70 participants. The title of the conference this year was “Human Intelligence in the Digital Era.” This conference was a joint project of the Israeli CI Forum (FIMAT) and the Israel Export Institute.

When this was conference was planned, a few months ago, it was obvious that in the digital time, it is still very important to keep the capabilities of Human Intelligence and to upgrade them. There was a concern that in the current direction of business priorities and focus, human capabilities are about to lose their pivotal importance and thus will harm the capabilities and the value of the competitive intelligence professionals.

The Keynote, Ken Sawka, the CEO of Fuld + Company spoke about “The Human Factor in Competitive Intelligence.” Ken related to the difficulties of defining intelligence requirements emphasizing that, “A competitive intelligence requirement is an identified gap in understanding of the market which must be filled by Humint in order for business leaders to make a sound decision.” In his view, more information does not yield

better insights. It does not improve predictive accuracy, but it does, however, increase analysts’ confidence levels, sometimes overly so in retrospect; most analysts believe they use more information than they actually do.

Human Intelligence can cut through the mountain of information and sharpen in on what’s most important. Mr. Sawka also explained that human intelligence could dispel long-established perceptions and corporate “sacred cows.” He also talked practically about the advantage of elicitation and hypothesis testing and validation as human capabilities.

At the opening of the conference General (Ret.) Oren Shahor, the former Senior Officer with the Israeli Military Intelligence, spoke about his view based on his experience, as to the high importance of the human factor in intelligence in both gathering and analysis.

There was a panel of two leading Israeli CI Directors: Dr. Michael Neugarten and Giora Keter. While Neugarten was speaking of reducing blindness in business and Competitive Intelligence activities, Keter shared his experience of the added value of the human factor in the intelligence process, mainly in gathering but also in the analysis. Lyron Feldman, the CEO of the leading



From right to left: Dr. Avner Barnea, Prof. Daphna Raban, Dalia Belkine, Galit Richter, Elinor Belkine



Israeli market research Geocartography, shared his experience regarding doing outsourcing of human intelligence work in business, mainly in deep interviews, mystery customer (for CI purposes) and also panels of customers as an effective gathering tool. The final word was by Dr. Avner Barnea, Chairman of Fimat, who spoke of the future of CI which includes combining AI new tools in analysis of vast amounts of information in order to better evaluate the next move of your key competitor and using AI tools to reduce the impact of cognitive biases.

This year, as in the last four years, there was an award ceremony in memory of Michael Belkine, former chairman of FIMAT, who passed away a few years ago. This year the winner of the prize donated by the Belkin family together with the University of Haifa was Ganit Richter from the Department of Information and Knowledge Management at the University of Haifa. Richter was awarded for her academic article “Schedules of Rewards and Player Experience in Serious Games for Crowds.”

On the next day, Mr. Sawka led a workshop which was focused on the “Human Intelligence in the Digital Era.” He expanded the highlights he mentioned in his Keynote presentation the day before, while the participants were actively involved in various exercises related to this issue.

To sum up, the conference and the workshop were a great opportunity to look deeply into the challenges of CI directors on their continuing efforts to give added value to the decision makers.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

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