

# Strategy for Researching a Public Company

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## Where to Look for Information?

\*Understand varied information sources for **internal** and **external** analysis.

### Background

Find company history, mission, value, products, services, location, etc. on the company's website, SEC Form 10-K Item 1 (Business). Subscribed databases (e.g., Mergent Online) can provide an overview or company profile. Company profiles are also widely available online; consult reputable sources; be aware of outdated information.

### Current Strategy

Strategy can probably be found on the company's website, 10-K, 10-Q, 8-K, earnings call transcripts, executive interviews, or presentations. It may be analyzed by consultants, researchers, and scholars. Check the company's website, events, news, magazine, scholarly articles, or public media.

### Competitors

Identify direct competitors in 10-K (Item 1; Item 7) and industry reports. Many subscribed databases (e.g., Mergent Online) identified a list of competitors through industry classification (e.g., NAICS or SIC). Competitor information is also widely available online; be aware of how competitors are identified.

### Resources & Capabilities

Find resources (e.g., property, IT, R&D, employee, brand, IP) on 10-K. Identify capabilities, core competencies, and value chain activities by analyzing the 10-K, digging through the company's website, comparing to direct competitors, and searching news, magazine, scholarly articles, or company profile (SWOT analysis). Specific sources are available for research IP and R&D activities.

### Governance, CSR, & ESG

Find Board of Directors, Executive Compensations, Stock Ownership, etc. on SEC Form DEF 14A (Proxy Statement). Corporate social responsibility (CSR), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)-related efforts may be mentioned in DEF14A. The company may also have separate reports or news releases for CSR or ESG efforts.

### Industry Structure

Find industry analysis in the 10-K (Item 1; Item 7), and recent IPO's S-1 (Prospectus). Industry profiles (e.g., MarketLine) can provide five forces analysis, an industry overview, competitive landscape, industry financial ratios, industry opportunities, and challenges. Explore the industry association's website online for industry trends.

### Financial Performance

Find audited financial information on 10-K Item 7 (MD&A) and Item 8; find unaudited recent financial data on 10-Q. Financial statements can be amended through 10-K/A. Financial data including time-series data and financial ratios can be available via subscribed databases (e.g., Mergent Online) or online (e.g., Yahoo! Finance), but always remember to verify the data with the original SEC filings.

### Risks and Challenges

Find a company's risk factors and legal proceedings from 10-K and 10-Q; Risk factors can indicate challenges from the industry, market, consumers, etc. Industry profiles (e.g. First Research) can provide business challenges; company profiles (SWOT analysis) can provide weaknesses or external threats. Lawsuits can be found via legal databases.

### PESTLE

Macro-level political, economic, social, and technological trends are often analyzed by think tanks, consulting firms, government agencies, etc. A broad online search may work well (with the keywords such as macro trends, demographic trends, consumer trends, and technology trends), but pay attention to recent content and authoritative sources.

## Where to Search for Information Sources?

\*Mapping the sources with **subscribed databases** and **online research tools**.

### Company Releases

Corporate history, products, services, annual reports, ESG reports, events, conference presentations, earnings calls and transcripts, news, etc.  
**Online:**  
Company Website - About Us;  
Company Website - Investor Relations

### SEC Filings

Important filings include 10-K (Annual Report), DEF 14A (Proxy Statement), 10-Q: (Quarterly Report), 8-K (Current Report) S-1: (Prospectus).  
**Database:**  
[Mergent Online](#)  
**Online:**  
Company Website - Investor Relations  
Edgar - SEC Filings

### Company Profiles

Company history, products, services, employees, financials, SWOT analysis, competitors, etc.  
**Database:**  
[Mergent Online](#);  
[Business Source Complete](#) (MarketLine Company Profile)  
**Online:**  
Reputable business media (e.g., CNN money)

### Industry Profiles

Competitive environment, key success factors, five forces analysis, industry opportunities, challenges.  
**Databases:**  
[Business Source Complete](#) (MarketLine Industry Profile)  
[Mergent Archive](#) (First Research Industry Profile)  
**Online:**  
Industry Associations' Website

### News/Media

Highlighted company resources, capabilities, strategies, and changes in strategic directions; competitive analysis; executive interviews, etc.  
**Databases:**  
[ProQuest US Major Dailies](#) (Wall Street Journal, etc.)  
**Online:**  
Reliable News Sources  
Youtube (CBS, CNN)

### Magazine Articles

Professional analyses of companies' resources, capabilities, strategies, performance, governance; executive interviews, etc.  
**Databases:**  
[Business Source Complete](#) (Forbes, Fortune, Harvard Business Review)  
**Online:**  
Reputable publisher or consulting firm websites

### Scholarly Articles

Scholarly comments or analyses on a company's strategy, management issues, etc. It offers deep insights based on theories or empirical studies.  
**Databases:**  
[Business Source Complete](#) - Academic Journals  
**Online:**  
Google Scholar (WCU Library Link)

### Business Data

Business data variables, such as revenue, or the number of employees can be retrieved for time-series statistical analysis and cross-company comparisons. Often only available through subscribed databases.  
**Database:**  
[Mergent Online](#) (Basic) WRDS (Advanced) Bloomberg (Advanced)