



Group Decision Tip

E-mailed every two weeks to help groups make good decisions

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

In principle, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis is an effective way to take stock of an organization or project, and the context in which it exists. It is often done at the start of a strategic planning process. It provides a solid foundation on which to build plans.

Practical Tip: Ask the opinion of all stakeholders or at least key stakeholders; those who stand to win and lose most from the endeavor. Ask their opinion about strengths and weaknesses, the balance sheet, what's good and bad about the organization or project. This is an internal, current look at things like financial gains and losses, assets and liabilities, staff capacity, board capacity, reputation, mission impact, etc. These are all things within our general control.

Also gather feedback on the external view, the look into the future. What opportunities and threats loom? This is a look at projected trends regarding market demand, supplies and personnel, policy and regulation, and other external factors that might affect the organization or project. To look at opportunities and threats is to assess things that we don't fully control but that we need to consider.

Take stock of your organization or project by making four lists: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Discuss them as a group. Good assessment is key for good strategic planning.

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