

# *Context* 2003 *Enterprising Intrapreneurship: Putting Academic Learning into Real World Contexts*

## *SWOT analysis - an introduction*

SWOT analysis provides a structure for analysing either your own strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats you face, or in a work context for analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats a business or event faces. Ideally it is one step in a process which helps you to

1. appreciate the strengths of a situation, and you may then decide to build on these;
2. define the weaknesses, which you might choose to minimise;
3. make the most of the opportunities that present themselves, and
4. recognise the possible threats and treat them in a planned and organised way.

SWOT analyses are not ends in themselves but a step before some action planning.

SWOT analyses usually benefit from discussion, get other people's perspectives. Remember to be realistic and focused on what really happens.

In a SWOT analysis you want to note issues under the four headings. If you are new to the process the following questions may be helpful prompts to your thinking.

Strengths:	What are your personal strengths? What do you do well? What do other people see as your strengths?	What does the company do well? What is the good track record? Where does the organisation compete well?
Weaknesses:	What can be developed What is working less optimally than you wish? What is the competition doing better?	What could you improve? What is being done badly? What should you avoid doing?
Opportunities:	If there were no constraints what would you like to do? What might be possible? Where do you / your organisation want to be in five years time? Who might you want to work with? How may new technologies change your practices? What financial / governmental / legislative changes can benefit you in the near future?	What will happen in the next few years? What could be a win – win situation?
Threats:	What are the barriers to your development? Who else might move in a take over your tasks / job / business? What are rival organisations doing? Will new technologies / developments change you roles? What change is coming?	What sort of obstacles do you face? Can you fund the short and long term?

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SWOT analyses lead to asking difficult questions but the structure it gives helps people to focus on parts of the problem or sub-issues separately. Decisions can be made about these and in discussing components of an issue the whole is seen more clearly.

**An example:** A university society carrying out a SWOT analysis may find:

- Strengths:** We have 40 members and get subs from them.  
Being small means we can adapt our programme each year to meet our member's requests.  
We have a simple budget process and decisions are made by a team of four. We meet every two weeks so we can deal with matters efficiently.  
People like us and we are a friendly group.  
We are small enough that we don't have big overheads so we give value for the subs.
- Weaknesses:** We are too small to be represented on Union Council.  
We only have a few people on the committee so they have to work very hard to do the minimum.  
We tend to do the same things each year in the same way.  
When Jim was ill last year we didn't have back-up, in other words we don't have extra people with time to cover if someone is off.  
People don't always pay promptly so we have cash issues
- Opportunities:** We have room to grow, we would benefit from recruiting more members.  
More members and a bigger organising committee could do more events and thereby build the group.  
More members mean larger budgets, more options for activities.
- Threats:** If we change the way we do things too much the current group may leave.  
Some members say they like the small friendly nature of the group.

Having produced the SWOT data the society needs to plan. Is it worth the risk of losing some people from the current group to grow the society? Would the benefits of more people and money, and therefore more events actually be better all round? Would that be a win-win situation? Is small really beautiful in this case?

So SWOT is about making a structured analysis of yourself, an activity, an organisation, a company or event as a prelude to action planning.