**Assignment 1: Situation Analysis**

If you haven’t already done so, take time now to carefully review the material on the [Assignment Guidelines](http://sb5.athabascau.ca/course/mktg420v6.nsf/MoodleCourse/5C8AC945892D9D1887257707005EE204?Opendocument) page (in particular, take note of formatting and referencing requirements). Use Microsoft Office (or a compatible word processing program) to prepare the assignment.

Assignment 1 is worth 20 percent of your final grade and should be done after you complete the readings and learning activities for Lessons 1 through 6.

Assignment 1 requires you to perform a situation analysis of the organization you have chosen to work with. A situation analysis is divided in two parts: internal (company) and external analyses.

**Internal Analysis**

The research effort for this part of Assignment 1 is limited to assessing the organization’s internal resources, capabilities, and performances (see Figure 1-8 on page 21 of the textbook). The aim of this exercise is to review the organization’s ability to develop and implement successful communication campaigns, learn from the organization’s previous communication successes or failures, assess the firm or brand image, and identify key elements the organization can use to build its positioning.

Overall, this internal analysis should provide a snapshot of your company, including a very brief history, the firm's present status, product lines, sales history, target markets, current marketing mix, and other factors that make the company what it is today. You should also provide a description of the product or service that is the focus of your campaign plan. Emphasis should be placed on the product's sales history, market share, strengths, weaknesses, key benefits, brand image, and other factors important for an understanding of the product's or service's performance and place among its category competitors.

**External Analysis**

Figure 1-8 in the textbook provides an outline of the types of information you need to provide for this assignment under competitive, consumer, environmental, and market analyses. In addition to this outline, your assignment could also include

(1) a description of the industry in which your product competes, its size, growth, current trends and developments, and any key factors necessary for an understanding of the setting.

(2) an identification of the important direct and indirect competitors for the product. For each competitor, focus should be on factors such as sales, market share, growth, key benefits, positioning, advertising and promotion budget, promotion program mix, message and media strategies, and an overall assessment of strengths and weaknesses.

(3) an identification of the various market segments and the user profile for the product, as well as a description of the consumer decision process for the product and the important factors influencing brand selection. Who buys the product or service? Who is the decider? the influencer? What are the demographic, geographic, psychographic, and behavioral factors that influence the buying decision? Is buying behavior characterized by extended or limited problem solving? Is the product/brand a high-involvement or low-involvement purchase? In short, what are the key factors that influence buyer behavior for this product or service?

The challenge for you might be how to find this information. I assume that you are familiar with basic marketing research—your introductory marketing course should have covered this topic. If you need a refresher, you can request any basic marketing textbook (e.g., *Marketing: An Introduction* by Armstrong, Kotler, Trifts, and Buchwitz) from the AU library or your local library, or do an Internet search. Remember that the organization you have chosen already has knowledge about its customers, competitors, and environment that could be useful to you. You may also consider using external secondary data such as online databases (search the AU library), Statistics Canada, periodicals, your local Chamber of Commerce, newspapers, business publications, the company’s annual reports, and Internet data sources, depending on the type of organization you chose. Finally, you may also consider conducting preliminary primary research, especially to get a clear picture of customer behaviour. If you conduct such research, you **must** annex your research instrument to your report. Since this is only an academic exercise, you are not expected to have a large sample if you decide to conduct a survey. In-depth interviews or focus groups may also be relevant alternatives to consider. Note that conducting primary research is not mandatory and does not yield extra marks; however, if you cannot find enough secondary data to perform a relevant customer behaviour analysis, primary research may be your only option.

Your report must not exceed 20 pages in length, excluding the cover page, table of contents, references, and appendices.

**Evaluation**

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| **15%: professionalism** | general appearance, spelling, grammar, and organization (executive summary, table of contents, introduction, sections in the main body, and references) |
| **10%: research effort** | quantity and quality of sources, research instrument, research method |
| **30%: thoroughness** | and relevance of information collected |
| **35%: analysis of facts** | and their interpretation in terms of likely communication implications |
| **10%: synthesis** | quality of arguments and recommendations in the executive summary |