Robin Hood Case Analysis

BA 422W

Aaron Labin, Curt Matthews, Rich Miller
4/14/2009

This is the case analysis for the Robin Hood case study provided by the text. It includes our competitive forces in the industry analysis, key success factors analysis, current strategy determination, SWOT analysis and the recommendations we have made for Robin Hood.
Robin Hood and his band of Merrymen is the subject of this case study. Throughout this study, you will find several problems that face the group and several possible solutions to these problems. We will treat this group as though they are a legitimate business in need of consulting services.

The organizational structure of the Merrymen is that of a typical top-down management style, with Robin Hood as the CEO and a few lieutenants serving in roles that have been delegated, i.e. information gathering, discipline, finances and provisioning. The four tasks that have been delegated and Robin Hood’s personal vendetta serve as the basis for many of the problems encountered by the Merrymen.

**Competitive Forces in the Industry**

- Suppliers—Determined to be a high threat
- Rivalry—Determined to be a high threat
- New Entrants—Determined to be a low threat
- Buyers—Determined to be a low threat
- Substitute Products—Determined to be a low to moderate

Aaron Labin
Curt Matthews
Rich Miller
Robin Hood Case Study

ARC Consulting Services
The two main threats facing Robin Hood are the intensive threat of competitive rivals and threats to suppliers. Prince John and the Sherriff are Robin’s main rivals and pose a definite threat to his operation. They are in direct competition with each other, and their actions have to constantly be monitored. They pose a high level threat, because of the threat of an attack, taxations to the residents of the forest, and their persistent efforts to capture Robin Hood and his Merrymen. Suppliers are a high level threat, because at any point those who support Robin Hood could be captured by Prince John and the Sherriff, thus cutting off supplies. Also, the bargaining power of suppliers is high simply because of the business Robin is involved in. His business is illegal and therefore a high level threat to anyone who supplies to him.

Threat from buyers is currently a low level threat because an objective of Robin’s is to give to the poor. They have no reason to pose any threat unless at some time Robin Hood begins to tax them. The threat of new entry is also low given the legality of this endeavor. Individuals will likely be more willing to join Robin Hood as opposed to forming their own faction. Although it is obviously more common to have a threat of new entry when in control of the market while making a profit, in this particular situation it is relatively low given Robin Hood’s rapport within the forest.

The threat of substitute products has been identified as a low to moderate threat. The residents of the forest are assumed to be the customers. Two variables that that make them a threat include: The further increases in taxes via Prince John and the perceived possibility that Robin may fail. In the event of either of these things transpiring, the most probable alternative would be the majority of the people leaving the forest. This is a low to moderate threat because although Robin’s current status is relatively stable; his customers face the real possibility of being forced into making alternative decisions.

**Key Success Factors**

ARC Consulting Services has identified several key success factors that Robin Hood and his
Merrymen have experienced thus far. We have identified ten areas that fill the criteria of the success the Merrymen have.

1. The Merrymen’s expertise in their robbing techniques is a key success factor for the band. Robbing is what they are best at.

2. Capturing the learning curve effect of robbing the rich, due to the vast amount of knowledge the Merrymen could offer to new recruits, is a key success factor.

3. The band’s access to attractive supplies of skilled labor due to the popular image of the merry men is a key success factor.

4. High labor productivity is a key success factor due to the amount of Merrymen Robin Hood had incorporated into his band.

5. Low-cost product design and engineering is a key success factor in the band. This is due to the low cost of teaching band members how to rob others; this is not a very involved learning process for new members of the band.

6. A strong network of members is a key success factor based on the popularity of Robin Hood’s band of men.

7. A well know and well respected brand name is a key success factor for the band based on the popularity of the Merrymen.

8. Clever advertising is a key success factor in the terms that advertising is done by word of mouth and recruiting is not required. People want to join the band of Merrymen and don’t have to be coaxed to join.

9. Having convenient locations is a key success factor because the merry men are such a large group of people; they can be in many locations at one time and still work as a group.
10. Patent protection would be a key success factor if the merry men were a patented group or band. It would have been extremely hard for another’s group of robbers to compete with Robin Hood’s brand of Merrymen and carry out robbing activities like Robin Hood’s men did.
ARC has identified the Merrymen’s current competitive approach as a differentiation approach. They rob from the rich and give to the poor, which differentiates the group from its major competition who does the exact opposite. This is also a strength the Merrymen has; their distinctive competence. They have positioned themselves to fill a niche and until recently have done very well at this. His buyers definitely prefer his product over the competition and his tactics are not easily matched or cheaply copied by his competition. He has created brand loyalty and provides a very unique product; possibly one of the most unique products in history. He provides a free service to the poor after his operating expenses are accounted for. He has also created a high perceived value for his product.

**SWOT Analysis**

Many of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats the Merrymen have are closely related, if not a direct result of each other. Because of such a close correlation, many of the weaknesses and opportunities are one in the same and thus will not be identified as differing except when the recommendations are made.

The group has strength in its numbers. Manpower is the largest resource any group can have and the number of the Merrymen is formidable. Robin Hood is also a strong leader. For any one-single man to organize a group of this caliber, strong leadership skills must be present. The brand recognition the Merrymen posses has also been a strength. Because the group is so popular, it has allowed them to make a difference in their community. This popularity has also gained the group access to the resources of the surrounding towns and communities. The cost of training and producing their product is also a strength. They simply steal to obtain the capital they need and training costs are small outside the capital needed to supply the arms and feed the Merrymen. Most of the combat supplies are probably stolen as well.
The first major weakness I have identified is Robin Hood’s personal grudge with the sheriff. This has a great potential to cloud his overall view and influence judgments that may otherwise may not be for the good of the group. Even though the group was born from this idea, it has seemingly surpassed just over-throwing the sheriff and transformed to a scope much larger. This personal vendetta may not take this into account and cause ill-formed decisions.

The second major weakness I have identified is the alliances Robin Hood has made. This problem encompasses a few of the other weaknesses the Merrymen have. At first, the recruitment looked for viable candidates that fit a certain criteria. Now, the Merrymen will accept anyone who is willing to serve the cause. Because of this single change in recruitment procedures, many issues have arisen. First is the decline in discipline and vigilance. This is a direct result of not prescreening candidates and the now laxed criteria for membership. When any candidate is accepted, you are bound to found the “right” ones and many more “wrong” ones. Because of the now laxed recruitment process, another issue has arisen; exceeding the food capacity of the surrounding lands. This is simply a numerical problem that is encountered when you let anyone join a group that relies so heavily on natural resources. The food shortage has also resulted in a depletion of the Merrymen’s finances. Since the land can no longer provide the resources the group needs, they have turned to trade and purchasing. The large number of the group has also caused a space problem.

The next major sets of weaknesses I have identified are a result of the looting and raids the Merrymen participate in. The merchants who once traveled the woods as a trade route are now bypassing the woods completely, keeping the Merrymen from looting their goods. This raised the question to Robin Hood of what alternatives are available to help the group raise funds. Robin Hood favored taxation of the travelers and local towns people rather than looting and raiding but this concept
was met with much resistance. His lower management argued that taxation would turn their closest allies against them and would virtually put them in the same category as the sheriff.

A major opportunity present that is not coupled with the weaknesses the Merrymen have is the proposition of freeing King Richard. Securing the release of King Richard, if successful, would be very beneficial to the Merrymen. This is potentially another source of income for the Merrymen and would shine beneficial political light on the group. If the group were to fail, the retribution would be detrimental. Instead of fighting just one sheriff and his men, the band would potentially have to take on the entire army commanded by Prince John. We recommend partaking in this venture though because we see the benefits outweighing the risks. However, this must be a carefully planned and executed venture.

The sheriff, of course, was the source of the major threats to the Merrymen. At first the campaign was successful but over time the sheriff and his forces are growing larger and better organized. They have received the funding they need to disrupt the Merrymen’s operations. The plan the group first used forecasted that a perpetual state of unrest would cause the sheriff to be removed from his position, however the opposite happened and the sheriff used the unrest to secure reinforcements and funding for the campaign. This was a result of his close strategic alliance with Prince John.

Weaknesses and threats have already been identified but these are all also opportunities. Currently, there is no clear strategic direction for the future and a large lack of management depth. I have identified these and the activities that would follow to incorporate as the largest areas of opportunity for the Merrymen and the mission and strategy they have.
Recommendations

We have developed several recommendations for the Merrymen to aid in the success of the group. It is our belief that the current strategy is one that can again be successful but many changes need to be implemented to ensure this strategy’s success.

The Merrymen need to build off the strengths it has. Manpower is the largest resource any group can have, but the quality of the manpower is an area of concern. Implementation of the original recruitment process or an advanced recruitment process is the first necessary fix. Just letting anyone be a participant of the group has been the source to several of the issues plaguing the Merrymen.

Candidates should have a particular set of skills to allow entry. If there is a food shortage, pre-screen candidates for skills such as farming. Discipline has been identified as another issue. This can be eliminated through the better screening process and better training. For this all to work, there must be a better management system put in place. Five to six managers is not enough for a group of this size.

The better screening process would help identify candidates with the skill sets that would be suitable for the management needs of the group. Since the largest internal issues facing the group have stemmed from its size, identify the candidates who can help manage the discipline, resources, provisions and intelligence gathering. Departmentalization is a must. The brand recognition the Merrymen have can also serve as a source of strength in regards to recruiting. Since the group is so well known, a call to action for specific skill sets can result in a flood of qualified candidates to help manage and maintain the group.
The external threats, weaknesses and opportunities the Merrymen have are formidable, but proper action can be used to manage these. The lack of food and provisions can first be solved by recruiting farmers and hunter/gathers to the group who solely focus on these issues. This would also help eliminate the expenses the group incurs as trading and bartering for provision could be gradually eliminated. Since revenues are in decline, any money-saving action is beneficial. Concurrent with this issue, expansion of the raiding area is a must. Since merchants are now circumventing the forest, the raids need to be taken to them. Simple logic informs you to go where the money is. This is another area where recruitment can help, as the group needs to train specific individuals to focus solely on the raids and the guerilla-warfare tactics they use. The part of the group that conducts raids should also work very closely with the intelligence gathering portion. Once again, proper recruitment and training will result in a part of the group who can focus on this important aspect. The intelligence can be used to know when and where raids are conducted and what moves the sheriff is making. However, all the groups need to be properly trained in combat for when the need arises. These groups should continue to be managed separately.

Killing the sheriff would not end the campaign because it has grown beyond the scope of just the sheriff. This was the innovation that helped form the Merrymen but it has since transformed into its own entity. The death of the sheriff would result in only fulfilling the revenge of Robin Hood and has no benefit to the group as a whole.

Throughout the study, we have made recommendations on what action plan and implementation steps Robin Hood needs to take to continue the Merrymen. Proper execution of these plans will result in a continued group and prosperity to those involved. We feel the biggest area for
improvement is the recruitment and training aspect. Since the largest resource the group has is its manpower, utilization can yield great results.