

is that such connections could be a signal of people wanting to jump ship or some conference that company employees met up at. What we really wanted to know is whether the executives were talking to each other and unfortunately in those days, few executives were using social media and tools like LinkedIn. They certainly weren't linking up with competitor CEOs prior to an acquisition.

Fortunately, executives like private jets. The tailplane numbers of private jets and company ownership were easily accessible and so were the flight plans. By monitoring the movement of private jets and looking for disturbances in the data i.e. the repeated landing of the jet of one company in the same area at roughly the same time as the jet of another company, ideally in a location where neither had headquarters (i.e. "*off-site*" and away from prying eyes) then it would indicate that executives were meeting. This is an example of a weak signal and such tools can be surprisingly effective. Companies tend to spend an awful lot of time and money trying to secure corporate M&A information and then leak the same information like a sieve through some form of weak signal.

Weak signals can be used to anticipate an actors action e.g. before the common use of tumble dryers then Russian sailors hanging out clothes on a drying line would be a signal that the Russian fleet was about to set sail. Unfortunately it's often time consuming and demanding work to collect and analyse weak signals. You usually need to examine a single or small sample of actors rather than an entire market. In general, you have to accept that the predictability of who is going to take a specific action is low. However, though you cannot easily predict