

A SWOT analysis is a flexible tool that's used to identify the current internal (S)TRENGTHS, (W)EAKNESSES, (O)PPORTUNITIES AND (T)HREATS facing a business.

To explain each category further, lets look at the descriptions below:

SWOT	FOCUSES ON	CONSIDER	PERIOD
(S) Strengths and (W) Weaknesses	The internal environment within the business	Factors relating to products, pricing, performance, quality, people skills, adaptability, brands, services, reputation, processes, infrastructure, etc	Generally focused on the present situation
Opportunities (O) and Threats (T)	The external environment – factors that are outside the business	Factors relating to markets, audiences, fashion, seasonality, trends, competition, economics, politics, society, culture, technology, environmental, media, law etc	Generally focused on the future situation

The SWOT analysis example on the next page, is a form that can be used when developing your own business SWOT analysis with factors to be considered under each category. Remember that a SWOT analysis can be used for almost any type of decision making and can be modified to meet the most important issues facing an organisation.

Start by dividing a page into 4 quarters as below for each category, and then use the prompting questions in the example to discuss and apply them to your own business, with the results recorded in the relevant quarter.

Once completed this will give you a great framework of your business position which will help you develop your small business plan further, based on improvements and goals identified during the SWOT analysis exercise.

SWOT Analysis – “Analysis Subject here!”

STRENGTHS (Internal) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capabilities?• Competitive advantages?• USP's (unique selling points)?• Resources, Assets, People?• Experience, knowledge, data?• Financial reserves, likely returns?• Marketing – reach, distribution, awareness?• Innovative aspects?• Location and geographical/• Price, value, quality?• Accreditations, qualifications, certifications?• Processes, systems, IT, communications?• Cultural, attitudinal, behavioural?• Management cover, succession?	WEAKNESSES (Internal) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gaps in Capability?• Lack of competitive strength?• Reputation, presence and reach?• Financials?• Own known vulnerabilities?• Timescales, deadlines and pressures?• Cash flow, start-up cash-drain?• Continuity, supply chain robustness?• Effects on core activities, distraction?• Reliability of data, plan predictability?• Morale, commitment, leadership?• Accreditations, etc?• Processes and systems, etc?• Management cover, succession?
OPPORTUNITIES (External) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Market developments?• Competitors' vulnerabilities?• Industry or lifestyle trends?• Technology development and innovation?• Global influences?• New markets, vertical, horizontal?• Niche target markets?• Geographical, export, import?• Market need for new USP's?• Market response to tactic e.g., surprise?• Major contracts, tenders?• Business and product development?• Information and research?• Partnerships, agencies, distribution?• Market volume demand trends?• Seasonal, weather, fashion influences?	THREATS (External) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political effects?• Legislative effects?• Environmental effects?• IT developments?• Competitor intentions – various?• IT developments?• Competitor intentions – various?• Market demands?• New technologies, services, ideas?• Vital contracts and partners/• Obstacles faced?• Insurmountable weaknesses?• Employment market?• Financial and credit pressures?• Economy – home and international?• Seasonality, weather effects?