

Understanding your Strengths and Weaknesses

For planning your career we suggest you to have a simple self assessment analysis, which is called SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). This analysis is used for Strategic Planning and can be also applied for planning your career.

SWOT Analysis

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

To construct the SWOT analysis you will need to examine your current state. 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?

After the SWOT, when you already know what are your strengths and Weaknesses, you need to have Self-Marketing plan, where the product you sell is YOU! Here is how you need to start:

Marketing Plan

1. **Objective(s)** (what kind of job I want to get? What position?)
 - o e.g. Information technology specialist/systems analyst
2. **Marketing Strategies** (define your strategies for reaching your Objective) e.g.
 - o Determine the top companies for IT professionals;
 - o Examine the demand for .NET professional
 - o Build and strengthen my network.
3. **Action Programs** (here you need to describe concrete actions you are going to take) e.g.
 - o Generate a list of the top 20 companies for IT professionals
 - o Visit each potential company's Website and obtain other information.
 - o Develop, nurture, and grow at least three network contacts per week.

<p style="text-align: center;">I N T E R N A L</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <p>Internal positive aspects that are under control and upon which you may capitalize in planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Experience • Education, including value-added features • Strong technical knowledge within your field (e.g. hardware, software, programming languages) • Specific transferable skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, leadership skills) • Personal characteristics (e.g., strong work ethic, self-discipline, ability to work under pressure, creativity, optimism, or a high level of energy) • Good contacts/successful networking • Interaction with professional organizations 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <p>Internal negative aspects that are under your control and that you may plan to improve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Negative personal characteristics (e.g., poor work ethic, lack of discipline, lack of motivation, indecisiveness, shyness, too emotional)
<p style="text-align: center;">E X T E R N A L</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p>Positive external conditions that you do not control but of which you can plan to take advantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive trends in your field that will create more jobs (e.g., growth, globalization, technological advances) • Opportunities you could have in the field by enhancing your education • Field is particularly in need of your set of skills • Opportunities you could have through greater self-knowledge, more specific job goals • Opportunities for advancement in your field • Opportunities for professional development in your field • Career path you've chosen provides unique opportunities • Geography • Strong network 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <p>Negative external conditions that you do not control but the effect of which you may be able to lessen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative trends in your field that diminish jobs (downsizing, obsolescence) • Competition from your cohort of college graduates • Competitors with superior skills, experience, knowledge • Competitors with better job-hunting skills than you • Obstacles in your way (e.g., lack of the advanced education/training you need to take advantage of opportunities) • Limited advancement in your field, advancement is cut-throat and competitive • Limited professional development in your field, so it's hard to stay marketable • Companies are not hiring people with your major/degree

Here are some critical questions that can help you for constructing the SWOT analysis.

Strengths

- 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?
- What need do you expect to fill within your organization?
- What have been your most notable achievements?
- How do you measure your success?
- What knowledge or expertise will you bring to the company you join that may not have been available to the organization before?
- What is your greatest asset?

Weaknesses

- 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? (These might include weakness in technical skill areas or in leadership or interpersonal skills.)
- Think about your most unpleasant experiences in school or in past jobs and consider whether some aspect of your personal or professional life could be a root cause.

Opportunities

- Where are the promising prospects facing you?
- What is the "state of the art" in your particular area of expertise?
- 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 an MBA or another 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:
 - 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 changes, etc.

Threats

- What obstacles do you face?
- Are the requirements for your desired job field changing?
- Does changing technology threaten your prospective position?
- What is the current trend line for your personal area of expertise?
- 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?
- Will your future company provide enough access to new challenges to keep you sharp -- and marketable -- in the event of sudden unemployment?