

## YOU LEARN A LOT ANALYZING 'SWOT'

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**Y**ou may know about SWOT. The acronym is familiar to many in business. It stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Those words identify four main areas that businesses analyze to help in their strategic planning.

John McKee, a career coach and author, likes to use SWOT to help individuals, too.

"Conducting a self SWOT analysis with regularity is, in my opinion, the single most effective 'power tool' one can use in optimizing a career," McKee said.

McKee's advice is sound. But,

exactly, how do you do that?

You start by being honest with yourself.

That's not always easy. One academic research project found that the most frequent causes of career derailment is faulty self-perception, the fact that you don't see yourself the same way others see you.

Assuming honest self-perception, you benefit from assessing your personal strengths. That includes appraising your education, experience, reputation and affiliations (another word for your personal and professional networks).

Such assessment is a starting point for figuring out which jobs you're right to apply for and which promotions you might reasonably expect to be qualified to get.

Then look at your weaknesses. You don't have to broadcast them to others. But pinpoint the skills or reputation that

your competitors have that you lack.

And remember that weaknesses can include personality or behavior. If you're honest with yourself, you've probably found something to work on.

Next, research your realistic opportunities. Pay attention to what companies or industries are hiring. Aim for the healthy ones.

Look around internally. Are the spots you aspire to in-house already filled and look to be filled for the long haul?

Finally, face the threats. Are you on the wrong side of some office politics? Are there financial or geographic reasons you shouldn't make a big change now? Is your company or industry on financial quicksand?

A SWOT analysis in your desk drawer can help you cope with any change thrust upon you.

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