# Media & Entertainment: Strategy Consulting Projects SPRING 2021

**Update: 12.30.20**

**Course: B8685-1**

**Date Set: M/W - B Term (March 8 to April 26)**

**Start Time: 3:50 PM , End Time: 5:20 PM**

**Credits: 1.5**

**Room/Zoom TK**

**Adjunct Associate Professor Ava Seave**

Phone: 212 222 0025 (office off campus/messages) or 917 279 6270 (mobile)

Office hours: By appointment

Email: as2486@columbia.edu

**General Course Description**

Very helpful, but in no way a requirement: One media course and/or one strategy course and/or professional experience at a media company.

In “Media & Entertainment: Strategy Consulting Projects,” the concepts and theories introduced in previous media and strategy courses will be applied in a practical way to problems brought to the class as projects from real companies and their managers.

The ultimate goal of this class is for students to have team experience in helping companies recognize and solve strategic media problems.

Among the techniques the students will work on

* Industry mapping
* SCP: Structure/Conduct/Performance analysis
* Market sizing
* Defining the goals of a project
* Defining and understanding scope
* Value propositions and Value curves
* Mapping Business Systems
* Introduction to Business Canvas and Minimal viable product

The half-semester course will introduce techniques to perform strategy consulting for media companies and teach students how to apply these techniques to real projects from real companies. In the seventh week, the teams will present their findings to the sponsoring companies.

To master these skills, each week students will be given specific tools to work through each concept and will to apply these concepts in several ways:

* to current situations of well-known companies and industries
* to a case about an evolving media SaaS company and to a case about a French media company
* to the company project they have been assigned to

Each team will do brief presentations in 11 out of the 12 classes. The teams will have an opportunity to work in a break out room for a portion of each class.

The class is limited to 28 students. There will be four teams of seven members each. Team work, and active participation in each and every class will be required.  Check in meetings (zoom or by phone) with sponsor companies are required each week. Collaboration is expected and encouraged throughout the course.

The class may be assigned some readings throughout the class which will be applicable to certain problems we will be discussing. There will be some reading that is required before the class starts. Optional textbook for this class is: *Curse of the Mogul: What’s Wrong with the World’s Leading Media Companies*(Knee, Greenwald, Seave; Penguin 2009.) But I will be assigning a few chapters via a PDF so no need to purchase it.

**Which companies?**

All participating companies have committed. As the projects are fleshed out, the syllabus will be updated.

* [babbel](https://www.babbel.com/) – an online learning company (project brief below.)
* [Starz](https://www.starz.com/us/en/) – Series and Movies streaming (project brief below.)
* [RF](https://www.babbel.com/) Binder– Communications firm (project brief below)
* [Oaklins DeSilva + Phillips](https://dp.oaklins.com/)– media investment bank (project brief below)

**Before the class begins**

* Pre class reading: Introduction and Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of The Curse of the Mogul: What’s Wrong with the World’s Leading Media Companies (Knee, Greenwald, Seave; Penguin 2009.)
* Read the case Contently: Evolution of a Media Start-up

**Additional Reading assigned after start of term**

* *French News Start-up L'Opinion:  Swimming Upstream in Uncertain Times (Parts A and B)*
* Spotlight on Cumulative Advantage, pages 1-13 (HBR)
	+ Customer Loyalty is Overrated by A.J. Lafley et al
	+ Counterpoint: Old Habits Die Hard but they do die by McGrath
* The Dangers of Categorical Thinking (HBR)
* The Most Underrated Skills in Management (MIT Sloan Review)

**Classroom expectations**

* **Attendance at the first two classes is mandatory, with companies visiting the classroom on Class 2**
* **Attendance to all classes is strongly encouraged, and is expected**
* Except for the first two classes, each class will consist of presentation to the professor (and one other team) of the week’s assignment, team work time and lecture/discussion of the next week’s assignment.

**Class Project Assignments**

* Students will be assigned projects by the professor based as much as possible on student preferences.
* Project assignment mechanics:
	+ Before class begins, I will send a detailed description of the class projects, students can prioritize your preferences, and I will try to honor them as much as possible.
	+ Once assigned to a team, if a student would like to try to switch to another team, he/she has 24 hours to convince someone on the desired team to switch. However, no one is required to switch.
	+ Only contact me after the switch is made to let me know. Do not involve me in any kind of discussion or negotiation.
* The presentation to the company will consist of a presentation deck plus any back up analysis and research that is appropriate

**Grades and how you get them**

Grades will be based on

* the quality of the work for the client,
* class participation during the full class and in break out sessions,
* weekly completion of assignments that will be presented to the prof in break out sessions,
* revision of these assignments if requested
* and the final presentation (group, type A) to your company’s executives in the seventh/exam week.
* The deliverable for the presentation will consist of a presentation deck plus any back up analysis and research that is appropriate.
* You will also be given a short quiz at the end of the semester (multiple choice) to test your retention of major principles discussed.

**Class Dates**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class #** | **Day** | **Date** |
| Class 1 MANDATORY | **Monday** | 8-Mar |
| Class 2 MANDATORY | **Wednesday** | 10-Mar |
| Class 3 | **Monday** | 15-Mar |
| Class 4 | **Wednesday** | 17-Mar |
| Class 5 | **Monday** | 22-Mar |
| Class 6 | **Wednesday** | 24-Mar |
| Class 7 | **Monday** | 29-Mar |
| Class 8 | **Wednesday** | 31-Mar |
| Class 9 | **Monday** | 5-Apr |
| Class 10 | **Wednesday** | 7-Apr |
| Class 11 | **Monday** | 12-Apr |
| Class 12 | **Wednesday** | 14-Apr |
| *Presentation for the companies should be scheduled April 15 to April 23* |

**Babbel**

<https://www.babbel.com/>

**Currently ages 18 to 24 year-olds who indicate they are interested in Babbel --the online language learning platform -- subscribe at a 50% lower rate than adults over 25. The company wants to find out WHY and then what to do about it.**

About Babbel (From the website)

“Language for Life.”

“Over 10,000,000 subscriptions sold!”

“When you learn a new language, you want to be able to actually use it. With real people. In the real world. Every part of Babbel is designed with that goal in mind.

* Designed by pros: Lessons with realistic scenarios designed by over 100 linguists.
* Use what you learn: Interactive dialogues that get you speaking confidently.
* Learn on any device: Compatibility with most devices, with lessons that are only 10-15 min.
* Remember everything: Reviews that bring back what you’ve learned.

“Founded in 2007, Babbel is the world’s first language learning app. A leader in the online language learning industry, Babbel is an international success with millions of active subscribers and ranked as the world’s #1 innovative company in education. Our meticulously designed courses guarantee you language skills you can use right away. Babbel is the shortest path to real-life conversations; 73% of our users indicated that they’d be able to have a short, simple conversation in their new language within five hours of using Babbel.

“At the core of Babbel is a world-class, empirically-proven method that enhances language learning with advanced technology. Our language experts obsess over how to bring you the best quality in modern language learning, covering more than 10,000 hours of content in 14 languages, from Spanish to Indonesian. Babbel is the only product to offer courses tailored to your native language, building on grammar and vocabulary you already know. Audio examples and dialogues are recorded with real native speakers, not automated computers, empowering you to speak correctly and confidently.

“Time tested strategies such, as cognitive research and communicative didactics, optimize how new vocabulary and grammar is received, saved and recalled. Babbel trains your brain to learn constantly and efficiently, so you absorb more information while in the app and continue learning outside of it. Babbel is a premium product and our iOS and Android app makes our practical language lessons available wherever and whenever. With no ads and a transparent, subscription-based business model, we work directly for our learners — not for any third party. And it’s all supported by a fast and dedicated customer service team, available via telephone, email and online chat.”

The Project:

Babbel U.S. would like the student team to delve into research and analysis that will guide the company on how to increase subscriptions among 18 to 24-year-olds. This cohort expresses interest in babbel, becoming a “lead,” in greater quantities than any other.  However,  they are the least likely group to subscribe to the product after becoming a lead.  (Sometimes this is called the “conversion rate” or how many people who explore the product or do a free trial convert to paid subscribers.)   Right now, this age group subscribes at a 50% lower rate than adults over 25. The company wants to find out WHY and then what to do about it.

Another way to think about this is that the Babbel product somehow underdelivers to this group – but in what ways? Once the deficits are identified, Babbel U.S. would like the students to advise on which strategies would win them over and convince them to pay to learn a language with Babbel.

To start the project, students will review and reconsider previous customer research, interviews with Babbel executives as well as any industry-wide studies or other data that Babble currently has access to answer these questions if possible:

* How do the current sources convert interest to paid subscribers for the 18-24 demographic?
	+ Which are the most successful sources to the least successful?
	+ Which are the most successful creative approaches to the least successful?
	+ Which are the most successful terms/pricing for the younger demographic?
* Do men and women of the younger demographic convert at the same rate?
* Do 24-year-olds convert at the highest rate down to the 18-year-olds at the lowest rate in that group, or is a pattern not evident?
* Among the languages are there some in which the differential between the 18-24 vs. the 25+ groups are less pronounced?   Among the psychographic segments, is the differential bigger or smaller among those who study a foreign language for family legacy reasons compared to those who study a foreign language for work reasons?
* Does Babbel use identical unpaid trial content (i.e., words and phrases learned, design) for all demographic groups?

Students should do desk research going through the purchase process of the top 3 or 4 competitors, to understand how their approaches vary from Babbel and if their approaches differ if the buyer is identified by age going through the “funnel.”

The heart of the research, however, is fielding and evaluating a quantitative and qualitative shopper study through consumer surveys. Babbel wants to survey 18-24-year-olds who have ever considered paying for online language learning as well as those who are current and past customers of Babbel or other online language learning companies.  Babbel will work with the students to use a consumer panel from Survey Monkey and a pre-determined budget.

The quantitative survey that the students will design will be a short 10 closed-end question survey which will help to rank and rate some basic “whys”.   This will give the leads for the qualitative work, as it will ask for volunteers for a 10 question I.D.I – in depth interview-- to delve deeper and more illustratively. The students will choose a selection from the volunteers for the I.D.I.s, and complete from 10-15 I.D.Is.

The final report will:

* Summarize the information about 18-24 year olds among Babbels current and former customers as to gender, age, demographic differences, language, sources, creative, etc.  – if there are any
* Summarize the “themes” of the qualitative research
* Recommend how Babbel should test increasing the conversion rate among 18-24-year-olds.

**STARZ**

“OBSESSABLE SERIES. HIT MOVIES. FULL DOWNLOADS.IT'S ALL AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.”

<https://www.starz.com/us/en/>

http://investors.lionsgate.com/company (corporate site)

**What can Starz learn from interviewing 18-34 streaming subscribers and nonsubscribers about why they pay or do not pay for streaming and what they consider “quality” and “premium” streaming service?**

About Starz

From 10K 2020 of Lionsgate, which purchased Starz in 2016

“Accelerating the Transformation of Starz Into A Global Streaming Leader:When we bought Starz in December 2016, our goal was to combine our global content company with a premier distribution platform to amplify the reach of our respective businesses and capitalize on the opportunities afforded by a dynamic and disruptive environment. Less than four years later, we’ve created a thriving direct-to-consumer offering that reaches

“10 million global subscribers, expanded what was once a domestic network into 50 countries around the world and transitioned our legacy business into an a la carte environment for which it is exceptionally well suited.

“During the year, we fulfilled our commitment to open the creative aperture at Starz, producing one of our best original programming slates ever. Domestically, the hit series Outlander achieved record ratings in its 5th season, reporting a 13% uptick from the prior year, and new series Hightown…and P-Valley… debuted to critical acclaim and strong ratings, driving record engagement on the Starz app. Both series have been renewed for their second seasons and look to become mainstays of our slate. When production resumes, we will finish shooting the next two series in the Power franchise, Power Book II: Ghost and Power Book III: Raising Kanan….

“At a time when many platforms continue to search for their identities in a crowded marketplace, Starz knows its brand, its audience and how to reach them with original, compelling, provocative series reflecting grown-up premium content at its best.”

The “media network” segment of Lionsgate consists mostly of 96% Starz domestic revenue. The financials for this segment are below:

|  |
| --- |
| **Media Networks, Lionsgate; in 2020 96% consisted of Starz domestic revenue** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *$ millions* | **2020** | **2019** | **2018** |
| Revenue |  $ 1,487  | 100% |  $ 1,461  | 100% |  $ 1,411  | 100% |
| Intersegment revenue |  $ 2  | - |  -  |  |  -  | - |
| Direct expenses |  $ 1,108  | 75% |  $ 927  | 63% |  $ 881  | 62% |
| Gross Contribution |  $ 381  | 26% |  $ 534  | 37% |  $ 530  | 38% |
| G&A |  $ 86  | 6% |  $ 98  | 7% |  $ 101  | 7% |
| Profit |  $ 295  | 20% |  $ 436  | 30% |  $ 429  | 30% |

From starz.com

|  |
| --- |
| ***From STARZ.com FAQs*** |
| STARZ Free Trial | Want to get? Here's how to:1. Go to starz.com and click "Sign Up"2. Enter your email address3. Submit your payment information (only to be charged after the trial period)4. Select a password for logging in on other devices5. Go to starz.com on your desktop or download the STARZ App on your favorite device6. Find "Have STARZ" or "Login" and use the email address and password you chose when signing up to login |
| When does it end and what will I be charged? | Your free trial lasts for 7 days. When it is over, you will be charged the monthly subscription fee of $8.99 by your subscription provider. You pay for your subscription in advance of the covered month. Remember it is your responsibility to cancel before the trial ends to avoid being charged. |
| What is the STARZ app? | STARZ is the app for TV, movies and more. Watch current and past seasons of STARZ Original Series, today's best movies and other favorites wherever, whenever and as much as your heart desires. It's all right here and it's all yours. Just watch on a computer, or download on a smartphone or tablet and start the obsession.  |
| How do I get STARZ? | There are three ways to get into the obsessable TV, movies and more that STARZ delivers. 1. Subscribe to your cable, satellite or telco provider. 2. Get the app on your TV connected device or from the App Store on your phone or tablet and subscribe. 3. Head to www.starz.com and select 'Buy STARZ’ Check out www.starz.com/getstarz for more info. |
| How much do I owe per month? | It depends how you subscribe. Different providers have different deals and monthly subscription fees. Check out www.starz.com/getstarz for more info. |
| I don't see my TV Provider listed. Can I still get the app? | We're working closely with all TV providers to make the STARZ app available to you as part of your subscription. Check back regularly or call your provider to tell them you want it. Or, you can subscribe to our standalone streaming service through the App Store, Google Play or Roku. For more info, check out www.starz.com/getstarz. |
| Where can I watch the STARZ app? | The simple answer to that is anywhere you have a computer or mobile device with a high-speed data connection, either through a direct Internet connection, Wi-Fi or 4G in the U.S. and certain U.S territories. Or you can download content to your device and watch offline. Airplanes, mountain peaks, wherever. |
| Can I get STARZ without being a cable, satellite or telco subscriber? | Yes. Just download the STARZ app and subscribe. For more info, check out www.starz.com/getstarz. |
| Can STARZ Original Series and movies be viewed on multiple devices at one time? | Most definitely. You can stream on up to 4 devices at a time. |
| Can I pause something on one device and resume it on another? | Sure can. You can play, pause, and continue watching on any other device. |
| Can I purchase shows and movies on a pay-per-view basis? | Unfortunately, no. And why limit yourself anyway? STARZ adds new episodes and movies weekly so subscribing through your provider or streaming directly is where it's at. |
| Is STARZ or the STARZ app available internationally? | They're both only available in the United States and its legal territories. Still, STARZ licenses many of its obsessable Original Series to broadcasters around the world and STARZ Play Arabia is available in 17 countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA Region). |

The Project:

STARZ would like the student team to delve into qualitative research and analysis that will guide the company on why the 18-24 ranges and the 25-34 ranges do or do not subscribe to STARZ and other streaming services. Starz has historically targeted an audience that is older, but is open to engaging with 18-34 year-olds in the future (both in advertising and in consumer insights research.

The company wants to conduct “in depth interviews (IDIs)” with customers and potential customers in this cohort to get to the “why” of their streaming purchase behavior.

To start the project, students will review and reconsider any industry-wide studies, trade articles or other data that STARZ can supply. They will also do their own literature search through Statista, eMarketer and other CBS resources available. They will meet with the STARZ VP, Audience Research and Insights and her staff and may interview other executives at the company. They will gather any current theories and any other guidance from the company about the 18-34 subscription behaviors.

Students should also do desk research by going through the purchase process of 5 or 6 other streaming companies (HBO, Showtime, Apple TV+ in addition to 3 others that the students believe should be compared) to understand how their approaches vary.

The heart of the research, however, is fielding and evaluating IDIs with people who pay for a subscription to Starz or other similar identified competitors vs. those who do not.

First the students will devise a screener survey to help select who they will qualitatively interview. The screener will be a short 8 closed-end question survey which will establish age, gender, geography, if they subscribe to Starz and/or one of the identified closer competitors, for how long and through which distribution partner. This will help select appropriate people as well as a demographic array of interviewees.   The students will find interviewees from their own social networks and fellow students as well as get volunteers from Starz consumer research panel of current and past Starz app subscribers who have signed up to participate in research.

The students will design an interview guide for the IDIs to understand the “journey” of subscribing or not subscribing. The interviews will be conducted by phone or by Zoom. Some areas they may be probing will be how these individuals find out about current or past streaming services (family/friends, advertising, Search, social etc.), why they responded when they did, if they change streaming services often and why, if they are susceptible to free trials and other promotions, what does a “premium” streaming service mean to them, what does “high quality content” mean to them in a streaming service. The students will complete from 20 to 25 I.D.Is.

The deliverables at the end of the project will include

* Summaries of each interview with top take-aways from each interview
* Final written report and presentation that will include
	+ A summary of the overall “themes” of the interviews
	+ Compare and contrast of subscribers vs. the non-subscribers
	+ Interviewees’ understanding, definition of “premium” service and “high quality content.”
	+ Conclusions/recommendations for the Starz research team

**RF|Binder**

<https://www.rfbinder.com/>

**The communications industry has continued to evolve—the types of agencies that thrive, and their methods for growth continue to shift. As we look forward to the next 5 years, RF|Binder is looking to understand the future of the market, challenges and opportunities ahead, and the levers management needs to consider for growth. What factors have contributed to the growth and decline of communications firms over the past three years? What is the market outlook, and what can we anticipate will come to fruition in the years ahead?**

**About RF|Binder**

From the website:

RF|Binder is a fully integrated communications and consulting firm—powered by strategy, creativity, analytics and purpose. We are business builders. We address challenges and opportunities with a communications mindset, enabling our clients to build, grow, protect and transform their brands and reputations. Our team has deep expertise across industries, non-profits, and government entities and an extensive range of offerings. We are independent, entrepreneurial, woman-owned, and integrated across capabilities and geographies without boundaries. RF|Binder is headquartered in New York City, with offices in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and a global presence through our PROI Worldwide partners, an association of leading public relations firms across 50 countries in 100 cities. For more information about RF|Binder, visit [www.rfbinder.com](http://www.rfbinder.com).

What we do:

# We build, grow, protect and transform brands and reputations. We are committed to delivering exceptional service to our clients. As an independent agency, we are flexible, adaptable, and entrepreneurial. We pride ourselves in delivering industry-leading work that combines business insights with research, analytics, and creativity to help our clients stand out and achieve their communications and business objectives.

Our People:

We are business leaders, communicators, and impassioned creators. Our team is nimble and multi-disciplinary. We ensure our clients have the right people with the right skills to drive results. To do this, our team includes marketers, entrepreneurs, consultants, strategic advisers, data scientists, MBAs, PhDs, JDs, artists, designers, academics, and reporters. We value analytical thinking, rigorous execution and creativity that enable our clients to have influence. We are passionate about our work, our community, and our world, and we bring that enthusiasm to everything we do. We are solution-oriented and creative problem solvers, who are undaunted by challenges. We care deeply about our clients who can count on us to understand their sense of urgency, be collegial, collaborative, and a trusted partner.

Our Services:



**About the project**

The communications industry has continued to evolve—the types of agencies that thrive, and their methods for growth continue to shift. As we look forward to the next 5 years, RF|Binder is looking to understand the future of the market, challenges and opportunities ahead, and the levers management needs to consider for growth. As part of the firm’s annual planning, we need to understand: What factors have contributed to the growth and decline of communications firms over the past three years? What is the market outlook, and what can we anticipate will come to fruition in the years ahead?The answers to these questions will help inform our approach, strategic priorities for the next 1-5 years.

There are two main phases to this project:

**Phase 1: A Market & Company Analysis**

The first step will be taking a deeper look at the landscape of the U.S. PR/communications agency marketplace—understanding the overall size, projected growth, and forseeable trends that can be anticipated in the next 3-5 years. This will be completed with a combination of primary stakeholder interviews and secondary research within business publications, communications trades, market reports, company profiles/reports/10ks, etc. (RF|Binder will provide a full list of individuals and resources to leverage for this portion of the research). At the end of phase 1, we’ll want to have a strong analysis of the industry landscape that answers the following questions:

* What’s the overall market size today?
* How has the industry evolved over the last 3 years? Has total revenue/size increased/decreased?
* What are the top growth agencies over a 3-year period?
* What are the top declining agencies over a 3-year period?
* What is the market outlook for communications agencies? What are the important emerging trends/factors—e.g., new services, methodologies, business models, etc.—of note?
* What are some of the biggest client/customer demands for communications agencies?

**Phase 2: Identifying Key Growth and Decline Factors in the Industry**

The second phase entails an analysis of some of the high-growth companies and top declining companies to bolster our market analysis, and understand the factors that result in growth for PR/communications agencies. To do this, we will together look at the list of agencies on growth trajectories and on the decline, and choose a sample of 8 to12 to analyze. The team will audit each agency on our list—reviewing communications channels, news/announcements, websites, reports, thought leadership, CEO/leadership commentary, profiles, etc.—to identify potential factors to their success or decline. Once research on each agency is compiled, we will analyze the data to determine:

* What are the similar features/initiatives of growth firms? Of declining firms? Potential factors to consider:
	+ **Industry:** do agencies serve a similar client base or industry(s)? Do they specialize in one industry or serve many?
	+ **Leadership structure:** Are the consistencies in leadership team titles/structure?
	+ **Markets:** Are there consistencies in locations/markets served? Expansion to markets?
	+ **Mergers/acquisitions:** Are they consolidating/acquiring for growth?
	+ **Services**/**Products:** Are they a specialty shop vs. integrated? Do they have similar services/offerings that seem to be prominently marketed?
	+ **Marketing:** Do they have robust marketing initiatives? Are they conducting thought leadership/media interviews/blogs/social media/media interviews, etc.?

Once these factors are analyzed, we’ll review findings to form implications/hypotheses on key factors for growth and decline within the industry.

**Final deliverables:**

* An excel sheet/workbook with raw data of the marketplace and analysis that include graphs that highlight top growth and declining companies (RF|Binder will provide initial raw data, sources and potential output from similar analysis completed in 2018)
* A slide presentation including findings from the market analysis and outlook, the agency audit, and 2-3 slides on implications for RF|Binder, including hypotheses on key factors for growth and decline within the industry.

**Oaklins DeSilva + Phillips**

<https://dp.oaklins.com/>

**IQVIA is a provider of advanced analytics, technology solutions and contract research services to the life sciences industry. In the 2019 10K, the company stated that an important part of its growth plans includes expansion “through strategic acquisitions.” Given IQVIA’s ambitions, what would you advise ODP to pitch to the company to purchase and why?**

**About Oaklins DeSilva+Phillips**

From the website:

“MIDDLE MARKET INVESTMENT BANKERS FOR THE MEDIA, MARKETING AND TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRIES

“Oaklins DeSilva+Phillips leads the TMT practice for Oaklins, the world’s largest and most successful M&A advisory organization in the mid-market.

“ODP specializes in sell-side and buy-side transactions, corporate finance services, valuations and restructurings for companies at the intersection of content, technology and services worldwide.

“We were founded in 1996 by two seasoned media and banking professionals, Roland A. DeSilva and Reed Phillips. For 20+ years, our core focus has been serving the companies and investors that operate at the intersection of Content, Technology and Services, and today, we have deep TMT market expertise in six key sectors:

* Media
* Marketing
* Technology, Data & Information
* Education
* Healthcare
* Private Equity

“In today’s digital economy, geographic borders no longer impede M&A transactions, but it is essential to have an advisor that understands the nuances of cross-border M&A. Virtually every transaction that Oaklins DeSilva+Phillips advises on today involves an international component. For any business owner contemplating a transaction, it is imperative to explore the international buyer and investor universe. Likewise, as an acquirer or investor, the most attractive opportunities often lie abroad, and global deal sourcing is critical.

“Oaklins DeSilva+Phillips has built upon its strong track-record of international M&A through our successful integration with Oaklins, the world’s largest and most successful M&A advisory organization in the mid-market. As the Co-Head of the global TMT practice, we work daily with our colleagues around the world to deliver global reach with a local touch to all of our clients. The Oaklins TMT practice encompasses 90+ bankers and has completed 840+ transactions in the last five years.

“Our Oaklins organization provides invaluable insight into local business practices and customs, and have personal contacts with the most active buyers and investors in their countries.”

**About the project**

There are two parts to this project which centers on IQVIA (NYSE:IQV**)**

1. **Competitive Analysis:**

IQVIA has two main competitors: Cerner (Nasdaq: CERN), which acquired the health care division of Kantar in December 2020, and Optum, which is a unit of United Health Group (NYSE: UNH).

* Students should prepare a competitive landscape that details the strengths and weaknesses of each company and their positioning via-a-vis each other.
* In addition to the overall comparison, there are 4 special areas that we would like the student team to cover
	1. Real-world evidence (one aspect of life-science data) is broadly available and posing a challenge to IQVIA's real-world claims-based databases, hence revenue and profits.  (An example is Komodo Health) -- how do the 3 competitors deal with this issue?
	2. Which of the 3 competitors are strongest in digital healthcare services focused on clinical trials? Which are stronger in more traditional clinical trial management?
	3. How are the 3 competitors responding to digital transformation in marketing communications?
	4. What are the geographic differences among the competitors?  Does IQVIA's global footprint give it an advantage or not?
1. **M&A targets**

ODP expects the pace and size of M&A activity to accelerate over the next several years for IQVIA because of the general activity in the health tech area. The company itself is the product of a 2016 merger of IMS Health and Quintiles.

We are particularly interested in understanding how we can aid IQVIA in making the best acquisitions for their business in the current environment. Students should describe an acquisition strategy for IQVIA and then make recommendations for 3 acquisitions that will fit into the strategy you have defined.