

S.W.O.T. Team-Do You Have One?

By Roger Bostdorff

Does your company have a S.W.O.T. Team? I am not referring to a group of guys toting rifles to shoot down the guy that has robbed the bank and taken hostages. I am talking about a group of leaders that are focused on understanding the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of your organization. As this economy becomes more and more global, we have to at least annually do an internal grade card on how our organizations measure up.

How does an organization get started in doing one of these? They take some time away from the day to day grind and go ask themselves the following questions and then discuss and debate the answers.

Strengths-

- What Advantages Does Your Company/Organization Have In the Marketplace?
- What Does Your Company Do Better Than Anyone Else?
- What Unique or Low Cost Resources Does Your Company/Organization Have Access To?
- What Do Others See As Your Company's Strengths?

Weaknesses-

- What Could Your Company Improve On?
- Where Does Your Company Have Fewer Resources Than Your Competition? (People, \$, Manufacturing Capacity, etc.)
- What Should Your Company Avoid?
- What Are Others Likely to See As Your Company's Weaknesses?

Threats-

- What Obstacles Does Your Company Face?
- What is Your Company's Competition Doing?
- Are The Required Specifications For Your Job, Products or Services Changing?
- Is Changing Technology Threatening Your Company's Position in the Marketplace?
- Could Any of Your Company's Weaknesses Seriously Threaten Your Business?

Opportunities-

- What Good Opportunities Are Open To Your Company?
- What Trends Could You Take Advantage of? (I.e. Changes in Age of Population, Lifestyle, etc.)
- Looking At Your Company's Strengths, How Can You Turn These Into Opportunities?

A SWOT analysis helps an organization define what makes them unique while outlining the organizations strategic advantages so that they can leverage these in the marketplace. Pretty simple, right? Wrong!! These are hard questions that need a hard look with objective viewpoints being discussed/ debated. The stripes need to come off during these discussions. By that I mean that the head of the organization needs to insure that his team opens up and really tells it like it is. This discussion needs to be free of rank and penalty relative to opinions. Many organizations enlist the help of an outside facilitator to make this happen.

Now you are half way home. If you agree that it is important to understand the SWOT for your organization, then you should also agree that you should do this exercise for your major competitor. If your business is in a market that is growing, then everyone can ride the positive curve. However, if your market is not growing then the only way to grow is to take market share from someone else. In order to do that you need to focus your strengths on your competitor's weaknesses.

As you contemplate whether your company has the time, energy, manpower, etc. to spend on this endeavor let me ask you a question. How will you feel if you discover your major competitor is doing their SWOT right now? By the way, what if they will be wrapping up their strategic planning by doing a SWOT on your company?

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