SWOT analysis template

Take an honest look at your business and its environment, then turn what you find into a short list of actions.

How to run a SWOT session (60 to 90 minutes)

1. Invite three to six people who see the business from different angles: owner, staff, an adviser, even a trusted customer.
2. Agree the question first, for example "Should we open a second location?" A focused SWOT is far more useful than a general one.
3. Strengths and weaknesses are internal: things you control. Opportunities and threats are external: the market, customers, competitors, regulation, technology and the economy.
4. Back each point with evidence (numbers, customer feedback, competitor facts) rather than opinion.
5. Rank the top three in each box, then use the action page to match strengths to opportunities and fix the weaknesses that expose you to threats.

Question or decision this SWOT is for:

Date: _____ **Participants:** _____

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SWOT grid

Strengths (internal, helpful)

- *What do customers praise us for?*
- *What do we do better or cheaper than others?*
- *Which skills, relationships or assets are hard to copy?*

Weaknesses (internal, harmful)

- *Where do we lose customers or margin?*
- *What do we rely on one person for?*
- *Which systems or skills are missing?*

Opportunities (external, helpful)

- *Which customer needs are growing or unmet?*
- *Which trends, technology or regulation changes help us?*
- *Which partners or new markets could we reach?*

Threats (external, harmful)

- *What are competitors doing that could hurt us?*
- *Which costs, rules or economic changes put us at risk?*
- *Which customers or suppliers could we lose?*

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From analysis to action

Combine the boxes to find strategies (often called a TOWS matrix), then pick no more than five actions.

Strengths + Opportunities

How can we use our strengths to take advantage of these opportunities?

Weaknesses + Opportunities

Which weaknesses must we fix to capture these opportunities?

Strengths + Threats

How can our strengths reduce these threats?

Weaknesses + Threats

Where are we most exposed, and what is our defensive plan?

Priority actions

#	Action	Owner	Due date	Success measure
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Revisit this SWOT every six to twelve months, or before any big decision. Things that were opportunities last year may now be threats.

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