

Conducting a SWOT Analysis

Description:

This tool provides a step-by-step guide to conducting an effective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis.

How it can be used:

As you explore integration opportunities, conducting a SWOT analysis is a simple yet comprehensive way of identifying your organization's strengths and weaknesses as well as the external opportunities and threats.

Through the SWOT process you will be guided to:

- leverage your strengths;
- understand your weaknesses;
- recognize opportunities; and
- counteract threats.

A SWOT analysis will be helpful in assessing the relevance and value of potential integration activities and assist you in making strategic decisions.

Why use a SWOT analysis?

- Explore the possibilities of new integration opportunities;
- Help make decisions about the viability of opportunities and your organization's capacity;
- Clarify where change is possible;
- Review and adjust current programming, where necessary, to support integrated approaches.

Conducting a thorough SWOT analysis helps uncover the opportunities and issues, the issues and the strengths that can be used to address them.

Conducting a SWOT analysis: Set the stage

Follow these guidelines for your SWOT process and increase your probability for success.

- Include as many of the relevant stakeholders as possible; each brings a different perspective and staff will be more engaged in implementation if they've been involved in the process.
- Be specific when describing the elements of the SWOT analysis.
- Be realistic when describing your weaknesses and strengths; this exercise is only effective if it is accurate.
- Consider the current context and also consider what the future could hold.
- Commit to ongoing follow-up by engaging with the people who have the authority and ability to implement the actions.
- Keep the process simple and clear and a reasonable length.

Conducting a SWOT analysis: The Steps

1. Assign someone to lead and/or facilitate the process; this person must be able to listen to and process a lot of information, keep the groups on task, and ensure the process moves clearly and quickly.

2. Assign someone to record the responses in order to produce a report after the session. Use flip charts and/or whiteboards to record key points of the group's discussions.
3. Explain the SWOT analysis and why this is being undertaken. Provide any relevant examples of integration activities that help put the analysis in context.
4. It might be helpful to demonstrate a quick example to clarify the difference between internal and external factors.
5. Divide your stakeholders into small groups; consider mixing up the types of stakeholders to ensure a broad mix of perspectives. Ensure the breakout groups are no larger than ten people to facilitate good participation.
6. Have each group assign a recorder and provide supplies (newsprint, flipchart, whiteboard) and a format for recording their input (a matrix or columns are effective).

Conducting a SWOT analysis – Thinking *Inside* the Box

7. Allow 20-30 minutes for the groups to brainstorm and identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats from their perspectives. Remind them not to rule out any ideas. Consider posting the following to help stimulate discussion.
 - a. **Questions that help identify strengths**
 - i. What do we do well?
 - ii. What are we proud of?
 - iii. What resources do we have and use well?
 - iv. How would others identify our strengths?
 - b. **Questions that help identify weaknesses**
 - i. What do we feel we could do better?
 - ii. Where have we been trying to improve but haven't been successful?
 - iii. Where do we see recurring issues?
 - c. **Questions to help identify opportunities**
 - i. What is happening in the community that provides us with opportunities to help?
 - ii. What are other organizations doing that could affect our programs and services?
 - iii. What is happening in the broader health context that could affect our programs and services?
 - iv. What trends should we be aware of that positively affect our programs and services?
 - d. **Questions to help identify threats**
 - i. What trends should we be aware of that could negatively affect our population or our ability to provide programs and services?
 - ii. Are we adapting to changes in the environment (e.g., political changes, technology, demographics, etc.)?
 - e. **Offer the following suggestions:**
 - i. Record all the ideas that the group offers. You can sort them later.
 - ii. Sort them into broad categories.
 - iii. Prepare to present to the large group, limiting the list of ideas to ten or fewer.
8. Reconvene the large group. Collect and organize the groups' ideas and suggestions in a matrix or column format.

SWOT ANALYSIS		
INTERNAL These are elements within our organization; within our control	<u>Strengths</u> Examples: expertise, strong community relationships, etc.	<u>Weaknesses</u> Examples: high staff turnover, lack of financial capability, etc.
EXTERNAL These are factors outside the organization; not within our control	<u>Opportunities</u> Examples: provincial focus on skills development, integration project funding, etc.	<u>Threats</u> Examples: band elections, government funding cuts, etc.

9. Begin filling in the matrix or columns; consider the following approaches:
 - a. Involve the groups:
 - i. Ask each group to report, varying which group starts each section to ensure that no group ends up having to repeat points made by others. OR
 - ii. Open the floor to all groups (i.e., “What strengths did your group identify?”) for each category until all groups have contributed and the matrix is complete.
 - b. Fill in content:
 - i. Proceed in S-W-O-T order, recording strengths, and then weaknesses, then opportunities, then threats. OR
 - ii. Record the top or most urgent priorities in each category (strongest strength, most dangerous weakness, biggest opportunity, worst threat) and continue to enter ideas into each category.
 - c. The facilitator or recorder should take notes until input from all groups is recorded. Identify items that are repeated by different groups; this signifies that the item is important.
10. Be prepared to discuss items that are cross-connected; for example, “This strength can be used to overcome that threat”.
 - a. Keep the process moving until the chart is complete. If there are ideas outside of the current matrix, consider adding a “working ideas” column.
11. Discuss and record the results. If required:
 - a. Come to a consensus about the most important items in each category.
 - b. Relate the analysis to your vision, mission, and integration goals.
 - c. If relevant, translate the analysis to action plans and strategies. Clearly identify who is responsible, and what is the timeline for each of the action items.

Conducting a SWOT Analysis – The Follow-up

12. If appropriate, prepare a written summary of the SWOT analysis to provide to participants.
13. Use the SWOT analysis as a ‘snapshot’ that clarifies the positives and negatives of your integration assessment to help you identify issues that need to be changed, and reaffirms goals.