

SWOT Analysis



What is a SWOT and Why Do It?

SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. SWOT lays a foundation for planning, the first and most critical action to make your vision real. In a SWOT analysis, we assess what is true now, in current reality, for the organization. When we know where we are and what we have to work with, we can see and define the gap between our vision and our current reality. The SWOT prepares us for strategic and operational planning, in which we will map how to move from where we are to where we want to be.

- A SWOT analysis helps an organization understand how it relates to and is aligned with its external environment.
- The most valuable outcome of the SWOT process and subsequent goal setting is not the plan itself, but rather, the deeper understanding of our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- A SWOT is a snapshot of where we are at this moment in time.
- Completing a SWOT analysis is an excellent way to incorporate our stakeholders in our plan.
- Completing a SWOT provides us a focus for finding the areas of our greatest strength and the best opportunities for our organization.

Strengths and Weaknesses are internally focused. They are about the organization itself. Strengths should be realistic and not modest! Think: capabilities, resources, people, marketing, quality, processes/systems. Weaknesses are the internal forces that may serve as a barrier to accomplishing our mission and vision. Think: disadvantages, gaps in capability, reputation, finances, morale, leadership.

Opportunities and Threats are externally focused; i.e. what is relevant in the environment. Opportunities are any favorable situations present now or in the future in the external environment. Think: social trends, geography, partnerships, legislative/judicial/medical changes, new technology, demographic shifts, funding possibilities. Threats are external forces that could inhibit or damage us, both now and in the future. Think: competition, political climate, resource availability, economic factors, cultural issues, etc.

Sparking Your Thinking

On the next two pages are questions to help spark your thinking during the brainstorm. They are roughly organized by each of the four components; however, they often are applicable across the components. For example, you may want to think about the skills, experience, and values of the people in the organization as you brainstorm the list of strengths. That same topic might also inform the list of weaknesses, so feel free to repeat ideas to create a thorough list.

Strengths:

- *What are our unique skills?*
- *What are our strengths?*
- *What are we passionate about?*
- *What do we do well?*
- *What do other people see as our strengths?*
- *What are our values?*
- *What do we have working for us?*
- *What are our capabilities?*
- *What is our “competitive” advantage?*
- *What about our resources and assets are strengths?*
- *What about our people is a strength(s)?*
- *What about our knowledge and experience are strengths?*
- *What about our relationships, our quality, our service, our ethics are strengths?*
- *What about our internal processes and systems are our strengths?*
- *What about our marketing, reach, and visibility are strengths for us?*
- *What about our attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors work well for us?*
- *What are our financial strengths?*
- *What would you want to boast about to someone who knows nothing about our organization?*

Weaknesses:

- *What could we improve?*
- *What do we do poorly?*
- *What should we avoid?*
- *What are we doing now that could be done more effectively or efficiently?*
- *What are the gaps in our capabilities?*
- *Where do we lack competitive strength?*
- *What are our vulnerabilities?*
- *What distracts us from the work we’re here to do?*
- *What about our processes and systems are weaknesses?*
- *What about our people resources is a weakness for us?*
- *What about financials?*
- *What are we NOT doing that you believe we should be doing?*

Opportunities:

- *What are the good opportunities facing us?*
- *What have we been dreaming of?*
- *What are we most excited about doing?*
- *What are the interesting trends we are aware of?*
- *What are the societal and cultural changes that support progress on our mission?*
- *What are the legislative or judicial changes that support progress?*
- *What are relevant opportunities in our communities?*
- *What are new possibilities – new markets for services, for donors, for influence?*
- *What relationships do we have the opportunity to build?*
- *What partnerships can we grow?*
- *What economic realities in our communities present opportunities for us?*

Threats:

- *What obstacles do we face?*
- *What is our competition doing?*
- *What is occurring in the environment that has the potential to hurt us or move us backwards?*
- *What are the societal and cultural changes that can damage or hurt progress on our mission?*
- *What are the legislative or judicial changes that can inhibit our mission?*
- *What are the economic realities in our communities that can inhibit our mission?*
- *Are there changes in how we are required to do our work that may affect our service or effectiveness?*

Weaknesses

Threats

**S.W.O.T.
Analysis**

Strengths

Opportunities