

SWOT Your Career Plan

A key tool in the strategic planning process can also be applied to career planning. This tool is a marketing analysis using the SWOT technique. A SWOT analysis focuses on the internal and external environments, examining strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment and opportunities and threats in the external environment. Imagine your SWOT analysis to be structured like the table below:

INTERNAL	<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p><i>Internal positive aspects that are under control and upon which you may capitalize in planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your advantages? • What do you do well? • Why did you decide to enter the field you will enter upon graduation? • What were the motivating factors and influences? • Do these factors still represent some of your inherent strengths? • What need do you expect to fill within your organization? • What have been your most notable achievements? • To what do you attribute your success? • How do you measure your success? • What is your greatest asset? 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p><i>Internal negative aspects that are under your control and that you may plan to improve</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could be improved? • What do you do badly? • What should you avoid? • What are your professional weaknesses? • How do they affect your job performance? • Lack of Work Experience • Low GPA, wrong major • Lack of goals, lack of self-knowledge, lack of specific job knowledge • Weak technical knowledge • Weak skills (leadership, interpersonal, communication, teamwork) • Weak job-hunting skills
EXTERNAL	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p><i>Positive external conditions that you do not control but of which you can plan to take advantage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the promising prospects facing you? • What is the "state of the art" in your particular area? • Are you doing everything you can to enhance your exposure to this area? • What formal training and education can you add to your credentials that might position you appropriately for more opportunities? • Would a graduate degree add to your advantage? • How quickly are you likely to advance in your chosen career? • Useful opportunities can come from such things as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Changes in technology and markets on both a broad and industry-specific scale – Changes in government policy related to your field – Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle 	<p>THREATS</p> <p><i>Negative external conditions that you do not control but the effect of which you may be able to lessen</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What obstacles do you face? • Are the requirements for your desired job field changing? • Does changing technology threaten your prospective position? • Could your area of interest be fading in comparison with more emergent fields? • Is your chosen field subject to internal politics that will lead to conflict? • Is there any way to change the politics or to perhaps defuse your involvement in potential disputes? • How might the economy negatively affect your future company and your work group? • Negative trends in your field that diminish jobs? • Are companies are not hiring people with your major/degree?

To construct your own SWOT analysis to set a course for your career planning, examine your current situation. What are your strengths and weaknesses? How can you capitalize on your strengths and overcome your weaknesses? What are the external opportunities and threats in your chosen career field?

From this analysis, you will have a road map that shows you how to capitalize on your strengths and minimize or eliminate your weaknesses. You should then use this map to take advantage of opportunities and avoid or lessen threats.

After you've analyzed your strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities, you should use that information to plan how to market yourself.

NOW TURN OVER AND "SWOT" YOURSELF →

SWOT Your Career Plan

Now it's your turn ... SWOT your own career plan and see what you find out. Complete the chart below.

CAREER PLAN: _____

INTERNAL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
EXTERNAL	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS