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## Game Playing Filling Corporate Boardrooms

**Author:** Raimondi, Terri

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**Abstract:** The United States military calls it wargaming, but some companies call it business insurance. Corporate Wargaming is a technique for simulating corporate strategies co-developed and marketed by Sonalysts Inc., a military simulations defense contractor in Waterford, and New Business Search & Development International Corp., an international management consulting firm in Old Saybrook. They are the only companies in the state that offer this service. Robert Chew, project leader at Sonalysts, said that Corporate Wargaming was developed as an extension of military wargaming techniques used to simulate global warfare for officers and cabinet-level leaders. (excerpt)

**Links:** [Linking Service](#), [Find it @ UAB](#)

**Full text:** The United States military calls it wargaming, but some companies call it business insurance. Corporate Wargaming is a technique for simulating corporate strategies co-developed and marketed by Sonalysts Inc., a military simulations defense contractor in Waterford, and New Business Search & Development International Corp., an international management consulting firm in Old Saybrook. They are the only companies in the state that offer this service.

Robert Chew, project leader at Sonalysts, said that Corporate Wargaming was developed as an extension of military wargaming techniques used to simulate global warfare for officers and cabinet-level leaders.

"This type of simulation is constantly done by the military at all levels of decision-making oriented to war and the conduct of war," said Chew.

Corporate Wargaming is designed to get the important players of a company together to respond to a simulated situation, such as a company acquisition or launching of a major new product line.

"Business leaders of a company take actions in response to stimuli provided in the form of a news broadcast, market survey results, sales results and pieces of information that would affect corporate decision makers," said Chew.

Ken Wexler, president of New Business Search, said the advantage of Corporate Wargaming is that you get a very realistic simulation of business.

"The game is quick and confidential," said Wexler. "It's very exciting to test the what ifs that might happen in the marketplace."

In a corporate wargame, a company's venture team is pitted against a team of selected experts that represent the competitive marketplace. Thousands of experts are drawn from the Shared Expertise Network available to NBS&D.

The venture team is given a detailed scenario based on their own real business plans and then are supplied information on technology, marketing, geopolitical and competitive forces.

The experts are situated in a mini-television studio and the venture team can see these experts react to their decisions via simulated news programs, radio programs, sales reports, market research and faxed information.

Chew said that each wargame will have a panel of five experts that are chosen especially for the specific subject matter of the client. NBS&D provides these experts who will evaluate players' actions.

"These experts are professors, company executives, editors of trade publications, trade association executives and consultants," said Chew. "We have contacted thousands of experts over the last several years to use them for our network or to identify other experts for a specific task."

The actual game takes about two days to complete and is set up like a conference that can be done just about

anywhere. The companies work with the client for about two months prior to the start of the game.

"It takes two months to prepare for a two day intensive game," said Chew. "During that period we will be interviewing key players, define exactly what it is they want to game and learn about the company so we can effectively simulate the scenario and define the objectives."

Companies can game a business scenario or emergency response situation. They can game the launching of a new product line, the impact of a particular division on the local population, or even a situation as severe as the Exxon Valdez disaster.

"In a corporate wargame, a company discovers a resource or asset that no one knew about that can be applied to a problem," said Chew. "What was thought to be an adequate need or resource for the situation really wasn't, and the only way that is discovered is playing the situation out through a wargame. That is why the military wargames."

The number of people involved depends on the scope of the game. There can be about five or a dozen or more, depending on the simulation. About three facilitators are present to make sure the game runs properly, and there may even be a camera crew to tape the game.

The corporate wargame is geared toward very large companies like Coca-Cola. Chew said that these companies consider the \$50,000 to \$70,000 price tag on the game business insurance or a new business planning tool. Smaller companies, he said, don't plan, they just do.

"There is two months of intensive preparation before the game starts," said Chew. "The game can be videotaped, and there is a post- game analysis and written report that goes through the results of the game. The client can even simulate a newscaster if they wanted."

Wexler said that NBS&D became interested in Sonalysts after reading a newspaper article in January about how Sonalysts wanted to bring wargames to the commercial market.

"It only made sense for our companies to work together so players get the maximum benefit of our huge panel of experts," said Wexler.

Wexler said that the project is just being launched, and some large Connecticut and New Jersey companies have currently shown interest in the project.

NBS&D is currently marketing the concept to Fortune 500 companies in the northeast, and are now approaching business trade associations and the Conference Board to offer the game to their members. Wexler said that NBS&D is currently marketing the game in Europe through their Netherlands office.

"We plan to Corporate Wargame more and more," said Wexler, "and as our service evolves to satisfy clients, we hope to wargame for a long time."

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