The research approach for this company would best be accomplished through a case study of the current and future needs of the company.  The organization is in the process of consolidating offices from several areas, including Jacksonville, FL, back into the Arkansas headquarters.  This is a cost saving move.  The company's strategic plan needs to include flexibility while considering the needs and outcomes for its workers and the communities it serves and distributes from.

A look at the vision, mission, and values statements will give the researcher an idea of the proposed goals of the company, based on these statements.  When looking at the values and vision, a review of the past few years� annual statements will show if the vision is followed and if the company bases strategic plans or implementation on the vision.  The vision must be clear, concise and flexible to be valid.  Management and staff also must share it.  The ability of a company to follow the vision is important.  This statement gives all involved an idea of the company's path and whether it is successful in following that path.

The values are those things binding the company and employees together in a tangible and demonstrable way.  Knowing if, in the external review, there have been any issues with employees, communities, consumers, or agencies that interfere with company image and company loyalty, this needs addressing in the strategic plan.  For example, a lawsuit brought by a consumer about lost or damaged products left unsolved will be a value decision of the company and will be part of the company's and its employees image.  Unexpected layoffs, unfair labor practices, and other internal issues including audit issues can also damage the company and lay the groundwork for poor value standards.

For the external analysis, industry information from sources such as competition, industry sites, and government agencies will be gathered.  This information is necessary to the external analysis to gauge the overall health of the industry and Arkansas Best�s place in the industry.  It will help identify opportunities and threats to the company within the industry and with competition and substitutes.  Also, previous annual statements, company news, and other website information should be reviewed for possible indications of missed opportunities and threats.

The news and annual reports can be used for the internal analysis. Company financials and information about employee benefits, turnover, and the number of people hired and laid off can indicate where the strengths and weaknesses of the company lie.  If there were layoffs, were they accomplished under fair labor practices, or perceptions of fair practices?  When considering changes, does the company employ a change leadership approach or does it make top down decisions without input from middle management and staff?  These are all questions that help to analyze the internal environment of the company.