



THE SWOT ANALYSIS TOOL

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The **SWOT analysis** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is a commonly used tool to facilitate a strategic review of a particular organization, church or ministry. It focuses on the key factors which are most pertinent to ministry achievement or otherwise of evaluating the progress of its purpose and vision. It does this through identifying the internal and weaknesses of the church/ministry and the opportunities and threats which (primarily) are impacting it from outside.

In itself it doesn't identify what should be done. Rather it provides a framework for identifying where strategic opportunities may exist, how to avoid weaknesses inherent within the church, or threats from outside that may limit future growth.

When developing **Strengths and Weaknesses**, it is important to appraise the church/ministry honestly, rather than being too modest or over critical. Seek a balance between the number of Strengths and Weaknesses identified.

Strengths and Weaknesses can be identified by asking the following questions :

- What do we do well? What do we do less well?
- What areas of church life are vibrant and healthy? What areas are weaker?
- What would someone who sees several churches like ours point out as being distinctive (either positive or negative) about our church.
- What resources can we call upon? How does this compare to our needs?

Note that a church's "Strengths" and its "Weaknesses" (its "flaws") are obviously **internal** considerations. In "Strengths", list your church's internal strengths that make it meaningful and effective. In "Weaknesses", list any internal weaknesses of your church that must be strengthened to ensure effectiveness.

When considering **Opportunities and Threats**, realize they are mainly gathered from looking beyond the boundaries of the church/ministry. These question will help identify Opportunities and Threats.

- What community based needs could be met by our church's strengths and resources?
- What is changing in the community or in society that will impact us in the future?

Note that "Opportunities" and "Threats" in a church's environment are clearly **external** considerations. In "Opportunities", list the opportunities your church is going to capitalize on. In "Threats", list the external threats that your church must be aware of in terms of problems that it has to solve.

Remember : the aim of the SWOT analysis is to identify the key factors that will impact on the church's ability to achieve its purpose and vision, rather than attempting to map every possible factor. It is probably best to limit the SWOT analysis to no more than 10 factors for each of the four elements.

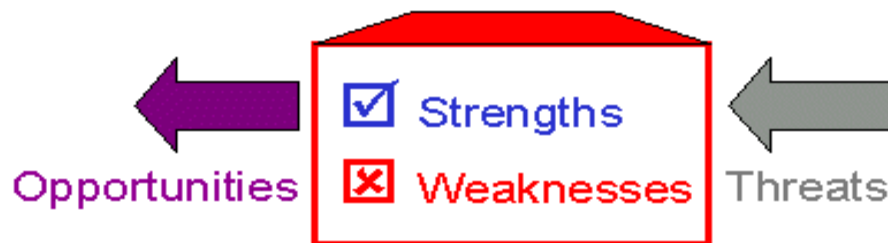
In order to do effective strategic planning, there are specific ways that this information can be used by church leaders. In general, it is clear that the church should attempt

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- to build its Strengths
- to reverse (or disguise) its Weaknesses
- to maximize the response to its Opportunities, and
- to overcome its Threats.

Visualize the SWOT process representing your church environment



On the next page is an example of a church SWOT analysis of its ministry children

On the final page is a SWOT template for church use.

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Example: A church considering its ministry to children could produce the following SWOT analysis:

Strengths:

- ♦ We have around 40 children between 4 and 11 coming to Junior Church each week.
 - ♦ We have a strong team of experienced, well trained Junior Church leaders who are committed to their ministry with children.
 - ♦ Our building is modern and flexible - we have a number of rooms to accommodate Junior Church.
 - ♦ Children enjoy coming to church, and find their groups stimulating and rewarding. So much so they sometimes bring their friends.
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Weaknesses:

- ♦ We currently lack modern music resources within the church (guitar/drums)
 - ♦ Only around two-thirds of children leaving Junior Church at 11, stay in the church until the age of 13.
 - ♦ We currently don't integrate the children into church worship well - they leave during the first song, and don't return until the coffee time at the end.
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Opportunities:

- ♦ Children have brought their friends along to Junior Church - this could be encouraged with special weeks focused on newcomers.
 - ♦ Opportunity to link some of the teaching with current themes amongst children eg latest Disney release, bands, etc.
 - ♦ We could make new contacts through participating in a local football or netball league.
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Threats:

- ♦ Some parents don't come to church, and give it a low priority for their children to attend.
 - ♦ Children's leaders have busy working lives and a number are under pressure at work.
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Using the matrix below, try this exercise for your church. And then write out your SWOT analysis similar to the example given above.

Strengths: potentially positive <i>internal</i> factors	Weaknesses: potentially negative <i>internal</i> factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____
Opportunities: potentially positive <i>external</i> factors	Threats: potentially negative <i>external</i> factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____• _____