

Introduction to SWOT Analysis

Develop a full awareness of present conditions to plan for future success.

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An Introduction to SWOT Analysis

Welcome to this brief overview of SWOT analysis, a strategic planning technique used to identify helpful and harmful elements that are either within or beyond your control. This course will take about 5 minutes to complete.

This course complements the Goal Setting course, also available in the Lions Learning Center. For this course there is one objective:

- You will be able to describe what a SWOT analysis is and why it is useful.

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What is a SWOT Analysis?

A SWOT analysis is a process used to think strategically when developing a vision, goals and action plans. A SWOT analysis is done to develop a deeper knowledge of what can impact and support efforts to achieve success. This analysis can be done before making decisions or plans for the future.

A SWOT analysis can also be used as a tool to gather information to monitor progress. At the conclusion of these efforts, a SWOT analysis can provide opportunities for reflection and evaluation. A SWOT analysis is used to explore four key elements of a present situation that could impact your vision, goals and action plans: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Read through the descriptions of each of the four key elements below:

Strengths: We identify strengths when we look internally to see what will support us in moving forward.

Questions you can use to identify strengths include:

- What do we do well?
- What knowledge do we have?
- How do others view our strengths?

Weaknesses: We identify weaknesses when we look internally to see what challenges we may face in pursuing success.

Questions you can use to identify weaknesses include:

- What are our challenges?
- What knowledge do we lack?
- How do others view our weaknesses?

Opportunities: We identify opportunities when we look externally at factors beyond our control and recognize how they support our pursuit of success.

Questions you can use to identify opportunities include:

- What opportunities exist in the area where we are working?
- How can others' strengths support achievement?
- How can others help to convert our weaknesses into strengths?

Threats: We identify threats when we look externally at factors beyond our control and recognize how they hinder our pursuit of success.

Questions you can use to identify threats include:

- What threats exist in the area where we are working?
- Are there other people or organizations that are competing for the same resources?
- What structural changes (economic, legal, policy, etc.) could have a negative impact on our work?

Reflect Individually and Build Team Consensus

A SWOT analysis is a flexible tool that can be used by an individual any time a deeper understanding of a situation is needed. After identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, an individual can fully address each when developing a vision, goal or action plan.

Similarly, a SWOT analysis can be used collaboratively by a team at any stage of developing a joint vision, goal or action plan. A SWOT analysis can assist in gathering the perspectives of all team members and analyzing the potential of these perspectives. This analysis supports building both team understanding and consensus to plan, develop and achieve a joint vision, goal or action plan, and success in overcoming problems.

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Why Complete a SWOT Analysis?

Developing a fine-tuned vision can be a challenge for many of us.

Uncover Helpful Conditions

Sometimes, we may not have all of the information we need to refine our vision. We might struggle to see all of our strengths and the assets available to achieve our goals. A SWOT analysis can unveil opportunities we would have otherwise missed.

Uncover Harmful Conditions

Recognizing what barriers exist, or how to overcome barriers, is also a common struggle in defining a vision, goal or steps in an action plan. A SWOT analysis can support identifying what stands in the way of achieving success.

Separate Internal and External Conditions

Having a tool such as a SWOT analysis at our disposal can refine and clarify our thinking. Strengths and weaknesses are internal aspects we can control and adjust. Opportunities and threats are external factors that are mostly beyond our control. We can take advantage of opportunities and protect against threats, but we cannot change them. A SWOT analysis provides support while crafting goals and developing a path to achievement.

Maximize the Analysis

For a SWOT analysis to be useful, time must be set aside to complete it. In addition, anyone participating in the analysis should approach it with an open mind and a willingness to honestly answer the questions. Once the answers are recorded, they should be considered throughout the visioning, planning and evaluation process. How much time it takes and who participates in the SWOT analysis will depend on local circumstances.

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Summary and Contact

Whether you or your team are developing a vision, goal, or action plan, a SWOT analysis can be used to systematically review the conditions that impact your success. Completing the initial analysis is as easy as identifying a full list of each element –strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Congratulations! You have completed the Introduction to SWOT Analysis course. You can continue your education through the Lions Learning Center, which offers a variety of online courses to assist members with leadership development. Screen reader versions of all courses are available.

To receive completion credit for this course, or if you have problems navigating through this course, please contact eLearning@lionsclubs.org.

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