

Use this tool to help you figure out your strengths, etc...

Creating a S.W.O.T analysis of your creative business can be extremely useful as a way of identifying potential difficulties and opportunities for your business, and for yourself.

- Strengths and Weaknesses are **internal** aspects of you and your business – think about your personality, your home life, the way you organise and run your business;
- Opportunities and Threats are **external** aspects of your business – think about things outside of yourself and your life;
- The **golden rule**? Each box must help you move forward towards your goals, which are destination points that you have decided represent success. Weaknesses and threats are then obstacles or barriers between you and your destination, strengths and opportunities are tools to help you get there.

Use each section to **identify problems and solutions** in other sections. You can use your strengths to spot related weaknesses (eg “I am well-organised” is a strength, “I am too rigid” is a related weakness), then use that weakness to identify a corresponding opportunity, and so on.

- Think **laterally** when you are doing your S.W.O.T analysis. Don’t get caught up in analysing the ‘whys’ of these, just jot them down as you think of them. Brainstorm!
- Use a **big piece of paper** to help you – this is just a guide!

<p>S - Strengths (internal/personal aspects that give you an advantage)</p>	<p>O - Opportunities (external/public, such as new services, products or markets for you to consider)</p>
<p>W - Weaknesses (internal/personal aspects that might hinder you or cause problems)</p>	<p>T - Threats (external/public elements that can create barriers to your success)</p>

Start with this handy guide to help you identify some key issues.

What are your STRENGTHS? Ask yourself...

1. What do I do well, as an artist/creative and as a business? What's my “unfair advantage”?
2. How am I strong as a person? What do people compliment me about?
3. What makes me different, in a good way, from everybody else?

As Andy Molinsky says, “Knowing your strengths tells you what added value you can uniquely bring to your business”. How do you add value to your own life, your business, your practice and your loved ones?

What are your WEAKNESSES?

Don't beat yourself up about your perceived weaknesses – these are simply obstacles in your path towards success. Ask yourself:

1. What happened in my last failed initiative or project, and what can I learn from it?
2. What do I avoid (for instance – money) and why do I avoid it?
3. What makes me feel anxious? Can I help myself to feel less nervous?
4. Is there a gap in my skills or practice?

What are your THREATS?

These are obstacles that are *outside* of you, not inside, so don't just repeat your Weaknesses. Threats are outside of you, beyond your control, and cannot be changed. Your job is to work out creative ways around these external obstacles. Ask yourself:

1. What challenges do I anticipate in the next few months, in the next few years?
2. What are others doing that I don't do?
3. Are the essential provisions for my offering, products or services changing?
4. Are my customers, clients or fanbase changing?
5. Is changing technology threatening me?
6. How are you managing the 'famine and the feast' of creative business cashflow?
7. Is your community changing? (for instance, is a highway by-pass going around your town?)
8. Do I have other financial problems (like rising costs or an income deficiency)?

Where are your OPPORTUNITIES?

Now, the good bit. Where are there doors opening and beacons shining a light on the path for you and your business, as you work your way towards the promised land of success?

1. What events or networking occasions are in my calendar? None? Time to go look!
2. What gigs or jobs do I have coming up? How can I take advantage of my new clients or audiences?
3. What is changing in my industry or my community? What are the positive impacts of this change?
4. What grants, Expressions of Interest, awards and competitions or awards are coming up?
5. What short courses are available to help me overcome some of my weaknesses?

By keeping your eyes open and adding to your SWOT, you can begin to put together a plan!

Once completed, think about how to turn your S.W.O.T analysis into an **Action Plan** – How will you...:

- Capitalise on your strengths?
- Make the most of those opportunities?
- Correct or mitigate the effect of your weaknesses?
- Protect your business from threats?

For your Threats and Weaknesses, write down 5 ideas (or more) to help you plan ways to avoid or minimise those negative outcomes.

For your Strengths and Opportunities, write down 5 ideas (or more) to make the most of these great things.

To help you prioritise these ideas and your S.W.O.T analysis action steps, ask yourself:

1. What is the ideal outcome for me (*not best, or perfect – just whatever it is that will help you feel okay about the current situation*), and
2. What is the next step I will take? (*not everything, just the next step*)

Put that in your diary and away you go!

People don't plan to fail, they just fail to plan

If you found this worksheet helpful, please visit

www.creativeplusbusiness.com

for more resources aimed at helping creative businesses.

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