THE SWOT ANALYSIS

A key tool for developing your business strategy

Internal factors

Strengths

Opportunities

External factors

SWOT

Weaknesses

Threats

Pansophix

A Useful Guide
to
SWOT Analysis

Published by Pansophix Online

Sterling House, 10 Wheatcroft Business Park,

Landmere Lane, Edwalton, Nottingham, NG12 4DG

Written by Alan Sarsby

This edition published November 2012 (a)

Confidence through Development

Confidence through Development

Pansophix

Confidence through Development

Confidence through Development

1   Introducing SWOT

1.1   Four boxes

SWOT is a popular 4-box strategy analysis and strategy development model. The acronym SWOT is derived from …

- **S**trengths

- **W**eaknesses

- **O**pportunities

- **T**hreats.

SWOT has been around for decades and could lay claim to being the most widely used strategy tool in modern times. It is used by industry, commerce, charitable and voluntary organisations. In higher education, SWOT is often a key part of business studies and MBAs. If you have ever applied for a business bank loan, it is likely that the bank would want to see a SWOT analysis or something similar.

1.2   This Useful Guide

The goal of this Useful Guide is …

- To introduce SWOT as a useful strategy tool,

- To help you carry out a SWOT analysis that is robust and relevant,

- To guide you around its pitfalls, so that you can create a strategic direction for you or your organisation.

This Useful Guide is a book about SWOT as a strategy analysis tool; it is not a Useful Guide to Strategy; that is a separate subject. A future Useful Guide is expected to cover a wider view of strategy.

1.3   What has SWOT ever done for us?

With due acknowledgement to the Monty Python team and their famous phrase, it is worth reviewing the benefits and limitations of the SWOT strategy tool before rushing headlong into the theory and deployment. Let's start with the advantages …

Confidence through Development

Advantages

SWOT has many advantages, a few of which are …

- It is easy to understand — a simple diagram and no mathematics.

- It is applicable to many levels in an organisation — from an individual, a team, a business unit or division, up to the corporate strategy.

- It can be applied at many different depths from quick and easy, to highly detailed.

- With proper use, it can be linked to corporate objectives and to strategy deployment.

- Being highly visual, it is easy to communicate.

Disadvantages — Despite its popularity and the advantages above, SWOT has several disadvantages …

- It is tempting to undertake SWOT analysis using qualitative or subjective (anecdotal or hearsay) rather than quantitative data.

- Issues are easily expressed as broad generalisations rather than specifics.

- Easily biased by perceptions, personality types and preferences.

- Data collection, evaluation, and decision-making are easily confused.

- It is often drawn incorrectly; this has an impact especially when the underlying principles are ignored.

- The surrounding method is often ignored (or worse, being unaware that there is a surrounding method).

The disadvantages have led to SWOT also being known by a different and derogatory acronym — a *Significant Waste Of Time* — especially when led by an unskilled facilitator. When used well, SWOT is a useful *aid* to your thinking. It directs your attention to aspects of strategic thinking that may be subconsciously ignored.

Confidence through Development

What you get from a SWOT analysis is an awareness of the issues that impact you or your business and help you form a list of actions (including things to avoid). SWOT helps you *think* and in turn *informs* your decisions. SWOT cannot make your decisions for you, nor can it guarantee success.

Remember, SWOT is a tool and only one of many strategy-making tools in your toolbox. Your SWOT tool is only as good as its operator. You still have to do the work, you still have to interpret the analysis, and you still have to make decisions.

1.4 Does SWOT lead to a strategy?

Not always. It is dangerously easy to undertake a SWOT analysis that does not result in a strategy, often due to a lack of understanding of what a strategy is. This Useful Guide is not about strategy in general, but to make SWOT useful, we need to introduce a basic definition and keep this in mind as we work through this Useful Guide to SWOT analysis.

> For our purpose, a strategy gives you a point of advantage or a point of distinction.

Strategic conversations — In many ways, the underlying value of SWOT is the strategic conversations encouraged by the analysis.

Confidence through Development

2 The SWOT framework

2.1 Illustrating SWOT

SWOT is commonly drawn as shown in Figure 1. You can be creative about how it is drawn and alternative illustrations of SWOT are shown in Appendix 1.
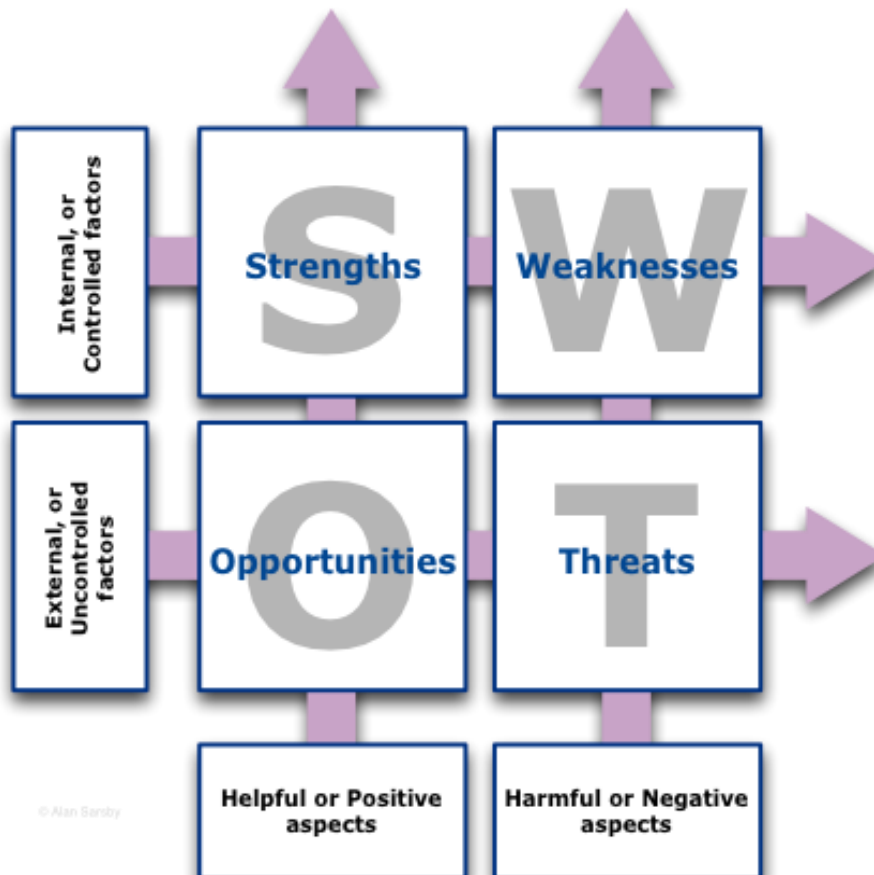
Figure 1 — The basic SWOT diagram.

The axes are important in SWOT because they define the content of the four boxes, S (Strengths), W (Weaknesses), O (Opportunities), and T (Threats). Indeed a common error in SWOT analysis is to ignore the axes and place information in the wrong box!

SWOT has its own jargon and we should introduce some of it before proceeding further. A *factor* is SWOT jargon for data or information. SWOT is predominately a data and information gathering framework which records *input* factors. In practical use, the four boxes each hold a list of factors, typically as a bullet-point list.

> Note — to create outputs, SWOT needs to be redrawn to generate strategies that address the input factors. This is covered in §3.

Confidence through Development

2.2 In control — internal and external

The rows in SWOT diagram, Figure 2, distinguish between the factors you are in control of and those you are not. In SWOT jargon, the factors you control are *Internal factors*, and those you do not control are *External factors*.

Internal factors
Internal factors are those that you or your organisation have control over. Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors.

External factors
External factors are those which you or your organisation has little or no control over. Opportunities and Threats are external factors.

Whether a factor is a Strength or a Weakness, and likewise whether a factor is an Opportunity or a Threat, depends on the context and purpose of the SWOT analysis. Context is vitally important in a SWOT analysis; this is covered in more detail in §2.5.

Figure 2 — Are you in control of the factor?

Confidence through Development

2.3 Impact — helpful or harmful

The columns in the SWOT diagram distinguish between factors that are helpful, and those that are harmful in respect of your SWOT objective.

- ▪ **Helpful**
  Helpful factors are those that assist your success.
  Strengths and Opportunities are helpful.

- ▪ **Harmful**
  Harmful factors are those that impede or block your success.
  Weaknesses and Threats are harmful.

Remember, whether a factor is helpful or harmful depends on the objective of your SWOT analysis.

Figure 3 — Helpful or harmful (with reference to the objective).

2.4 SWOT quadrants

Each of the four SWOT boxes is the product of the axes. Each box is introduced below, but only in brief because the context of the SWOT analysis has a strong impact on where a factor is assigned. (For example, a Strength in one context may be a Weakness in another.)

Confidence through Development

2.4.1 Strengths

Strengths are **internal** and **helpful**. Strengths are factors that support an Opportunity or overcome a Threat to give you advantage. Strengths may include …

- Financial strengths. A robust balance sheet, good cash flow and good credit rating.

- Technological and production advantages (Plant, machines and associated techniques).

- Customer service advantages in marketing, sales and reputation.

- Talented, dedicated and well trained employees.
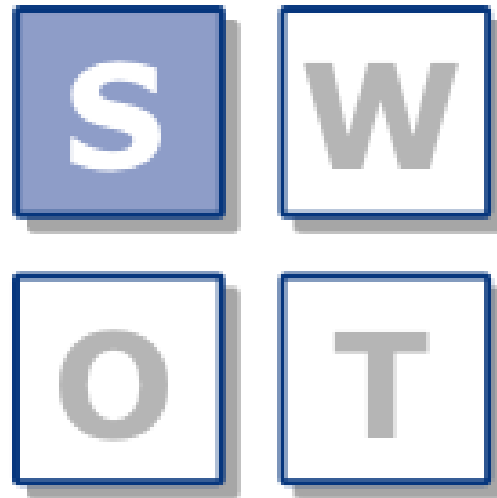
Figure 4 - Strengths Quadrant.

2.4.2 Weaknesses

Weaknesses are **internal** and **harmful**. Weaknesses are factors of your business that mean you are unable to take advantage of an opportunity, or are vulnerable to a Threat. Weaknesses may include …

- Financial weaknesses such as high debt ratios.

- Old or inflexible technology.

- Customer service weaknesses, for example, long delivery times or poor customer communications.

- Skills shortages or poor employee morale.
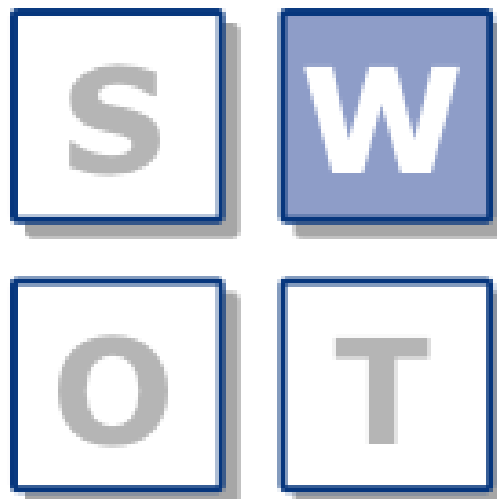
Figure 5 — Weaknesses Quadrant.

2.4.3 Opportunities

Opportunities are **external** factors over which you have no control and are **helpful**.

Opportunities arise from many sources: for example, competitors withdrawing from the market, new social trends, and technological innovations. Even apparently restrictive legislation may be viewed as an opportunity if it inhibits your competition.

Opportunities may be tangible (products and features) or intangible such as enhancing reputation or extending your influence.
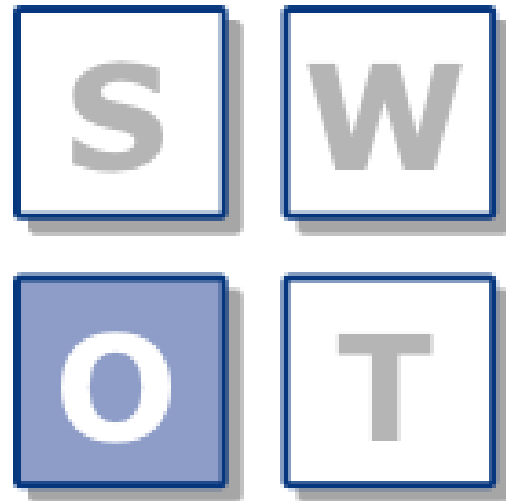
Figure 6 — Opportunities quadrant.

2.4.4 Threats

Threats are **external** factors over which you have no control and are **harmful**.

Threats come in many guises, for example, a new competitor, restrictive regulation, hostile takeovers.

Threats may also appear as tangible or intangible. A tangible threat may be a hostile takeover bid, restrictive legislation or even theft (of property and assets). Intangible threats include, for example, the inability to secure licences (in many forms) or potential loss of reputation or brand damaging factors.
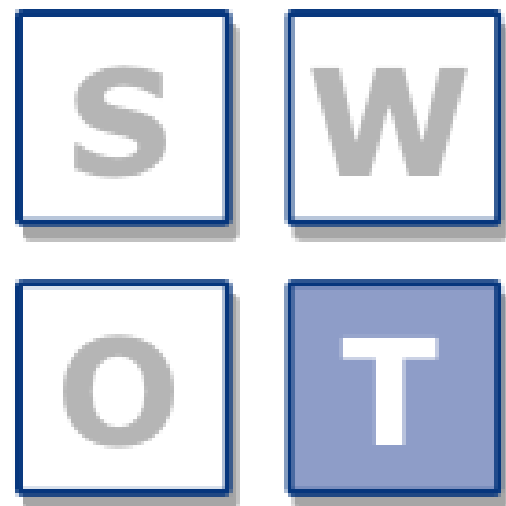
Figure 7 — Threats quadrant.

Confidence through Development

2.5   A Context … is vital

As the old saying goes, one person's meat is another's poison. A factor may exist in several places on a SWOT analysis. To position a factor correctly within a SWOT analysis requires a context.

A few examples may demonstrate the importance of context …

- You may have the skills in *using* off-the-shelf software, in which case the *skill* could be a Strength. However the software could be a Threat if it is mission-critical and the external developer doesn't include the functions that you need.

- Your proprietary software does what you want it to do, and hence may be a Strength. But the cost of maintaining proprietary software could be expensive and may be a Weakness.

- Your billing system may be robust and reliable, so in the context of regulatory standards for billing and invoicing, it is a Strength. But in the context of an Opportunity that requires flexible invoicing, your robust billing system may be a Weakness.

- A substantial cash reserve may be superficially seen as a Strength and, with no further consideration, would therefore appear as a bullet point in the list of Strengths. However, this same cash reserve would make for an attractive take-over target in the context of a hostile business climate. So in that context excess cash may be a Weakness and possibly a Threat.

Context is critical to the effective use of SWOT. A good quality SWOT analysis starts with understanding the context, typically statements of the business environment, then proceeds to analyse a *specific* situation or idea. This usually leads to parallel SWOTs, each analysing some specific aspect, and contributing different elements to the resulting strategy.

By contrast, generalized SWOTs have limited value. The data capture may be interesting, but without a context and purpose, the result is often somewhat vague statements masquerading as a strategy. A good SWOT analysis requires the overall context to be understood. Context helps to eliminate interesting but irrelevant actions.

Confidence through Development

2.6 Summary

In this section we've introduced the basic components of SWOT. It is a straightforward framework, but with its apparent simplicity it is tempting to bypass the underlying principles and consequently end up without a worthwhile result.

To summarize what we have so far …

- **Axis**
  The axes are important to SWOT. The axes: In Control gives us the Internal/External factors; Impact gives us the Helpful or Harmful factors. Whether that factor is in the correct place depends on the context.

- **Context**
  A specific context is essential for a good quality SWOT; your Strength in one Context could be a Weakness in another.

- **Specific**
  A good SWOT analyses a specific situation within a specific context. Writing a purpose statement helps to keep the analysis relevant rather than generalised.

And that is almost it, a simple a four-box model where each box holds specific information.

However, at this point, SWOT is not yet useful. A SWOT chart of four boxes filled with bullet points is just a yawning 'so what' moment. We need two additional features …

Creating strategic responses
SWOT is good at capturing input factors — it needs to be extended and redrawn so that we can create strategic outputs. And to make it work we need …

Surrounding method
To make SWOT useful, a surrounding method — almost a project plan — is needed to take us through the whole process from input, analysis, choices and strategic actions.

2.7 Exercises

Context is so important to a well-constructed SWOT analysis, it is worth spending some intellectual energy to reinforce the principle.

Confidence through Development

As an exercise, try to identify a real situation where a factor changes place depending on the context.

Try this exercise for three instances …

1   A business or an organisation from your perspective as an observer. Your position as an observer may be close in, for example as a customer, or more distant, for example by reading newspaper reports.

2   Look within your own organisation where a factor currently in one of the SWOT boxes needs to be moved to a different SWOT box depending on the circumstance.

- For example, a Threat in one department might be an Opportunity for your own department.

- A specific example might be where creativity is a Strength in a new product development team, but is a threat in an operational delivery team where strict processes must be followed.

3   Examine your own circumstances. For example a Strength at work or the sports club becomes a Weakness at home. Or a Threat in one circumstance becomes an Opportunity elsewhere.

Remember that a factor can do a double switch where an internal/helpful Strength becomes an external/harmful Threat, or conversely, an internal/harmful Weakness becomes an external/helpful Opportunity.

Confidence through Development

Pansophix

3 Creating strategic responses

3.1 Beyond the four boxes

So far SWOT is a data and information gathering framework which records *input* factors. In a typical analysis project, each of the four boxes would contain a list of factors — typically as a bullet-point list (with supporting rationale in an accompanying document). Although these four lists are interesting as a *classification* of input factors, they don't yet help us to develop a strategy. To make SWOT useful, two additional features are needed …

- Turn SWOT inside out to become TOWS and reveal generic approaches for development into specific strategic actions.

- Consider what to do with the factors. This is done by the application of two verbs: *Match* and *Convert.*

3.2 SWOT becomes TOWS

To advance our four lists of *input factors* into potential *strategic outputs*, the SWOT framework needs to be adapted as shown in Figure 8.
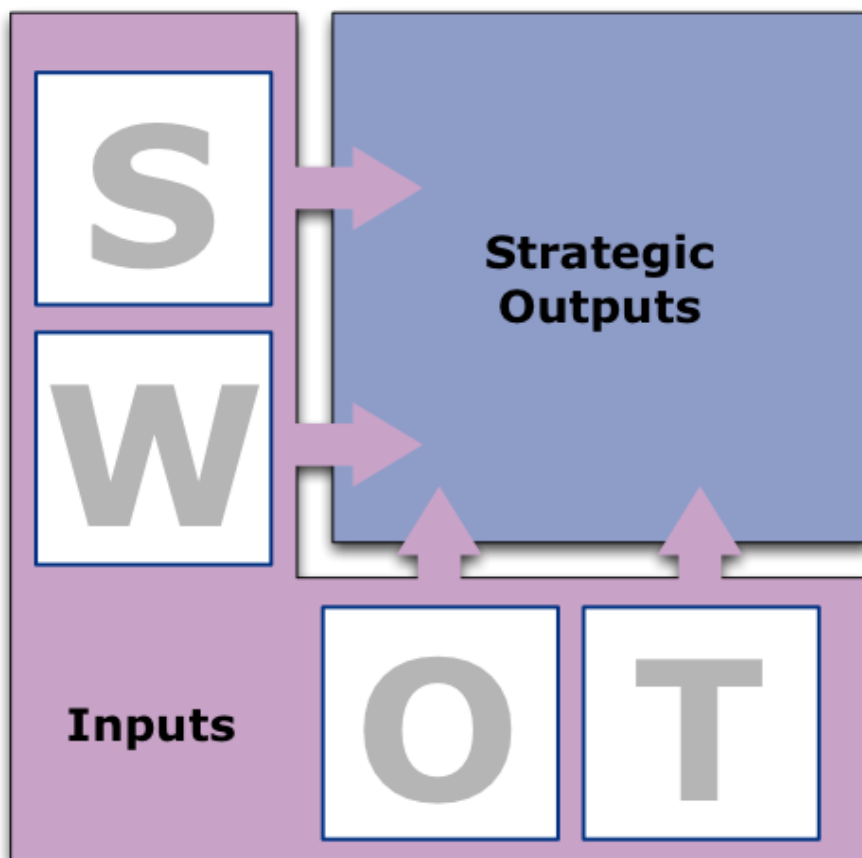
Figure 8 — Transforming SWOT inputs into strategic responses – TOWS.

Confidence through Development

In essence, SWOT has been turned inside out and the four input categories are used to guide you towards *output* strategies or, if you prefer, strategic responses. In this state the framework is usually known as TOWS (that is, SWOT backwards).

3.3 Match and convert

With our four lists in the S, W, O, and T boxes, the next step is to link the related factors. This is done through *Matching* and *Converting*.

Match

Matching is the process of linking the *external* factors — Opportunities and Threats — to the *internal* Strengths and Weaknesses.

Figure 9 below shows the various matches that are possible in SWOT. We'll examine later the types of strategy that the matching links produce.
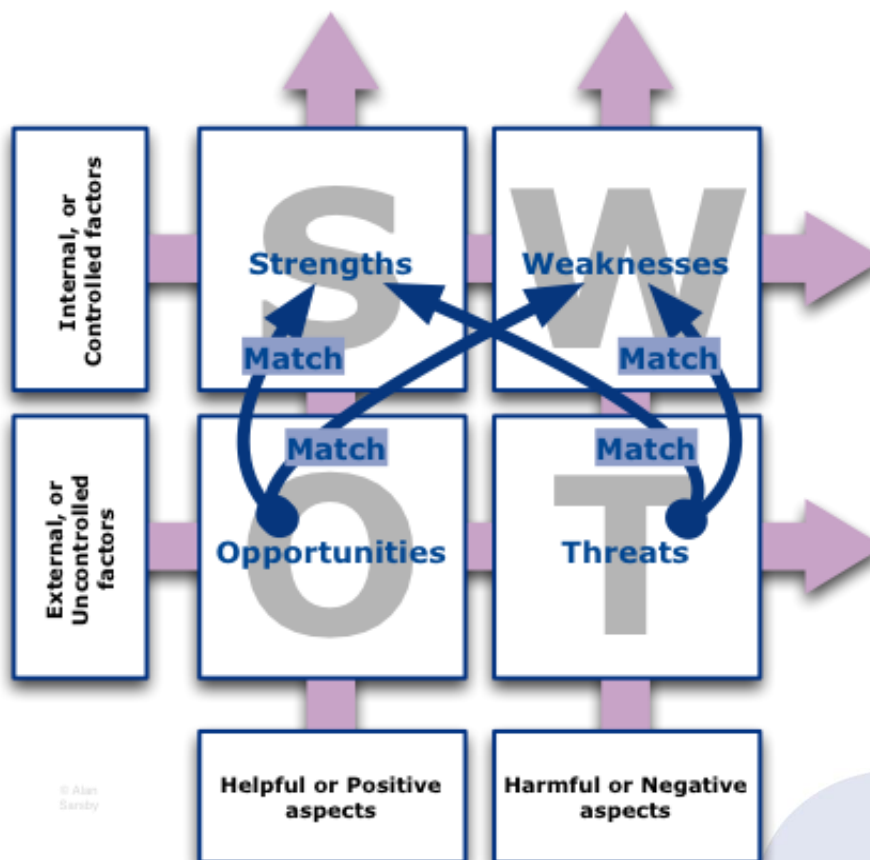
Figure 9 — Matching the external factors to the internal factors.

Confidence through Development

Pansophix

Convert

The principle of Converting is to encourage you to think about actions that change harmful factors into helpful factors. Figure 10 below shows the possible conversions within SWOT:

- Threat factors may be turned into a strategic advantage by *converting* the Threat into an Opportunity.

- Weakness factors may be *converted* into Strengths.
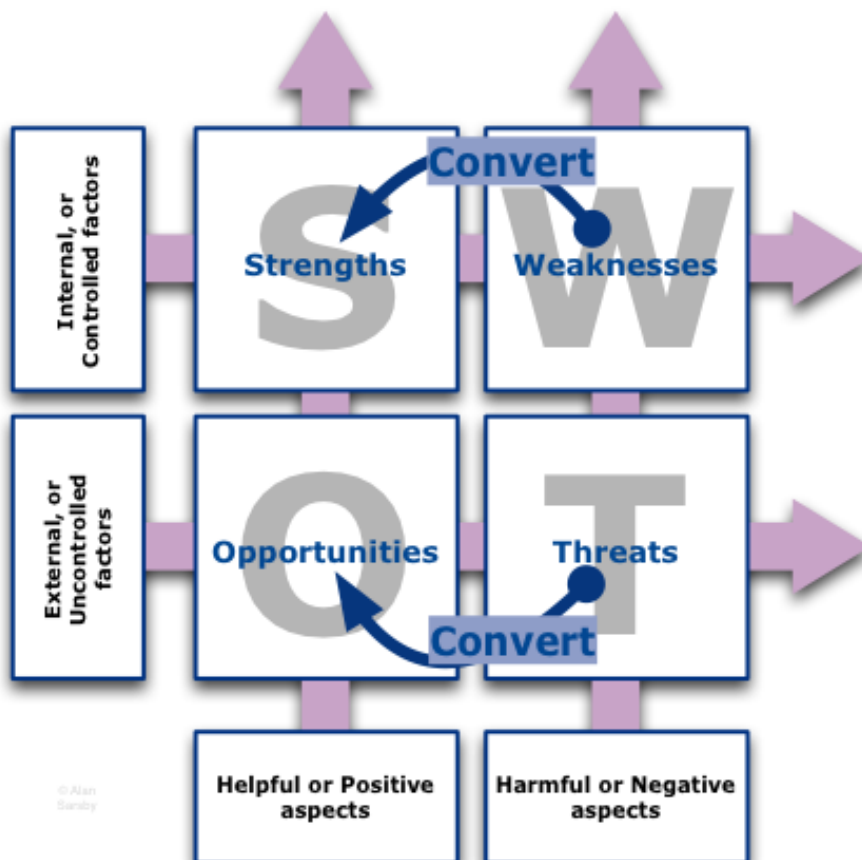
Figure 10 — Potential Conversions.

Redrawing SWOT into TOWS and applying Match and Convert leads to four generic strategies.

Confidence through Development

3.4 The four generic strategies

With the SWOT model redrawn as TOWS, each intersection between the internal and external factors results in an indication of the specific type of strategic response arising from SWOT inputs. The four approaches are illustrated in Figure 11 below.
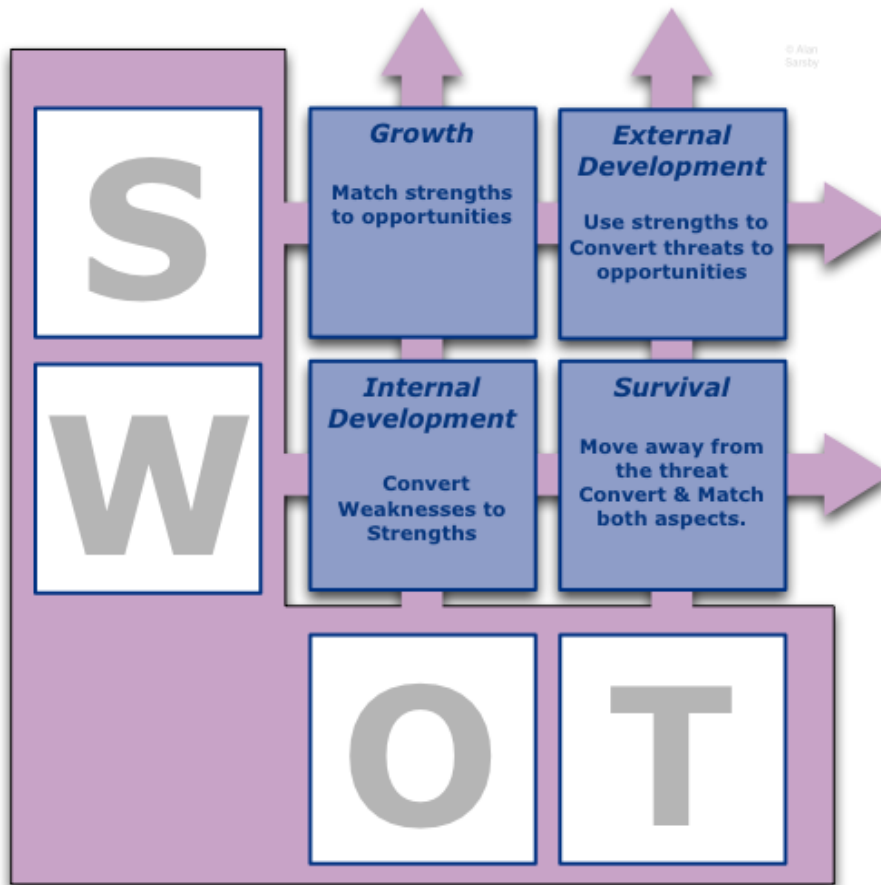
Figure 11 — Specific types of response to the SWOT inputs.

Confidence through Development

Pansophix

These four generic strategies are …

- **Growth strategies** (Opportunity × Strengths)
  The essence of a growth-based strategy is to *Match* the Opportunity to your existing Strengths and do more of what you're already good at. A growth-based strategy usually involves investing in those factors that increase your capacity to do more of the same thing. The investment could include, for example, hiring extra people or procuring additional production machinery. The result of a growth-based strategy is continuation of your competitive advantage.

- **Internal development strategies** (Opportunity × Weaknesses)
  The main consideration in this type of strategy is to *Convert* weaknesses to strengths so they can be matched to an opportunity. An internal development strategy is about repairing or developing internal factors. The investment may include developing new skills, hiring new people with different skills or training existing people with new skills, designing new processes or developing new technology. The internal development strategy leads to new capabilities that were not present before, and these can be matched to an opportunity.

- **External development strategies** (Threats × Strengths)
  This type of strategy is based on using your existing strengths to *convert* a threat into an opportunity. An external development strategy may include extending your marketing reach into new areas or new customers through advertising; you may use skills in product development (a Strength) to broaden your services in existing markets.

- **Survival strategies** (Threats × Weaknesses)
  A threat and weaknesses combined — the worst possible scenario. Here you are faced with stark choices; for example, fundamentally change what your organisation is or does, or ultimately dissolve the business and release the capital back to the shareholders. Both match and convert are applicable here. Assuming that you choose to stay in business, the strategies are the simultaneous deployment of both External and Internal development actions.

Confidence through Development

Pansophix

3.5 Summary

In this section we have moved beyond the four boxes of SWOT. In particular we know that …

- SWOT gathers the factors, and is turned inside out to create the TOWS framework;

- Factors can be matched or converted; and …

- TOWS gives us four generic strategic responses …

    - Growth strategy;

    - Internal development strategy;

    - External development strategy; and

    - Survival strategy.

3.6 Exercises

Take a break and look at a variety of published strategies, from your own organisation or elsewhere.

- Recall the basic purpose of a strategy outlined in §1.4 *a strategy gives you/your organisation a point of advantage or a point of distinction*.
  Then …

- Make an assessment of the strategy — does it provide an advantage or distinction?

- Make a note of the Match and Convert actions and how these moved harmful aspects or weaknesses into helpful aspects or strengths.

- Ascertain what type of strategy is being pursued. (Growth, internal development, external development, survival.)

Just a cautious note: commercial organisations don't often publish their strategy; for a strategy to be successful it is often necessary to hide it from the competition. What you read might be watered down statements that sound good but don't stand much scrutiny.

Confidence through Development

4 Strategy development

4.1 The surrounding method

The SWOT/TOWS boxes don't exist in isolation; they are part of an overall strategy development method.

The basic method follows a sequence …

- Be clear about the context (the situation) and purpose of the analysis;

- Identify the Opportunities and Threats;

- Identify the Strengths and Weaknesses;

- Match the Opportunities and Threats to Strengths and Weaknesses;

- Convert harmful factors into helpful factors;

- Develop responses;

- Make choices and decisions; and

- Define actions to deploy the strategy.

For this Useful Guide, a basic framework in Figure 12 illustrates the type of method needed. You could treat this as a basic project plan, although you will need to modify this to suit your own circumstances.

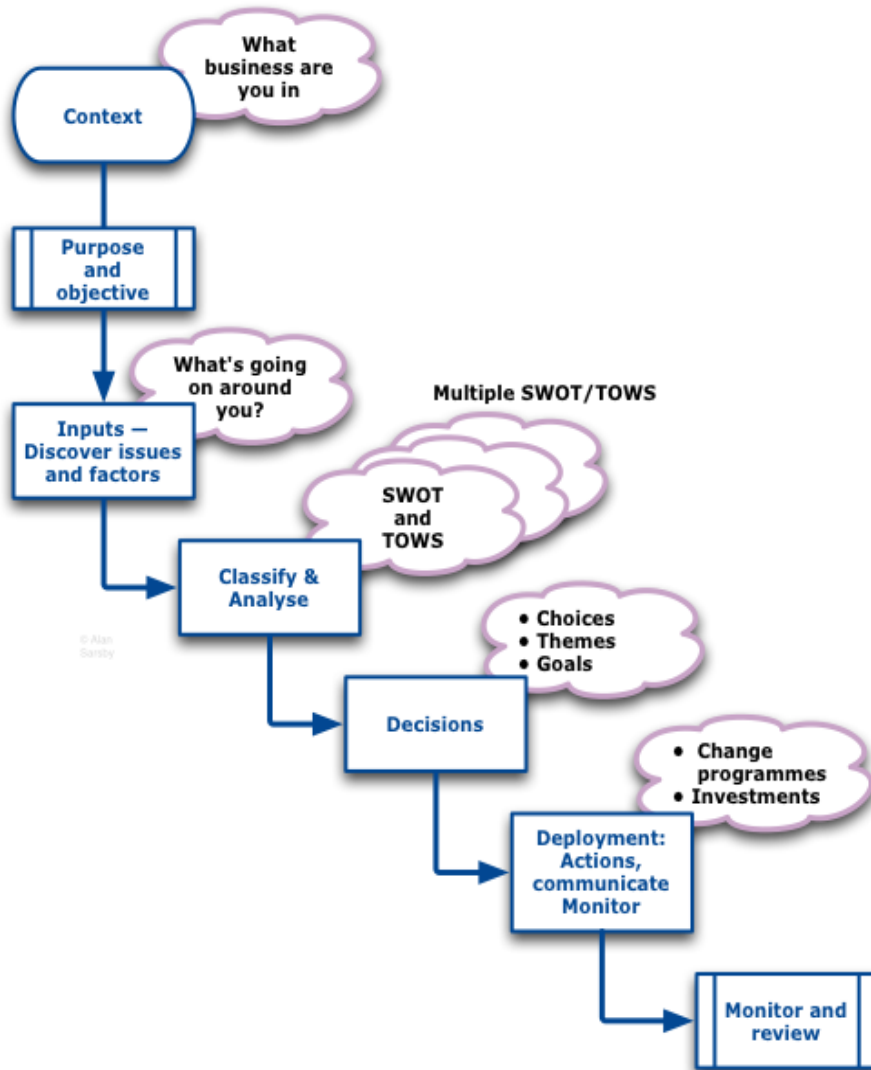*Confidence through Development*

Pansophix

Figure 12 — SWOT within a surrounding method.

Although the method is shown as linear, the reality is that many feedback loops exist. For example, the analysis may show the need for an additional data source, so you will need to go back to the inputs.

Confidence through Development

4.2 Define the context

We've already highlighted the importance of context for SWOT analysis (Section 2.5). The context enables you to assess and interpret the issues and factors so they are correctly located in the SWOT grid and therefore correctly considered in the TOWS formulation of strategic responses.

In SWOT, a context statement may include …

- What your business is, typically mentioning …

  - What you do, what you sell and who your typical customers are.

  - What it does and does not do. Referring to your vision and mission statements often helps.

  - An indication of scale — are you a sole trader, a small business or a corporate?

  - How you go about your business. For example, is your business retail or business-to-business; walk-in shop, Internet or phone; quick sales (fast moving goods) or bespoke. This element of the context is important when considering the business-fit of the strategies that emerge from the SWOT analysis.

In preparation for later parts of this Useful Guide, some examples should help. The following example is a fast food business and we'll see how the context affects the decisions made following a SWOT analysis.

> Note — the label *[Context]* is introduced here because this notation is used to identify various components in the case studies in the Appendixes.

Example context — The Basic Burger Bar

[Context] The Basic Burger Bar business is a hamburger fast food restaurant. It is a town-centre retail business selling a small range of burgers and chips. Customers enter the premises and join a queue where they make their selection and are served immediately at the counter. Within a few minutes they have ordered, paid and received their food. The food is delivered either in a paper bag for takeaway ('to go' orders) or on a tray for 'eat-in' orders.

For 'eat-in' orders, customers sit at a table and consume their food with their fingers and, optionally, a disposable plastic fork. The time at the table is short, typically 10 to 20 minutes. Customers expect to take their tray to a table, and afterwards to clear the table by taking the trash and tray to a nearby collection point.

Confidence through Development

Customer travel time is quick, an 'eat-in' customer is unlikely to be longer than 30 minutes; a 'to-go' customer can enter and leave the restaurant within 5 minutes.

4.3 Purpose

You will have already detected from the preceding sections that the importance of purpose should not be underestimated. Whatever activity is being undertaken, knowing the purpose adds focus and helps one keep the activity to a manageable size by eliminating irrelevant matters.

The range of what may be a purpose is huge. The purpose may be formed around any of the business processes or functions. Classic business processes include, for example, invoicing, marketing, recruitment and product development. The purpose may also be to support one-off activities, for example mergers and actualisations, new office premises or the formation of new internal business functions.

A good purpose is valuable because it helps to identify what inputs you may need for the SWOT analysis. In a real situation, many SWOTs exist side-by-side, each focusing on a specific issue or factor.

4.4 Discovering Opportunities and Threats

In SWOT-based strategy development, this first step is usually known as an *environmental scan*. Or in plain English, what is going on around you. In strategy development, the purpose is often to define a response to a changing world and this presents the Opportunities and Threats. These external factors may be, for example, new legislation, a new competitor or a gap in the market.

Note — In SWOT analysis, environment does not mean air quality, carbon footprint or energy consumption; it means the *business environment* within which you exist.

There are many sources and models to help with your environmental scan. Figure 13 illustrates some of these. Each has a particular focus and benefit and you may need to use several. Remember — don't let these models constrain you, mix and match as needed.

Confidence through Development

A framework known as PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal) is popular because it provides a checklist of issues and factors from an external perspective, and these can help with the inputs to your SWOT analysis. Appendix 2 introduces PESTEL in more detail.

*Figure 13 — Sources of environmental information for SWOT inputs
(* PESTEL is introduced in Appendix 2).*

4.5 Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors over which you have substantial control. You should look for, and identify, Strengths and Weaknesses within your internal processes, your operations and the way you do things (including your business ethos and culture).

Appendix 3 illustrates three ways of identifying your Strengths and Weaknesses, including a suggested list of core business processes you could use as a checklist in your search for Strengths and Weaknesses that help or hinder the external Opportunities or Threats.

Confidence through Development

Remember that factors classified as Strengths or Weaknesses are valid only within a given context or circumstance.

Example …
Suppose that your organisation has an extremely robust credit verification process. Because of this, it can take several weeks to approve a new customer account.

This could be a Strength in the context of reducing fraud, but it is a Weakness in the context of *quickly* gaining new customers.

4.6 Match and Convert

Match and Convert were introduced in Section 3.3. To illustrate matching, assume that you are the owner of the Basic Burger Bar mentioned in section 4.2 and have commissioned some market research. This suggests that there is an opportunity for extending the menu to include plated food eaten with knives and forks. Figure 14 illustrates how the Opportunity factors are matched to the Weakness factors.
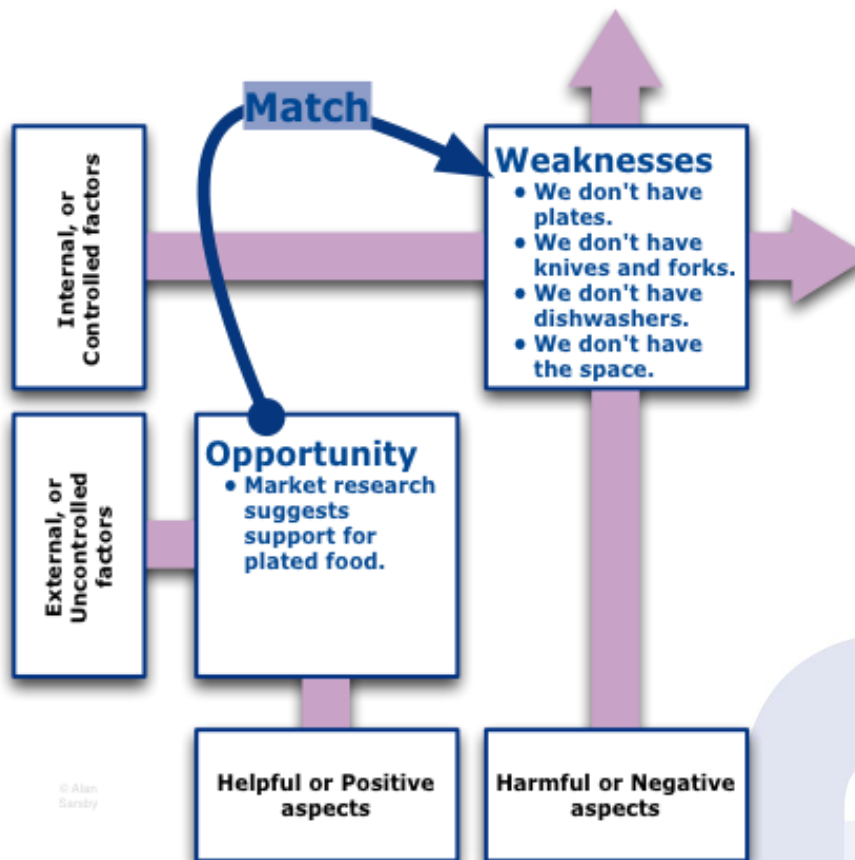
Figure 14—Example of Matching an Opportunity to a Weakness for the Basic Burger Bar.

4.7 Use TOWS to select a strategic approach

Our Basic Burger Bar business now has to make some decisions. Redrawing SWOT into TOWS, so that we can see the intersection of Opportunity and Weaknesses, would suggest an *internal development* strategy.
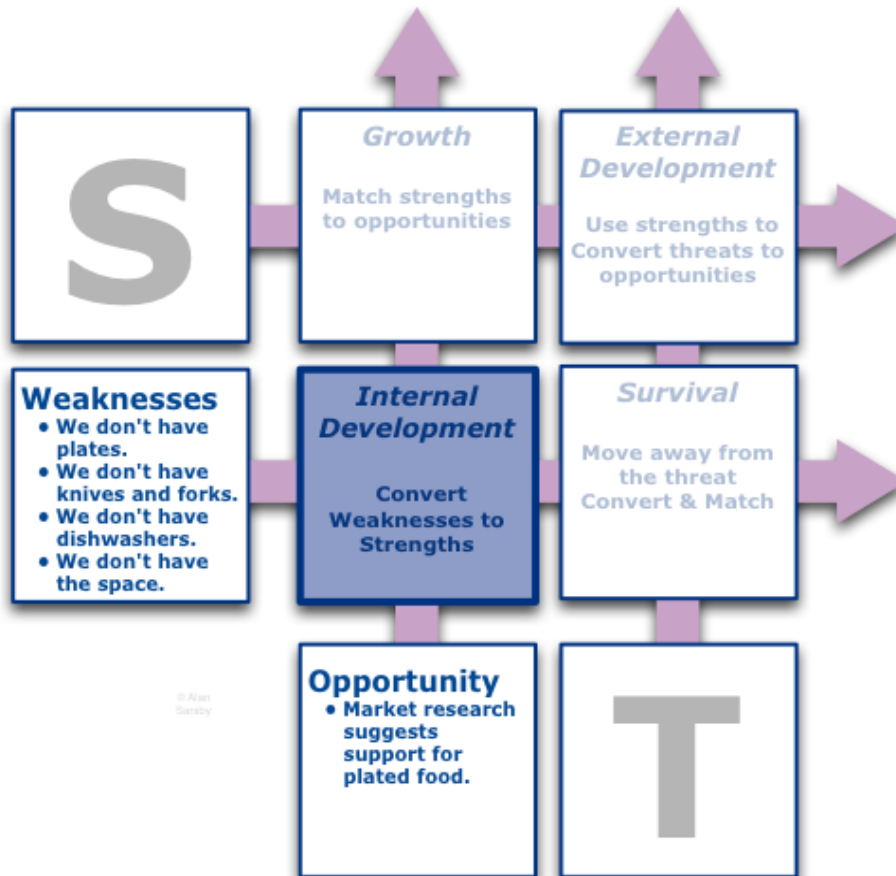
Figure 15—TOWS suggests an Internal Development strategy.

An uncritical application of SWOT and TOWS would suggest investment in cutlery, plates and a supportive menu. Both front-of-house and back-of-house would require some investment. Front-of-house would require crockery and cutlery, as well as waiting staff to clear and collect plates, knives and forks; these staff would also need training. Back-of-house would need a dishwasher (with staff training, cleaning materials, water softeners, etc) and storage. Items may go missing; cutlery may get broken, so consequently prices may need to increase. With sit-down meals, customers are likely to stay longer, so the Basic Burger Bar would need to rethink the seating capacity.

Context is important here. The Basic Burger Bar attracts low-spending customers who stay for a relatively short time. The front-of-house and back-of-house procedures are geared towards this. Against this context, plated meals are an opportunity that the Basic Burger Bar should decide to

Confidence through Development

avoid. If the managers of the Basic Burger Bar wanted to take advantage of the plated food opportunity, they may consider opening a new restaurant with a different operating ethos.

4.8 Reality — Testing the decisions

The example of the Basic Burger Bar provides a straightforward, if simplistic, situation. In reality, decision-making is more difficult and decisions often involve a high degree of subjectivity. (Recall that an important benefit is the strategic conversations that happen.)

Having made a decision, the final step is to give it a reality check. There are many ways of doing this. The following list provides an indication of the kind of tests you may use — your list would reflect what your business is and the *context* of the analysis.

Areas to examine might include …

- Is it appropriate for your business (sector/subsector)? In business jargon this is often referred to as the Business Fit.

- Does it match your ethics and values?

- Is the strategy an incremental change to what you do, or is it a fundamental shift?

- Effectiveness — does the decision lead to a real strategic distinction?

- Efficiency — what resources are needed to implement the strategy?

- Would the strategic action be reliable and sustainable?

- Is it possible to visualise what things would be like after the strategic change has been implemented? Being able to do this helps one to communicate the decision, and to encourage the motivation for the change.

- Is the strategy and solution elegant?

- What would happen if you do nothing?

Confidence through Development

4.9 Deployment

Your strategy must be converted from intent into action. Strategy deployment is a full subject in its own right and beyond the scope of this Useful Guide. Consequently, this section is very brief.

Three worthwhile thoughts to address when preparing for strategy deployment are …

- **Communication**
  How to communicate your strategy — the goals for communication are well known: clarity, simplicity, consistency and self-adjusting so people can internalise the message in their own way.

- **Implementation**
  Implementing a strategy often involves a change programme of some kind. Give some thought as to what kind of programme, and how big, it should be.

- **Measuring success**
  How would you know whether your strategy has been a success? Give some thought to the kind of indicators or measures you would need so that you can check that the advantage or distinction is delivering real results.

4.10 Summary

At this point in the Useful Guide, you have the essential information to prepare a strategy using the SWOT/TOWS technique. From the previous chapters we have introduced the core SWOT framework (§2) and demonstrated that a context is vital. Then in §3 we rearranged SWOT to become TOWS and hence create a strategic response to the situation.

In this chapter, we introduced an overall method, almost a project plan, to help you develop a SWOT-based strategy. The sequence listed in §4.1 is worth repeating by way of a chapter summary …

- Be clear about the context (the situation) and purpose of the analysis;

- Identify the Opportunities and Threats;

- Identify the Strengths and Weaknesses;

- Match the Opportunities and Threats to Strengths and Weaknesses;

- Convert harmful factors into helpful factors;

- Develop responses;

- Make choices and decisions; and

- Define actions to deploy the strategy.

A classic error in SWOT strategy and development is to lock people in a room and 'do SWOT.' At the end of the session, the walls are covered in flipchart paper giving the illusion of 'doing SWOT' and making progress; in fact the team might be only 'doing flipcharts!'

Confidence through Development

4.11 Exercises

In the next chapter, four case studies are introduced that illustrate the breadth of problems that SWOT can address. But before embarking on the case studies, which encourage you to develop a strategy from a given situation, it may be worth analysing existing strategies to discover how they were made and whether the strategy is sound.

As an exercise …

Examine someone else's strategy …

- Can you deduce, or is it stated, what situation and specific context the strategy is responding to?

- Ascertain the connections from context and purpose, through the various SWOT factors; identify the matches and conversions, through to decisions.

- Are those decisions a good fit with the business?

- What type of strategic response is being proposed?

- Is there any indication that a deployment plan supports the strategic intentions?

Confidence through Development

5   Examples and case studies

Case studies are one way of illustrating how the theory can be applied to real situations. The examples provided here cover four different areas of business activity and one personal one to give you a feel for the variety of topics that may go into a SWOT/TOWS developed strategy. As with all case studies, they represent only a snapshot of a situation; remember that SWOT is only one of many strategy development tools.

Each case study includes the context and purpose with a list of factors and their location on a SWOT/TOWS diagram.

5.1   The coffee shop

Appendix 4 is the classic coffee shop case study. This is a favourite example in further/higher education and it is included here because of that popularity. Take care with examples like this because you can only account for what you see as an *external observer* — that is, the things you experience by visiting the coffee shop and their competitors (often only a few steps away down the high street). You may use information such as their report and accounts and these may provide you with some additional inputs for the SWOT. However, you are limited in what you can know about the economic model of the coffee shop industry and their internal processes, so it's difficult to judge what is a Strength or a Weakness; hence you can only produce a generalised SWOT.

Our coffee shop case study makes the purpose clear — should the coffee bean be changed?

5.2   Personalisation and Individual Budgets

Appendix 5 shows the impact of government policy on an organisation's strategy. The case study is based on the political objective to give people more control over how benefits are administered on their behalf. This organisation is in the care sector and provides support for people with learning disabilities. Traditionally, services are commissioned through block contracts with local government.

Central government policy changed the funding arrangement. If this organisation had followed the 'do-nothing' option, they would have been out of business within 12 to 18 months.

Confidence through Development

5.3 Deciding to start a new business

Appendix 6 is the personal SWOT of an individual who is considering self-employment. This case study illustrates that soft factors can have a significant impact on the strategic actions. It can be adapted for someone who is applying for employment.

5.4 Wi-Fi in a Fast-food Restaurant

Appendix 7 introduces a situation where there is ultimately a conflict between a strategic action to catch up with the competition, and the introduction of a service which impacts on the very nature of a fast-food restaurant.

Confidence through Development

6 Summary

6.1 SWOT checklist

SWOT can be applied to a wide variety of issues and problems. But, like all tools it is dependent on the skill of the user.

So, let's conclude this Useful Guide with a checklist to help you prepare a SWOT based strategy …

- Be clear what the four boxes in SWOT actually mean. The two axes *in control* (internal or external) and *impact* (helpful or harmful) define what should be recorded in each box (§2.1 to §2.4).

- Be clear of the situation — the context, and what problem is being addressed (§2.5, §4.2, and §4.3).
  Note that dealing with the problem at once often requires several SWOTs sitting side by side to address multiple issues.

- SWOT captures input factors. You may need several methods of identifying the input factors (§4.4 and §4.5).

- Apply the Match and Convert principles to the issues to discover what is possible in the resulting strategy (§3.3 and §4.6).

- The TOWS suggests the *type* of strategy appropriate to the mixture of input factors (§3.2 and §4.6).

- Remember to examine the strategies in order to check that they fit with the characteristics of your own business (§4.8).

6.2 Avoiding the waste of time

Sadly, SWOT is often misused. Remember the remark in §1.4 — SWOT is also known as a *Significant Waste Of Time*. This occurs when SWOT is applied as a general activity without a specific focus. At the time of writing an Internet search for "SWOT + Apple" produced more than 49 <u>million</u> hits! The page one results were generalized SWOTs with almost no substance and no strategic suggestions.

A more interesting result came from the search "SWOT + apple + iphone + android" — this still produced 1.6 million hits — many were quite specific but only included what could be observed as an outsider. Many of the so-called facts were nothing greater than guesses. Be careful about the intrinsic quality of the factors you collect.

Confidence through Development

7   Exercises

You might be keen to undertake a SWOT analysis and to create a strategy. The range of situations is vast, so to help you start, some suggestions are …

- A SWOT analysis for yourself — context: applying for a new job.

- A SWOT analysis for yourself — context: applying for promotion.

- A SWOT analysis for yourself — context: facing redundancy.

- A SWOT analysis for your local corner shop — context: competition from a shop on the opposite corner of the street.

- A SWOT analysis for your team at work — context: the team's annual review, with a view to securing ongoing funding.

- A SWOT analysis for a customer bid — context: a competitive tender response.

- A SWOT analysis for an internal support function, for example Information Technology, Billing and Receivables, or Training — context: supporting the new customer requirements.

- A SWOT analysis for a charity you are associated with, for example the local community centre/village hall, school or youth club — context: a bid for lottery funding for a new roof.

Confidence through Development

Appendices

Confidence through Development

Appendix 1 — Alternative drawings of SWOT

Visual representations

Although SWOT is commonly drawn as 4-boxes, there are other representations, the form shown in Figure 16 emphasises the internal/external aspects of SWOT. A more stylized version of SWOT is shown in Figure 17.

Figure 16 — The original drawing of SWOT.
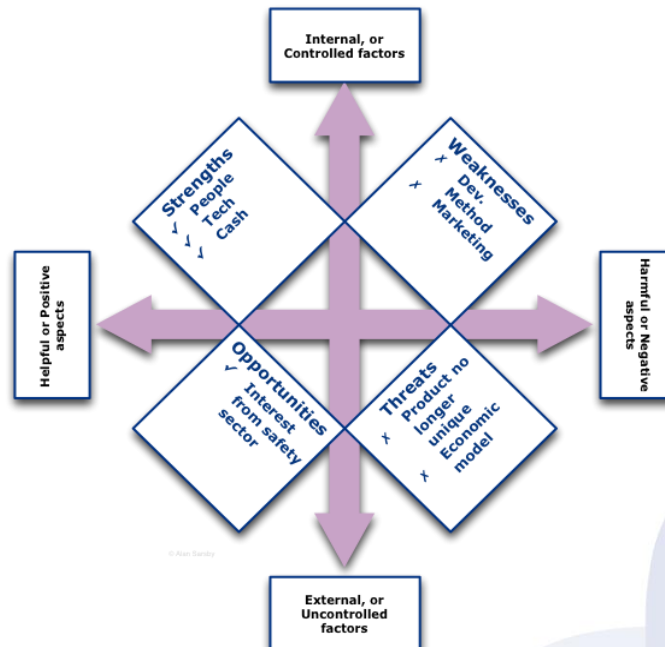
Figure 17 — A stylised drawing of SWOT.

Confidence through Development

Pansophix

Alternative names for the four quadrants

The names of the four quadrants have alternatives. Some find the language of SWOT too war-like or judgemental. And in a world littered with political correctness, for some the choice of words carries more weight than the meaning.

For example …

- **Strengths** — some interpret this in the context of a *warrior* and strength of an army.
  Alternatives include *Advantages* or *Supporting Factors*.

- **Weakness** — some people (and some professions) object to this because it implies *inadequate* or *shortcoming*. Alternatives include *Liabilities*, or *Areas for Development*.

- **Opportunities** — this term is frequently derided by two camps: those who see the world in a deterministic way and hence dislike opportunism, and those who see this as capitalist exploitation. Alternatives include *options*, *openings*, or *attractions*; however, do bear in mind that there are some opportunities you should not take.

- **Threats** — to some this has overtones of violence or the headlines used in the tabloid press. However, in SWOT the Threats are vitally important in the recognition of, and response to, external hazards. Downgrading the terminology with casual or softer vocabulary is likely to lead to indecisive thinking and a poor strategy. However, if you must change the terminology, alternatives include *hazards*, *impediments* or *risks*.

  Author's note — Please, don't go down the politically correct route of *negative opportunities*. Thanks.

Confidence through Development

Appendix 2 — Identifying Opportunities and Threats using PESTEL

PESTEL is a useful tool for identifying inputs to SWOT. PESTEL is an acronym where each letter indicates an aspect of factors that may influence both your internal practices and your external products and services. Some aspects, such as Health and Safety may fall under several headings; that is to be expected.

- **Political** — Political factors are those coming from government. Political factors include: *Policy direction* — the intention and opinion of governments and their view of how a nation functions, and its role within the community (local, national and global). Policies in this context are about a government's intentions;
Law-making — the type and style of laws that a government promotes and introduces; *Taxation* — the principles of government revenue collection; and *Budgetary* — how the government intends to spend the tax revenue.

- **Economic** — Economic factors are those relating to the economy at large. Economic factors include those led by a government, for example interest rates, the amount of money in circulation, national debt, and so on. Economic factors also include those that exist within industry or commercial sectors. For example, the economic model for double-decker busses is different from that of domestic saloon cars; the economic model for the self-employed is different from that of a publically listed company.

- **Social** — Social factors may include healthcare, culture and arts, law and order, and population and demographics.

- **Technological** — Technological factors can be broad-ranging, including everything from automation in factories and offices, information technology in key operational processes, and research and development.

- **Environmental** — Environmental in PESTEL includes ecological factors such as air quality, nature and waste disposal. For example, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations caused substantial product redesign or withdrawal.

- **Legal** — Legal factors include laws, regulations and statutory requirements. These affect both what you do and how you do it.

You may encounter different variants and acronyms, for example, PEST, SLEPT, PESTLE, STEER, and LONG-PESTLE. These all do similar jobs of reminding you where to look when doing the environmental scan.

Confidence through Development

Figure 18 illustrates PESTEL when it is used for an environmental scan. The cells should hold a brief statement of how a factor is experienced at three levels. The levels should provide a logical progression from the big picture (macro) to the specific. These levels are …

- **Macro** — The factor as it applies everywhere;

- **Sector** — The factor as it applies to your market sector; and

- **Specific** — How the factor impacts on your specific organisation.

	Macro environment	Sector environment	Impact on your environment
Political	Government ethos and policies	Policies specific to your *type* of business	Policies that specifically affect your business
Economic	State of the economy generally	The economics of your business sector	The economic model of your business
Social & Demographic	Social, Human rights, Education	Attractiveness of your sector to employees	Attractiveness of your company to employees
Technological	Technology available generally	Technology specific to your business sector	Technology unique to your business
Environmental	Environmental Quality System (EN14000)	Sector-specific obligations	Your environmental policy and practice
Legal & Regulatory	Approach to regulation	Specific regulations for your sector	How you meet regulatory requirements.

Figure 18 — PESTEL summary.

Confidence through Development

Appendix 3 — Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors. There are many ways to identify these factors; this Useful Guide offers three suggestions that you may employ.

1   Process-mapping

Start with a beneficiary, for example the customer, and follow what happens at each stage of their experience. This approach is often expressed as an informal diagram. The approach is sometimes known as the *staple yourself to …* For example, a weakness may be the slow response to purchase orders, then mentally staple yourself to a purchase order and follow its journey through the organisation. Beware, the temptation with this process-mapping approach can be to record the mechanics and resources (for example, headcount); for SWOT, the purpose is to observe where the issue (Threat or Opportunity) is supported (Strength) or hindered (Weakness) by the presence, absence or performance of internal capabilities. The key benefit of this approach is that you will have a diagram of how things work currently.

> Note — In consultant jargon, this current state is known as the *as-is* situation. When things have to change, a similar diagram known as the *To-Be* state is created and the differences between the *as-is* and *to-be* are the foundations of a change plan.

2   What if …

The *What if* method deliberately injects a big idea (sometimes known as a BHAG — Big Hairy Audacious Goal) into the analysis. For example, *What if* we discontinue accepting payment by cash and only accept payments by card; *What if* we remove our employee grade structure and call everyone an 'associate'; *What if* we engage a public relations company; *What if* we made our products exclusively for left-handed customers; *What if* our key supplier becomes bankrupt, and so on. For SWOT, the Strengths and Weaknesses become apparent as the big idea is worked through.

The advantage of the *What If* approach is that it encourages creativity and freethinking. Where process-mapping is useful for analysing and responding to previously identified issues, *What If* engages issues and topics that have not yet appeared on the horizon.

> Example — Within the context of mobile computing, an opportunity for a small, inexpensive laptop computer was envisaged. *Process-mapping* led to smaller and cheaper laptop computers know known as netbooks. *What if* led to a new category of computing—the tablet.

Pansophix

3   Checklist

Using checklists, or tick lists, is a method of ensuring that a wide variety of factors have been taken into account and not forgotten. For SWOT, checklists are a convenient way of reminding you *where to look* for strengths and weaknesses. Typically, a checklist may be created using the major functions of an organisation. These may include …

- Customer-facing activities

  - Marketing/Advertising/Awareness
  - Customer service/customer experience
  - Sales, pricing, product attractiveness
  - Delivery and fulfilment
  - Payments, receipting

- Financial and investors

  - Banking
  - Reconciliation
  - Tax management – returns and settlements
  - Investor relations

- People – staff, volunteers, employees

  - Selection and recruitment (Hire and fire)
  - Morale, motivation, loyalty, remuneration
  - Capabilities of leaders and managers (Staff development)

- Research and development

  - New product development
  - Ability to experiment, prototype, test, pilot

- Resource management

  - Capability of Management Information Systems
  - Knowledge management

- Operations

  - Marketing, promotion, awareness
  - Sales, order-taking
  - Shipping and fulfilment, Goods inward
  - Storage, logistics

- Resources

  - Plant, machinery, tools
  - Knowledge
  - ICT

Confidence through Development

Appendix 4 — Case study: the coffee shop

[Context] The coffee shop is a high-street café with hundreds of outlets selling coffee beverages (and coffee variations) together with snack-sized pastries. The high street coffee shop industry is very competitive with other global and national operators who have local outlets often within a moment's walk away. At 2012 prices, a typical customer may spend £6 – £8 on an eat-in visit or slightly less on a 'to-go' visit. A repeat customer visiting twice a day (breakfast and lunch) over one hundred days per year is worth over £1,000 per year in revenue.

The business relies on high-volume and assumes a quick throughput of customers. Shops are almost always positioned in prime retail sites on main streets to attract plenty of passing trade.

The bean used in the coffee product is Robusta *(coffea canephora)*, which is rich in caffeine. However, market research has identified that discerning coffee drinkers prefer other beans, in particular Arabica *(coffea arabica)*, which is reputed to be more refined and aromatic. Local competitors are advertising *100% Arabica* and successfully attracting these discerning customers.

[Purpose] To review the use of the Robusta bean in the coffee beverages and consider changing the recipe to include Arabica.

[Social] Customers are becoming more concerned with the ethics of coffee production. It is a widely held view that the coffee growers receive poor payment for the value of their crop. The rise of Ethical brands (eg Fair-trade) causes some customers to go elsewhere. Some competitors distinguish their establishment by promoting Fair-trade sources.

[Economics] Robusta is cheaper to grow and more abundant, consequently the input costs are lower than Arabica.

[Technological] The espresso machines (grinding, packing, pressure) can take either bean.

Recording the factors and developing the responses on a SWOT/TOWS diagram would result in something like Figure 19.
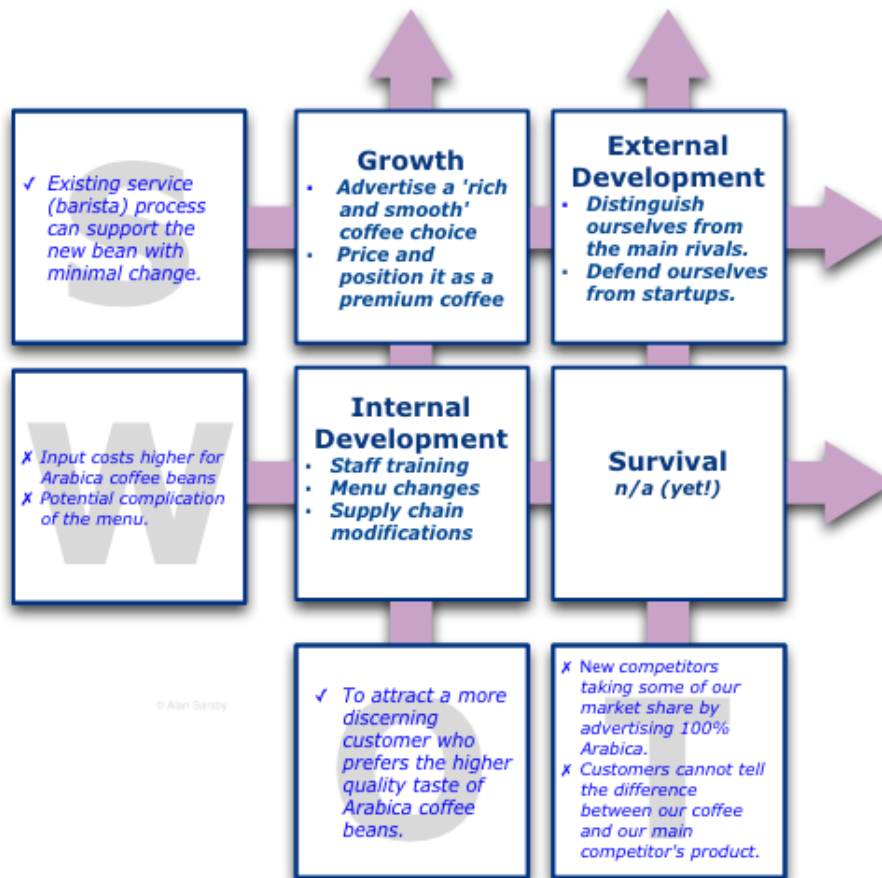
Confidence through Development

Figure 19 — SWOT/TOWS diagram for the review of coffee bean.

Exercises

1 — Next time you go to a coffee shop, observe what is going on and create your own SWOT/TOWS analysis. Would you change the coffee bean?

2 — Imagine you wanted to start a new coffee shop business. What would your SWOT/TOWS analysis contain?

> Author's note — Oh, you wanted an answer! Well, let's just say that I'm happy to walk past several national chain coffee shops to reach one that serves good coffee. (And plays good jazz in the background!)

Confidence through Development

Appendix 5 — Case study: a charity in the care sector

[Context] The charity is in the care sector with the charitable objective to provide support and help for people with learning disabilities. The charity has a turnover of £100 million (2012).

[Purpose] To examine how Individual Budgets (also known as personalisation) will impact our care business, and decide how to react to the government's personalisation agenda.

[Political] The provision of care has traditionally been accessed and administered through local authorities, who would then commission a service provider to deliver the care service package using a block contract.

[Political] Government policy is to change the economic model so that a person in need of care would receive the resources (as money) directly instead of it being channelled through the local authority.

[Economic] The economic model of the care sector would change from wholesale provision (for example, the block contract) to that where the person in need of support would be a retail customer of the care provider. The flow of resources and money would be entirely different; consequently existing strengths in bids and tenders, largely a wholesale model of provision, are no longer relevant.

[Threat] Most of the charity's revenue comes via local authorities. In the near future none of it will.

[Opportunity] People with an Individual Budget (the Individual Budget Holder) are going to be our new paying customers. They are the same people that receive the care services. These individuals often have what is known as a 'circle of support' so our opportunity is to present ourselves as the provider of choice to their circle of support and the individual budget holder.

[Strength] The charity has a good track record of delivering care and has considerable positive feedback from the people it supports.

[Weakness] The charity's former strength of being able to respond to local authority requirements in bids and tenders is no longer relevant.

[Weakness] Employees do not have retail sales skills.

Confidence through Development

[Weakness] The charity has no retail-oriented process for a person and their circle of support to make a purchase.

[Weakness] The charity has no supporting infrastructure, for example computer systems to support sales enquiries, and thus no management information to help operational decision-making.

[Weakness] Individual service components are often incorporated within a larger package of services. The client may not need, nor want, the whole package of services.

Using PESTEL and SWOT has highlighted many factors. Positioning these on a SWOT/TOWS diagram may look something like Figure 20.
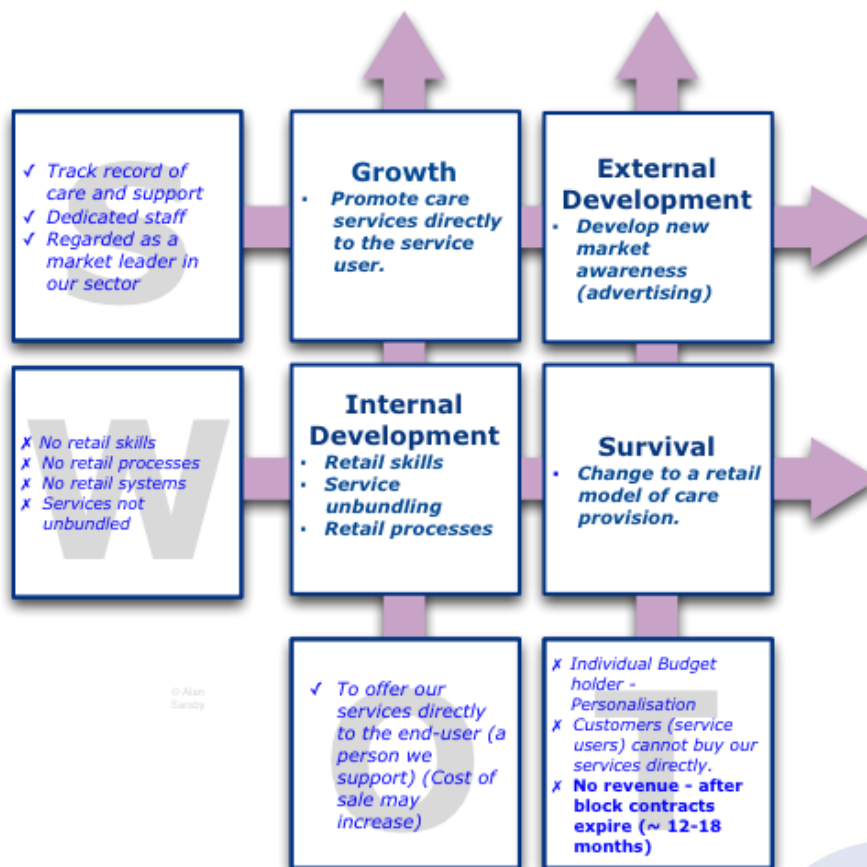

Figure 20 — Care Sector SWOT/TOWS.

Confidence through Development

Whilst the foregoing may paint a desperate picture for the charity, it demonstrates that in the old environment they were the market leader. Suddenly, in the new environment, they may not even be in business. In this case the SWOT has led to a *Strategic Imperative*.

[Strategic Imperative] Unless we change the way we do business, and make ourselves attractive to the retail buyer of personal care services, we will go out of business in under a year. The goal is to *convert* the Threat into an Opportunity.

Strategy and actions

- *[Survival]*

    - Re-invent our organisation as a retail provider of care services.

In order to do this …

- *[Internal Development]*

    - Unbundle our services so each element can be individually priced and sold.

    - Develop a retail customer service journey from initial enquiry, enquiry tracking, order taking (sales), and fulfilment (service delivery).

    - Train our staff in customer service skills.

    - Develop the financial systems for retail sales.

- *[External Development]*

    - Develop and promote the organisation – advertise directly to the new Individual Budget Holders and their family and friends.

    - Awareness – advertise and host seminars.

- *[Growth]*

    - Develop related services for other groups with similar (but different) conditions. For example, retail care services for those with autism or dementia.

Appendix 6 — Case study: self-employment

[Context] Kay is employed as the Senior Operations Manager of a Contract Cleaning business. The company's business includes large-scale cleaning services, for example cleaning school premises during the vacations, or builder's cleans (cleaning a house immediately following the builder's completion of their work so it is ready for use or sale).

On the downside, the company is a family business whose directors are reluctant to share their rewards. Employee satisfaction is consistently low with many disciplinary cases (often for trivial 'offences') and there is poor communication between the directors and the operational teams. Against this background Kay is considering setting up a limited company to become self-employed.

[Purpose] Define a strategy for Kay to start a new contract cleaning company.

[Opportunity] Several clients have indicated that they would switch their allegiance to Kay if she were to start her own contract cleaning business.

[Political/Legal] New regulations are about to come into force which require cleaning staff to be adequately trained.

[Threat] If Kay were to leave, there is a small possibility that her existing employer may require a non-compete agreement. The risk is small since this is vague in her contract of employment.

[Threat] Whilst some existing clients may support Kay, others, typically the larger corporations might not, because the effort of reworking their procurement processes (due diligence, supplier qualification and supplier management) could be expensive.

[Strengths] Kay's expertise includes surface, wall and floor cleaning using specialist industrial solvents, and project logistics to source cleaning operators to the client's site.

[Weakness] Kay has limited skills in running a business, as distinct from operations management in the cleaning industry, and no skills in starting a new business. Additionally, there is insufficient cash in her savings to purchase the amount of equipment and supplies required to start the business.

Confidence through Development

Placing these factors on a SWOT/TOWS diagram would result in something like Figure 21.
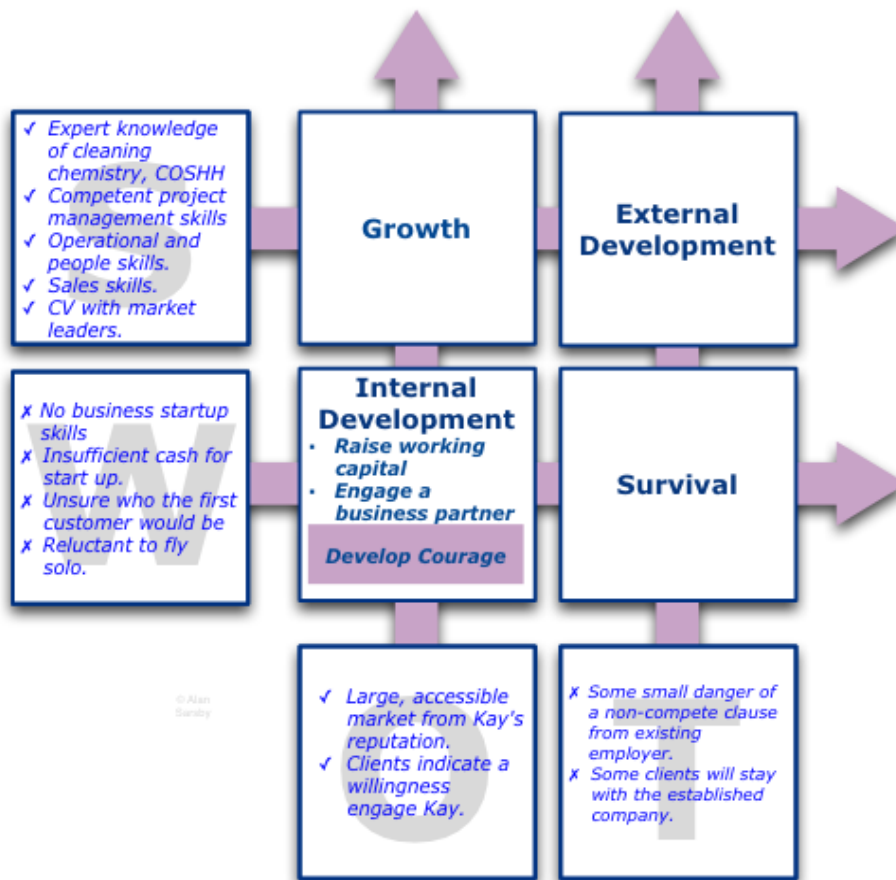

Figure 21 — SWOT/TOWS for Kay's ambition.

Strategy and actions

The most obvious strategy is survival because the threats and weaknesses intersect. She can either put up with the problematic employer, or leave. Let's assume that Kay wants to start her own business; the primary strategy type is Internal Development because the opportunities are there, but Kay has weaknesses that prevent the opportunity being taken.

A strategy based on Internal Development would be …

Confidence through Development

- **Raise working capital**
  The key requirements for cash are …

  - To purchase tools (floor scrubbers, vacuum cleaners), materials (cleaning chemistry, consumables) and other equipment.

  - To establish the business as a business — company formation, web site, telecoms and computing, and so on.

  - Reserves to cover cash flow from the period of the first contract through to being paid.

- **Engage a business partner**
  The key requirements for a business partner are …

  - Experience in establishing small businesses.

  - Practical experience in complementary services for the cleaning industry. For example, to seize the opportunity presented by forthcoming legislation for staff to be trained. So, someone having training skills would be desirable.

However, these are mechanistic strategic objectives. Because Kay is risk-averse and is reluctant to take a leap into the unknown, the most important strategic action is finding emotional support to help her through the first steps of creating a new business and going self-employed.

- **Prepare to go self-employed**
  This is the most important element in Kay's strategy. Actions may include …

  - Mentoring to become self-employed.

  - Taking the small preparatory steps in advance of resigning from her employer.

  - Seeking support and advice from local business links.

Note that the other quadrants in the TOWS framework have been ignored at this stage. One cannot have a Growth Strategy unless there is a business to grow; one cannot have External Development without a business (in any case, this area has been covered to some extent by some customers indicating their willingness to engage Kay).

The main point from this case study is that strategy is not mechanical and must also incorporate the human and emotional aspects.

Confidence through Development

Appendix 7 — Case study: Wi-Fi in the Basic Burger Bar

We introduced the Basic Burger Bar in §4.2 where the opportunity to serve plated food was strategically declined. In this case study, we'll add a new aspect to the study — the provision of free Wi-Fi in the restaurant so that customers can use their own computing devices (laptops, tablets, phones) to check email, surf the web and so on.

The context needs extending to embrace more of the social culture of the burger bar, and the purpose needs to be modified.

[Context] The Basic Burger Bar is a fast food restaurant. The duration that a customer may be in the restaurant is short; from entry, ordering, paying, eating, clearing and leaving is unlikely to be longer than 30 minutes.

The environment is designed to reflect these short duration visits: The décor is garish, the noise level is high, and seats are designed for ease of cleaning not for comfort.

[Purpose] Decide whether to offer a free Wi-Fi service in the Basic Burger Bar.

[Threat] Loss of Customers: observation of customer attendance and exit surveys indicate that some are frequenting nearby competitors who offer free Wi-Fi for their customers to use whilst on the premises.

[Threat] Reputation: risk being seen as out of touch and unattractive to the mobile computing generation.

[Opportunity] To retain our customers.

[Weakness] Encouraging long-stay customers is inconsistent with the ethos of fast-food/quick entry-to-departure. There is insufficient table space to hold the net increase in occupants.

[Weakness] Although central IT skills can undertake the provision, there are no front-of-house technical support skills. Most staff are not technically knowledgeable and the jobs have low skill requirements. Giving a customer technical support would deflect their attention away from their fundamental job function and be inconsistent with the notion of 'fast.'

Placing these factors on a SWOT/TOWS diagram could result in something like Figure 22.
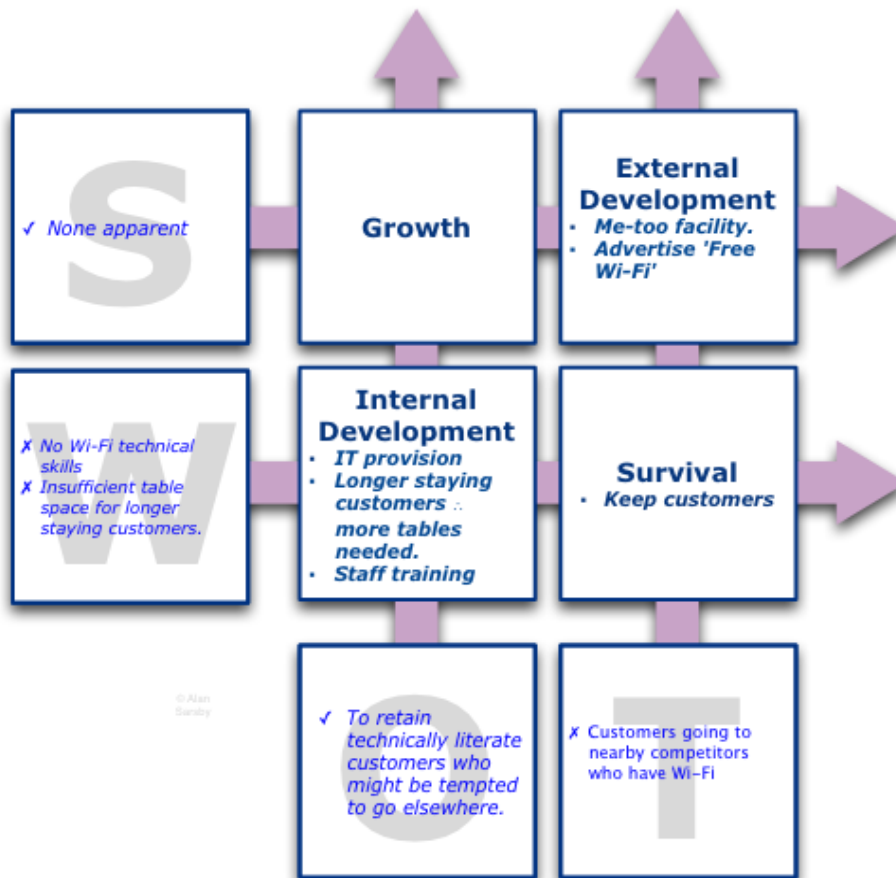
Confidence through Development

Figure 22 — SWOT/TOWS for Wi-Fi in Basic Burger Bar.

Strategy review

The main driver for change is to keep customers from drifting away to competitors. The threat is exacerbated by important weaknesses. The strategic action is …

- Convert the Threat into an Opportunity — attract the techno customers.

- Convert the Weakness into a Strength — Invest in Wi-Fi.

- And finally to invest in External Development by advertising to inform their customers that Wi-Fi is available for free in the Basic Burger Bar.

Note that this type of strategy is a Catch-Up action. It is also known as a 'me-too' response so that your distinction of being the "laggard" is averted. It doesn't provide you with a new feature to distinguish yourself from your competitors. A Wi-Fi service standard may also be needed, for example to cover how long a customer may stay connected; and information for customer self-help when using Wi-Fi in the restaurant would be essential.

Confidence through Development

Appendix 8 — Weighting the factors

We've tacitly assumed that the factors in SWOT have a basic equality. In real life this isn't so; some factors have a stronger impact than others. There are many methods of illustrating the relative importance of factors. Two popular ways of representing impact are spider diagrams and bubble graphs. See the example in Figure 23.
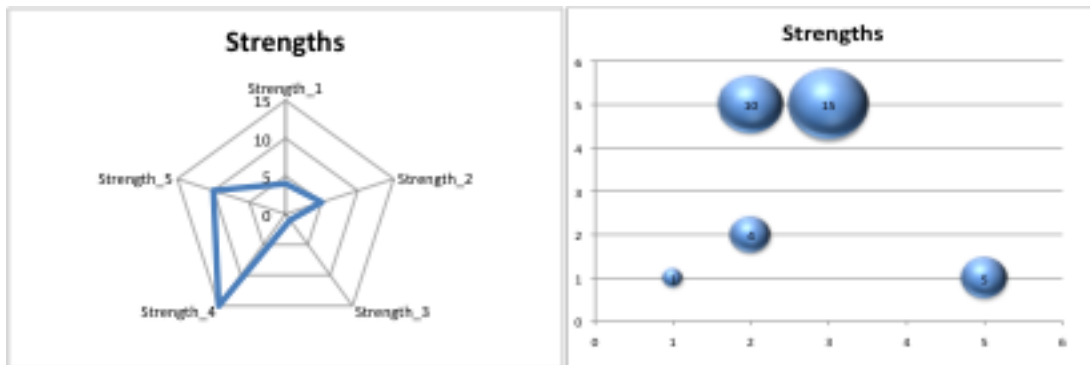

Figure 23 — Example diagrams to illustrate the impact of a factor.

Note — Constructing spreadsheets for this kind of visual display of data is beyond the scope of this Useful Guide.

There are many methods of assigning relative importance scores, and to some extent it depends on the purpose of the SWOT analysis. For example …

- Score = agreement × criticality
  This approach may be useful in a workshop where gaining consensus among the participants is a goal. The score is a scalar value and lends itself to a spider diagram.

- Score = relevance to purpose × importance
  This may be useful where multiple factors need to be taken into account. The relevance and importance position the factor (x and y axes) on a bubble diagram with the size of the bubble being the score.

Printing each of the four SWOT quadrants on very large paper such as a flipchart (ISO A1) is a useful method to gain stakeholder agreement (buy-in) to the analysis.

Confidence through Development

Feedback

We are always trying to improve our Useful Guides and would appreciate any feedback you can give us on A Useful Guide to SWOT Analysis. Please click on the link below to access our online feedback form …
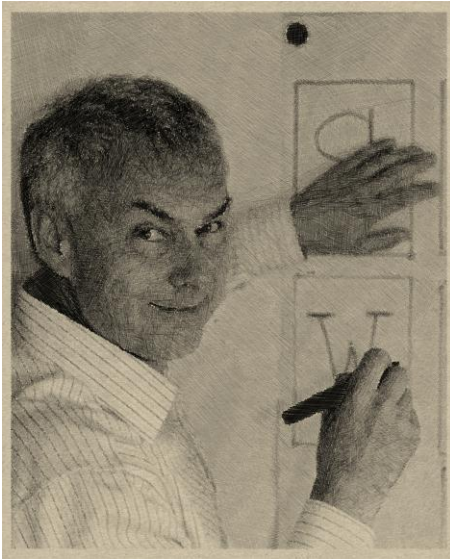
http://www.pansophix.com/useful-guide-feedback.html

If we use your feedback to improve **A Useful Guide to SWOT** we will email you a copy of the updated version.

Resources

Pansophix has many resources including free tips and tools at 247freetips.com.

Confidence through Development

Pansophix

About the author

Alan Sarsby has enjoyed over forty years in many different careers, initially in electronic engineering and IT strategy then later in customer service and business change.

He has developed and implemented novel approaches to enterprise design and change leadership. Since 2001, Alan has specialised in training services.

He is a conference speaker and has had articles published in the trade press.

Alan is also the author of A Useful Guide to Managing Email.

Alan runs an independent training company that specialises in …

- The application of leadership and management-ship to practical situations

- Training trainers

- Making sense of messy problems, Quest and Lost in the Fog projects

- Interpersonal communications and presentation skills

His clients include: commercial and industrial, charitable, voluntary, and local government.

Alan may be able to help you with …

- **Training, seminars, conference speaker**.

- **Customised versions of this Useful Guide**.

Please contact Pansophix on enquiries@pansophix.com
or telephone 0845 260 2820.

When not working with clients or writing, Alan is an enthusiastic photographer. He is an active member of a local Camera Club, a tutor for leisure photography at Otley College in East Anglia, and a photographic judge.

—Δ—

Confidence through Development