

Robert Milner Associates

Marketing and Management Consultants

SERVICES OFFERED

Robert Milner Associates offer a range of marketing services to industry from technical marketing research through customer satisfaction and positioning research to facilitating marketing audits, strategic planning, expert witnesses and acquisition support.

The company specialises in the chemical and manufacturing industries and also provides a service to all other parts of the industrial and professional services market. We have an impressive list of "blue chip" clients. We are committed to providing you with customised solutions. Our techno-commercial background and expertise enables us to fully understand the context of your problems and to maintain the "action orientation" that is a key feature of our work.

The consultancy bridges the gap that exists between basic market research companies and management consultants. It mixes high quality marketing research with affordable strategic planning expertise, to give you actionable results and strategic options. As well as classic marketing research *Robert Milner Associates* can help you to define your "Battleground"; set up a new marketing department; or audit your existing set up and help to refocus it; and train your people in marketing research/competitor analysis. We also have the "Competitor Awareness Process" one of the most advanced competitor analysis techniques that is available anywhere. Using these and our other unique planning tools we can help you to move forward as an organisation to carry out your strategy.

Specialist Services include:

- In-depth Product and Industry Marketing Research
- Customer Satisfaction and Perception analysis
- Competitor Analysis & the "Competitor Awareness" Processes*
- Acquisition identification and evaluation
- Business & Marketing Audits
- Cost Base Analysis and Research Economics
- Marketing Strategy Development Support
- Scenario Planning
- Industrial Marketing Research & Competitor Analysis training
- Expert Witness

Contact *Robert Milner Associates* for more information on any of these services or to arrange a meeting and get your strategy moving forward.

* *Competitor Awareness is a technique developed by Robert Milner Associates*

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IN-DEPTH MARKETING RESEARCH

Product and industry market research is a key part of the business audit and therefore has strategic implications. *Robert Milner Associates* provides a complete service of in-depth marketing research for chemical and industrial markets. The key to successful marketing research is the setting of clear objectives and success criteria for the work at the outset. This step allows the research to proceed with a definite focus, and helps to produce actionable results.

Our work aims to build on your existing knowledge base and aspirations to identify your options for action. We believe that this type of industrial marketing research usually needs experienced technical people to carry it out successfully. Our high level of techno-commercial expertise sets us apart and means our service is differentiated. All projects are "one-off", customised to your particular needs. We also understand that presentation of results to senior managers is a key step if the overall objectives of the project are to be achieved, and we pay great attention to it.

Robert Milner Associates has experience of many sectors of the chemical and manufacturing industries, for example:

- Resins
- Coatings
- Inks, Adhesives & Sealants
- Acrylic, polyurethane and chloropolymer emulsions and dispersions
- Plastics and plastic raw materials
- Chlorine and derivatives
- Fluorine, HF and fluorinated products
- Engineering Plastics
- Optical fibres
- Ceramic fibres
- Vinyl chloride
- Liquid effluent treatment
- Organic fibres
- Organic intermediates
- Pneumatic components
- Speciality Chemicals & Elastomers
- Solvents
- Polyurethane chemicals
- Acrylic monomers and resins
- Fine chemical intermediates

as well as experience in the legal, environmental and air transport industries.

Contact *Robert Milner Associates* on 01925-268489 for more details.

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ACQUISITION IDENTIFICATION, EVALUATION & SUPPORT

The level of Merger and Acquisition activity in industry is astounding, Chemical Week recently described the phenomena in the Chemical and Plastics industry as a "feeding frenzy". The attractions of changing your business in a stepwise fashion are great, but getting the "right" acquisition is not an easy process whether the company is large or small, and it is easy to be swept along by the process. Most of the studies carried out on M & A suggest that the majority of acquisitions are retrospectively felt to have been unsuccessful, or not really worth the money. Many of the problems result from poor preparation and research at the early stages.

We can help you to reduce the risk in acquisition by providing excellent research and support to you and your financial partners.

This means;

- We can be there at the beginning of the process to set out the "universe of companies" from which your acquisition target will be drawn
- We can generate the information that will enable you to "filter down" the universe to give a short list of preferred candidates
- We can research these candidates to a set pro-forma to prioritise them
- We can approach the company anonymously to gauge their reaction to acquisition or other relationship
- We can help you to "mine" the data room pre bid and research the candidates
- We can help you understand how the business could be developed and the synergies that exist
- We can conduct commercial due diligence to validate the vendor's claims, so you know that what you are being told can be supported
- We can visit the plants post letter of agreement to identify potential problems by detailed questioning and observation

Getting the right acquisition sometimes feels like a lottery. We can help reduce the odds of failure using experienced people who understand industry and can give independent, pragmatic advice, because we want you to succeed. We have been involved in supporting several of the largest acquisitions in the chemical industry and can do the same for your business. Confidentiality is assured. Although our experience base is the chemicals and plastics industry the techniques are applicable across the whole of manufacturing industry.

If you would like to talk further call Robert Milner on 01925-268489.

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MARKETING RESEARCH AND COMPETITOR ANALYSIS TRAINING

The increasingly competitive nature of the business world has been accompanied by a general attempt to reduce numbers and become "lean" organisations. This initiative has had many positive effects, but has also often removed experienced staff both from mainstream business and from central research/planning groups. We are able to offer tailored packages of training in Marketing Research and Competitive Analysis for both newly appointed and experienced marketing researchers and for line managers who need some of these skills in their job. These packages are unique in the industry.

Our approach is to develop customised training packages for individuals or groups of people within a company based upon the agreed needs of the group or individual. We specialise in business-to-business marketing research and competitor analysis. Our objective is to help people to do their job more effectively so time is spent to show where the marketing research role fits in an organisation and how it can link with the company strategy as well as on the techniques of the research. It stresses the importance of marketing research as a process, rather than a series of projects, and the key task of building the company database, and then pro-actively "leveraging" it to provide the reports that the senior managers need and want to support their strategy and operational decisions.

The process we use therefore is first to understand what our client wishes to achieve as a result of the training and what they will use it for. We find this stage is much better than producing a rigid "one size fits all" course which may not satisfy anyone (see below):

- For example a company dealing with "heavy chemicals" needs to clearly understand the asset base, the in-house use of the products and the raw materials position of its competitors to position itself.
- However a speciality or fine chemical company is less dependent upon the scale economics but is more focused upon product differentiation and niche marketing.
- The marketing research needs of these types of companies differ even though many of the techniques overlap

Our approach has been developed based upon many years experience in marketing research and strategic planning within large chemical companies and has been refined by our experience in the consulting industry. As well as conducting small group and individual coaching in companies we have taught the Marketing Research module for the UK Institute of Directors Marketing diploma course. The *Robert Milner Associates* system works in practice, it provides practical guidance, techniques and insight.

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MARKETING AUDITS, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRAINING

The increasingly competitive nature of the business world has been accompanied by a general attempt to reduce numbers and become a "lean" organisation. This initiative has had many positive effects but has also often removed experienced staff both from mainstream business and from central research/planning groups. This loss of skills has meant that many companies now lack some of the key skills they need for marketing, competitor analysis and strategic planning. As well as offering "project based" consultancy services *Robert Milner Associates* is able to offer marketing audits, strategic planning support and training in key skills.

Marketing Audits/Battleground Diagrams

Marketing audits are a "health check" to ensure that the key aspirations of your executive and management is matched by the skills, resource and information available within the formal or informal "marketing function" of the company. It sets out to ensure that the companies "battleground" can be mapped out and the competitive environment is understood. In doing so it shows up the gaps in knowledge and identifies the skills and resources need to fill them. As part of the process it draws up preliminary "Battleground Diagrams*" to capture the companies' position in the key strategic dimensions that effect the business. These insights and assumptions are the basis of the strategic planning of a company.

Strategic Planning Support

Only the people who are responsible for a strategy should develop it. However *Robert Milner Associates* will provide support in techniques and facilitation right through the planning process to ensure a robust strategy is developed and shared with the company. The process involves a marketing audit, the development of shared business assumptions and battleground diagrams and the process through to SWOT and competitor analysis and future positioning.

Training

There is an increasing trend for marketing research and competitive analysis to be part of an operational job, rather than the preserve of central departments. In many cases the skills to carry out these processes have been lost. *Robert Milner Associates* offers training for both managers and practitioners in marketing research and competitor analysis, on the job or off line, utilising examples and projects relevant to the business.

Contact *Robert Milner Associates* for more information on any of these services.

** Battleground Diagrams are a technique developed by Robert Milner Associates*

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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND PERCEPTION ANALYSIS

Its very obvious that price is a key parameter when you are selling anything; but its equally true that there are almost no products in the world where price is the only factor that effects the purchasing decision. Everyone sells a package which includes the product, the service associated with the product and the perception of the company that is selling it. The importance of this fundamental observation has come home "with a jolt" to the business community during the recent recessions. Markets are no longer as protected as they were in the past and competition is fiercer and more global. The leading edge companies manage to remain profitable in the recession because they position themselves to reduce the effect of competition. Their market positioning is not accidental, it is the place where they maximise their strengths and minimise the effect of their weaknesses and it stems from a clear understanding of the market and their customers' needs.

An essential step to understanding your market and positioning is excellent Customer Satisfaction and Perception Analysis.

Leading Edge Customer Satisfaction, Positioning and Perception Analysis

The key requirement of any marketing research is that it produces actionable results. *Robert Milner Associates* is able to offer a leading edge service to industrial and business to business customers. We describe the service as "Leading Edge" because it is differentiated and it is aimed to help companies become the best, not just one of the pack. Our process uses creative techniques and in-depth, face to face interviews to get "beneath the skin" of the buying decision. It aims to comprehensively answer the questions "what makes your customer choose or reject you now", and "what will you need to do in the future to be the leader". Our whole effort is aimed towards producing "actionable" results, not just tables of statistics and we use very high quality people and a variety of creative and qualitative techniques to bolster the "conventional" quantitative methods. The results provide our customers with strategic options.

Market research is only one step in the process; the key step for you is the implementation of the results.

By always having this in our mind we can maintain the focus of the research throughout the project. We produce customised solutions to give you options.

Companies from a wide variety of industries have benefited from this approach, contact *Robert Milner Associates* for more information.

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COMPETITIVE AWARENESS

"Know your enemy and know yourself; In a hundred battles you will never be in peril"
"Probe him and learn where his strength is abundant and where deficient"

- *Sun Tzu Chinese philosopher and general*

"If we want to win against these !?*&%!?! we've got to get our retaliation in first"

- *William John McBride, Captain British Lions*

Both Sun Tzu and Willie John McBride realised that to succeed in their "business" they needed to understand the competition and use the knowledge to take strategic and tactical decisions. In today's ultra competitive business environment the need to understand your competitors has never been greater, as the commercial world shrinks and barriers come down. The "Competitive Awareness" process was designed to allow you to build on your in-house knowledge to create a unique, shared understanding of your competitive environment and the threats and opportunities it presents to you.

The process shuns the "topdown" approach and concentrates on building up, validating and sharing the picture of "real life" at the main competitive interfaces (called "hubs" in the process); sales and marketing; research and development; manufacturing and strategic planning. While developing this shared model the participants rapidly identify and evaluate the main competitive threats, issues and opportunities and can begin addressing them. The models produced can be rapidly communicated through the organisation to help the process of strategy development. Equally importantly the process helps to put competition onto everybody's agenda, which is where it must be if you are to succeed.

Because the operational level has an input to the process at the beginning; and because models can be produced rapidly, the approach achieves an excellent "buy in" from the organisation and avoids the "not invented here" syndrome. Competitive Awareness produces the sort of tactical understanding and information that is needed at the operational level. The aggregation of these operational views, plus the understanding of the wider environment produced at the centre of the organisation, enable a view of the strategic positioning of the company in the market to be modeled. The information for the initial model is collected by structured questionnaires and interviews; and validated by workshops. In some areas audit trails are set up to allow individuals to monitor their progress towards increasing competitive awareness. The process can be used for selected business sectors, functions and/or selected technologies within a business. It can help your business; contact *Robert Milner Associates* for more information.

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ADVANTAGES OF ROBERT MILNER ASSOCIATES IN PLASTICS

Robert Milner Associates Ltd has undertaken a number of projects in the plastics field working closely with European, UK and multi-national "blue chip" clients.

Among the projects completed recently are:

- *Strategic analysis and positioning of (6) selected Engineering Polymer and*
- *Intermediate Suppliers in Europe*
- *Analysis of the Engineering Polymer market in Europe*
- *Opportunities in "hi-flow" polycarbonate resins*
- *Depth analysis of two Engineering Polymer suppliers in Europe*
- *Analysis of investment strategies of selected Engineering Plastics and*
- *Intermediate companies in Asia*
- *The pricing structure of Magnesium Hydroxide flame retardants in Europe*
- *Developments and opportunities in Antimicrobial Plastics and Fibres.*

In addition to our in-house staff we have experienced associates in Europe and North America.

Dr Robert Milner himself is a chemist by training and spent 20 years in the industry before setting up a consultancy at the beginning of 1995. The last 10 years of his career in the chemical industry were spent in the strategic planning department of a £200M acrylic and polyurethane resin manufacturing business unit of Zeneca Specialities, where he was the Business Analyst responsible for the provision of services to the Executive. In this role he was the Marketing Research Manager, led the Acquisition and Competitive Analysis processes and was a member of the New Products Business Teams. As well as his work in the company he lectures in Marketing Research and Marketing for the Institute of Marketing Diploma and Certificate courses and was recently an invited speaker at the Chemical Industries Association Conference. His topic was "*Marketing: 80% Perspiration and 20% Inspiration*" which explored the reasons for the failure of the marketing processes in the Chemical Industry.

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ADVANTAGES OF ROBERT MILNER ASSOCIATES IN COATINGS & RESINS

Robert Milner Associates Ltd has nearly 15 years of experience in the coatings, resins and coating raw material industries and has undertaken many projects in the field working closely with European, UK and multi-national "blue chip" clients. Robert Milner himself spent 10 years in the strategic planning section of a major speciality resin producer.

Among the projects completed recently are:

- *Development of a database for the resin industry world-wide*
- *Due diligence studies of major resin company*
- *Analysis of the speciality solvent industry in Europe*
- *Opportunities for a low VOC novel solvent*
- *Opportunities for speciality resins in the adhesives industry*
- *The growth of the acrylic emulsion market in Europe and the USA*
- *Powder coatings and resins in Europe*
- *UV cured coatings in Europe and the USA*
- *Identification of acquisition candidates in selected product areas*
- *Customer satisfaction in the ink resin market*
- *Technical leadership and competitive positioning in several resin technology fields*
- *Speciality additives in Northern Europe*
- *Numerous company evaluations*

In addition to our in-house staff we have experienced associates in Europe and North America. In the USA a number of our associates have many years of working in senior positions in the resins and coatings market. Acrylic and polyurethane resins and dispersions are a particular speciality.

Dr Robert Milner himself is a chemist by training and spent 20 years in the industry before setting up a consultancy at the beginning of 1995. The last 10 years of his career in the chemical industry were spent in the strategic planning department of a £200M acrylic and polyurethane resin manufacturing business unit of Zeneca Specialities, where he was the Business Analyst responsible for the provision of services to the Executive. In this role he was the Marketing Research Manager, led the Acquisition and Competitive Analysis processes and was a member of the New Products Business Teams. As well as his work in the company he lectures in Marketing Research and Marketing for the Institute of Marketing Diploma and Certificate courses and was recently an invited speaker at the Chemical Industries Association Conference. His topic was "*Marketing: 80% Perspiration and 20% Inspiration*" which explored the reasons for the failure of the marketing processes in the Chemical Industry.