

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in a project or in a business venture. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving that objective. If a SWOT analysis does not start with defining a desired end state or objective, it runs the risk of being useless.

- **Strengths:** attributes of the organization that are helpful to achieving the objective.
- **Weaknesses:** attributes of the organization that are harmful to achieving the objective.
- **Opportunities:** *external* conditions that are helpful to achieving the objective.
- **Threats:** *external* conditions which could do damage to the business's performance.

Identification of SWOTs is essential because subsequent steps in the process of planning for achievement of the selected objective may be derived from the SWOTs.

Example: PSI/Cervezuela is considering beginning a project with the objective of reducing multiple and concurrent partnerships. Their SWOT looked like the following:

SWOT	Helpful (to what you are trying to achieve)	Harmful (to what you are trying to achieve)
Internal (within PSI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previous expertise in non-product behavior change campaigns ▪ Adequate funding ▪ High quality research capability ▪ High-level organizational support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few precedents of campaigns addressing this behavior ▪ Little pre-existing research ▪ Lack of clear definition of concurrency
External (outside PSI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longstanding relationship with government increases chance of government support ▪ “Hot topic” among international health community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entrenched social norms against the behavior ▪ May be addressed differently by other NGOs first ▪ Women rely on multiple partners as survival strategy ▪ Complicated, sensitive behavior ▪ Poor public role models

First, the decision makers have to determine whether the objective is attainable, given the SWOTs. If the objective is NOT attainable a different objective must be selected and the process repeated.

If, on the other hand, the objective seems attainable, the SWOTs are used as inputs to the creative generation of possible strategies, by asking and answering each of the following four questions, many times:

- How can we Use each Strength?
- How can we Stop each Weakness?
- How can we Exploit each Opportunity?
- How can we Defend against each Threat?

Ideally a cross-functional team or a task force that represents a broad range of perspectives should carry out the SWOT analysis. For example, a SWOT team may include the CR, the sales manager, the program manager and a researcher.

Reference:

Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis