

Aldi

In 2013, Aldi - the world's 8th largest retailer - planned to accelerate its US expansion. Aldi was a German-based hard discounter that sold a limited assortment of private-label groceries and household items in barebones stores. Despite its presence with 1200 stores in 32 states, Aldi was still relatively unknown in the US. But it was often cited as one of the reasons for Walmart's exit from Germany. Could it compete with WalMart in the US, WalMart's home market?

The Weather Company

New CEO David Kenny transformed The Weather Company in less than two years from a primary identity as a cable television channel to a multi-platform digital company innovating in the uses of weather data. He assesses progress and considers strategic choices and organizational challenges ahead. He created a new narrative for the company in the era of Big Data, putting science at the center (great forecasts) and stressing services, stories (the ability to communicate the data to users), and safety (preparation for severe weather, including using social media). Now he has questions about how much to invest in the declining but still important television business; how to build and hold audiences beyond severe weather events, when audiences spike; how to stay ahead of growth of digital platforms, especially mobile, when current partners (such as Google) could easily turn into competitors; and how to build organizational capabilities, culture, and talent to be ready for ongoing and future change, including global growth. Kenny grapples with a number of strategic tensions: between innovations and the traditional business, between global and local, and about increased partnering or proprietary advantages. He must continue to lead and develop the team to support a vision that is still unfolding.

LinkedIn

The purpose of this case is to help students critically evaluate the market value of LinkedIn's stock following its recent IPO. In the context of strong investor appetite for social media companies, LinkedIn is the lamp bearer among US companies in that industry that are considering tapping into public markets. The case can serve to illustrate the challenges of valuing an early-stage high-growth company with a great deal of uncertainty about fundamental value and how quoted prices might reflect expectations that are hard to justify. Regardless of which valuation method is employed (eg, residual income, discounted cash flow, multiples), the case provides a platform (i) to map the firm's key success and risk factors into forecasts and estimates for its future performance and cost of capital and (ii) to critically assess the implied assumptions underlying the market's expectations. The case is best suited for a course on business valuation at all levels (undergraduate, MBA, executive programs).

Tesla

In mid-2013, Tesla Motors was riding a wave of success: It had launched its first really mass-produced car - the model S - to rave reviews; had recently raised first-year production targets; and had started taking orders for its next car, the Model X. Tesla seemed to be on its way to defying the skeptics and becoming the first US company to enter the car industry with a mass-produced car since WWII and the first to successfully launch a fully electric car. Or was it not?