

# SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

## Basics of SWOT Analysis

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### Introduction

*The 2014 FIRST Entrepreneurship guide asks teams to conduct risk analysis using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). This is a tool used in business but may be a new approach for a FIRST team. This paper is intended to introduce the concept of a SWOT analysis and provide some basic guidance on how to lead one for your team. Comments, feedback and suggestions are welcomed. Please send to [first@cyberblue234.com](mailto:first@cyberblue234.com).*

### What Is a SWOT and How do you do a SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is often used to determine what the internal and external factors are that can be a benefit or a risk to a business venture. For a FIRST Team, the SWOT analysis can be used to address the team's challenges for sustainment and growth.

A SWOT analysis is best done with a representative group from the team. If possible, the whole team should participate to be sure all ideas are captured and everyone on the team understands the risks to the team. Following the SWOT analysis, the team should then put together action plans to address the issues identified. Taking these steps can improve the likelihood of success and sustainment for the team.

Strengths and Weaknesses are usually focused on issues "inside" the organization, while Opportunities and Threats are usually focused on "external" factors. However, both internal and external factors can be in any of the four categories.

In a typical SWOT analysis, the items are captured in a "4 BOX" layout with Strengths and Weaknesses in the top 2 boxes and Opportunities and Threats in the bottom 2 boxes. A sample of this layout is below.

STRENGTH	WEAKNESS
OPPORTUNITY	THREAT

Each of the four SWOT categories is defined below.

**Strengths** – A Strength is something or some capability that can help the team be successful and sustaining. It could be something that the team would share with other teams.

**Weaknesses** – A Weakness is something that is a disadvantage or significant additional challenge to the team.

**Opportunity** – An Opportunity is something the team may be able to do to help be more competitive or improve sustainability.

**Threats** – A Threat is something that poses a risk to the team and the ability of the team to sustain itself.

Examples of potential details for a *FIRST* Team are listed below.

### **Strengths –**

- Great school and administration support.
- Dedicated building space.
- Long term mentors and mentor support.
- Large number of students, across several school age groups.
- Diversity in student and mentor population.
- Strong support from the community.
- Major sponsor who provides significant support.
- Successful recruiting program.
- Training program for new members.
- Future team members through Elementary and Middle School programs.

### **Weaknesses –**

- Little support from the school or administration.
- Small team and ineffective recruitment.
- No diversity of team members.
- Most team members are seniors.
- Mentors only stay a year or two.
- Fundraising is always limited.
- There are very limited funds to purchase materials.
- Team can only meet 3 days per week.
- There is only one major sponsor.
- There is only one mentor.

### **Opportunities –**

- Partner with another school or community center.
- Recruit a new major sponsor who just moved into town.
- Use school announcements and media to publicize the team and recruit new members.
- Hold an open house to highlight the team and FIRST.
- Do a demo at major sponsors to highlight their support.
- Search for creative, unique fundraising options.

### **Threats –**

- School decides to stop supporting the team.
- Mentors “retire” from *FIRST* due to burnout or other commitments.
- Major sponsor closes down or decides to reduce funding.
- Students and / or Mentors cannot work together.
- Team members cannot get approval to miss school to compete.

A SWOT can be a very useful tool for a team. After completing the analysis, the next step is to put together action plans. Action plans can help assure that the Strengths and Opportunities are used to the advantage of the team, and the Weaknesses and Threats are addressed to remove them or reduce their impact on the team.

*For additional information, search the internet for “SWOT” for several other examples and descriptions of SWOT techniques and approaches for businesses.*