Step 1: Identify/Profile the Company

- Determine whether the company is publicly-owned (does the company sell/buy shares of its stock?) or privately-held. U.S. public companies must file regular reports with the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC).
- Summarize the company's business activities. Company profiles include details like company history, sales, profits, number of employees, principle executives, multi-year financial statements, locations, products and services, brands, and key competitors.

Consider checking several of these sources because they won’t necessarily include the same information; some may be a little more current.

Where to look for company profiles:

- **Library Sources**
  - ABI/Inform Complete
  - Business Insights: Essentials
  - Business Source Ultimate
  - Hoover’s Online
  - Mergent Online
  - S&P NetAdvantage

*Information for privately-owned companies may be more challenging to find but Business Source Premier includes MarketLine company profiles that will cover some of the more readily available information on privately-held companies. Also, Check Hoover’s Company Records.

Step 2: Find Current News and In-depth Articles about the Company

- Articles published in leading business magazines and trade journals often provide insight into a company's operations, strategy and competition. Where to look for articles:
  - **Library Resources**
    - ABI/Inform Complete
    - Business Source Ultimate

  Also, consider these web sites devoted to business news:

  - Bloomberg
  - CNNMoney
  - MarketWatch
  - Yahoo! Finance
  - Google Business News

Step 3: Visit the Company's Web Site

Company websites are valuable sources of information and well worth exploring. Look for links for Investors, global responsibility, corporate information, and similar labels.

Step 4: Examine the Company's Financials and Market Performance
Company Research in Seven Steps

Public companies issue annual and quarterly reports including income statements, balance sheets, and cash flow statements. Some sources for financial information allow it to be downloaded into a spreadsheet for analysis. Where to find financial information:

**Library Resources**
Mergent Online
S&P NetAdvantage

**Internet Sources**
EDGAR (SEC)
Yahoo Finance

**Step 5: Locating the Company’s Strategy**

U.S. Public Companies usually state business strategies in "Item 1. Business" of their Form 10-K (or annual report) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The Business overview in the 10-K includes a discussion of the company's strategy, products and services, operations, marketing, distribution, international business, suppliers and government regulation. Where to find 10-K’s:

**Library Resource**
Mergent Online

**Internet Sources**
EDGAR
Yahoo Finance

**Step 6: Locate Investment Research Reports**

Financial institutions produce research reports, written by specialists, on both U.S. and international publicly traded companies. Locate Analysts’ Reports:

Business Insights: Essentials
Nexis Uni

**Step 7: Survey the Industry and Competition**

Companies are affected by industry conditions. Industry reports can help to identify the top competitors as well.

**Library Resources**
IBISWorld
S&P NetAdvantage
Business Insights: Essentials- selected Plunkett Industry reports available here. Click the Industries link, scroll down to Plunkett Reports.