SWOT Analysis – How to Create a Strategic Plan for Information Technology

BY WYLIE BLANCHARD

One of the key skills that employers look for when hiring a technology leader is the ability to think strategically. This, however, can be hard for an employer to identify when bringing in someone new to their organization therefore a technique used by HR recruiters is to ask the interviewee to do a simple SWOT analysis for the business. Many employers believe that even without having detailed knowledge of the business, one should be able to identify SWOT themes very quickly.

So, what is a SWOT analysis? It's a method to create a strategic plan by identifying 4 key principles: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

To do a SWOT analysis take some time to think about each of the 4 key principles and then list how that business relates to each one.

First start with **Strengths** by asking: What does the company do well, what resources

does it offer that are important to you and how is the company making best use of information technology?

With **Weaknesses** ask: What resources or services could the company improve, in what areas does the competition have the technological edge and what technology should the business actually avoid?

For **Opportunities**: think about how technology is changing, are there interesting trends in technology that you would like to see used and is there a need in the market that no one is currently filling?

Lastly with **Threats** consider: what is the competition doing well, what information security threats should the business be most concerned about and what new innovations are others bringing to the market?

Next, organize the list by priority, choosing only a few for each SWOT item. You'll find that Weaknesses and Strengths are normally true for the company today, an internal factor. While Opportunities and Threats imply an external factor or a future state.

An exercise that will help you remember the key principles, is to complete a SWOT analysis on your ability to market "yourself." Completing this exercise will give you a foundation on how to create a strategic plan for yourself and for a business.

Being able to present a SWOT analysis means that you have the ability to see the changes needed for a business to stay successful and that you've given yourself one of the skills needed to be a Technical Pro who's in high demand.

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