

Research In Motion (RIM) is the company behind the development of the Blackberry wireless hardware. The company was one of the first to market a “smartphone” amid a sea of wireless devices available to consumers. RIM is now expanding their product line to include wireless tablets in addition to the newest generation of handsets.

The Blackberry has faced strong competition throughout its development. Now with developers such as Google and Apple, Blackberry is finding their dominant market share diminishing. When RIM first introduced the Blackberry design it was quickly adopted by business individuals as a convenient way to conduct operations away from their desk. The company's designs were innovative enough to patent and the Blackberry has had its share of battles to protect itself from copies. There have been infringement suits against other companies for such things as the Blackberry's email system and the design of the keyboard. In several cases, the infringing companies chose to license RIM's technology instead of continuing litigation.

There are some industry factors that influenced the designs of RIM. The emerging smartphone market wanted handsets capable of high data transfer rates which would allow accessing web pages and sending emails and text messages. This was of course in addition to making calls with high quality audio and very little drop outs. The Blackberry included a tactile keyboard in order to facilitate sending text messages and email, taking notes for meetings, inputting contact information, and a screen large enough to clearly read the aforementioned functions. Many competing phones of the day had a rudimentary means of entering text and were “crude” compared to the Blackberry design.

I believe RIM has addressed many of the TCOs presented for this class. TCO A entails describing the industry dynamics of technological innovation. The Blackberry released in 1999 amid a nearly already flooded wireless market, but was a significant step ahead of the competition and captured a significant share of that market especially with the business world. TCO B describes the protection of technological innovations, and RIM has taken careful steps to patent their designs and monitor competitors to make sure they are not infringing upon those designs (as witnessed by the court battles with other companies). TCO C covers identifying the core technological competencies of the organization in an industry context. RIM has been, and will most likely continue to be, an innovator in the wireless mobile industry, which include the Blackberry OS as well as hardware.

TCO D addresses how the company can increase their innovative capabilities through collaboration and internal strategies. RIM is currently expanding into the wireless tablet market (similar to the iPad). I believe that ensuring their handsets and tablets are complimentary devices is a way to give their products a wider install base, and encouraging first and third party developers to produce applications for each (or even complimentary apps) will give added value to the consumer. TCO E covers formulating an innovation strategy through new product development, and I think RIM is in the process of doing this right now. They are continuing to develop the Blackberry devices and expanding their capabilities to meet or exceed current generation handsets and tablets, but still be compatible with

current data standards. I believe they should focus on preparing for the next generation of data networks (5g). TCO F suggests a deployment strategy to facilitate the success of the technology driven organization. Also I believe RIM is doing this right now. They have captured a strong market with the corporate business individuals who need reliable and diverse wireless technologies to use in their day to day business. Perhaps they can develop corporate software to interface with the wireless hardware in which individuals can access company information and resources anywhere their handset can go.

In closing, I believe RIM will continue to innovate with their Blackberry design. They have a loyal following much the same as Apple with the iPhone. Now RIM is joining other developers in producing a wireless tablet. As long as the Blackberry is able to appeal to the business individual, I think they will be a strong competitor to the other handset manufacturers.

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