1. Business competition has always been a prominent element in the landscape of analysts, directors, entrepreneurs, executives, founders, managers, and planners, among others. The challenges it presents remain dynamic, creating uncertainty and sometimes its corresponding cousins of fear and doubt in business executives as they seek to achieve their aims.

2. Nevertheless, what surprises us about business, competitive, market, and/or most strategic analysis we see is the relatively limited number of tools and techniques used by most practitioners; unsurprisingly, it is not a surprise about how little genuine insight emanates from them.

3. Competitive in a business or commercial sense means that a contest is occurring between two or more parties. The sources of this can be multifaceted, originating in product or service offerings, shelf-space negotiations, supplier contracts, and investor relations, or access to key capital or resources, to name just a few.

4. Strategic is a word used today to describe almost every decision and/or action taken, when in reality there is a clear mix of the no less valuable, tactical decision making taking place. The generic use of a word such as a strategic can diminish its real role and mask the impact that a true strategic decision has.

5. If all or a significant number of the preceding elements are present, the greater the likelihood that the decision is indeed strategic. We want to make it clear that just because a decision is not strategic does not make it unimportant. Many non-strategic decisions help to determine the performance of an enterprise in a marketplace, particularly in the shorter term.

6. Like many developing fields of inquiry, business and competitive analysis is not purely art or science, but a combination of substantial portions of both in its effective application. As with the type of research formally taught to scientists, the analysis process can be viewed as holding much in common with the scientific method.

7. Intelligence processes in business organizations have received significant attention in recent decades. The benefits gained by successfully anticipating a competitor’s future plans and strategies are generally self-evident. The consequences of making decisions based on information that is incomplete, inaccurate, or late are as severe.

8. Beating competitors, in many industries, has become a necessity rather than a desirable goal. More insightful strategy development and execution has been needed since even a decade ago. We would suggest the following reasons are among the most critical ones underlying increased competition, all of which produce a greater need for improved business and competitive analysis.

9. Loss of traditional means of competitive structuring and advantage. Traditionally, companies could achieve competitive advantage through scale economies, segment entrenchment, first-mover advantages, and other such industry level gains. While still present in some sectors, these approaches are now so quickly and easily imitated that they no longer deliver sustainable advantage.

10. Contemporary analysts are expected to offer direct and immediate support to resolve different types of queries, work more closely with their counterparts responsible for human and technical collection, package their analyses in a variety of new forms, and deliver them through whatever means are best suited to the recipient.

11. Generative art is neither programming nor art, in their conventional sense. It is both and neither of these things. Programming is an interface between man and machine; it is a clean, logical discipline, with clearly defined aims. Art is an emotional subject, highly subjective and defying definition.

12. Modern computer programmers may adopt the same pose as Newton. They spend their working days entranced before a screen, squinting at a glowing monitor in a dimmed office, making only the barest micro-movements with their mouse-hand and keyboard fingers, only vaguely aware of what is beyond the screen, outside the window, outside the city.

13. Declaring our work as art is a bold and arrogant thing to do. By doing so, were saying that our work is beyond mere utility: it’s an expression of our humanity and individuality. It may even be in the realm of the ineffable. Unfortunately, it may also be an expression of our pretentiousness, but lets’ try not to worry about that for now.

14. Contemporary art is in flux. Old hierarchies and categories are fracturing; new technologies are offering different ways of conceptualizing, producing, and showing visual art; established art forms are under scrutiny and revision; an awareness of heritages from around the world is fostering cross-fertilizations; and everyday culture is providing both inspiration for art and competing visual stimulation.

15. The 2000s so far have been extremely violent. In September 2001 the World Trade Center in New York was destroyed and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., attacked by Islamist terrorists. The United States-led invasion of Afghanistan commenced later that fall, and in 2003, the United States led an invasion of Iraq that toppled the government of Saddam Hussein.

16. The demographics of various parts of the world have changed dramatically since 1980. Just in the United States, the U.S. experienced a profound demographic shift in the 1980s, with an influx of over 7 million immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. By 1990, 25 per cent of Americans claimed African, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American ancestry.

17. The art scene exploded after 1980, with a marked increase in artists, dealers, collectors, publications, and exhibition spaces. The formation of new institutions, as well as new or revamped facilities at existing institutions, expanded the number, size, and quality of locations where the latest in visual art could be seen by a growing public, including tourists seeking entertainment.

18. The fortunes and misfortunes of contemporary artists take shape, to a large degree, within the sphere of the commercial galleries that present new art. Reputations are built by the support of prominent gallery dealers and the approval of the critics, curators, and collectors who carefully monitor and judge the quality of the art featured in highly publicized exhibitions.

19. A spectacular recent example of public art, Charles Rays Boy with Frog, is an eight-foot-tall sculpture installed on the tip of an island at the southern entrance of the Grand Canal in Venice. Designed for that prominent site, the sculpture displays the artists characteristic combination of conceptualism and humour.

20. Public dollars funded many public art activities, a fact that turned out to be something of a double-edged sword. The support of contemporary art with government dollars was a crucial means of enlarging the funds available to artists and institutions; in the United States and Britain such support was often a percentage of the amount budgeted for new government-funded public construction projects.

21. Drone footage is everywhere, whether used to film extreme sports, outdoor events, nature, music festivals, or just for its own sake. Recreational aircraft such as quad-copters, fixed-wing and mini drones are getting ever cheaper and easier to buy.

22. Crime dramas in film and television often focus on the value of forensic procedures in solving crimes and convicting criminals. While this evidence is often portrayed as almost infallible, a report released this month in the United States raises significant doubts.

23. A handful of soil is a small and very complex ecosystem which includes soil particles, pores, aggregates, organic matter and a staggering number of microorganisms, all of which interact to keep the soil healthy and productive.

24. Studies have shown that determining the political leanings of Facebook users is easy, even for those who refrain from online political activity. Facebook could therefore deploy the I Voted tool selectively only for supporters of candidates or political parties of its choosing, thereby amplifying only their votes. This, it should be stated, would be legal, even if done covertly.

25. Ancient Celtic bards were famous for the sheer quantity of information they could memorise. This included thousands of songs, stories, chants and poems that could take hours to recite in full.

26. Many Aboriginal people have their own origin stories. Equally, scientific narratives of Aboriginal origins have presented different accounts. But these have been difficult to establish in part due to the difficulty and limitations of the science involved.

27. The early stages of human space activity coincided with a period of quite considerable tension. The possibility of large scale and potentially highly destructive military conflict between the space superpowers always lurked in the background.

28. With the release of the latest Apple Watch this month came a new Breathe app which promises to help you better manage everyday stress. Giving mindful breathing a place beside the alarm clock and weather app seems to prove mindfulness has truly gone mainstream.

29. Earthquakes, including the tsunamis they generate, are Earths most fatal natural hazard, accounting for approximately 55% of the more than 1.35 million disaster deaths in the last two decades. The US Geological Survey predicts that more than 2.5 million people will die from earthquakes this century alone.

30. The discovery of these security flaws brought to light a relatively new, low-profile and ethically questionable business: selling potent hacking tools, and information about security flaws that make them effective, to government agencies and private companies around the world.

31. More than any other species, human beings are gifted with the power to manipulate their environment and the ability to accumulate and transmit knowledge across generations. The first of these gifts we call technology; the other we call culture. They are central to our humanity.

32. After millennia of development, the power to manipulate the environment has become the power to destroy it, while the ability to transmit knowledge transmits as well a legacy of hatred, injustice, and violence. Today, as both the destruction and the violence reach a feverish crescendo, few can deny that the world is in a state of crisis.

33. The dashed Utopian dreams of the last few centuries leave little hope. Despite the miracles we have produced, people across the ideological spectrum, from Christian fundamentalists to environmental activists, share a foreboding that the world is in grave and growing peril. Temporary, localized improvements cannot hide the ambient wrongness that pervades the warp and woof of modern society, and often our personal lives as well.

34. At the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, it seemed obvious that the Age of Coal would usher in a new era of leisure. In one industry after another, a machine was able to “do the work of a thousand men”.

35. Philosophers of science will protest that it is already well-established, even in conventional circles, that perfect knowledge and perfect control of the universe is probably impossible, due to such things as mathematical incompleteness, quantum indeterminacy, and sensitive dependence on initial conditions.

36. The bankruptcy of the ambition encoded in the words “knowledge economy” is now becoming plain. Office work is no less tedious than that of the assembly line or vegetable monofarm—and for the same systemic reasons of standardization and mass scale. Much of today’s knowledge economy consists of data input.

37. The promise of Utopia just around the corner to justify today’s sacrifices is a common thread connecting every application of the Technological Program. We saw it in the Age of Coal, we see it in the Computer Revolution today: We must undertake the vast project of inputting all the data; then computers will run everything much more efficiently.

38. Ironically, it was precisely these principles of logic, reason, and efficiency that were supposed to elevate humanity to a more noble state, just as the technologies of physical and chemical engineering—used in the world wars—were supposed to elevate humanity to a new level of material comfort, health, and security.

39. Whereas technology once promised a grand future of leisure and security, today we need intensifying doses of it merely to keep the world from falling apart. A pattern of diminishing marginal returns seems to have infiltrated all areas of technology, whether material or social.

40. Early in the twentieth century, modest expenditures in medical research brought enormous improvements in lifespan; today vast outlays barely succeed in maintaining present standards. In agriculture, small amounts of chemical fertilizers and pesticides once brought huge increases in crop yields.