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Shashi has worked in sales, marketing, and business development roles for Xerox in India as well as for Delta Ltd. in the Middle East, where he was responsible for several new product launches. He has consulted for the World Bank for technical feasibility. In his most recent position as Senior Consulting Project Manager at Thunderbird, he consulted for corporate leaders in diverse industries such as health & medical services, hi-tech & telecom, and financial services, including global companies such as Johnson & Johnson, IBM, Alcatel, Citibank and AIG. Shashi holds an undergraduate degree in technology from National Institute of Technology in Warangal, India and a Masters in International Management from Thunderbird, The Garvin School of International Management.

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How Consulting Can Best Serve Family-Owned Businesses

While business organizations of all kinds can effectively utilize consulting services for a variety of purposes, family-owned businesses, in particular, seem to use outside consulting mostly for the following needs:

- an urge to **validate their 'intuition/ gut-feel'** about their industry, market, customers, and competition through independent research
- a **need for inspiration from an outside view** that incorporates a 'cross-industry' perspective

Both of these factors were at work in a recent Thunderbird Learning Consulting Network (TLCN) engagement with a family-owned holding company from Mexico which was a market leader in the product segment they focus on. It was evident from the outset that the clients, the fourth generation to run their company, were seeking to enhance their knowledge and reaffirm their intuition about entering a rapidly growing market segment in US, namely the Hispanic segment.

Examples of how the company used TLCN **to validate its intuition** include the following:

- The management team of a father and two sons had a "hunch" that the US was becoming one of the largest consumers of spices and seasonings.
 - ⇒ TLCN was able to develop a methodological framework to provide the client with a quantitative basis for understanding the size and shape of the US market
- the client also had a "gut feel" that the demand for their products would be high because of growing Hispanic immigration
 - ⇒ TLCN enumerated the purchasing power of Hispanic consumers as well as the amount per capita they spent on food, groceries, and seasonings in particular

Examples of how the company used TLCN's ability to generate **an outside view** that incorporates a 'cross-industry' perspective include:

- how they should structure their decision-making process for a market entry strategy
- useful insights from our previous experiences with retail market sourcing on the barriers they were likely to face with mainstream retailers with formalized supply-lines
- a useful lead from TLCN's past experiences with food import regulations into the practices that they would need to add to ensure customs clearance and other regulatory compliance.

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