ONLINE SEARCHER

INFORMATION DISCOVERY, TECHNOLOGY, STRATEGIES

Competitive Intelligence Portals for the 21st Century

By Barbie E. Keiser

Activities traditionally associated with competitive intelligence (CI) include gathering, analyzing, and sharing data, information, and knowledge about markets, industries, companies, and people. The objective: equipping organizations to anticipate the next moves their competitors are likely to make and plan appropriate responses. Actionable intelligence requires more than a simple pass-through to decision makers. It's not just doing a search and giving a list of results to management.

NORTHERN LIGHT

SinglePoint is Northern Light's end-to-end enterprise KM portal solution, aggregating business news from 6,500 high-quality business and technology news sources, optimized for CI. In addition, Northern Light works with more than 160 industry research firms, such as G*****r, Forrester, and 451 Research, and each of the research firms sends full-text copy to NL for indexing. Northern Light builds a custom full-text search index for each SinglePoint client organization which reflects that client's license rights to premium content. Users can search against the premium content from all of the industry research firms that their company licenses and then seamlessly click through to the content if they are authorized by the licensed agreements to view it.

Many organizations today are taking a self-service approach to content that is offered in multiple repositories to under-skilled searchers. NL strategic dashboards present curated topical content collections to users who prefer browsing over search. They get to choose from a wide array of standard widgets that can be "snapped" together to the desired configuration as cards floating against the background. This ap-

proach to portal infrastructure means that most changes do not require any software development and can be implemented instantly. Strategic dashboards can be turned into topical newsletters using the NL templates and emailed to those on a distribution list. (According to NL, the average client has 20–25 product market segments, topics, or geographic regions forming dashboards/newsletters.) Other insight distribution options include email and RSS/JSON alerts.

SinglePoint's browse-to-content approach is one of several ways NL addresses Millennials in the workforce, who prefer recommendations over search and look to colleagues inside their organization for information about the competition, sometimes resorting to sending "All Staff" messages: "Does anybody know what Company X is doing?" This being a thumb-swipe world, NL is intentional about delivering content that can be viewed comfortably using a mobile device and is looking at how to be sure that CI finds the user.

Northern Light started applying TensorFlow, Google's open-source ML technology, as soon as it was made available in 2016. In fall 2017, NL rolled out ML-based cognitive search. SinglePoint uses ML to:

- Provide insightful document summaries.
- Refine complex search queries as users click "more like this."
- Create recommended reading lists, based on user behavior. Start reading articles on a topic, and the sophisticated algorithms automatically find additional content you should see. The tool incorporates feedback into the recommendation process.
- Supply automated search reports based on the most important ideas across all documents in your search results, reducing (or even eliminating) your need to work your way through a set of documents retrieved via search query. Search report analyzes the documents in the search results and summarizes the ideas across the documents retrieved (with citation for attribution). These reports can be exported so that these insights can be used in your own work product.

- Run the digital search assistant in the background against all new content based on your regular behavior. It accomplishes this using latent semantic indexing (LSI), giving each item a percentage similarity likeness score.
- Create automated document summaries, not snippets, using the best sentences representing the most important ideas in the text.
- MI (Market Intelligence) Analyst analytics reveal strategic insights from portal content.

Northern Light is leading the way in the automated analysis and extraction of meaning from large repositories of market intelligence content. Its ML-based search reads the documents retrieved from your query and tells you what it finds that is important and relevant to your work. ML for enterprise applications is scheduled to be deployed to all clients by mid-2018.

NL clients cluster in two industry sectors; IT firms use the company's products for secondary research, while pharmaceutical companies turn to NL for primary research support. NL is expanding its footprint, applying its ML to assist pharmaceutical companies to surface and red-flag compliance problems in jurisdictions with regulatory considerations that vary from market to market. The majority of NL clients are global entities with multiple users. Pricing depends on the configuration and how much content, portals, publication tools, and market research are in the package. You'll need at least $100K for an enterprise with 8,000 users (flat fee, unlimited use).

For those who do not subscribe to SinglePoint, the company offers Millie (millie.northernlight.com). This free, web-based market and CI portal presents news headlines about major companies and industry topics drawn from that same set of editorially selected business and technology web news sites accessed by SinglePoint. Industries covered by Millie include IT, life sciences, healthcare, financial services, energy, agribusiness, chemical, and food/beverage. Millie is updated continuously, drawing content from Northern Light Business News and featuring Northern Light's text analytics application, MI Analyst. For an in-depth look at Millie, see "Thoroughly Modern Millie: Access to Industry Intelligence for the Millennial Generation" by Ruth A. Pagell (*Online Searcher*, January/February 2016, pp. 24–31).

Click Dashboards to reveal more in-depth profiles of each industry sector Millie covers. Expert searches within each industry include company news, corporate strategy, headlines, hot topics, and research targets—just to name a few of the ready-made searches. Users can view results of each search, subscribe to receive alerts (for free), or get the RSS feed to automatically deliver the results to them. Registered users can find a wealth of possibilities in My Saved Searches, My Headlines, and My Bookmarks.

Northern Light is considering which features of its SinglePoint to offer through Millie, so stay tuned.
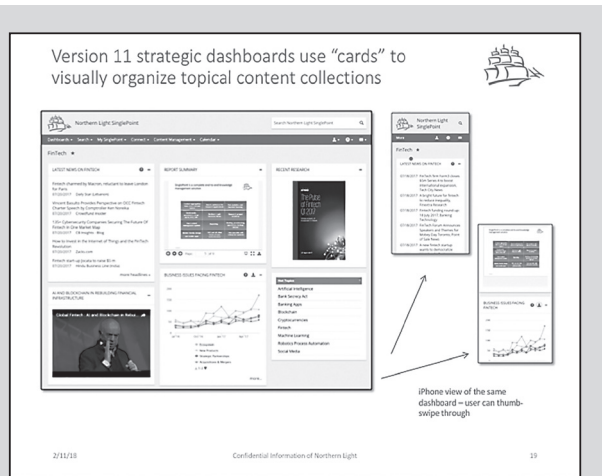
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