

Personal Development Resources

Quick Guide to Developing a Personal SWOT Analysis to Make the Most of Your Talents and Opportunities

Quick Guide



Quick Guide to Developing a Personal SWOT Analysis to Make the Most of Your Talents and Opportunities

You are most likely to succeed in life if you fully use your talents. Similarly, you'll suffer fewer problems if you know what your weaknesses are, and if you manage those weaknesses so that they don't matter in the work you do.

So how do you go about identifying these strengths and weaknesses, and analysing the opportunities and threats that flow from them?

A SWOT Analysis is a useful technique that helps you do this.

What makes SWOT especially powerful is that, with a little thought, it can help you uncover opportunities that you would not otherwise have spotted. And by understanding your weaknesses, you can manage and eliminate threats that might otherwise hurt your ability to move forward.

If you look at yourself using the SWOT framework, you can start to separate yourself from your peers, and further develop the specialised talents and abilities you need to advance your career and help you achieve your personal goals.



How to Develop a SWOT Analysis

To perform a personal SWOT analysis, first design a grid like the one below, this can either be drawn freehand or ideally in MS Word.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Then write the answers to the following questions in the corresponding box.



Strengths

- What advantages do you have that others don't have (for example, skills, certifications, education, or connections)?
- What do you do better than anyone else?
- What personal resources can you access?
- What do other people (and your boss, in particular) see as your strengths?
- Which of your achievements are you most proud of?
- What values do you believe in that others fail to exhibit?
- Are you part of a network that no one else is involved in? If so, what connections do you have with influential people?

Consider this from your own perspective, and from the point of view of the people around you. And don't be modest or shy – be as objective as you can. Knowing and using your strengths can make you happier and more fulfilled at work.

And if you still have any difficulty identifying your strengths, write down a list of your personal characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!



Weaknesses

- What tasks do you usually avoid because you don't feel confident doing them?
- What will the people around you see as your weaknesses?
- Are you completely confident in your education and skills training? If not, where are your weakest?
- What are your negative work habits (for example, are you often late, are you disorganised, do you have a short temper, or are you poor at handling stress)?
- Do you have personality traits that hold you back in your field? For instance, if you have to conduct meetings on a regular basis, a fear of public speaking could be a major weakness.

Again, consider this from a personal/internal perspective and an external perspective. Speak to your Personal Development Manager (PDM) at t2 and ask them to help you build in information captured from your employer at your initial assessment. Do other people see weaknesses that you don't, see? Do co-workers consistently outperform you in key areas? Be realistic – it's best to face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.



Opportunities

- What new technology can help you? Or can you get help from others or from people via the internet?
- Is your industry growing? If so, how can you take advantage of the current market?
- Do you have a network of contacts to help you, or offer good advice?
- What trends (management or otherwise) do you see in your company, and how can you take advantage of them?
- Are any of your competitors failing to do something important? If so, can you take advantage of their mistakes?
- Is there a need in your company or industry that no one is filling?
- Do your customers complain about something in your company? If so, could you create an opportunity by offering a solution?

You might find useful opportunities in the following:

- Networking events, training courses, or conferences.
- A colleague going on an extended leave. Could you take on some of this person's tasks to gain experience?
- A new role that forces you to learn new skills.
- A company expansion or acquisition. Do you have specific skills (like a second language) that could help with the process?

Also, importantly, look at your strengths, and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities – and look at your weaknesses, and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating those weaknesses.



Threats

- What obstacles do you currently face at work?
- Are any of your colleagues competing with you for specific tasks, roles, or promotion?
- Is your job (or the demand for the things you do) changing?
- Does changing technology threaten your position?
- Could any of your weaknesses lead to threats?

Performing this analysis will often provide key information – it can point out what needs to be done and put problems into perspective.



Personal SWOT Example

What would a personal SWOT assessment look like?

Review this SWOT analysis for Helen, a Junior Receptionist in a Doctors Surgery.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>I'm always on time for work as I'm an early riser</p> <p>I have a great way of dealing with patients and they really like me</p> <p>I have excellent listening skills</p> <p>I have really learned how things work in the practice and the standards expected through my Level 2 Apprenticeship</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>I'm not very organised</p> <p>I'm not confident in my own ability</p> <p>I don't contribute at all meetings, so the Doctor's don't really know me</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>The Receptionist is going on maternity leave soon. Covering her duties while she is away would be a great career development opportunity for me</p> <p>The local Health Centre whose patients are leaving for has a reputation for using temporary staff on reception and they don't get the opportunity to know the patients properly, many of whom are old and like a chat. Some of them that initially left us have returned</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>Jo, one of the Administrators is far more experienced than me and she is hoping to get the Receptionist role as it is more money, but she can't start work until 9.15 as she must drop her kids to school</p> <p>A local Health Centre is now open from 7am in the morning and a lot of patients are leaving so our jobs could be at risk</p>

As a result of performing this analysis, Helen takes the bold step of approaching her colleague Jo about the Receptionist's maternity leave. Helen proposes that both she and Jo cover the job's duties, working together and each using their strengths. To her surprise, Jo likes the idea. She knows she is very organised, but she admits that she's going to be unable to arrive any earlier and is impressed by Helen's way of listening to and dealing with patients, which she feels is much better than hers.

By working as a team, they have a chance to open earlier in the morning and use Helen's strengths of listening to and dealing with the patients. This takes advantage of their competitor's weakness in this area.

Key Points

A SWOT matrix is a framework for analysing your strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that you face.

This helps you focus on your strengths, minimise your weaknesses, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available to you.