

FALL PROJECTS 2003

Please note that projects suitable for MIT or Finance options are indicated. People not requiring a specific type of project may choose any project; however, priority will be given to those who must have a finance- or MIT-oriented project.



Background

Comcast's Oregon/SW Washington market has over 300,000 customers that currently are serviceable for our cable service, are not using a competitor's product, and also choose not to use ours. Our market's cable penetration rate is considerably lower than other markets in our company.

Proposal

We would like to propose that a PSU MBA team would research and define those 300,000 customers. Using that information, we would like a marketing plan developed to reach and sell to that audience.

Deliverables

- Demographic profile
- Marketing plan.

Contact Info

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DCS (Marketing/Finance)

Background

We manufacture and market a product that offers compelling value and convenience propositions to consumers in a \$6 billion dollar existing market. We have one competitor (a multi national) in this new consumer category and together we account for approximately \$60 million annually in retail sales in the U.S. We have a 10% market share and our competitor has a 90% share. Our patent protected technology is superior to our competitor both in its efficacy and its ease of use. Our technology also benefits from a lower cost to produce.

To date we have adopted a “drafting” tactic in marketing our product. Simply stated, we have allowed our competitor to incur the expensive cost of communicating to the end consumer alerting them about this new type of product and the benefits of using it. We use a “switch and convert “ strategy at the point of purchase. We accomplish this by positioning ourselves \$1.00 under them, offering 50% more product and touting our key differentiator that our product is easier to use.

While our drafting strategy has worked to an extent, our competitor’s brand has not achieved the success our competitor had hoped and as such it is not a brand they are currently supporting. Given this and our unsubstantiated feeling that consumers have a high rejecter rate to the use of their cumbersome technology, leads us to question whether we should continue a drafting strategy.

In May we began marketing directly to consumers in a large test market. Our goal is to determine if we can become the leader in this market and, if so, at what cost and with what return on investment. The marketing programs in test are underway but it is too early to know if this type of marketing will play out. Another strategy we need to assess is whether we should consider making an offer to purchase our competitor’s brand, which is the topic of this proposed research project.

Proposal

Overall, to assess whether our company should consider making a solicitation to purchase our competitors category-leading brand.

Assessment to include:

- A statistically valid Awareness, Attitude and Usage (AAU) survey underwritten by the company. The AAU survey objective would be to measure awareness of our category, awareness of brands, brand usage, attitudes toward the product types and brands (among users, trier-rejectors and aware non-triers), interest in the company’s brand type of product, reasons for interest and expected usage frequency and expected types of use occasions.
- Preparation of a Brand Equity Valuation on our competitor’s brand.

Deliverables

- Formal written statistically based analysis of the results of the AAU survey including any personal observations.
- Brand Equity Valuation on our competitor’s brand.
- SWOT analysis addressing the overall question of the merits of the company making a solicitation for our competitor’s brand.

Contact Info

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O'Loughlin Trade Shows, Inc.

Background

O'Loughlin Trade Shows, Inc. has been producing consumer shows in Portland, Oregon for over 70 years. We are a third generation company. The shows we produce include the Portland Fall RV & Van Show, Portland Fall Home & Garden Show, Portland Boat Show, Pacific NW Sportsmen's Show, and the Portland Home & Garden Show. These Shows represent some of the largest shows in the country. To learn more about the specific shows go to www.oloughlintradeshows.com.

For many years, buildings have been built in cities to house conventions, trade shows and consumer shows. These buildings are usually built with public funds. The politicians have convinced the public that conventions and trade shows are the most important clients because they bring the most money into a city's economy.

Proposal

Recent studies are starting show this not to be so. We are looking for your students to take economic impact studies on conventions, trade shows and consumer shows in the Portland area and show who really brings in the most money. Some of the data collecting has already been done.

Deliverables

The deliverable we are looking for is a marketing piece that can be taken to various political groups as well as the public and should demonstrate who is really contributing most to the economy. This piece needs to disprove the convention/trade show numbers as well as show the economic impact of the consumer shows. This piece should include a power point presentation as well as a document that can be shown. Many magazines and national organizations will publish this study.

Contact Info

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Portland International Raceway

Background

Portland International Raceway is built on the former location of the World War II city of Vanport, which was wiped out by a 1948 flood. The Army Corps of Engineers sold the site to the City of Portland in 1960 and in 1961 the first Rose Cup races were held.

By 1970 the old asphalt of Vanport was in such poor shape that some of the sanctioning bodies would not sanction races at "West Delta Park." Because the very popular Rose Cup Races were threatened, the Rose Festival decided to do \$100,000 worth of paving if the City would pay them back out of revenues from the racing events held there. The City accepted the offer feeling that the raceway would never be able to make the final payment.

Newly hired Racetrack Manager, Dale LaFollette, made the final payment on the loan after only two and one half years. Since that day Portland International Raceway has operated as an enterprise fund even though the first ten years were spent in the General Fund. Revenue sources consist of three major categories: rental, food concessions and advertising. PIR prides itself on being the most "user friendly" racing facility on the west coast with rates and charges 10% to 25% less than other, similar facilities.

The facility is owned and operated by the City of Portland through its bureau of Parks and Recreation. The raceway is operated as an Enterprise Fund, meaning that the revenues that it generates, as the raceway receives no general fund tax dollars, cover its operating expenses and capital improvements. The raceway's varied, year round activities bring between 30 and 40 million dollars into the surrounding community each year.

Proposal

PIR is looking for a strategic plan for operations (they both self-promote events as well as rent the facility out to other promoters), as well creating a 5-year plan for growth, both in attendance and profitability. Of special interest is looking at opportunities for alternative fund-raising, from non-profits to grants, as well as a plan for more traditional revenue sources, from sponsorship and signage to promotions.

Deliverables

- Strategic plan
- 5-year growth plan
- Propose and identify opportunities for revenue sources

Contact Info

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Pixelworks (MIT)

Background

Pixelworks (Nasdaq:PXLW), headquartered in Tualatin, Oregon, is a leading provider of system-on-chip ICs for the advanced display market. Pixelworks' solutions process and optimize video, computer graphics and Web information for display on a wide variety of devices including flat-panel monitors, digital televisions and multimedia projectors used in business and consumer markets. Our broad IC product line is used by the world's leading manufacturers of consumer electronics and computer display products to enhance image quality and ease of use.

Pixelworks Image Processor chips are the power behind the screens. No matter where the images come from, our Image Processor ICs deliver the best front of screen performance and innovative features to the world's most advanced monitors, televisions, and projectors. Or, as we like to say, we push pixels perfectly into place.

The unique Pixelworks Image Processor Architecture combines ICs and a consistent software design that includes customizable software development and production support tools. In addition, Pixelworks provides a complete support environment through its Architecture Labs enabling customers to quickly integrate Pixelworks products into their own product development programs. This approach allows customers to rapidly customize feature sets, performance, and "look and feel" of their final products with fast time to market.

Proposal

We are interested in engaging with a motivated group of researchers to perform a "blue sky" investigation into revolutionary applications for silicon integrated circuits. The technology to manufacture ICs is evolving rapidly, creating the opportunity to build more complex ICs, such as high-powered microprocessors, as well as ubiquitous chips that can make everyday objects "smart" for only a few cents but sell in massive volumes. Examples include RF identity tags and other smart sensors.

The research team would be tasked with the following:

- Researching through published reports, scientific papers and interviews possible applications for silicon-based ICs that will be commercially viable in 3-10 years;
- Assessing the total available market for the application;
- Evaluating the technological advances necessary to achieve a product that is commercializable; and
- Recommending the top three areas to pursue based on the team's evaluation of the potential product's opportunity for success.

Deliverables

- Written report compiling the research, including comprehensive bibliography, that addresses the project tasks
- Presentation to Pixelworks executives

Contact Info

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Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund

Background

The Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund (MCM) was formed in 1970 and is a private grant-making foundation organized to relieve the misfortune and promote the well being of mankind. It is currently the 5th largest foundation Oregon with an asset base of approximately \$130 million. We are community based, meaning we make grants principally to Oregon Non- Profits. The goal is to manage the fund so as to benefit the community into perpetuity by managing the assets base to grow at a greater percentage than the minimum required 5% annual distribution rate. The Fund is an Oregon Non Profit Corporation and is governed by an executive committee and board of directors. We make grants to relieve misfortune and promote well-being in the following five areas:

Cultural Arts	10%*	Medical Research	10%
Education	25%	Public Benefit	5%
Human Services	50%		

*The above percentages represent target cash flow budgets for each area.

MCM is relationship-based grant making organization. This means that that we do not receive unsolicited grant requests and that a relationship to our Board is required to begin the process of making a grant to an organization.

Proposal

The Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund (MCM) requires a comprehensive Strategic Plan. The process will be similar to a plan for a commercial venture with some notable exceptions discussed below. The plan will have the following major components:

- A thorough Situation Analysis that spans the overall market for foundations including the following
 - Methods for benchmarking the performance
 - Trends in the formation, operation, and governance of foundations
 - An analysis of foundations with similar missions to MCM
 - Legal and regulatory trends and changes
 - The impact of the political climate on foundations
 - Key issues plaguing foundations in today's environment and how they are being addressed
 - Trends in the grant process
 - SWOT Analysis
- Mission, Values and Objectives
- The Grant Process
 - The basic strategy and philosophy
 - Pro-active versus reactive
 - On-going versus one-time grants
 - Cooperation with other foundations (forming alliances)
 - Recommendations for making the process more effective
- Communication Strategy
 - Getting the word out
 - Simplifying communication with MCM
- Operations
- Financial Strategy
 - Goals of the fund
 - Investment strategy
- Measurement and Control

Deliverables

- Comprehensive Strategic Plan

Contact Info

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