Gardens of Intelligence

Designing Robust Digital Market and Competitive Intelligence Platforms

Gabriel Anderbjörk
Jesper E. Martell

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Praise

"I have known the authors since they were changing Ericsson CI from within, pioneering the global intelligence network and using it to affect innumerous decisions throughout the company. Their practical perspective is unparalleled in the field on how CI affects the bottom line. Together they have more experience with platforms in more companies than all of us combined and the beauty of their approach is that they chart a path to getting many different people at the organization to look at a stream of info and say, *hold on*. Have you thought of…? So, what are the six steps to their "Garden of Intelligence"? Oh, for God sakes I am not going to describe it. Just read it!"

Benjamin Gilad
Co-founder of the Academy of Competitive Intelligence

"Regardless of whether you are starting out or a seasoned market and competitive insight professional you have to read this. Not only does it provide a perspective from two gentlemen who have been at the coal face of practicing market and competitive intelligence at Ericsson at its height but have used and understood those well-trodden frameworks and approaches and digitized them. The book

does a fantastic job to provide a balanced view around the when and how to bring in technology to go beyond the collection phase of creating the knowledge and the foreknowledge of the market around you as a prelude to decision making and action. This is complemented by case studies of businesses Jesper and Gabriel have worked with to advance their businesses' insight capabilities as competitive advantages. A great title to address the velocity of change powered by the Internet to reduce time to insight."

Andrew Beurschgens
Head, Market and Competitive Intelligence, BT

"I recommend this book to my customers, so they make an impact on the bottom line; to my students so that they can have an impact on the professional world; and just about anyone interested in actually making an impact. This is the power of Garden of Intelligence!"

Luis Madureira
Managing Partner @ UBERBRANDS, CIP-II, CI Fellow

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About the Authors

Gabriel Anderbjörk and Jesper Martell have collaborated since 1994 when they met at Ericsson, a telecommunications company in Stockholm, Sweden, as the core of the corporate competitive intelligence team. In January 1999, they teamed up with a third colleague to found the software company Comintelli (www.comintelli.com). Comintelli believes that *information* is one of the most valuable assets possessed by an organization and should be managed as such.

Comintelli was a market pioneer for automation in information classification and dissemination. At the time, it was almost unheard of to mix external information with internal content in the same classification structures and user interfaces. Furthermore, the focus on context-driven information models and algorithms (taxonomies), rather than prevailing content-driven structures, changed how many customers approached the entire field of information management.

Since then, the authors have engaged with and helped hundreds of organizations, multinational companies, and governmental organizations in most corners of the world to develop and implement intelligence operations and knowledge management platforms. Their joint experience

of more than 50 years in the Market and Competitive Intelligence (MCI) field is simply unrivaled.

Gabriel Anderbjörk is a true innovator and entrepreneur within the fields of Information Management, Knowledge Management, and Enterprise Intelligence. The latter sprung a deep interest in and insight into varied global business cultures and their impact on international Competitive Intelligence (CI) operations. His professional experience spans more than 25 years and includes major projects worldwide.

Today, Gabriel is the founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Inzyon (www.inzyon.com), an organization that develops and delivers advanced insights management environments. Previously, he was the Director of Competitive Intelligence at the telecom company Ericsson, co-founder of Comintelli, and worked as a structured trade finance analyst at Citigroup European HQ.

Since leaving Ericsson, Gabriel has enjoyed providing advisory and consulting services to numerous management teams within regional and global companies such as AstraZeneca, Bayer, BBC, Fortum, Interpol, Olympus, Roche, Skanska, Volvo Cars, and Yokogawa. He has also served as a senior advisor on information modeling and process development in select European governmental organizations.

Gabriel frequently speaks on his topics of expertise and participates in international panels. He has lectured at the top European business schools INSEAD and Stockholm School of Economics, presented at international webinars, and contributed to Romanian national TV business news. Furthermore, he has led courses for several Stockholm University international executive business training programs. Gabriel's publications include articles in the SCIP *Competitive Intelligence Magazine* and published papers on information theory. Parallel to his work at Inzyon, he also manages his own think tank company, Intheo (www.intheo.se), further developing his theories on Information-Centric Management.

Gabriel holds a BA degree in physics from Lund University, Sweden, and an MBA from London Business School.

Jesper Ejdling Martell is a highly experienced CI professional, having worked in the field since 1996—initially as a practitioner at telecom company Ericsson and later as a solution provider at Comintelli.

Today, he is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Comintelli (www.comintelli.com), a leading provider of award-winning competitive intelligence platform Intelligence2day® (www.intelligence2day.com).

Over the years, Jesper has served as a trusted advisor in CI-related matters for multinational companies and organizations, including AkzoNobel, Bayer, Dow AgroSciences, Ericsson, Essity, ExxonMobil, Interpol, Monsanto, Schott, Telia, and Tetra Pak.

Jesper has engaged in numerous presentations, courses, and webinars, sharing his Competitive Intelligence expertise with associations such as Strategic Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP), Knowledge Management (KM) World, and Special Libraries Association (SLA). He

also chaired CiMi.CON in Berlin, Europe's premier CI conference.

From 2013-2016, Jesper was a leading participant and sponsor of a 3-year research project at Södertörn University in Stockholm to study how the competitive intelligence (CI) and business analytics (BA) industries can meet challenges and utilize possibilities with social computing. The project, *Competitive Intelligence and Business Analytics: Social Computing for the Knowledge-Intensive Enterprise (CIBAS)*, was co-funded by the research financier, The Knowledge Foundation.

In 2016, SCIP (www.scip.org) named Jesper a Distinguished Member, recognizing his international achievement in the field for his unique contributions to the profession of intellectual advancement of intelligence and dedication to the SCIP Association and community of creators. Jesper currently chairs the SCIP Nordic chapter.

In 2020, Jesper was inducted into the Council of Competitive Intelligence Fellows (www.cifellows.com), recognizing his long-standing contributions to the CI profession. CI Fellows sustain and foster the CI discipline with roles as Ambassadors, Champions, Mentors, and Educators.

Jesper holds a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from the Stockholm School of Economics.

What's in it for you?

Already working as Market and Competitive Intelligence (MCI) practitioners in the late 90s, we were struck by the lack of focus and structure in the MCI work of many organizations we encountered. Within our own industry, the pace of change was at that time probably the fastest of all, given international market deregulation for cellular networks and the race to claim de facto monopolies for specific technologies. At Ericsson, we built our own internal MCI platform, training program, and global analysis network that eventually, and measurably, contributed to group bottom-line results. CI legend Ben Gilad was our first true mentor and inspiration, and we were thrilled he accepted to write the foreword to this book.

We launched Comintelli in 1999, inspired by encouragement from companies who would later become some of our first customers. Since then, our customers and peers frequently ask for recommendations on MCI operations literature. We always respond by naming traditional books that focus more on analytics and less on processes and support systems.

For many years, we considered writing that sought-after book ourselves, with the lack of time as a barrier—until now. This book serves as the practical hands-on guidebook we wished we had while building a global MCI operation many years ago. Granted, it now includes some additional insights that probably didn't even exist at the time!

We hope you will enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed performing the relevant research over the last 20+ years and now, finally writing it!

Jack Welsh, the CEO of GE, once famously said that "*When the rate of change outside exceeds the rate of change inside, the end is in sight.*" This has never been truer. Even though the concept of intelligence is far from new, its application must be updated to suit a more turbulent, evolving world.

Market and Competitive Intelligence directly impacts the ability to keep many parts of an organization healthy, strong, and competitive. This book, therefore, aims to target both:

- **Executives and decision-makers, or the *consumers* of intelligence.** Those who use it to understand their business landscape and anticipate future opportunities and threats.

- **Intelligence analysts/practitioners, or the *producers* of intelligence**. Those who were

assigned the important task to track information and discover actionable insights.

With this book, we aim to bring intelligence into the future and the future into intelligence.

Enterprises realize they must prepare for varied business disruptions and change while transitioning to a digital economy. A prioritized agenda item for CEOs during this shift is to transform their corporations into more intelligent organizations. During uncertain times, real-time information from internal and external sources, combined with organizational learning and knowledge, enables enterprises to rapidly adjust and adapt.

This book explains how intelligence tools and technology are vital to transform into a digital business, as well as illustrate how investing in technology will provide the decision support required to create competitive advantages. Unlike many others on the topic, this book does *not* focus on analysis models, research tips, or future forecasts. Rather, this is a pragmatic, hands-on guide to help initiate, develop, implement and maintain MCI operations and platforms in organizations and enterprises.

The framework and ideas presented in the book are based both on our own practical experience in the last 25 years and research drawn from over 100 Competitive

Intelligence cases. These organizations range from large Fortune 500 companies to smaller analyst firms. They represent a variety of industries across many countries, as illustrated below. From this material, we have isolated common traits and characteristics of successful MCI platforms. These organizations are all truly at the forefront of Market and Competitive Intelligence.

AkzoNobel	Ericsson	Olympus
Amadeus	Essity	Owens Corning
Bayer	ExxonMobil	Roche
Biogen	GEA	SCA
Bristol Myers Squibb	Honeywell	Schott
British Telecom	HPE	Siemens
Corteva	Interpol	Telia
DOW AgroSciences	LexisNexis	Tetra Pak
Royal DSM	Medtronic	VodafoneZiggo
EnerSys	Monsanto	Volvo
	Nokia	Yokogawa

This book consists of four parts:

- **Part I—A Wild Grown Landscape.** The first part of the book (chapter 1 and 2) describes that the world has changed and **why** Market & Competitive Intelligence should be used to create insights that make your organization more future proof.

- **Part II—Growing a Garden.** The second part is the key part of the book (chapter 3 and 4). We describe **what** the Garden of Intelligence is – a management concept for developing successful Market & Competitive Intelligence capabilities. The framework is a step-by-step stairway to a blooming Garden of Intelligence that will reduce your time to insights and decisions.

- **PART III—Digging Deeper**. The third part provides more in-depth guidance into **how** to work with some key capability components that are essential for the buildup of Market & Competitive Intelligence, namely Information, Technology and People. Chapters 5 and 6 are about Information, chapters 7 and 8 covers Technology and chapters 9 and 10 deal with the People capability.

- **PART IV—Beyond the Garden Walls.** The final, fourth, part answers the "**Now what?**" question, i.e. what do you do with all your insights? Anyone who has attempted to develop a beautiful and long-lasting garden know that you

> cannot relax just because your first rhododendrons are blooming and you have harvested your first sweet oranges. A garden needs constant attention and influences from the outside will be critical. Chapter 11 to 13 are there to provide a future perspective and inspiration.

We recommend you first skim through the book in full, just to acquaint yourself with its content. Then, engage in a self-assessment based on the framework outlined in Chapter 4—which level corresponds with your position? Continue to use this book as inspiration and guidance to eventually achieve a state-of-the-art MCI platform within your organization.

CHAPTER 3

Preparing the Grounds

To summarize the previous chapter, change is needed for MCI to continue to serve its purpose. The cyclical work process that prevailed since MCI evolved from military models into enterprise operations is terminally outdated. Available technology has amassed over prior decades but is not sufficiently included in MCI work. The change in organizational models developed over the same period, fueled by "social and collaboration" work processes, must be better embedded and leveraged within the MCI landscape.

This chapter introduces a framework to evolve a MCI operation from a very informal position to a "state-of the-art" capability, through six different levels.

We choose to call this framework "**The Garden of Intelligence**," as we believe Market and Competitive Intelligence capabilities must evolve step by step and develop with care, patience, and agility. There is no "Big Bang" solution, and it will not happen overnight using magic AI robots. Rather, grit, time, resources, and perseverance are required. Much like in the gardening

world, the minute you forget to water your plants, provide nutrients, trim branches, and weed your garden, plants will wither and decay. The same applies to your MCI platform.

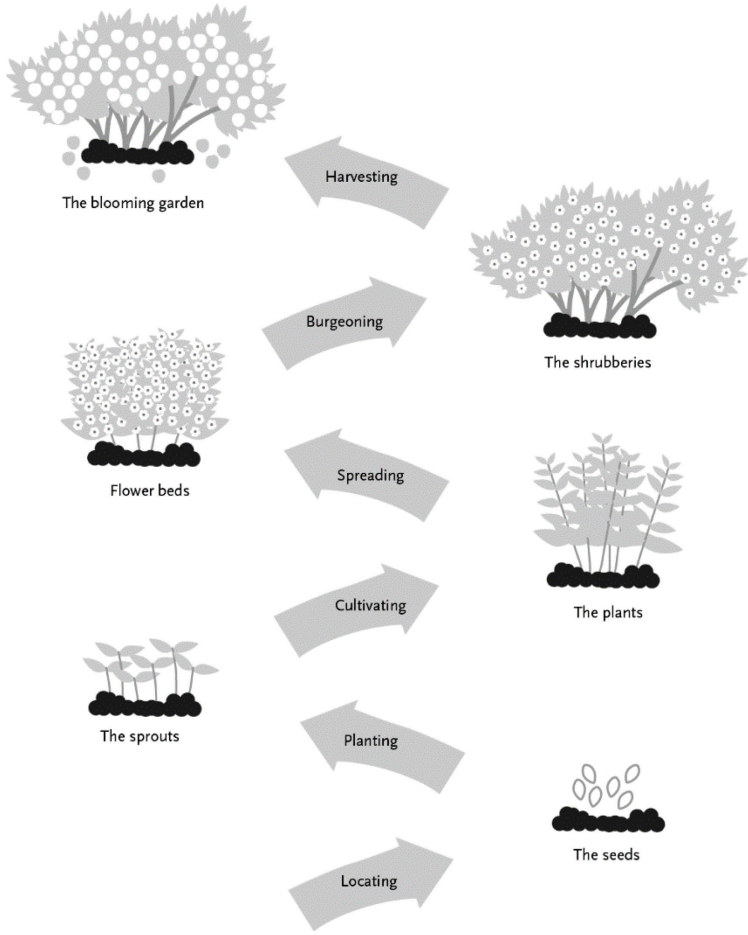
This part of the book describes the framework of six different levels to ultimately grow a "Garden of Intelligence." Cultivating a beautiful garden that will thrive for generations is not only time-consuming but takes grit, experience, and perseverance. The gardeners are exposed to the evolution of the six levels on a step-by-step basis: defining where to start, building a structure, understanding sources, understanding decision-maker needs and forging connections, applying analytics, and finally, embedding MCI operations within all decision-making processes throughout the organization.

The phases and levels of growing a Garden of Intelligence

A blooming *Garden of Intelligence* is developed in six phases, leading to six respective levels of maturity, as described below.

The fact that the phases and levels are numbered from one to six does not imply they must be carried out in chronological order. Rather, it is likely that while

addressing one level, others are also involved in varied iterative ways. The key is not to jump too far ahead without maintaining a solid foundation. After all, it is impossible to grow a tree from a seed if you do not nurture the soil in the process.



Evolving through the six phases and six levels of a Garden of Intelligence.

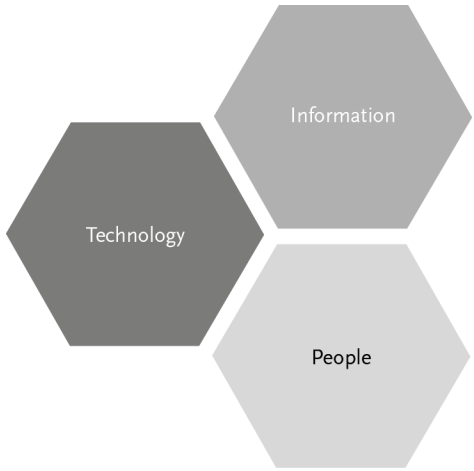
	Phases	Levels
	Phase A—Locating You are mapping out your garden of intelligence, evaluating its terrain, soil, and weather conditions. This will bring you to the very first level of your design.	**Level 1: The Seeds**—You realize that the organization will benefit from a better understanding of its business environment. You have surveyed tools and procedures already in place. You know where to start and have secured the first seeds.
	Phase B—Planting This is when you plant the first seeds and truly embark on the journey to develop your garden of intelligence. It is the phase that will be most visible to passersby. Something entirely new, tangible, and beautiful is growing. This phase leads to Level 2.	**Level 2: The Sprouts**—You have constructed your first MCI structure and connected open-source feeds. Your team is still small, but usage is growing.
	Phase C—Cultivating Your garden is now attracting attention, and you must cater to more visitors. By laying out new paths and organizing your sprouts, you granularize biodiversity and enable a more targeted experience for botanically mindful visitors. By further cultivating each section specifically for each sprout species, you spur growth into hardy plants.	**Level 3: The Plants**—You have boosted MCI usage numbers. Internal sources are now included in the system, and you add external commercial sources such as news and analysis providers.

	Phases	Levels
	Phase D—Spreading You now have a garden with all basic plants in place. You are happy with the design and the harmony it provides, but it is still fragile. Plants and trees need more nutrition, with some requiring supporting plants to shield them from heightened sun exposure. Others might need better irrigation. You are now honing the details, leading to subsequent levels.	**Level 4: The Flower Beds**—You have welcomed decision-makers into the workflow. The focus is now on delivering business benefits to all MCI users. Users have become involved as MCI observers in information-collection processes.
	Phase E—Burgeoning Your garden is, in all material respects, fully grown. Plants, flowers, and trees are firmly rooted in the ground. The varieties are many, and the beauty is there for everyone to enjoy. A walk in your garden will inspire confidence and new thoughts. Your work as a gardener is now to ensure a stable and long-term maintenance of the garden.	**Level 5: The Shrubberies** — With all information now at hand, you apply more advanced analytics and share results with managers and strategists throughout the organization. MCI is inspiring and enabling dialogue per such analysis.
	Phase F—Harvesting Time to reap the real benefits of perseverance as well as both structured and intense development work. By ensuring all visitors and contributors to your garden are constantly aware of its growing beauty and development from season to season, your creation will endure. Ongoing cultivation will guarantee a bountiful harvest in the years to come, bringing your garden to the final level of its maturity evolution.	**Level 6: The Blooming Garden**—You have fulfilled your development ambitions. MCI is now a firmly embedded component within management responsibilities in both line and project organizations.

The Information, Technology, People (ITP) framework

To describe proper MCI management across the six different levels, we will use a conceptual model for socio-technical analysis of related processes that identifies three mutually interdependent perspectives:

- Information (I)
- Technology (T)
- People (P)



These are loosely based on the phrase "People, Process, and Technology," which originates from Harold Leavitt's well-established 1964 paper, "Applied Organization Changes in Industry." In it, he presents a widely accepted four-part "Diamond" model to create organizational change.

Information (I)

Information consists of data arranged in some order (for instance, by classification or rational presentation) to acquire meaning or reveal associations between data items. Information is applied by Technology and used by People.

Many sources can supply this information, divided into two main types:

- **External information**—From any sources outside of the organization, e.g., published reports, magazines or trade journals, and anything on the web

- **Internal information**—From any sources within the organization, e.g., proprietary presentations, documents and surveys, internal e-mail exchanges, or remarks made by employees

Technology (T)

In this context, Technology means using computers to store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate information, typically used within the context of business operations.

People work with these tools. Technology helps people structure information and execute faster, more innovative work—especially in the age of Artificial intelligence.

People (P)

People are the humans working together and performing tasks to achieve organizational goals. People, by themselves, have to do work. How they perform and apply work is key. Even in the age of Artificial Intelligence, *people* must govern the output of machines (for now).

Process helps people do better work, defining and standardizing it to prevent a need to reinvent the wheel.

Harmonizing ITP

If any of these three ITP components are missing, our experience is that MCI will ultimately fail. Rapidly developing the "people capability" without supporting technology and information access is as futile as heavily investing in advanced software tools with no one available to draw conclusions. It is a perfect example of the saying that no chain is stronger than its weakest link.

The three ITP components must develop gradually, together, to eventually reach an intelligence capability that will truly contribute to the organization's competitiveness. Consequently, deploying a MCI platform in an organization is a long-term commitment that involves developing a number of resources and capabilities. Over time, these evolve into one holistic approach, but, as always, one must start from the beginning. Consequently,

the guide for leveling up your garden is presented with this ITP model as a foundation.

The team of gardeners

To undertake the activities outlined in this chapter, you will need to surround yourself with a team of gardeners. Growing a garden is *not* a one-person job! Gardener duties and responsibilities can, for example, include maintaining and mowing lawns, monitoring watering needs of the grounds under their care, pruning trees and shrubs, monitoring plant health problems, applying fertilizers and weed-control agents, maintaining gardening equipment and tools, and much, much more.

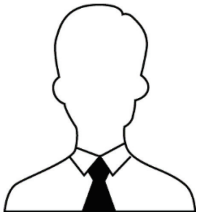
We will primarily introduce and discuss the varied activities from the perspective of a "Director of MCI," but all roles defined below reflect their own "list of activities." Each organization has its own take on how to build teams, so the below suggested team setup is not cast in stone. Just ensure you allocate the duties and responsibilities to someone in one way or another.

The team of gardeners should comprise the following six roles:

1. Executive Sponsor—Owner of the garden
2. Director of MCI—Lead gardener

3. Information specialists—Looks after the seeds and plants
4. Technology specialist—Tends to the equipment and tools
5. Analysts—Applies fertilizers and water the garden
6. Decision-makers—Consumers of the garden produce

Executive Sponsor



The Executive Sponsor is the "owner of the garden," so to speak. This is a key decision-maker who is a primary consumer of intelligence.

Often, this role is a C-suite executive (e.g., CEO, Chief Strategy Office, CMO, or COO) or even on the board level. The Director of MCI often reports to this person. This role is normally not so active in actually growing the garden, but crucial for initiating the garden in the first place—and an avid consumer of everything the garden grows, as well!

Director of MCI

This is the person assigned the marvelously inspiring, rewarding, and demanding mandate of growing the organization's MCI capabilities.

In the everyday development work of growing a Garden of Intelligence, this is the "Lead Gardener," the lead strategist, community leader, and, most importantly, MCI communicator and ambassador within the organization. This means he or she is often responsible for the "People" component of ITP. A key role requirement is that it is staffed by a person who thoroughly understands the industry, marketplace, and company culture. We, therefore, recommend recruiting internally to fulfill this role. An important step for the Director of MCI is to build the team of gardeners, as described below.

Information specialists

Since information sourcing is a critical part of MCI, an information specialist is a must. They are responsible for looking after the content of the garden, ensuring the right seeds are planted.

This role summons a broad spectrum of choices, including a recent MBA with a background in your industry/time spent with your organization, a digital library professional, someone with an industry-relevant research background, or the like. The key characteristic is a proven understanding of the "content industry," both free and paid sources, and a solid understanding of internal company sources, i.e., business-supporting processes and internal knowledge management systems. This is a role that will have to develop over time.

Naturally, this is often the person responsible for the "Information" component of ITP.

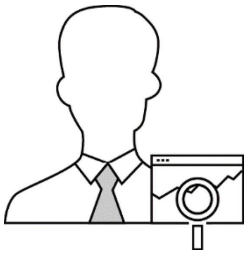
Technology specialists

Technology specialists are responsible for all IT-related matters. This can include hardware and software platforms, policy and security compliance, and integration with other systems. They are the ones who look after the equipment and tools used in the garden.

A key capability for this role is someone who understands the current organization's IT environment. He or she need not be a programmer but rather a system architect with a

deeply rooted interest in business strategy. Naturally, this is often the role responsible for the "Technology" component of ITP.

Analysts

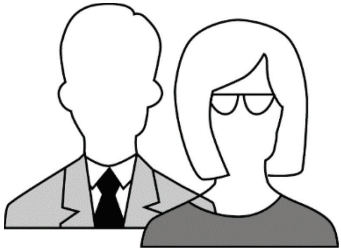


Analysts are responsible for reviewing information, identifying what is relevant, and putting it into the context of their organization. They develop conclusions for likely courses of action and provide recommendations for decision-makers.

You will find analysts throughout your organization in marketing, sales, and product development teams, corporate headquarters, strategy groups, etc. A common trait is that a senior manager has tasked them to "keep me informed about the market, please."

Analysts add fertilizer and water the garden so that plants bear fruit; be mindful of analysts when evolving your MCI capabilities, as they represent the core network of your MCI operation and serve as primary insight producers. Only a few analysts will likely be present when your garden is conceived, but the group will rapidly expand if it is managed well.

Decision-makers



These are your garden visitors and consumers, the widest role you must consider, by far. These are your user representatives who truly understand how MCI processes and output exert a bottom-line impact on business decisions.

Involve them early on as your "tasting" team to sample the fruits of your garden. When developing new garden outputs (i.e., MCI services), employ a few decision-makers as "tasters." They will serve as the ultimate judges for the quality of your produce. MCI's impact on decision-makers is the primary justification for growing your garden in the first place.

Key takeaways

Summarizing the key takeaways of this chapter:

- The six maturity levels of the Garden of Intelligence are:

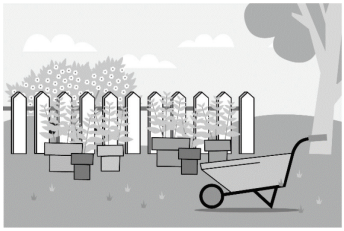
    1. The Seeds
    2. The Sprouts
    3. The Plants
    4. The Flower Beds
    5. The Shrubberies
    6. The Blooming Garden

- The Information, Technology, People framework is key for managing your Garden of Intelligence.

- The team of gardeners should comprise the following six roles:

    1. Executive Sponsor—Owner of the garden
    2. Director of MCI—Lead gardener
    3. Information specialists—Look after the seeds and plants
    4. Technology specialist—Tends to the equipment and tools
    5. Analysts—Apply fertilizers and water the garden
    6. Decision-makers—Garden produce consumers

Now that we have prepared the grounds, we are ready to go and work our garden!



Want to read more?

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