

Quick Tips for Team Leaders¹

Getting Ideas: SWOT Analysis²

Jeff Oltmann

SWOT analysis is a popular tool for situational analysis. SWOT is an acronym for “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.” It looks at both internal and external factors (figure 1).

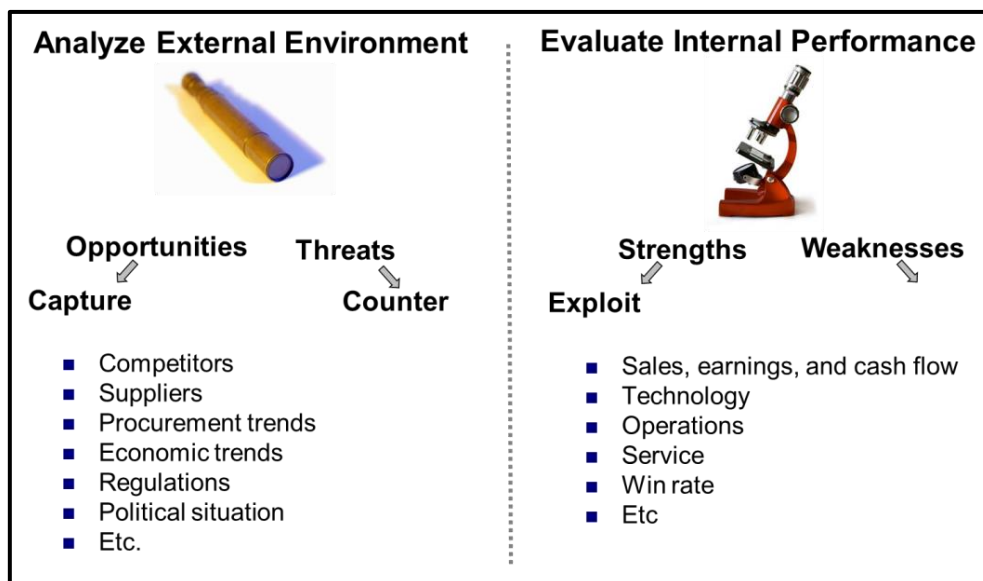


Figure 1: SWOT does internal and external analysis.

The external analysis examines both opportunities and threats from factors such as competitors, suppliers, economic trends, and regulations. Then it looks for ways to take advantage of (capture) the opportunities and counter the threats.

The internal performance analysis looks at the organization’s strengths and how to exploit them, as well as weaknesses and how to mitigate them. Examples of internal areas to evaluate are

¹ This series of “Quick Tips” articles is by Jeff Oltmann, experienced program and technology executive and principal of Synergy Professional Services, LLC in Oregon, USA. The Quick Tips offer simple approaches and models for problem analysis, gathering ideas and input from team members, facilitation and taking action. The tips offered in this series were identified or developed over two decades of helping program, project and team leaders get things done in faster, more agile ways. Learn more about Jeff Oltmann in his author profile below.

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financial performance, development capabilities such as engineering expertise, technology, and service and operations capabilities.

All of this gives a good understanding of the current state of the organization, as well as some ideas on how to change that state to get to the desired state.

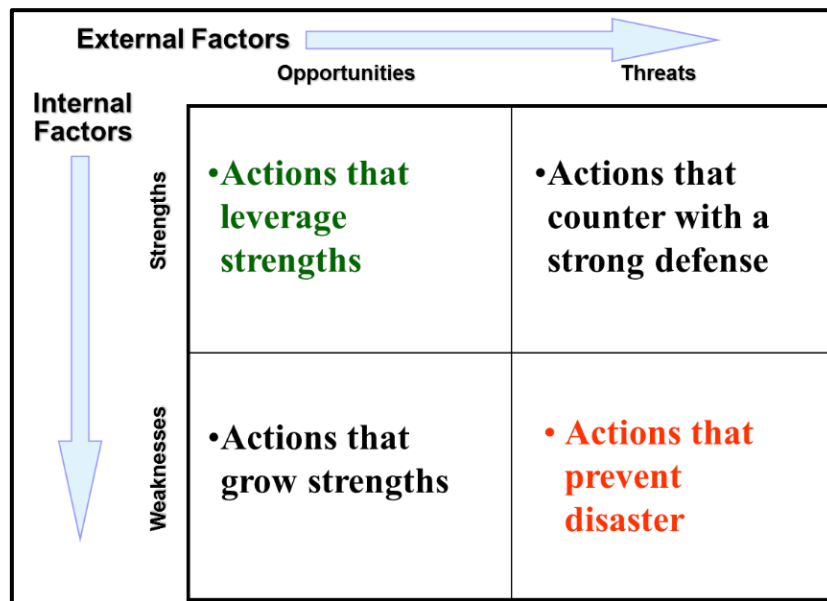


Figure 2: Develop actions based on SWOT analysis.

The strongest strategic actions emerge from external opportunities that intersect with an organization’s internal strengths (upper left quadrant of figure 2). These are chances for an organization to “lead the charge,” moving forward as a leader leveraging its strengths.

The most dangerous situations for an organization are in the lower right quadrant, where external threats intersect with internal weaknesses. This puts the organization in a defensive position right where it is weak.

Source: *Strategic Planning* lecture

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About the Author



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Jeff Oltmann is a seasoned leader with over 30 years of experience advising clients, managing successful technology programs, and developing new products. His specialties include strategy deployment, operational and project excellence, and project portfolio management. As principal consultant at Synergy Professional Services, Jeff advises leaders and teams in diverse sectors including healthcare, research, bioscience, and technology product development.

Jeff is the founder of the Portfolio and Project Leaders Forum. He is also on the graduate faculty of the Division of Management at Oregon Health and Science University and was previously on executive staff at IBM. He teaches portfolio, program, and project management and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP®).

Jeff welcomes your questions and ideas. You can contact him at jeff@spspro.com or read previous articles at www.spspro.com/article-library.

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