

Title: Market Forces and Forecasting

Timing: Ideally this activity will mete out the four assignments over the course of a year (one per quarter) so that the learners have the ability look at their industry from a variety of angles; each time encompassing what they've learned in to their next set of analyses. You may choose to shorten the assignment by assigning different groups to each of the four topics.

Develops: Market Intelligence, Competitive Intelligence, Research, Forecasting, Communication Skills

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Best done in small groups.

Assignment: Spend at least five hours researching the following four foci and writing a brief 2 – 3 page synopsis of what you have learned and how it relates back to your own organization. Be prepared to discuss and defend your research.

Phase 1: Competitor Intelligence

- Identify your organization's competitors.
- Answer: What are they doing similarly or differently from your organization?
- Identify an organization that serves the same demographic / audience as your company but is not a likely competitor and analyze their offering, identify best practices, assess customer engagement and loyalty.
- Keep track of this research and augment it quarterly in order to stay apprised of what is happening in your competitive space.

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Phase 2: Market Forces

Identify what is happening in your company's "marketplace;" some areas to look at are:

- Trade restrictions
- Government / laws
- Consumer sentiment
- Supply and demand
- Distribution
- Mergers and acquisitions

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Phase 3: Outside Forces

Identify outside forces that may impact your company in the near-term and far-term; some things to look for are:

- Social media
- Technology
- Government changes (for example, Brexit, or the reversal of Obamacare)
- Impacts from governments other than your own (nations at war, nations that have gone bankrupt)



Phase 4: Historical Events and Future Thinking

What past events have affected companies in your industry? What types of events have affected companies in industries other than your own? What can you learn from history? Where can your company go next? Is your company vulnerable? What opportunities do you foresee?

Here are two examples:

GROWTH: During the 20th century, AT+T had a near monopoly on one commodity: the home-phone line. In the ensuing decades, as technology has advanced and competition has multiplied, the company has expanded its offerings to include cellular service, television service, satellite television and more. Each of these offerings required different technology and infrastructure, different competitors and regulators, and the need to constantly train, hire or retrain workers.

RETRACTION: Cellular phones had been popular and affordable alternatives to land-line phones for over a decade when the first iPhone hit the market in 2007. In the following decade, with each release of the iPhone, more applications were added which made many industries and devices obsolete, including: cameras, maps, GPSs, computers, music players, audio recording devices, scanners and more.