

Facilitator's Body of Knowledge Research Project

SWOT Analysis

Background: A general technique instrumental in the organizational decision-making process and strategic planning is a technique known as SWOT, or Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis. Depending on the organization the letters may be reorganized into other names like the WOTS, STOW, or TOWS. But all are essentially the same kind of organizational analysis.

Whether it is utilized in business, education, or industry, a SWOT analysis provides a framework for dealing with complex situations in a limited amount of time. SWOT analysis is one of the most useful tools in organizational planning. It provides the structure to recognize and then capitalize on the strengths of an organization and minimize or eliminate the organizations weaknesses. The SWOT also provides structure to and explore and examine opportunities and recognize and avoid or elimination threats.

Groups, individually or collectively, brainstorm to identify strengths and weaknesses in an internal scan of the organization identify opportunities and threats in an external scan of the environment.

A matrix, (above, right) containing four quadrants, illustrates the framework of a SWOT analysis:

Strengths: This is an internal positive aspect, which is under the organization or group's control. This is used to capitalize planning. For example, ask what the advantages and what does one do well.

Weaknesses: This is an internal negative aspect, which is under the organization or group's control. Weaknesses are identified so that they may be improved. Ask what is done badly or what should we avoid. Be realistic and face the unpleasant truths so that they may be improved.

	Protect Utilize	Overcome Minimize
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

Opportunities: This is a positive external condition, which is out of one's control, but through planning, may be taken advantage of. Look at the good options facing a situation and locate the interesting trends in the marketplace, environment, technology, government, etc.

Threats: This is a negative external condition which one has no control of, but through planning, may be able to lesson or reduce the impact of. It incorporates identifying obstacles, examining the competition and acknowledging changes that may threaten your position.

Application: Understanding this information will enable one to develop a strategic plan that will evaluate one's present position and calculate one's potential for the future. This involves allowances for internal and external component that threaten the success of the plan, enabling one to execute a plan that will ensure the success of the entity.

More Information:

<http://www.profitclinic.com/SmallBiz/ResInfo/Tols/SWOT.html>

<http://www.mindtools.com/swot.html>

<http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~tumblin/swot.htm>

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Strengths	What are your advantages? What does your organization do well? What about your organization should be protected in the future?

Weaknesses	What could be improved? What does your organization have trouble doing? What should be avoided in the future?

Opportunities	What are the challenging opportunities facing you? What are the interesting trends you've noticed? What is not done today, but, if it could be, would totally change the face of your organization?

Threats	What obstacles do you face? What is your competition doing that you cannot? How is changing technology threatening your position?