# SWOT Analysis Guidelines

***Please note these guidelines are taken from the Mind Tools website. You will need to adapt it for your session with your mentee. It is to help you get a feel of what a SWOT analysis includes, it doesn’t directly relate to a further education situation.***

# Strengths

* What advantages do you have that others don't have (for example, skills, certifications, education, or connections)?
* What do you do better than anyone else?
* What personal resources can you access?
* What do other people (and your boss, in particular) see as your strengths?
* Which of your achievements are you most proud of?
* What values do you believe in that others fail to exhibit?
* Are you part of a network that no one else is involved in? If so, what connections do you have with influential people?

Consider this from your own perspective, and from the point of view of the people around you. And don't be modest or shy – be as objective as you can. Knowing and using your strengths can make you happier and more fulfilled at work. See our **StrengthsFinder** article for more help on this.

And if you still have any difficulty identifying your strengths, write down a list of your personal characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths!

# Tip:

Think about your strengths in relation to the people around you. For example, if you're a great mathematician and the people around you are also great at math, then this is not likely to be a strength in your current role – it may be a necessity.

# Weaknesses

* What tasks do you usually avoid because you don't feel confident doing them?
* What will the people around you see as your weaknesses?
* Are you completely confident in your education and skills training? If not, where are you weakest?
* What are your negative work habits (for example, are you often late, are you disorganized, do you have a short temper, or are you poor at handling stress)?
* Do you have personality traits that hold you back in your field? For instance, if you have to conduct meetings on a regular basis, a fear of public speaking would be a major weakness.

Again, consider this from a personal/internal perspective and an external perspective. Do other people see weaknesses that you don't see? Do co‐workers consistently outperform you in key areas? Be realistic – it's best to face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

# Opportunities

* What new technology can help you? Or can you get help from others or from people via the Internet?
* Is your industry growing? If so, how can you take advantage of the current market?
* Do you have a network of strategic contacts to help you, or offer good advice?
* What trends (management or otherwise) do you see in your company, and how can you take advantage of them?
* Are any of your competitors failing to do something important? If so, can you take advantage of their mistakes?
* Is there a need in your company or industry that no one is filling?
* Do your customers or vendors complain about something in your company? If so, could you create an opportunity by offering a solution?

You might find useful opportunities in the following:

* Networking events, educational classes, or conferences.
* A colleague going on an extended leave. Could you take on some of this person's projects to gain experience?
* A new role or project that forces you to learn new skills, like public speaking or international relations.
* A company expansion or acquisition. Do you have specific skills (like a second language) that could help with the process?

Also, importantly, look at your strengths, and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities – and look at your weaknesses, and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating those weaknesses.

# Threats

* What obstacles do you currently face at work?
* Are any of your colleagues competing with you for projects or roles?
* Is your job (or the demand for the things you do) changing?
* Does changing technology threaten your position?
* Could any of your weaknesses lead to threats?

Performing this analysis will often provide key information – it can point out what needs to be done and put problems into perspective.

# A Personal SWOT Example

What would a personal SWOT assessment look like? Review this SWOT analysis for Carol, an advertising manager.

# Strengths

* I'm very creative. I often impress clients with a new perspective on their brands.
* I communicate well with my clients and team.
* I have the ability to ask key questions to find just the right marketing angle.
* I'm completely committed to the success of a client's brand.

# Weaknesses

* I have a strong, compulsive need to do things quickly and remove them from my "to do" list, and sometimes the quality of my work suffers as a result.
* This same need to get things done also causes me stress when I have too many tasks.
* I get nervous when presenting ideas to clients, and this fear of public speaking often takes the passion out of my presentations.

# Opportunities

* One of our major competitors has developed a reputation for treating their smaller clients poorly.
* I'm attending a major marketing conference next month. This will allow for strategic networking, and also offer some great training seminars.
* Our art director will go on maternity leave soon. Covering her duties while she's away would be a great career development opportunity for me.

# Threats

* Simon, one of my colleagues, is a much stronger speaker than I am, and he's competing with me for the art director position.
* Due to recent staff shortages, I'm often overworked, and this negatively impacts my creativity.
* The current economic climate has resulted in slow growth for the marketing industry. Many firms have laid off staff members, and our company is considering further cutbacks.

As a result of performing this analysis, Carol takes the bold step of approaching her colleague Simon about the art director's maternity leave. Carol proposes that both she and Simon cover the job's duties, working together and each using his or her strengths. To her surprise, Simon likes the idea. He knows he presents very well, but he admits that he's usually impressed by Carol's creative ideas, which he feels are far better than most of his.

By working as a team, they have a chance to make their smaller clients feel even better about the service they're getting. This takes advantage of their competitor's weakness in this area.