



## Facilitator's Guide

# Using a SWOT Analysis

## *Taking a Look at Your Organization*

*Nothing stops an organization faster than people who believe that the way you worked yesterday is the best way to work tomorrow.—Jon Madonna*

### Rationale:

Effective organizations must use deliberate planning strategies to identify issues and needs.

### Program Goal:

To develop the skills necessary to implement and interpret results of a SWOT analysis

### Program Objectives:

- To distinguish the elements of a SWOT Analysis for organizational growth
- To successfully facilitate a SWOT analysis as an effective planning strategy
- To evaluate SWOT analysis results for application to organizational program planning
- To develop an action plan to move the SWOT analysis results toward a successful outcome

### Pre-Program Preparation/Materials:

- Read and make copies of the “Using a SWOT Analysis” fact sheet (CLD2-5).
- Review “Developing and Implementing an Action Plan for Community Organizations” fact sheet (CLD2-6) for background information for Learning Activity 4.
- Print comment cards for *Introductory Activity*.
- Print copies of *Using Our Brains Handout*, one per member.
- Print one copy of the *Interpretation and Strategy Worksheet* for recorder.
- Print copies of the *Action Plan Worksheet* (one per group).
- Gather scissors, pencils, pens, markers and easel paper (if desired).

### Introduction:

A SWOT analysis is a deliberate planning method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organization or project. The acronym SWOT stands for:

- **S** = Strengths: Internal attributes of the organization that are helpful to achieving the goal(s)
- **W** = Weaknesses: Internal attributes of the organization that are harmful to achieving the goal(s)
- **O** = Opportunities: External conditions that are helpful to achieving the goal(s)
- **T** = Threats: External conditions which could do damage to the goal(s)

Doing a SWOT analysis is a straightforward process that will allow your organization to reach their goals successfully.

### Introductory Activity:

The SWOT analysis can be helpful in generating ideas and systematically evaluating a project or organization. This process can be used in making decisions, adopting strategies and creating goals in your personal and organizational life. The following scenario will allow your group to practice determining the differences between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats:

*Your County Homemaker Club is in need of a fundraising idea. Someone brings up creating a Homemaker cookbook. Your club has many ideas but this one has created some buzz so your president asks the membership to discuss the pros and cons. Members have written down their comments.*

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### Activity Directions:

- Cut out the comment cards.
- Label four small containers or baskets with the words “strength,” “weakness,” “opportunity” and “threat.”
- Shuffle and hand out comment cards to members until they are gone.
- Allow members time to read the comment cards.
- Ask each member to place comment card(s) in the appropriate container/basket.
- Take turns taking comment cards out of the four container/baskets, and use the following discussion questions as a guide:
  - » Why did you place that card in that particular basket?
  - » Did some comment cards fall into more than one category?
  - » Who needs to be at the table for the discussion? Internal? External?
  - » What are the next steps for the club

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### Objective 1: To distinguish the elements of an SWOT Analysis for organizational growth

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#### Learning Activity 1:

Show a PowerPoint slide (or flip chart paper with a SWOT analysis table illustration) that explains each letter of the acronym SWOT. Clearly review/explain each component of the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Ask the audience:

- How do you think a SWOT analysis could be undertaken within your organization?
- How would knowing each of these aspects (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) help to improve your organization? **NOTE:** Focus on each of these aspects separately if you have time.

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### Objective 2: To successfully facilitate a SWOT analysis as an effective planning strategy

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#### Learning Activity 2: Using Our Brains

A SWOT analysis is basically a guided brainstorm on a specific topic. Through facilitation, a SWOT analysis uses open-ended questions to create more meaningful discussion.

**Helpful Facilitation Tips:** Let the participants lead, and as facilitator only speak when needed. Have each member use a worksheet to record discussion or utilize easel paper to record for everyone to see.

#### Scenario:

*Your County Homemaker Vice President has made a call for each club to do a SWOT analysis of the County*

*Extension Homemaker Organization. Through the years, the County Homemakers Association has lost membership due to low numbers of first-time members joining and an aging membership. The Vice President would like to attract newcomers and a wider variety of ages. Her goal is to increase membership. Follow the directions below to undertake a SWOT analysis.*

### Activity Directions:

- Read the scenario to the club members.
- Use the SWOT analysis “Using Our Brains Hand-out” handout as a reference and for taking notes.
- Facilitate the discussion.
- Use the following questions and hints to facilitate discussion if needed:
  - » Be honest and real.
  - » Be constructive while truth telling.
  - » Put your feet in someone else’s shoes.
  - » Be open-minded and think outside the box.
  - » Consider changes in society.

#### Strengths:

- » What do we do well?
- » What advantages do we have?
- » What are our resources and assets?
- » What do other acknowledge as strengths of our organization?

#### Weaknesses:

- » What could we do better?
- » Where are we at risk?

#### Opportunities:

- » What do we know about but have not been able to try?
- » Are there any new frontiers that we can explore?

#### Threats:

- » Are any of our weaknesses likely to make us vulnerable?
- » What outside issues beyond our control or within that block our progress?
- » Are other like organizations doing anything different?
- » Are there any big changes in our demographics?

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### Objective 3: To evaluate SWOT analysis results for application to organizational program planning

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#### Learning Activity 3: Interpreting the Meaning: So What?

Interpreting a SWOT analysis can be done as a group or by one person. Depending on the group, you can complete the process on-site or off-site. This ac-

tivity involves taking the SWOT analysis “Using Our Brains Handout” outcomes and using the “Interpretation and Strategy Worksheet” to match like themes. An easy way to do this is to match strengths with opportunities and weaknesses with threats.

#### Activity Directions:

- The facilitator should identify a recorder.
- The recorder will record the pairs of S/O, W/O and S/T, W/T on the “Interpretation and Strategies Worksheet” or easel paper.
- Allow participants to discuss strategies for strengths/opportunities and weaknesses/opportunities.
- Allow participants to discuss strategies for strengths/threats and weaknesses/threats.
- Facilitator should lead discussion of common themes.
- Recorder should make note of discussion.
- Use the following questions to facilitate discussion:
  - » What do these results tell us?
  - » What decisions need to be made?
- Specifically, you’ll want to ask the group the following questions:
  - » How can we leverage each one of our strengths?
  - » How can we improve upon each weakness?
  - » How we can capitalize on each opportunity?
  - » How can we minimize each threat?
  - » Are we ready to proceed?
  - » If yes, then what is our first step of action?
  - » If not, what needs to be done before we can proceed?

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#### Objective 4: To develop an action plan to move the SWOT analysis results toward a successful outcome

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#### *Learning Activity 4: Application to Action: Creating an Action Plan*

Successful organizations build on their strengths, correct their weaknesses and protect against internal vulnerabilities and external threats. Through conducting the SWOT analysis in Activity 2 “Using Our Brains,” club members have identified the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the County Extension Homemaker Organization in regard to membership. Through Activity 3, members interpreted the SWOT analysis utilizing the SWOT “Interpretation and Strategy Worksheet” to further understand steps that can be taken to proceed

with increasing membership. In this activity, participants will create an action plan using the strategies identified in Learning Activity 3. An indication of a successful organization is the ability to take appropriate action when needed. The action plan is useful to define the goals within a timeframe with specific activities and outcomes. Participants will focus on attainable results. The action plan should be written in a “SMART” format. SMART is an acronym for: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and time-sensitive. Writing all objectives, goals and action steps in a SMART format will ensure that they are worded in such a format as to be easily accomplished.

#### Build an Action Plan using SMART Goals

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-Oriented
- Realistic
- Time-Sensitive

#### Activity Directions:

- Review “Developing and Implementing an Action Plan for Community Organizations” fact sheet for background information.
- Facilitate the group working through the action plan worksheet.
- Utilize the “Using Your Brains Worksheet” and the “Interpretation and Strategies Handout” to complete the action plan.
- Discuss what actions can be taken to accomplish the objective of increasing membership.
- As a group, choose at least three goals to map out on the action plan worksheet. (See the example on the action plan worksheet.)
- If the group is large (over 15 individuals), ask participants to break into groups of three to five people.
- After the action plan is completed, the facilitator may choose to lead a discussion using the following questions:
  - » Are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the organization visible in the action plan?
  - » Are the strategies discussed in Activity 2 (how to leverage each strength) visible in the action plan?
  - » How could this action plan benefit the organization?

- » How can an organization make sure the action plan is carried out?
- » How can we utilize this process in our own club or community?

## Summary

A SWOT analysis is a very useful planning tool for groups, organizations and communities. It is important to understand what a SWOT analysis is, how to successfully facilitate one, and how to apply the results once the analysis is finished. When done successfully, this process can assist anyone in reaching their goals.

## References:

- Impact Alliance (2000). *User's guide for SWOT analysis*. Found at: [http://www.impactalliance.org/file\\_download.php?location=S\\_U&filename=10227014460SWOT\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.impactalliance.org/file_download.php?location=S_U&filename=10227014460SWOT_Guide.pdf).
- Empowering Leaders in KY, (ELK). <http://www.ca.uky.edu/kccl/elk.php>.
- SWOT Strategies Worksheet, accessed at <http://www.amces.com/resources.htm>.
- Developing and Implementing an Action Plan for Community Organizations: Giving New Direction to Established Organizations KELD factsheet, Ken Culp, III, Ph.D.

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# Comment Cards

(Cut out cards for use with Introductory Activity.)

Have access to recipes	Recognized as good cooks
Have a leadership structure	No seed money
50% of members don't want to	Timeframe: Christmas to send for gifts
Some members don't cook anymore	Visibility in the community
Raise funds for camp scholarships	Develop cohesion among the membership
The organization down the road creating a cook book	Economic climate may show lack of cook book sales
Cook book company requires a down payment by certain date	Secretary types fast

**Comment Cards Suggested Answer Sheet:** Some cards may fit more than one category.

**Strengths**

Have access to recipes, Recognized as Good Cooks, Have a Leadership Structure, Secretary types fast

**Weaknesses**

Have no seed money, 50% of members don't want to, Timeframe: Christmas to send for gifts, Some members don't cook anymore

**Opportunities**

They would become more visible in the community, they could raise funds for camp scholarships, it would develop cohesion among the membership

**Threats**

The church down the road creating a cook book, Economic Climate may show lack of cook book sales, Cook Book Company requires a down payment by certain date

# Using Our Brains Handout

SUBJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

OBJECTIVE: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>HELPFUL</b> To achieving the Objective	<b>HARMFUL</b> To achieving the Objective
<b>External Factors</b> Outside of the Organization	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>
<b>Internal Factors</b> Inside of the Organization	<b>O</b>	<b>T</b>

# Interpretation and Strategy Worksheet

**Instructions:** Take your top three SWOT items and insert them in the appropriate box in this chart. Then, proceed to fill in the matrix.

SWOT - List top three			
Strengths (S)	Weakness (W)	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
List top three SWOT strategies			
<b>SO Strategies</b> Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities	<b>WO Strategies</b> Overcome weakness by taking advantage of opportunities	<b>ST Strategies</b> Use strengths to avoid threats	<b>WT Strategies</b> Minimize weakness and avoid threats
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3

## Action Plan Worksheet

<b>Goal</b> <i>Be Realistic</i>	<b>Time Frame</b> <i>Be Time Sensitive</i>	<b>Activity</b> <i>Be Action-Oriented</i>	<b>Outcomes</b> <i>Be Measurable</i>	<b>Results</b> <i>Be Specific</i>
<i>Ex. Each Member will invite one friend to join Homemakers</i>	<i>Ex. Invitations will start being made in June and will be completed by August</i>	<i>Ex. Verbal Invitations will be followed up by handwritten Invitations. Each current member will have an accountability partner.</i>	<i>Ex. Increase number of members in County Homemakers</i>	<i>Ex. Increase number of members by 25% by September 15.</i>