



# TOUGH TIMES: SWOT YOURSELF

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Most leaders are familiar with a SWOT analysis and see it as a valuable tool to analyze decisions. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Generally, it is used to help provide a good framework for reviewing the strategy, position, direction of a company or a business proposition. However, this tool can be adapted to help make strategic decisions when planning your career. How many of you make astute business decisions, yet have missed opportunities to create a strategic plan for your own career? Without a plan, it is easy to find yourself being blindsided when significant changes occur. In today's changing market, the successful individual will have a career map that considers how to create and sell their brand to potential employers. To better understand your brand and what you have to offer the marketplace, you can use the following SWOT analysis template:

**SWOT Analysis Career Template**

<b>I N T E R N A L</b>	<b>Your Strengths</b>	<b>Your Weaknesses</b>
<b>E X T E R N A L</b>	<b>Opportunities in Your Career Field</b>	<b>Threats in Your Career Field</b>

Gaining a better understanding of your own strengths, weaknesses, external opportunities and threats in your chosen career field will help create a career map and define your brand. Your brand represents the qualities or characteristics that make you unique. It is a valuable element that demonstrates what you are able to offer in the marketplace.

When looking at the internal factors, examine those things under which you have control. Consider all of your strengths, including education, personal characteristics and transferable skills such as teamwork or communication. When examining your weaknesses, analyze those internal aspects such as lack of work experience, lack of planning, or weak technical knowledge.



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The external factors are aspects of your career under which you have very little control. Instead, they are dictated by the positive or negative trends in your career field and marketplace. Opportunities often include the growth or globalization of your field and opportunities for continued professional development. Threats tend to be limited career growth or obstacles such as geographic location.

To get started in your SWOT analysis, ask yourself the following questions:

### Strengths

- What are you passionate about?
- What motivates you to get up and go to work every day?
- What needs do you expect to fill in the workforce?
- What is your greatest asset and how does it make your brand different?

### Weaknesses

- What developmental feedback have you received?
- What do you avoid or put off until the last minute?
- What technical, leadership or interpersonal skills do you need to improve?
- Consider past failures and honestly assess how your abilities contributed to the outcome.

### Opportunities

- What is considered "state of the art" in your particular area of expertise?
- What are the upcoming changes in technology and markets in your field?
- Will changes in government policy have an impact on your career?
- What changes in social patterns, population profiles, and lifestyle changes can take advantage of your brand?

### Threats

- What is your biggest obstacle?
- Are the requirements for your desired job field changing?
- Is your chosen field subject to internal politics that will lead to conflict?
- Are you gaining enough access to new challenges to keep you sharp or marketable in the event of sudden unemployment?

This is not an exhaustive list, be creative and even consider expanding the list by asking others for feedback. Your SWOT analysis can be used to create a career map, define your brand and proactively plan for future opportunities. Additionally, by learning to capitalize on your strengths and improve your weaknesses you will be better prepared to deal with an ever changing economy. It will give you a solid understanding of the market conditions and how to align your strengths to meet current and future market demands. Tough times or not, consider giving yourself a good SWOT.