SWOT Instructions

**SWOT** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is a simple but useful framework for analyzing your organization’s strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats that you face. It helps you focus on your strengths, minimize threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available to you.

The aim of any SWOT analysis is to identify the key internal and external factors that are important to achieving the objective. These come from within your organization’s unique value proposition. SWOT analysis groups key pieces of information into two main categories:

* Internal factors – The strengths and weaknesses internal to your organization.
* External factors – The opportunities and threats presented by the external environment,
i.e., competition to your organization.

SWOT analysis may be used in any decisionmaking situation when an objective has been defined. SWOT should be applied at multiple levels in the business development planning process.

At the enterprise level, use SWOT to help build a strategic plan. SWOT analysis can be used to “kick off” strategy formulation.

At an account plan level, use SWOT to support an organization’s long- and mid-term planning for a specific customer. The SWOT analysis provides information that is helpful in matching the organization’s resources and capabilities to the customers in the competitive environment in which it operates.

At an opportunity level, use SWOT to plan for the capture of a specific opportunity.

When carrying out your SWOT analysis, be realistic and rigorous. Apply it at multiple levels. It is often the precursor for deeper analysis using the Bidder Comparison Matrix and the Solutions Worksheet. It is a mandatory step in both account and capture planning.

**How to Use SWOT Analysis**

Use the SWOT analysis worksheet to document strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The areas of focus depend on the level of analysis: enterprise, account or opportunity.

**Strengths**

An organization’s strengths are its resources and capabilities that can be used as a basis for developing a competitive advantage. Consider your strengths from both an internal perspective, and from the point of view of your customers and people in your market. Be realistic; if you have any difficulty with this, write down a list of your organization’s characteristics. Some of these will likely be strengths.

When looking at your strengths, think about them in relation to your competitors. For example, if all of your competitors provide high-quality products, then this is not a strength in your organization’s market, it is a necessity. Consider:

* What advantages does your organization currently have?
* What do you do better than anyone else?
* Does your organization have an excellent reputation?
* Does your organization have outstanding subject matter expertise?
* What unique or lowest-cost resources can you draw upon that others can’t?
* What do people in your market see as your strengths?
* What factors mean that you “get the sale”?
* What are your organization’s discriminators?
* What strengths could this opportunity bring to your organization?
* Do you have costs advantages from proprietary know-how?

**Weaknesses**

Consider weaknesses from both an internal and customer-centric basis: Do other people seem to perceive weaknesses that you don’t see? Are your competitors doing anything better than you? Be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

* What weaknesses does your organization cur­rently have?
* Does your organization have the resources to invest to do this job correctly?
* Is the required head count compatible with your current overall plans?
* What could you improve?
* What should you avoid?
* Do you have a high cost structure?
* What are people in your market likely to see as weaknesses?
* What factors lose you sales?

**Opportunities**

The external environmental analysis may reveal certain new opportunities for profit and growth. A useful approach when looking at opportunities is to look at your strengths and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at your weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating them.

* What good opportunities can you spot?
* What interesting trends are you aware of?
* What are current changes in technology and markets on both a broad and narrow scale?
* What are current changes in government policy related to your field?
* What are relevant changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc.?

**Threats**

Don’t overlook external factors, such as new government regulations or technological changes in your industry.

* What obstacles do you face?
* What are your competitors doing?
* Are quality standards or specifications for your job, products, or services changing?
* Are there new regulations that threaten your approach?
* Is changing technology threatening your position?
* Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?
* Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your business?

sWOT worksheet

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| **Business Owner Name:** |  |
| **Date:** |  |
| **Company Name:** |  |
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| **Strengths** |  |
| **Weaknesses** |  |
| **Opportunities**  |  |
| **Threats** |  |