

SWOT Analysis Canvas

Framework: SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
Use for: Strategic situation assessment — understanding internal capabilities and external environment before making a significant decision.
Time required: 60–90 minutes with a small group (3–6 people). Works solo for quick assessments.

How to use this template

- 1. Define the scope first.** Name the specific decision, product, company, or initiative you're analyzing. SWOT without a clear subject produces vague results.
- 2. Internal before external.** Complete Strengths and Weaknesses (what's true about you) before moving to Opportunities and Threats (what's true about the environment).
- 3. Be specific.** "Good team" is not a strength. "Three engineers with production ML experience in our specific domain" is a strength. Specificity is what makes the framework useful.
- 4. Aim for 5–8 items per quadrant.** Fewer than 3 is probably too shallow. More than 10 per quadrant becomes noise.
- 5. Use the TOWS cross-step.** After completing the 4 quadrants, look across them: which Strengths can you use to capture which Opportunities? Which Weaknesses make which Threats more dangerous? The cross-analysis is where strategy actually lives.

Subject of this SWOT

Name the company, product, initiative, or decision being analyzed:

[Example: Launching our analytics product into the healthcare vertical]

Date: ____
Prepared by: ____
Participants: ____

The SWOT Canvas

INTERNAL

Strengths	Weaknesses
What do we do better than others?	Where are we genuinely behind?
What resources, capabilities, or assets do we have?	What resources or capabilities are we missing?
What do customers consistently praise?	What do customers or partners complain about?

Strengths	Weaknesses
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

EXTERNAL

Opportunities	Threats
What trends or conditions favor us?	What trends or conditions work against us?
What needs in the market are unmet?	What are competitors doing that could hurt us?
What can we do now that we couldn't before?	What could remove our advantage?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

TOWS Cross-Analysis (optional but recommended)

The TOWS step converts inventory into strategy. For each cell, write the 1–2 most important moves.

	Opportunities	Threats
Strengths	S×O — Pursue: How do your strengths let you capture these opportunities?	S×T — Defend: How do your strengths help you counter these threats?
	<i>[Which S enables which O?]</i>	<i>[Which S reduces which T?]</i>

	Opportunities	Threats
Weaknesses	W×O — Build: Which weaknesses, if fixed, would unlock these opportunities?	W×T — Mitigate: Which weaknesses make you most vulnerable to threats?
	<i>[Which W is blocking which O?]</i>	<i>[Which W+T combination is most dangerous?]</i>

Key implications

Top 3 things this SWOT tells us:

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Decisions or next steps this suggests:

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SWOT analysis is a widely used strategic planning framework. Covered in depth in the Frameworks & Mental Models Guide on biztechprimer.com.