



PERSONAL SWOT

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SWOT is an acronym for an assessment often used in teams; it stands for **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**.

But a SWOT analysis is not just a business tool. **It can be a use personal exercise to help you land a job!**

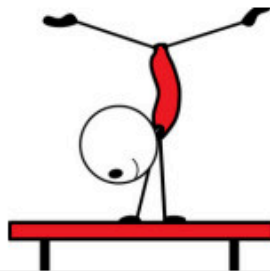
In preparing for a career move, my colleague and friend, MJ, put me through a mock interview. Suddenly all the great communication skills I know and teach went flying out the window; I was a rambling disaster!

She assigned me the homework of doing a personal SWOT analysis.

Like many people, I am uncomfortable describing or selling myself. But the job interview is a situation when you must do both of these! You only have a few minutes to tell about yourself in ways your cover letter or resume cannot.

I found the exercise of doing a SWOT analysis extremely helpful.

The first two are internal components:



Strengths

According to Forbes.com, you must picture yourself as a product in the marketplace. This is your opportunity to differentiate yourself from all the other applicants.

I think you have to get past the idea that you're being arrogant if you detail your strengths. These are some ideas that might get you started.

Use personality profiles you've taken. I relied on the results of my [Strengths Finder](#) results, a book, test and philosophy that identifies 34 top most common talents. (Buy the book, read it, and use the code at the back to take the test online. The results will uncover your top five strengths so you focus on them to build a successful life and career.) Mine include the ability to woo (win others over) and great communication skills.

Ask others. Because I'm a college teacher, I asked my students. They said I know how to engage them and make the classroom fun.

Brainstorm. I took some time to be quiet and consider the unique experiences I bring to any situation. I listed how multi-cultural I am because of my family and extensive travels, as well as my adaptability in diverse situations.



Weaknesses

These are your personal liabilities and areas for growth. They also include things you know you're not especially good at (that may be relevant to the job). You have to be able to articulate your weaknesses in ways that sound positive in that all-important interview.

I listed some weaknesses, then worded them so they sounded positive instead of negative. For example, I see a lot of possibilities, so I have a tendency to overextend myself. I'm not so good with details. So I added that I tend to be so big-picture, that I sometimes overlook details.

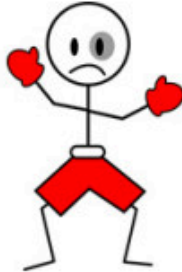


The second two are external components:



Opportunities are practical things you can do to improve yourself. And threats are circumstances and constraints that may hold you back. Lisa Quast of Forbes.com, said she found it helpful to list her threats first, then turn them into opportunities. For example, a fear of public speaking could become a motivation to take a public speaking course.

In the **Opportunities** section, I listed things like increasing my retirement savings and the unique opportunities I have in this season in my life (that weren't there before).



In the **Threats** section, I listed circumstances that intimidate me, like resource limitations and uncertainties about the future.

The bottom line is this. **When you interview for your next career move, recruiters are GOING to ask you questions for which you HAVE to have answers:**

- **What are some of your strengths?**
- **What are some of your weaknesses?**
- **Why should we hire you?**

I found the SWOT analysis an excellent tool to ensure that I was prepared for that all-important interview and prepare me for tough questions I may be asked.

You cannot over prepare for that position you really want.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What positive character traits do I have? • What do others ask me for help with? • What skills do I possess? • What makes me happy & fulfilled? • What unique experiences do I have? 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are my weak areas & what am I doing to manage them? • What are my limited resources? • What do others not ask my help with? • What makes me stressed? • What personal limitations do I feel?
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I leverage my strengths? • What unique opportunities do I have at this stage of my life? • What opportunities are immediately open to me? • What am I uniquely qualified to do? 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What circumstances threaten my security or well-being? • What aspects hold me back? • What things are outside of my control? • What vulnerabilities am I facing? • What financial or other constraints do I have?

