Utilizing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT): as a Needs Assessment Tool
Readings

1. SWOT Analysis of Horticultural Farms in Bulgaria
2. SWOT Analysis of Serbian Agriculture
3. SWOT Analysis of the City of Lushnje
4. Working Group SWOT Analysis
SWOT Objectives

Participants will be able to identify a SWOT Analysis

Participants will be able to distinguish the strengths of SWOT as a needs assessment tool

Participants will be able to identify the weaknesses of SWOT

Participants will be able to implement a SWOT Analysis to facilitate trade and improve family assets
Collaborative Learning Exercise

Ask participants to identify “strengths”: What programs is Farmer-Driven Extension doing well?
Collaborative Learning Exercise

Participants identify “weaknesses”: What programs are not working well?
Collaborative Learning Exercise

Participants identify “opportunities”: What exists that will help us improve the program?
Collaborative Learning Exercise

Participants identify “threats”: What prohibits adults from participating in the program or aspects that keep the program from flourishing?
What is SWOT

• SWOT is a strategic planning method used to summarize the key elements of your strategic environments.

• SWOT is a foundation for developing a strategy to establish an organizational operating plan.
Presentation 3.90 Utilizing SWOT Analysis as a Needs Assessment Tool
Before implementing a SWOT, have a vision, mission and values statement; and complete a thorough internal and external business status evaluation
Three Strategic Environments

Your three strategic environments are
• Internal Environment
• Industry Environment
• Macro Environment

Sometimes the last two are combined and called your external environment.
What is SWOT

SWOT is a summary of your

• **S**trengths
• **W**eaknesses
• **O**pportunities
• **T**hreats
The Four Step Strategic Process

Strategic Analysis → Strategic Decision → Strategic Implementation → Strategic Review

A SWOT is the analysis phase that can begin the strategic planning process.
Strengths and Weaknesses

The first two sections of the SWOT analysis usually examine the internal workings of your farm or organization. These issues or items are usually within the control of the administrators or owners.

The following are some questions that can be asked to assist in determining your organizations’ strengths and weaknesses.
A strength is a fundamental competence of your organization that enables your organization to have an advantage over a competing organization or business. The strength should be something your customers value.

You will find your strengths only when completing an internal analysis (strengths and weaknesses).

Valentin (2001)
Strengths

• What strengths does your business have that make you competitive?
  (family, labor, equipment, etc.)

• What do you do better than another organization does?
  Are you better at marketing?
  Are you a well-respected organization?
  Are you able to complete goals efficiently?

• What do your clients perceive as your strengths?
  Ask your clients what they believe.
Examples of Strengths

- **Tangible Strengths**
  - Equipment
  - Programs
  - Ability to deliver information

- **Intangible Strengths**
  - Recognized brands
  - Your reputation
  - Experience
  - Collaborative networks

Panagiotou (2003)
Weaknesses

A weakness is a fundamental incompetence of your organization where your competitor has an advantage over your organization. Clients value that advantage over what you offer or provide.

Valentin (2001)
Weaknesses

• What can you enhance?
  How can you become more efficient and effective?
  What small changes may create positive impacts?
• What are your positive impacts toward those you serve?
  Have you completed a summative evaluation of your organization to evaluate the organization’s effectiveness?
• What do your competing organizations do more superior than your organization?
  You may be to your advantage to address a local need competing organizations are not meeting.
Examples of Weaknesses

- Tangible Weaknesses
  - Lack of equipment
  - Programs not addressing needs
  - Unsatisfactory methods to disseminate information

- Intangible Weaknesses
  - Unrecognized program
  - Poor customer relationships
  - Lack of experience or knowledge or both
  - Little collaboration

Panagiotou (2003)
Opportunities and Threats

The second phase of a SWOT analysis involves examining your organization’s external environment at issues you cannot control but can handle to improve or decrease their influence on your organization.

An example could be the overuse of water in a specific area of the community that does not allow for others in the community much access to water.

The following are questions that can assist in understanding and identifying opportunities and threats to your organization.
Opportunities

Opportunity is a scenario in an external environment that can advance your organization's competitive position relative to that of your opponents.

You will find opportunities when completing an external analysis.

Valentin (2001)
Opportunities

- Which trends are confronting your organization or community?
  Do you have to increase personnel, equipment, and other resources to continue competing with others?

- What opportunities exist?
  Is a large population nearby where you could promote your program?
  Is there a niche market for your program?

- What is occurring in the community that can be beneficial?
  Current agricultural products in your community may require secondary agricultural products that local individuals could provide (i.e. peat moss containers for vegetables or flowers, manure to fertilize small gardens or flower beds). Is there a new market for your program? Can you market the program to local individuals?
Examples of Opportunities

• Organizational Opportunities
  • Expand programs to a larger audience
  • Vary programs to target audiences
  • Move the organization forward or backward to address client needs

• Macro Opportunities
  • Current or future legislation is positive toward your organization
  • Economic future is positive

Panagiotou (2003)
Threats

A threat is a potential environmental condition you do not control. A threat has the ability to harm your organization.

You will find your threats when conduct an external analysis.

Valentin (2001)
Threats

- What barriers are confronting your organization?
- What are your competitors preparing or achieving?
- Do technological innovations threaten your organization?
- Is your organization threatened financially?
- Is there a weakness that is a specific threat to your organization?
Examples of Threats

- Organizational Threats
  - Competitors offer similar programs
  - Competitors serve more clients
  - Commodity declines in price

- Broader Threats
  - Prices for commodity deteriorate
  - Population declines
  - Increased commodity regulation

Panagiotou (2003)
Completed SWOT…now what?

After completing your SWOT, you should identify the SWOT items that are not already being addressed by your current strategy.

This will help you to determine how much if any change is required to your current strategy.

Shinno, Yoshioka, Marpaung, and Hachiga (2006)
Who Is Involved in a SWOT Analysis?

Individuals most clearly engaged with the organization should participate in the SWOT Analysis.

This includes the organization’s personnel, clients, and other stakeholders or donors. Each group may provide different information in the analysis. This should be seen as a benefit because it will provide the organization a more holistic analysis from diverse angles.

Seeking and asking clients their opinions of your organization may be beneficial internally and externally analyzing your organization.
Conducting a SWOT analysis is the first step in strategic planning for your organization.

The procedure should assist you in identifying areas where your strengths and opportunities line up in order to produce a great chance of goal accomplishment.

Conducting a SWOT analysis will assist in identifying patterns of weaknesses and threats.

Zoller and Bruynis (2007)
Procedure

A strategic plan should avoid weaknesses or threats or offer approaches to reduce their effects on the organization.

A SWOT analysis should be conducted at least once a year.

Nothing or very little may have been produced or changed. The organization should still examine accomplishments, impacts, and assess alternatives.

Zoller and Bruynis (2007)
Keep in mind…

At the conclusion of your SWOT Analysis, you may find that your strengths may offset your weaknesses and your opportunities can offset your threats. If this does not occur, this application will assist you in understanding the issues or concerns that should be addressed.

Zoller and Bruynis (2007)
SWOT Summary

**Strengths** are internal and may be what the positives of the organization’s personnel.

**Weaknesses** are internal and elements that need addressing for the organization to be successful.

**Opportunities** are external and may be an unaddressed need that your organization has a program to address.

**Threats** are external and are elements that directly affect the organization. The organization has little control over threats.

United States Department of Agriculture (2008)
SWOT Mistakes
Shinno, Yoshioka, Marpaung, and Hachiga (2006)

You will find that the content of the vast majority of completed SWOT diagrams contain unverified strengths and weaknesses that are not aligned to the organizations core competences.

During the formation of strategy and development of organizational plan activities the majority of people do not focus on the content of their SWOT analysis. Instead they often almost completely ignore their SWOT and develop a strategic plan that has no regard for this analysis.

You should stay away from solutions or developing solutions until you have a completed SWOT diagram. Once you have a competed SWOT Diagram you will shift to solution mode.
Evaluation

How would you implement a SWOT Analysis to improve the effectiveness of Farmer-Driven or Market-Led Extension Systems?

How often should you conduct a SWOT Analysis of your organization?

What are the procedures you would undertake to implement a SWOT Analysis in order to improve family assets and facilitate trade among farmers and consumers?
References


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