



PETRA PLANNING

GIVING YOUR FORUM A BOOST



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

Need a Forum boost? Consider trying a personal SWOT analysis! SWOT, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, is a well-known analysis process that urges business leaders to identify these elements to assess their company and competition. This process forces employers to think deeply about their businesses as the first step in formulating strategies to reach their goals.

During a recent Forum retreat, I presented a spin on the traditional SWOT analysis, with a goal of injecting new energy into the group. Instead of identifying characteristics of our businesses, we focused on ourselves. Performing an individual SWOT analysis has helped us better understand ourselves (internal strengths and weaknesses) and our environment (external opportunities and threats), and that knowledge has gone a long way in strengthening our Forum. Here is how we executed it:



1. Strengths. Start with one member and have everyone in the group list strengths for that individual. What are his or her advantages over others? These could be skills, certifications, education or connections. Go around the room until everyone has shared three strengths. It's fine to repeat strengths if you think they should be reinforced. The member being analyzed should take notes on all of the group's observations, and should ask any clarifying questions at the conclusion of this step. When we did this in our Forum, it was interesting to note how some members saw their strengths as weaknesses. After hearing their Forum mates identify their weaknesses as strengths, they were able to see themselves in a different way.

2. Opportunities. Skip weaknesses for now and move on to opportunities. I have found it is better to do both of the positive elements first. It allows the group to invest in the buildup of each other before getting to the more negative pieces that can be difficult to be honest about. Follow the same guidelines from the strengths exercise, but instead focus on how this member can use his or her strengths to leverage opportunities. Some examples include industry trends, new technologies or a demand for a new skill in the company.

3. Threats. Next, do the same with threats, which are external factors that may work against the individual. This step will often point out what needs to be done and put problems into perspective. Is changing technology threatening his or her position? Is this person facing any obstacles at work? Is there less of a demand for one of his or her skills? I have found that it is very easy to underestimate our own threats. Having close Forum members think them through has helped bring the perspective I need to address my own threats.

4. Weaknesses. In this final exercise, the individual will list two or three of his or her own weaknesses. What are your negative work habits? Do you have personality traits that hold you back? Do you have a small network? Share these with the group for feedback. It's important to be realistic and honest with yourself so that you can face your weaknesses head on. Since weaknesses are internal, only you know them. That is why you need to list your own in this part of the process. This was the most difficult step for my Forum. It was painful to conduct such deep self-analysis and then share our weaknesses with each other. We could not have accomplished it if we didn't have a high level of trust in one another.

Repeat these four steps with each member in your Forum, allocating 30 minutes per person in the group. At the conclusion of the personal SWOT analysis, we entered our information into AlignToday.com, a program that many EO members use to create focus throughout their organizations, which lays the foundation for creating a personal "One-Page Plan." Since conducting this exercise, we have reflected back on this plan and taken action to ensure that we are honing our strengths and minimizing our weaknesses, taking advantage of our opportunities and mitigating our threats. In your next Forum meeting, I challenge you and your peers to look at yourselves using this SWOT framework.

This story was originally published in [Octane Magazine](#).

THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

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