The Ultimate Case Competition Industry Research Checklist

A JDCC Preparation Resource

Preparing for a case competition but have no idea what industry your case might be about? SAME!

This is a list my team and I put together while preparing for JDCC. We divided the research between ourselves to build our general business knowledge, understand different industries, and feel more prepared for whatever case came our way.

You don't need to become an expert in everything, but knowing a little about different industries can make a HUGE difference!

Before You Start: Research These 6 Things for EVERY Industry No matter what industry you're researching, make sure you can answer these questions:

- [ ] **Real-world examples:** Find case studies of companies implementing different strategies. What worked, what didn't, and why?
- [ ] **Competitors and industry leaders:** Who are the biggest players? How do they operate, compete, and differentiate themselves?
- [ ] **Industry challenges:** What factors are helping or hurting companies? Consider costs, competition, regulations, technology, and consumer behaviour.
- [ ] **Growth and success:** How do companies become successful, attract customers, and increase profitability?
- [ ] **Market and customers:** Who are the target customers? What are the market segments, total consumer base, and potential growth opportunities?
- [ ] **Numbers and evidence:** Find useful industry statistics, financial benchmarks, implementation costs, and examples to support your recommendations.

Remember: Everything you recommend should be backed by logical reasoning, realistic assumptions, and, whenever possible, real-world examples.

I know this list looks long but you can watch TikToks or YouTube videos or podcasts to help you understand better!

Part 1: Industries to Research

1. Consulting & Business Strategy

- [ ] Watch YouTube videos and TikToks explaining how to solve consulting cases.

- [ ] Learn how consultants structure problems, analyze information, and communicate recommendations.
- [ ] Research real consulting challenges and how companies solved them.
- [ ] Review common case frameworks, including SWOT, PESTEL, Porter's Five Forces, and profitability analysis.
- [ ] Practice explaining recommendations clearly, even when you don't have all the information.
- [ ] Learn how to think and speak like a consultant without just throwing around business buzzwords!

2. Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Digital Transformation

- [ ] Understand different types of AI, including generative AI, predictive AI, and agentic AI.
- [ ] Research how companies implement AI into their existing operations.
- [ ] Explore what technology companies are currently developing and implementing.
- [ ] Understand where digital transformation is heading and the opportunities it creates.
- [ ] Research implementation costs, employee training, and system integration.
- [ ] Identify the four main categories of risks: regulatory, ethical, legal, and reputational.
- [ ] Research Canadian privacy legislation, including PIPEDA, and check the status of proposed legislation such as Bill C-27.
- [ ] Understand how companies can mitigate risks and comply with relevant laws.
- [ ] Find examples of successful and unsuccessful AI implementations.

3. Food & Beverage Industry

- [ ] Research food safety regulations, health requirements, and inspections.
- [ ] Understand pricing strategies, operating costs, and profit margins.
- [ ] Explore payment systems and technology integration.
- [ ] Research food delivery platforms, mobile ordering, and loyalty applications.
- [ ] Compare major food brands and how they operate.
- [ ] Understand supply chains, inventory management, and food waste.
- [ ] Explore consumer preferences and emerging food trends.
- [ ] Find real examples of restaurant or food brand expansion strategies.

4. Sustainability & ESG

- [ ] Understand what sustainability means in different industries.

- [ ] Research the costs of implementing and maintaining sustainable practices.
- [ ] Learn the processes and technologies companies use to become more sustainable.
- [ ] Understand the environmental and financial impacts of different initiatives.
- [ ] Explore how sustainability can be integrated into business operations.
- [ ] Research how companies market sustainability to consumers.
- [ ] Understand greenwashing and how companies can avoid it.
- [ ] Find examples of companies successfully implementing sustainability strategies.

5. Finance, Accounting & FinTech

- [ ] Research major trends in financial services, accounting, and wealth management.
- [ ] Understand how the Big Four accounting firms operate.
- [ ] Explore what FinTech companies and financial institutions are implementing.
- [ ] Identify challenges facing financial companies and what helps them grow.
- [ ] Understand how interest rates affect businesses and consumers.
- [ ] Review financial metrics such as revenue, profit margins, ROI, and cash flow.
- [ ] Practice building a comprehensive financial story using numbers.
- [ ] Research emerging financial technologies and digital banking.

6. Pharmaceuticals & Healthcare

- [ ] Research healthcare and pharmaceutical regulations.
- [ ] Understand the process of developing and introducing new drugs.
- [ ] Explore marketing strategies in healthcare and pharmaceutical industries.
- [ ] Research how to introduce a new product into a conservative or traditional market.
- [ ] Understand health insurance systems and reimbursement models.
- [ ] Explore healthcare technology and future industry trends.
- [ ] Research pricing, accessibility, and ethical considerations.
- [ ] Find case studies of successful pharmaceutical launches.

7. Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) & Retail

- [ ] Research product packaging and labelling regulations.
- [ ] Understand global market expansion and international consumer differences.
- [ ] Explore branding, product positioning, and marketing strategies.
- [ ] Compare major competitors and their competitive advantages.
- [ ] Understand e-commerce versus in-person retail strategies.

- [ ] Research omnichannel retail and how companies integrate online and offline shopping.
- [ ] Explore pricing, distribution, and consumer purchasing behaviour.
- [ ] Find real examples of successful product launches or retail expansion.

8. Alcohol & Regulated Consumer Products

- [ ] Research alcohol regulations, licensing, and distribution rules.
- [ ] Understand advertising and marketing restrictions.
- [ ] Compare major competitors and their distribution strategies.
- [ ] Research Ontario's changing alcohol retail policies and market expansion.
- [ ] Explore consumer trends and product categories.
- [ ] Understand pricing, taxation, and operating restrictions.
- [ ] Find examples of alcohol brands adapting to changing regulations.

Part 2: Business Functions & Strategy Topics

9. Operations & Supply Chain Management

- [ ] Understand supply chain structures and logistics.
- [ ] Research the lasting impacts of COVID-19 on supply chains.
- [ ] Explore manufacturing and production processes.
- [ ] Research production automation and operational efficiency.
- [ ] Understand inventory management, forecasting, and distribution.
- [ ] Explore cost reduction and process improvement strategies.
- [ ] Research future trends in operations and supply chain technology.

10. Marketing Strategies & Consumer Behaviour

- [ ] Research marketing trends and digital marketing strategies.
- [ ] Understand social media platforms and how their algorithms work.
- [ ] Learn important marketing metrics, including engagement, conversion, reach, and retention.
- [ ] Research different types of influencers, their compensation, and incentives.
- [ ] Understand customer segmentation, target audiences, and consumer behaviour.
- [ ] Explore marketing frameworks and campaign planning.
- [ ] Research customer acquisition and retention strategies.
- [ ] Find examples of successful campaigns and why they worked.

11. Research & Development (R&D)

- [ ] Understand the steps involved in conducting R&D.
- [ ] Research typical R&D budgets and funding requirements.
- [ ] Learn how long research and product development usually take.
- [ ] Understand where to begin and how to structure an R&D project.
- [ ] Research how companies determine project feasibility.
- [ ] Understand team responsibilities and required expertise.
- [ ] Consider opportunity costs, risks, and potential returns.
- [ ] Find examples of companies successfully developing new products or technologies.

12. Product Development & Launch Strategy

- [ ] Understand how to define a new product or feature.
- [ ] Conduct customer and user analysis.
- [ ] Research user testing, prototypes, and feedback collection.
- [ ] Learn how companies plan product development.
- [ ] Understand marketing, promotions, and launch strategies.
- [ ] Identify the teams and resources needed.
- [ ] Research relevant certifications and approval requirements.
- [ ] Find real examples of successful product launches.

13. Human Resources & Management

- [ ] Research employee engagement strategies and workplace events.
- [ ] Understand different leadership styles and team dynamics.
- [ ] Explore vertical and horizontal organizational communication.
- [ ] Compare bureaucratic organizations with startup cultures.
- [ ] Understand employee compensation, benefits, bonuses, and work-life balance.
- [ ] Research how companies resolve internal conflicts.
- [ ] Explore employee retention, motivation, and performance management.
- [ ] Find case studies of organizational and leadership challenges.

14. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) & Organizational Culture

- [ ] Research how companies implement DEI initiatives.
- [ ] Understand common challenges and barriers in diverse workplaces.
- [ ] Explore how DEI strategies differ across industries.
- [ ] Research company culture and how it influences employee behaviour.

- [ ] Understand how organizations communicate their values internally and externally.
- [ ] Explore ways to measure the effectiveness of workplace initiatives.
- [ ] Find examples of companies improving their workplace culture.

Part 3: Business Implementation, Legal & Financial Planning

15. Business Laws & Regulations

- [ ] Research common laws affecting businesses in Canada.
- [ ] Understand industry-specific permits, licences, and certifications.
- [ ] Explore consumer protection and privacy laws.
- [ ] Research employment and workplace regulations.
- [ ] Identify legal risks when implementing new strategies.
- [ ] Understand how companies manage compliance.
- [ ] Find examples of businesses facing regulatory challenges.

16. Agreements, Contracts & Partnerships

- [ ] Learn how to structure a business agreement or contract.
- [ ] Understand pricing, payment terms, and deliverables.
- [ ] Research timelines, milestones, and responsibilities.
- [ ] Identify legal and technical requirements.
- [ ] Understand what should be included in a formal agreement.
- [ ] Research who prepares and reviews contracts.
- [ ] Learn how to identify a suitable business partner.
- [ ] Understand how to evaluate potential partnerships and explain WHY a particular partner makes sense.
- [ ] Find examples of successful strategic partnerships.

17. Funding & Financial Management

- [ ] Research business funding options through banks and investment funds.
- [ ] Understand loans, equity financing, and venture capital.
- [ ] Explore how companies secure large amounts of funding.
- [ ] Research financial management and the role of financial advisors.
- [ ] Understand basic investment accounts and concepts, including TFSAs and RRSPs, where relevant.

- [ ] Explore financial planning and budgeting.
- [ ] Understand funding costs, financial risks, and expected returns.
- [ ] Find real examples of companies raising capital for expansion.

18. Inspections, Evaluation & Performance Measurement

- [ ] Research how companies structure inspections and evaluations.
- [ ] Understand inspection costs and timelines.
- [ ] Identify industry-specific requirements and expectations.
- [ ] Explore quality assurance and performance evaluation.
- [ ] Research compliance monitoring and reporting.
- [ ] Understand how companies measure implementation success.
- [ ] Find examples of performance improvement programs.

Make Your Research Useful! For each industry, try to prepare a short summary answering:

1. **What's happening in this industry?** Major trends and challenges.
2. **Who are the biggest players?** Competitors and industry leaders.
3. **What's working?** Successful strategies and real-world examples.
4. **What's not working?** Common failures, risks, and challenges.
5. **What would I recommend?** Two or three realistic strategies you could apply to a business case.
6. **How much would it cost?** Financial considerations, resources, and implementation timelines.

You can also create a shared research document with your teammates so everyone can contribute their findings.

One Last Tip! Don't just memorize facts and frameworks. Try to actually understand how businesses operate and WHY companies make certain decisions.

You never know what kind of case you'll get, but the more familiar you are with different industries, the easier it becomes to connect ideas and build recommendations. And remember, **you don't need to know everything. You just need to know how to approach a problem!**

Good luck with your next case competition! You've got this!!

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Originally created from our team's JDCC preparation research list. Always verify current industry data, regulations, and legislation before applying your research.