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# SWOT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

*by Stephanie Leishman*



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# WHAT IS SWOT?

SWOT is an **acronym for a framework** that examines any business, product, venture, or idea. Taking the time to analyze SWOT --strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats -- can lay a great foundation for your social media strategy.

## **WHY USE A SWOT ANALYSIS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLANS**

When creating a marketing plan, often the temptation is to start with what you are going to do: the actions of your plan. While actions are great—it shows you are willing to roll up your sleeves and get to work—try to think through how you want to frame your business based on its internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its relationship in the industry, expressed as opportunities and threats.

## HOW TO FILL OUT YOUR SWOT FRAMEWORK

To fill out the SWOT framework, create a two-by-two grid (you can easily create a table and type your answers in the cells). Label each cell with S (strengths), W (weaknesses), O (opportunities), T (threats).



## **KNOW YOURSELF: START WITH INTERNAL ATTRIBUTES**

Strengths are internal and are what you do well. If you could describe your business with a few keywords, what would those words be? If you have a hard time identifying your strengths, look through the lens of “unique value proposition”: what do you do well that no one else does? What makes you unique? I know a business in town that is the only dry cleaner to offer green dry cleaning: they use chemicals that are safe for the environment. No other dry cleaner in their area can claim this, so it’s a strength for those who seek earth-friendly solutions.

### **Strengths**

- ▶ What keywords best describe you (no more than five)?
- ▶ What makes you unique?

Also, admit your weaknesses. The best businesses are run by self-aware people. Be completely honest with yourself: in which areas do you see a lack? Some businesses have a name that is too long or hard to remember, making digital branding difficult. Identifying this as a weakness can initiate a conversation about how to identify the lowest common denominator (maybe the Twitter handle is the most limiting in characters) and find a shorter, memorable username across all social media channels. Perhaps the weakness is an unpredictable inventory volume, making it hard to time promotions. Knowing where you need to improve directly leads to next actions you can set for your business.

## **Weaknesses**

- ▶ What do you need to improve?

## **KNOW YOUR PLACE: ANALYZE OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS**

One way to determine opportunities is to look for gaps in the market.

A florist in my neighborhood figured out that other florists also focus on the typical flower needs: birthdays, Valentine's Day, weddings, "I'm Sorry" bouquets, and so on. The time a person needs a flower most, though, might be when they are alone, and not everyone thinks to stop in and get a flower to make their own day a little brighter, even though it would cost less than a cup of coffee.

So this florist puts a sign out on their street every day offering free roses to anyone whose first name is the florist's chosen name of the day. Everyone around town is excited to see their name, and therefore receive a rose. The florist saw an opportunity to teach people self-love, as well as to bring in future customers that might continue to treat themselves a little better in the future by getting themselves flowers to add color to their homes.



## Opportunities

- ▶ What gaps exist? What are others not doing yet?
- ▶ How will this opportunity solve a pain point or delight customers?

Not everyone likes to identify the threats. They put us on the defensive. However, it's important to know where you could take a hit. If you own a smaller business, there may be a bigger business in the area that can offer lower prices because they have production scale. Threats can also be regulations (businesses that use drones are experiencing this now), new business models (like Uber was for the taxi industry), and improved products from entrants. Think: where am I most vulnerable?

## Threats

- ▶ Where am I most vulnerable?

## **USE SOCIAL MEDIA LISTENING TO IMPROVE YOUR SWOT ANALYSIS**

Now that you have filled out your SWOT grid with what you know about your own business and industry, it is time to improve it with what you may not know. You have strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that you don't know about -- but your customers' public social media posts and comments might help you uncover more information. This is where a good dose of social media listening comes in.

## STRENGTHS: EMBRACE THE LOVE

Who is mentioning you and using your campaign hashtags? Can you do a qualitative analysis to gain insights on why they love your product or service so much?

I learned from user-generated content that a lot of people who mention MIT love the university because of its quirky intelligence. When I was MIT's Social Media Strategist, this helped me identify MIT's unique value proposition, or strength: it's not just another "smart" or "top" university—it has a quirkiness that attracts a specific type of person.

### Strengths

- ▶ What keywords are people often using on social using to describe you?
- ▶ According to their comments and posts, what makes you unique?

## **WEAKNESSES: EMBRACE THE HATE**

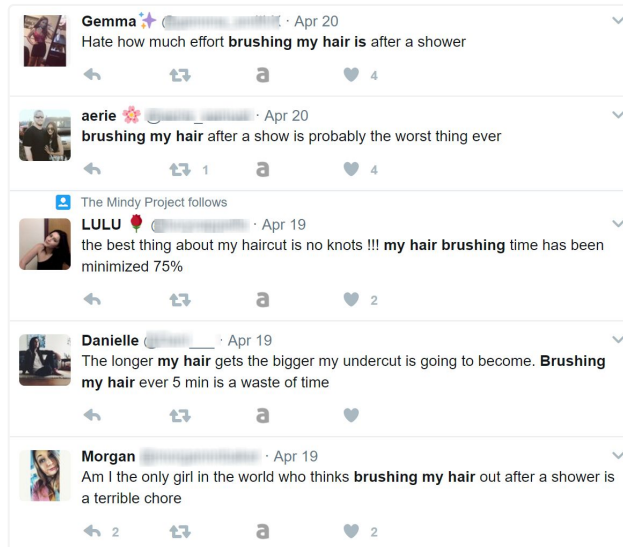
If you have enough mentions on social media, you could filter them with this specific search: “I hate [product name].” Do they say why they hate your product? Your shipping choices? Your website? Do they include images? What are you learning about your weaknesses?

### **Weaknesses**

- ▶ According to user generated content, in what areas do I need to improve?

## OPPORTUNITIES: FILL IN THE BLANK

For one client that sells hairbrushes, I wanted to know how customers felt about brushing their hair. I typed into Twitter advanced search, “Brushing my hair is” and observed the answers that resulted.



Do you notice some commonalities in what these tweets say about brushing hair?

By doing an in-depth analysis of the results, I was able to identify opportunities where a hairbrush might address those feelings.

## **Opportunities**

- ▶ According to your own social listening, what product or service gaps exist in your field? What are others not doing yet?
- ▶ How will this opportunity solve a pain point or delight customers?

# APPLY YOUR SWOT ANALYSIS TO FORMULATE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

## Put strengths front and center

Strengths come in the form of statements, phrases, and keywords. Include your strengths in static places like your Twitter and Instagram bios or in your “About” section on your Facebook page.

Then make a plan for including your strengths regularly in posts, whether you talk about them directly or subtly focus on your strengths in the way you talk to customers. For example, if your strength is that you offer green dry cleaning, plan to publish one post each day that teaches customers about sustainable practices at home, and link to articles that talk about what chemicals are most harsh on the body. Once per week be more direct and talk about one harmful chemical that you keep out of your cleaning solutions.

The easiest way to do this is to map out when you will stay on your strength theme: what days throughout the month.

**Example: green dry cleaner**

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	Sustainable home tips	Share a post from a local environmental group	Sustainable home tips	Educate about one harmful chemical we don't use	Deal of the week	Sustainable home tips

**Weaknesses are learning opportunities**

Worse than having weaknesses is to have a weaknesses and not know what they are. Ignorance might be bliss, but it's also the death of your business. You need to be able to take criticism and listen to your customers.





While it is fun to focus on the glowing reviews (and you will definitely want to retweet them), pay attention to the negative reviews. Specifically look for evidence of an unfulfilled customer need. What is it that they expected? What about the product did they not understand? If they can't figure out how to use the product effectively, it's not their fault; it's the product's fault.

### **Example: weakness spreadsheet to uncover customer needs**

What did the customer tweet?	Tweet link	Customer need

Try to identify the weaknesses of your industry as well. If you sell hairbrushes, you might want to save searches that reveal how people feel about their hairbrushes.

## EXPERIMENT WITH OPPORTUNITIES

Take the opportunities you have identified and design social media experiments around them. This requires some willingness to take risks and do something that you haven't seen someone do before. Be creative. Take a leap. Trust that the opportunities you have identified really solve customer pain points or delight customers even more.

### **Example: find a partner**

You sell jewelry and you often get questions from customers about what to wear with items in your online catalog. The customer's need is to match their jewelry with something to wear. Perhaps they don't buy until they are sure the outfit can come together.

Therefore, you partner with a clothing brand; you feature the partner's clothing paired with your jewelry in every Friday Instagram post for a month. The partner with the complementary products does the same, filling a need the customer has and bringing new customers to both of your businesses.

## REDUCE THREATS BY REACHING OUT

There are likely others doing what you do. You're not the only donut shop or baby clothing e-commerce site. How do you reduce threats? Threats creep up when you are paying so much attention to your day-to-day operations that you forget to pause and look around.





So, look around more often. See the threats as they are approaching, not after they start taking business. Include some competitive intelligence time in your social media strategy. Make a list of competitors and view their content often.

### **Example: Private Twitter list**

You own a restaurant in Salt Lake City, Utah. You want to make sure you always know what the competition is doing. Make a few Twitter lists to see what's going on in your market. Watch what influencers are doing as well, since they will be writing about changes in the industry and what innovations are emerging.

- Twitter list 1: Restaurants in Salt Lake City (see example below)
- Twitter list 2: Food trucks in Salt Lake City
- Twitter list 3: Restaurants most like yours in Idaho, California, Colorado
- Twitter list 4: Influential food bloggers in Utah

List members

	<b>Blue Iguana</b> @BlueIguanaSLC Award winning authentic Mexican cuisine in Utah. Two Locations: Downtown Salt Lake City & Main Street Park City. Try Blue Iguana today!	Following	⋮
	<b>La Caille Restaurant</b> @La_CailleSLC beautiful weddings, three-acre vineyard, 20-acre property, delicious menu, award-winning wine list, corporate events, overnight get-aways	Following	⋮
	<b>Bambara Restaurant</b> @BambaraSLC Bambara, recently named Salt Lake City's Best Restaurant, is an approachable New American Bistro and is one of downtown Salt Lake's liveliest restaurants.	Following	⋮
	<b>The Pie Pizzeria</b> @ThePiePizzeria For over 35 years, The Pie Pizzeria has been voted the peoples choice by newspaper and magazine reader polls throughout Utah. We thank you all!	Following	⋮
	<b>Cafe Rio</b> @caferio	Following	⋮
	<b>Caputo's Market</b> @CaputosMarket	Following	⋮

## MAKE YOUR STRATEGY ACTIONABLE

Once you've filled out your SWOT framework, and you've applied your analysis to your strategy, make sure the implementation plan is clear. It's great to have a list of ideas, but that's not a strategy. You'll have to consider more operational issues like:

- What are the tactics that support each area?
- When and how often will you employ these tactics?
- How will you measure success?

Take the time you need to do a SWOT analysis in detail as outlined above. You will find that when you know your business' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, it is much easier to design a winning social media strategy.

Good luck!

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