Assignment: Strategic Analysis of a Firm (Firm Choices)
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Course: *BUS 497a*
Title: *Capstone: Strategic Management* (3 units)

"The purpose of a business is to create and keep a customer."
"Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things."
"The best way to predict the future is to create it."
"If you want something new, you must stop doing something old."
-Peter Drucker (1909-2005)

Firm

Each team will select (with my approval) their own firm to study and analyze. I'll ask for three names of firms on the date listed on the course outline/calendar well before the middle of the semester in order to eliminate any duplicates among teams and help with applicability of firm choice to this course.

Sources for Firms

The three firms must be U.S. publicly-held and publicly-traded firms. The company must also submit data to the SEC. The reasons for this are that each team needs good sources for 1), internal company financials, 2), market and industry data, and 3), supporting articles from newspapers, new magazines, and other quality sources. A simple web search can result in the "ticker symbol" (i.e., the abbreviated name of the company). Most publicly-held U.S. firms are traded on either the New York Stock Exchange ("NYSE") or the Nasdaq Stock Market ("NASDAQ").

Do not select a firm for which any student is *currently* employed. However, previous employment is acceptable.

The "The Founder" movie will be used later in class. This movie is about the early development of McDonald's, so do *not* choose McDonald's.

The three firms must be in *three different industries*. An easy way to determine this—once you've determined the ticker symbol—is to use the EDGAR service to locate the industry. This is called the Standard Industry Classification (SIC):

https://www.sec.gov/edgar/searchedgar/companysearch.html

Use the "Fast Search" on the right side. The SIC code comes up in the upper-left of the resulting screen. Then, lookup the SIC code:

https://www.naics.com/business-lists/counts-by-sic-code/

The Industry Titles must be *different* for each of the three firms that you choose. The main reason for this requirement is that it encourages diversity of thought both within each team and across all teams in class. If you use NAICS codes, the same rule applies. One site that shows the NAICS codes is:

https://www.naics.com/business-lists/counts-by-naics-code/

Please rank your three choices: first, second, and third. A team may get their first choice but they may not. Student teams should be comfortable analyzing any of their three firm choices. The instructor will make the final selections from each team's choices during class.

Tips for Team Brainstorming:

- *Defer judgement.* You never know where a good idea is going to come from. The key is to make everyone feel like they can say the idea on their mind and allow others to build on it.

- *Encourage wild ideas.* Wild ideas can often give rise to creative leaps. In thinking about ideas that are wacky or out there, think about what the team really wants without the constraints of technology or materials.

- *Build on the ideas of others.* Being positive and building on the ideas of others take some skill. In conversation, try to use "and" instead of "but."

- *Stay focused on the topic.* Try to keep the discussion on target, otherwise the team can diverge beyond the scope of what you're trying to do.

- *One conversation at a time.* Your team is far more likely to build on an idea and make a creative leap if everyone is paying full attention to whoever is sharing a new idea.

- *Be visual.* In live brainstorms write down on Post-its and then put them on a wall (there are electronic collaboration tools for this too). Nothing gets an idea across faster than drawing it. It doesn't matter if you're not Rembrandt!

- *Go for quantity.* Aim for as many new ideas as possible. Crank the ideas out quickly and build on the best ones.

These tips were excerpted and adapted from https://www.designkit.org/methods/28.html.