

COMM 380: COMPANY REPORT ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

SELECT A COMPANY:

A list of major media, telecommunications, computer software and hardware firms is in CANVAS. Choose any company from this list as the subject of your report. You may choose another **publicly traded** media or telecommunications firm, but only with **written approval** from **Faculty or TA** (if one is assigned to the course). Submit name of the company you will research and evaluate **on or before** its due date.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY & INDUSTRY: Begin research on the company. Information on the companies can be found in several database within the University Libraries. Sources include Mergent Intellect, IBISWorld ABI Inform, Business Resource Premiere, Nexi Uni (formerly Lexis/Nexis), SNL Kagan Media and Factiva. Mergent provides company summaries, financials (including SEC filings and annual reports) and competitor lists. IBISWorld has a strong industry database. ABI Inform, Business Resource Premiere, Nexi Uni and SNL Kagan Media and Factiva are databases of journal, trade and newspaper articles. Set up ABI Inform Alerts to get information on the company or issue to help complete the report. Review COMM 380 Library Resource Guide and all other additional information provided in the CR folder in CANVAS.

The report is divided into three sections:

- Section One describes **the company and industry**
- Section Two describes the **company's financial performance**, and
- Section Three a written **evaluation of the company** that is based on the research and analysis conducted by the team.

Each section requires answers to specific questions. The questions to be answered are outlined by section below. As you respond to the questions and describe the company, use terminology learned during the semester. Some examples of potential terms include - buyer or seller concentration, barriers to entry, product differentiation, branding, vertical or horizontal integration, media conglomerate, monopoly, or oligopoly, market performance, copyright, diversity and inclusion, vision, mission statement, corporate ethics, technology, advertising, audience ratings, marketing strategy – branding, segmentation and positioning. Use the terminology to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts discussed. You may include information found in your research that you think adds to the report or is critical in your analysis of the company.

Section One:

Describes the Company and Industry. Provide information about the company history, its leadership team and its operational performance. Your description must include answers for the following questions:

1. What industry segment does the company belong?
2. What is the stated company vision or mission?
3. Where does the company operate? What geographical markets does it cover?
4. What is the company's main line of business?
5. What products or services does the company sell?
6. From which products or services primarily drive the company's revenues?
7. Who are its primary (and secondary, if applicable) customers?
8. What market share does the company control? [Note: Market share is the percentage of total industry revenues that the company earns. To calculate market share, divide the company's revenue by total industry revenues and express as a percentage. Note company and industry revenue must be calculated over the same time period.
9. What mergers/acquisitions, partnerships or collaborations has the company attempted or established within the last three years?
10. Who are its primary competitors? Has any of its competitors engaged in any strategic partnerships, collaborations, acquisitions or mergers?
11. Are there technological challenges, for example, a new technology that may threaten your industry? Conversely, do any technology changes present opportunities for the company?
12. Are there regulatory challenges, (laws recently passed or being proposed by Congress) or new FCC regulations that may threaten your company's business? Or provide an opportunity?

Section Two:

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Describes the company's Financial Performance: Access the company's latest Income (Profit & Loss or Operating) Statement, Statement of Cash Flow and Balance Sheet.

1. From the Company's Income Statement, compare the revenues, expenses, profits and net income for this company for the last three years. Are these financial measures increasing or decreasing? What does this change tell you about the profitability of the company?
2. From the Statement of Cash Flow show the cash flows from Operating, Investing and Financing activities. How have these performances changed over the past three years?
3. Cash flow determines the value of media companies as their sale prices are often based on some multiple of operating cash flow. What does a multiple of 8-10 suggest the value of the company to be?
4. Is the company's profitability more, less than or the same as its key competitors?
5. Use the Balance Sheet to review the company's Assets, Liabilities and Owner's Equity. How much total debt (long term and current liabilities) does the company currently have? Has debt increased or decreased over the last three years?
6. Financial managers use Ratio Analysis to compare their firm's financial performance to other companies or the industry. Find any Liquidity, Debt or Capitalization ratios for the company. How do they compare to the industry? Ratios are available on financial Web sites like Yahoo Finance or CBS Moneywatch.
7. Use tables from the company's financial reports to present this information in the financial section of the report
8. Additionally, **include the financial statements** used (Balance Sheet, Profit & Loss Statement and Statement of Cash Flows) at the end of the report before the bibliography.

Section Three:

Evaluate the Company: Go beyond a mere recitation of facts in this section. Take a more analytical or evaluative approach to the data you have collected. Use your personal perspective, as well as information, terms, concepts discussed in our class, text to demonstrate how much knowledge you've absorbed from the material taught in COMM 380.

1. What appears to be the company strategy? And how effective is the strategy likely to be over the long-term?
2. What has been the impact/result of mergers, collaborations or any strategic business activity?
3. What is the customer experience and the likely impact of that experience on the company's market performance?
4. How does the company's performance compare to the industry and one key competitor?
5. What is the customer experience and the likely impact of that experience on the company's market performance?
6. How does the company's performance compare to the industry and one key competitor?
7. If the competitor made a strategic change, has there been an impact on your company?
8. Based on the information you researched, how do you assess the business prospects for the company in the next few years?

As you write the report, keep in mind the following guidelines. The report must be a minimum of eight – ten (8-10) pages, double-spaced in Arial Narrow 12 pt. font. Use a wide variety of information sources. There should be a minimum of TEN (10) different sources of information for your paper. This is only a minimum requirement. You are encouraged to add more sources. A high-scoring report will include references to newspaper and magazine articles, books, websites, SEC filings, trade publications etc. Check the news, locate magazine, newspaper and trade sources. Multiple web pages from the same website will count as one source. Cite sources using the APA citation system. Provide specific citations **throughout the report** as well as in a reference list at the end of the document. Information on most publicly traded companies will be plentiful. The assignment should show clear evidence of the research you conducted on the company and the industry.

I will look for how carefully you analyze the information and incorporated it into a comprehensive understanding of the company and the industry. Awarded points will be based on the content of your report and how well you demonstrate your knowledge gained in COMM380 by appropriate use of course topics and terms to analyze and report on the company. There will be little credit given for simply reproducing the data you have collected online with no effort to engage with the information.

Presentation is very important. Bad spelling and poor grammar indicate not just lack of effort, but also a casual attitude toward the assignment. Make full use of the spell-checking utilities available with most word processing applications. **Include your Team and Individual Names, Company Name, course number and section in the header. Number the pages in the footer.** Submit the report on the due date. Late submissions will be subject to the late policy as written in the syllabus.

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A NOTE ON MANAGING THE ASSIGNMENT WITHIN THE TEAM:

Discuss the report and determine the work assignments and deliverables so that each student optimizes their learning experience. Do not assign work to team members with a deliverable the date the report is due. Review assignments before its due date so that changes can be made. Write and edit the report cohesively. Utilize a single writing style and format for the entire report.

NOTE ON INFORMATION SOURCES:

There is a COMM380 Resource Guide available on the PSU Libraries web site. Videos on the research resources available within the PSU Library system are available for review in this folder. In addition to the University Libraries' databases, other sources of company and industry information available on the web are: <https://finance.yahoo.com/>, www.morningstar.com and <https://finance.google.com/finance>

A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM:

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly and creative activity in an open, honest and responsible manner, free from fraud and deception, and is an educational objective of the Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications and the University. Cheating – including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in someone else's work, or passively allowing others to copy your work – will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor.

In serious cases, it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the University or in the assignment of an "XF" grade (failed for academic dishonesty). As students studying communications, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own.) A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at <http://tlt.psu.edu/plagiarism/student-tutorial/>. The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: <http://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/47-00-48-00-and-49-00-grades/#49-20> and in the College of Communications document, "Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures." Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.