

SWOT Analysis - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

SWOT Analysis is an effective method of identifying your Strengths and Weaknesses, and to examine the Opportunities and Threats you face. Often carrying out an analysis using the SWOT framework will be enough to reveal changes which can be usefully made.

To carry out a SWOT Analysis write down your answers to the following questions:

- **Strengths:**
 - What are your advantages?
 - What do you do well?

Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of the people you deal with. Don't be modest, be realistic. If you are having any difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!

- **Weaknesses:**
 - What could be improved?
 - What is done badly?
 - What should be avoided?

Again this should be considered from an internal and external basis - do other people perceive weaknesses that you don't see? Do your competitors do any better? It is best to be realistic now, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

- **Opportunities:**
 - Where are the good chances facing you?
 - What are the interesting trends?

Useful opportunities can come from such things as:

- Changes in technology and markets on both a broad and narrow scale
- Changes in government policy related to your field
- Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc.
- Local Events

- **Threats:**
 - What obstacles do you face?
 - What is your competition doing?
 - Are the required specifications for your job, products or services changing?
 - Is changing technology threatening your position?
 - Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?

Carrying out this analysis is will often be illuminating - both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done, and in putting problems into perspective.