

# Corporate espionage

[Business](#), [Business Ethics](#)



Because products tend to become obsolete much faster today than they did thirty or forty years ago, research and development are among the most important activities in modern business. However, it is an expensive activity. Some companies try to save money by paying people to conduct corporate espionage, that is, to spy on competitors' research and development operations. Is such espionage ever morally justifiable?

The temptation to spy on competitors' is completely justifiable, but the fact that it's called espionage, a word that connotes amorality any way you read it, shows that acts of corporate espionage are not justifiable or moral. It's also illegal. There's a fine line between competitive intelligence and corporate espionage. Competitive intelligence is an ethical and legal business practice, it's the action of defining, gathering, analyzing, and distributing intelligence about products, customers, competitors and any aspect of the environment needed to support executives and managers in making strategic decisions for an organization.

This requires that risks and opportunities be identified in a market before they become obvious and also requires extensive competitor analysis. These analyses are taken from market statistics, financial reports, newspaper clippings, and other information released from the company. Corporate espionage on the other hand, includes that acquisition of intellectual property such as information on industrial manufacturing ideas, techniques and processes, recipes, or formulas.

It often includes activities such as theft of trade secrets, bribery, blackmail, and unwarranted technological surveillance. The morality of this issue can be

broken down into a simple example using the children's show Spongebob. Spongebob Squarepants works at the Krusty Krab, home of the Krabby Patty, the most popular burger in all of Bikini Bottom. The Krabby Patty recipe is secret and its secret is what makes it so popular.

The Krusty Krab's rival, The Chum Bucket is a significantly less successful underseafood restaurant (mainly because they serve chum). The owner of The Chum Bucket, Plankton wants his restaurant to be as successful as The Krusty Krab and there are multiple episodes throughout the Spongebob series that involve Plankton trying to steal, finagle, coerce, or even brainwash Krusty Krab employees into revealing the secret ingredient in Krabby Patties.

Plankton is recognized as one of the main antagonists in the show for this reason, for his attempted acts of corporate espionage. Even children understand what's he's doing is wrong. As silly as this example is, it's the simplest way to think about the morality of corporate espionage, and any way you try to spin it, what Plankton is doing is wrong. Corporate espionage is amoral. Corporate Espionage By rflzese