



Action SWOT Analysis¹

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Description:

Like the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis⁴, the Action SWOT Analysis provides an assessment of an organization's internal and external environment. Both the SWOT Analysis and the Action SWOT Analysis are used to identify an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses (as the organization's current state), as well as opportunities and threats external to the organization (as the organization's future state).

Collecting and analyzing information is a critical part of any quality improvement (QI) or quality planning process. However, with so many tools to collect and display information, sometimes QI teams invest too much energy just gathering information, and fail to take action using the information they gathered. The Action SWOT Analysis builds on current state activities, and helps move organizations beyond collection and analysis to development and implementation of clear action steps. Figure 1 shows how the Action SWOT Analysis becomes an integral part of the problem solving process and can be seen as a useful tool to identify and implement potential improvements.

When to Use:

Action SWOT Analysis can be used in preparing for program process improvement planning or as part of an agency strategic planning process. It helps to understand how the organization fits into the external environment, identifying the organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It goes further to support the creation of actionable steps that build on strengths, mitigate weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and prevent future threats.

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⁴ [Public Health Quality Improvement Encyclopedia](#), Public Health Foundation, ©2012, pp. 137-138.

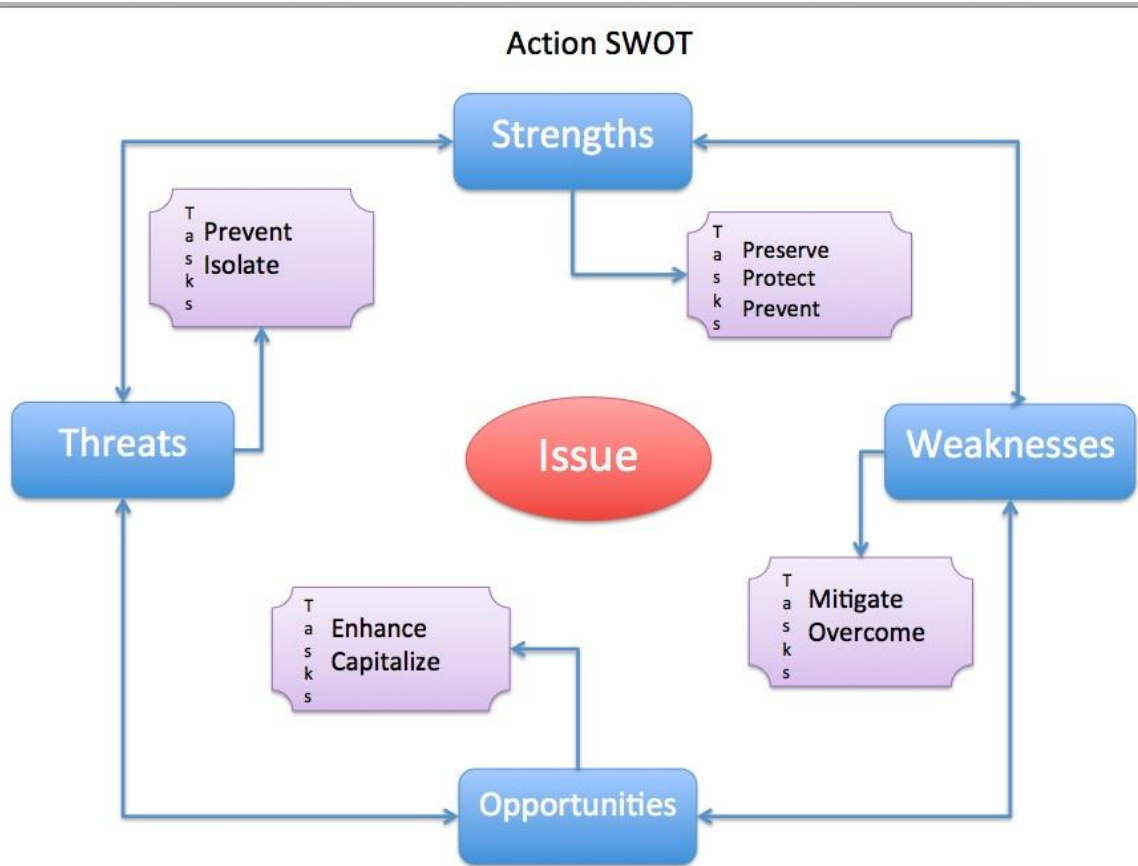


Figure 1

Construction Steps:

1. Identify the issue to be addressed or goal the improvement team would like to accomplish.
2. Using four pieces of flip chart paper posted on the wall, create four tables to gather information. Label the papers Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.
 - a. Each table should have three columns, as indicated in Tables 1 – 4.
 - b. Label the columns as shown in Table 1 -- Strengths, Preserve and Protect, and Prevent.
 - c. Label the columns as shown in Table 2 -- Weaknesses, Mitigate, and Overcome.
 - d. Label the columns as shown in Table 3 -- Opportunities, Capitalize, and Enhance.
 - e. Label the columns as shown in Table 4 -- Threats, Prevent, and Isolate.
3. Use brainstorming to identify the organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the issue or goal being addressed. This can be done by rotating small groups, as is done with the traditional SWOT Analysis.
 - a. Separate the improvement team into four small groups and assign each group to one of the four Tables.

- b. Each small group should brainstorm responses for their assigned Table and write them on the paper.
 - c. After five minutes, rotate each group to the next category to complete the same brainstorming exercise for the next Table.
 - d. Rotate the groups through each of the four Tables.
4. After the groups have rotated through the four Tables, collectively review the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Next, answer the following questions to develop a focused framework for developing action plans.

Strengths:

 - What actions will we need to take to **preserve** and **protect** the current strengths?
 - How can we **prevent** slippage of existing strengths?

Weaknesses:

 - What can **mitigate** these weaknesses, to reduce their power or influence?
 - What would it take to **overcome** the weaknesses?

Opportunities:

 - How can we **capitalize** on the opportunities?
 - What strategies can we design that will **enhance** those opportunities?

Threats:

 - What can **prevent** these threats in the future?
 - How can threats be **isolated**?
5. Document the answers to the questions in the tables, as is shown in Tables 1-4.
6. Use Action SWOT Analysis tool in conjunction with RASIC⁵ or Gantt⁶ Charts to assure assignment and documentation of responsible individuals/teams and deadlines.
 - a. Alternatively, add two columns (Responsibility and Deadline) to the four data-gathering tables.
7. Use the four completed tables to fill in the [downloadable Action SWOT Analysis template](#) (see Figure 2 below for an example) to create a single summary document.

Completing an Action SWOT Analysis creates actionable next steps, accountabilities, and deadlines. Instead of simply gathering information, the Action SWOT Analysis becomes a product useable by the improvement team.

Example: XYZ Organization

The XYZ Organization wants to retain its current workforce and keep their skills current. An improvement team opts to conduct an Action SWOT Analysis. First, the organization examines its existing strengths for retaining employees and keeping their skills current (Table 1).

⁵ [Public Health Quality Improvement Encyclopedia](#), Public Health Foundation, ©2012, pp. 109-110.

⁶ [Public Health Quality Improvement Encyclopedia](#), Public Health Foundation, ©2012, pp. 47-48.

Table 1

Strengths	Preserve and Protect	Prevent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledgeable and adaptable employees 	Update Workforce Development Plan	Pay skilled employees better than competition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In house training department 	Keep courses relevant to shifting demands of the marketplace	Evaluate course offerings quarterly and update

Next, the XYZ Organization identified its current weaknesses around retaining and keeping employee skills current (Table 2).

Table 2

Weaknesses	Mitigate	Overcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees leave for better opportunities 	Promote from within	Grow the organization so more opportunities are available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge leaves with an employee 	Mentoring program with senior and junior employees; have employees document all of their key work processes in detail to capture knowledge	Develop a computer bank where all key process and organization decisions reside

After completing the internal scan, XYZ Organization explored potential external opportunities that the organization could be facing in the near future.

Table 3

Opportunities	Capitalize	Enhance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers dissatisfied with rival's products/services 	Develop a change-ready and adaptable workforce that will monitor customer needs	Use current knowledge of workers to build products/services that satisfy the customer's needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep employee knowledge current 	Build academic partnerships with a university to offer courses and advanced degrees	Have a university develop an in-house satellite course to offer company-specific training on company time

In the final step, XYZ Organization identified potential internal and external threats and answered the action questions designed to prevent and isolate those threats.

Table 4

Threats	Prevent	Isolate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee knowledge/skills becomes obsolete 	Hire new workers with desired skills or upgrade current workers with current knowledge and skills	Keep workforce development plans current and identify those with obsolete skills; design targeted improvement plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competitors hire away most skilled employees 	Use employee satisfaction surveys to understand what motivates employees to stay	Keep pay, fringe benefits, education, and career advancement competitive with the market

The above tables are a simple way for an improvement team to gather information. The tables translates ideas into a concise visual format, and posting the completed tables on a wall can keep the action plan easily accessible. The information gathered in Tables 1-4 feeds into the following completed Action SWOT Analysis.

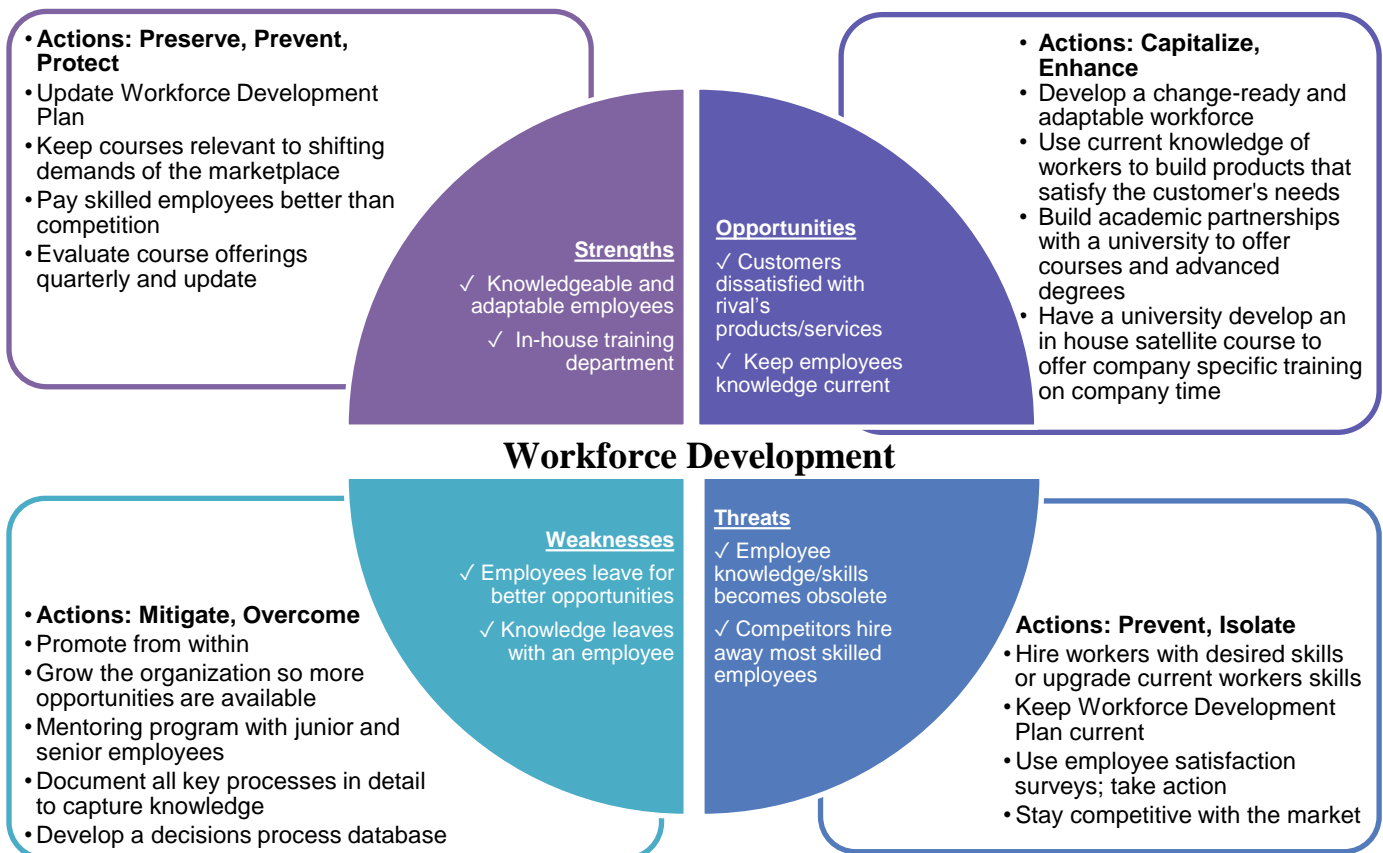


Figure 2