

SWOT Spectrum - An alternative to traditional SWOT Analysis

Starting a strategic plan you can use simple, fundamental tools that sift out the distracting elements and point to the important parts. One such tool is the SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) Analysis.

If you've done a traditional SWOT in the past, you might have spent several sessions in groups (or solo) iterating over these four quadrants and possibly prioritizing each.

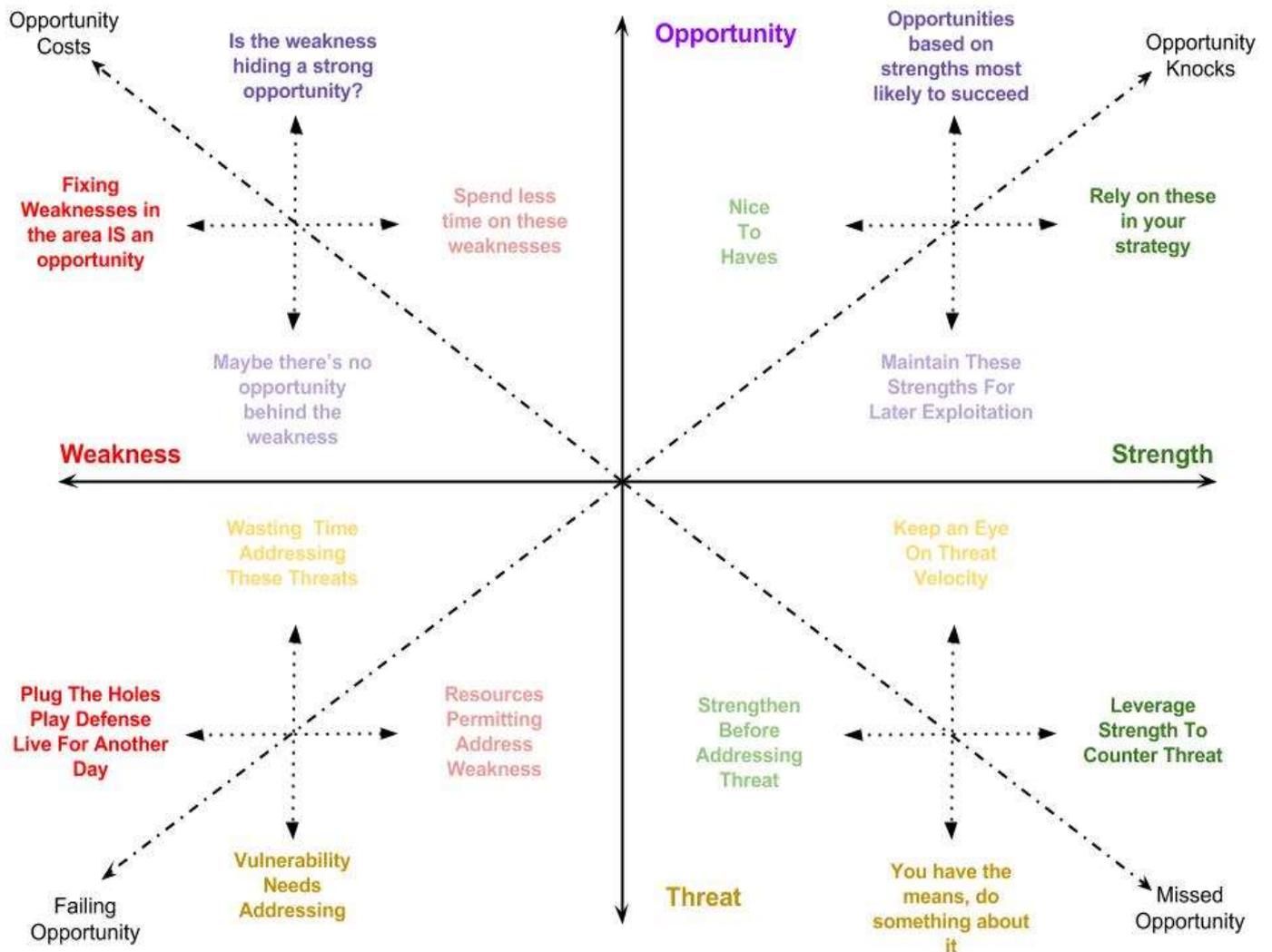
The process tells you a lot about yourself or your organization, and forces you to ask/answer tough questions. It helps form a basis for a strategy - what to focus on, what to leverage to implement that focus. It can be in the context of corporation, operations, marketing/sales, technology or even... personal life. It's a simple tool that produces quickly.

The problem with the SWOT process is that it tends to force isolation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. There are people struggling with deciding whether something was a weakness or a threat. More importantly, the prioritization tends to be separated from the identification, thus potentially creating a rift between reality (what needs to be done) and fantasy (what we wish would be done).

To attempt to address this problem, we can create the SWOT Spectrum Process. Something that is still very easy to execute, but that would point the way in prioritization. We also relate the four dimensions to each other in multi-dimensional ways (rather than just two broad axes), so that we can understand the interrelationships better.

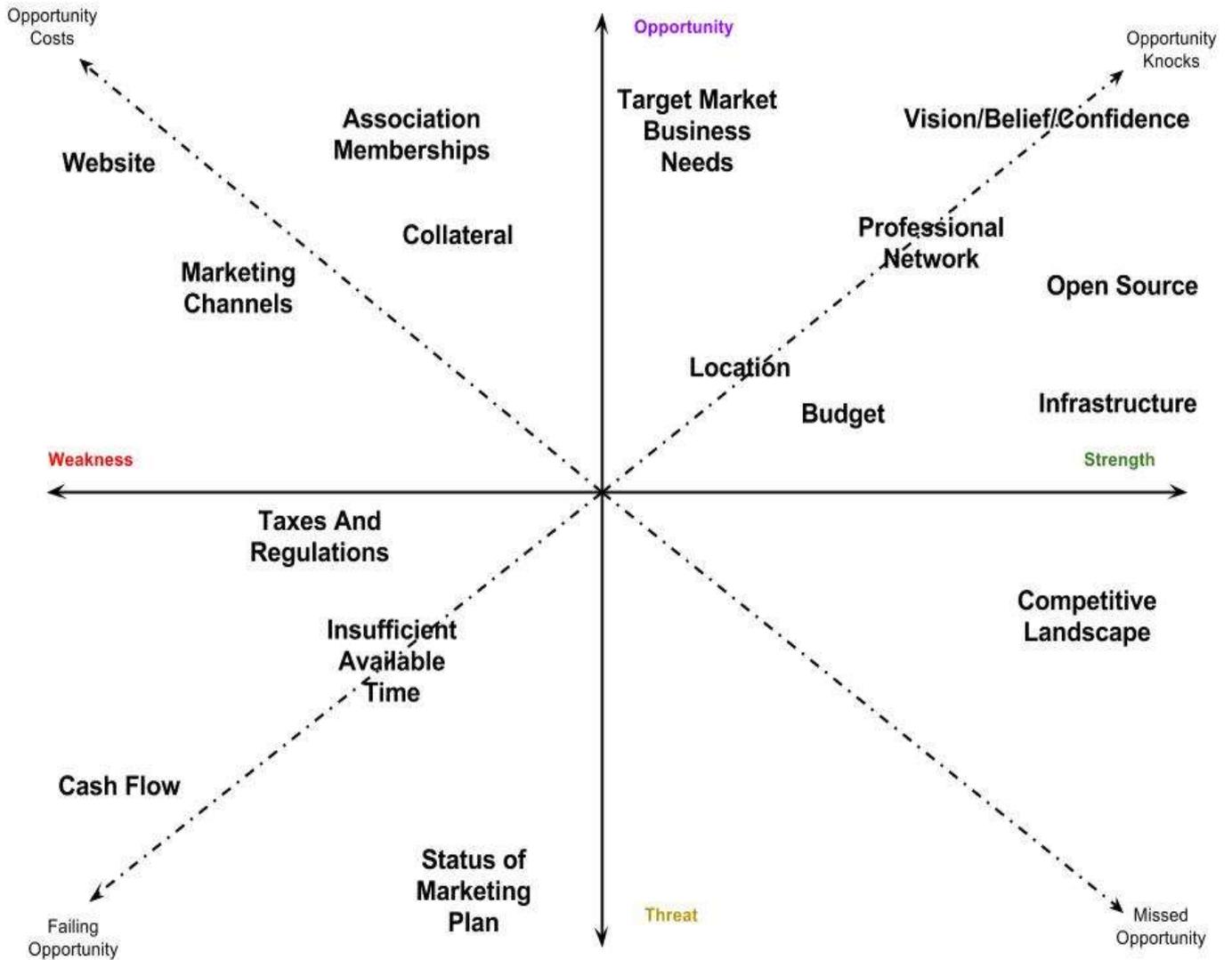
Have a look on this SWOT Spectrum Process

1. In an open-mind setting, just like in a SWOT shoot out facts about the context in which you're SWOTting.
2. Instead of lobbing these at one of 4 categories, place them in a 4 quadrant map. Is the fact more of strength or weakness, and does it represent more of an opportunity or a threat? This decides which quadrant to place the fact in.
3. For each fact, is it a strong fact, or a weak one with respect to the axes of the quadrant. For example, is a huge opportunity requiring capital something your organization has a strength in (perhaps, you're loaded with cash)?
4. Iterate, brainstorm, discuss
5. The SWOT Spectrum is now complete, and you can start making decisions on strategy using this chart:



Below is a sample result for a fledgling company for 2015.

- Clearly, as with a lot of start-ups, opportunity lies in desire and what we have done in the past.
- It also says the fundamentals (budget, location, infrastructure) are sound.
- We should work on the Website and place some focus on networking (good professional network, but weaknesses in general channels)
- We can't really do anything about Cash Flow. We therefore take a defensive attitude with a strategy to protect cash.
- Our marketing plan is in shambles and if we don't do anything, future work might be lost. But our marketing resources are only mildly weak, and improvements here diminish risk.



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