4-22-2020

Supplementing the SWOT Matrix for Personal Growth and Leadership

Irene Owens

Recommended Citation

Owens, Irene. "Supplementing the SWOT Matrix for Personal Growth and Leadership." *Library Diversity and Residency Studies* 1, 1 (2020): 33-36. doi:10.31390/ldrs.1.1.07.

SUPPLEMENTING THE SWOT MATRIX FOR PERSONAL GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP

Irene Owens

"Nothing is so well learned as that which is discovered" - Socrates

The philosopher, Socrates, is known for his legendary axioms as well as his teaching style. The Socratic or German method helped to revolutionize teaching using inquiry as a basis for discussion. Its' opposite - the lecture method - although often helpful, did not, and cannot create the type of results intended from effective teaching and learning. Likewise, is the SWOT matrix, or business strategy, as opposed to looking for problems and solutions, directs an organization or as later learned a person to examine him/herself based on the matrix of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The development of the matrix led by Harvard business professor, C. Roland Christensen, was popularized in 1987 with the publication of *Business Policy: Text and Cases*. (Christensen 1987) Like Socrates, Christensen was also a proponent of student inquiry. In so doing he helped to improve teaching throughout Harvard University and was the first School of Business professor to be named to a university professorship.

The personal SWOT strategy is utilized by examining internal factors such as strengths and weaknesses, and external factors such as opportunities and threats to plan one's career. It is advisable however, that before conducting the analysis there should be developed a list of outcomes one aspires to achieve followed by the development of action plans as follows:

1. Define strategic outcomes
2. Brainstorm strengths and weaknesses
3. Brainstorm opportunities and threats
4. Examine cross-quadrant relationships
5. Develop an action plan using a timeline

Chart 1 on the following page shows some examples, that can be substituted or changed as needed that should be used as a guide in a self-analysis.

ACRL DIVERSITY STANDARDS

The SWOT matrix is not a static entity. There is need to update as needed and supplement as appropriate. Since diversity is one of the major foci of this discussion. It may be helpful to ask: Can diversity be used as a portion of the SWOT matrix? For purposes of this article it is helpful to consider the Diversity Standards developed by the Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee of ACRL (ACRL 2012) which are based on the 2001 *National Association of Social Workers Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice*. They are as follows.

Standard I: Cultural awareness of self and others

Librarians and library staff shall develop an understanding of their own personal and cultural values and beliefs as a first step in appreciating the importance of multicultural identities in the lives of the people they work with and serve.

Standard 2: Cross Cultural Knowledge and skills

Librarians and library staff shall and continue to develop specialized knowledge and understanding about the history, traditions, values, and artistic expressions of colleagues, co-workers, and major constituencies served.

Standard 3: Organizational and professional values

Librarians and library staff shall develop and support organizational and professional values dedicated to culturally competent service.

Chart 1: SWOT

Strengths (don't be modest)	Weaknesses (be honest)
• How do your education, skills, talents, certifications, and connections set you apart from your peers? • What would your boss or coworkers say are your strengths? • What values or ethics do you have that your peers often lack? • What achievements are you most proud of?	• Where is your education, training, or skills lacking? • What would your boss or coworkers say are your weaknesses? • What are your negative work habits and personality traits? • What do you avoid because you lack confidence?
Opportunities	Threats
• What trends are affecting library and information science? • In what areas is library and Information Science growing? • How could new technology help you advance? • How could your connections help you?	• What obstacles do you currently face in your career? • Who is your competition? • Will new technology or certifications demands slow your progress? • How is your job or industry changing n ways that could affect your advancement?

Standard 4: Development of collections, programs, and services
Librarians and library staff shall develop collections and provide programs and services that are inclusive of the needs of all persons in the community the library serves.

Standard 5: Service delivery
Librarians and library staff shall be knowledgeable about and skillful in the use and provision of information services available in the community and broader society, and shall be able to make appropriate referrals for their diverse constituencies.

Standard 6: Language diversity
Librarians and library staff shall support the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity, and work to foster a climate of inclusion aimed at eliminating discrimination and oppression based on linguistic or other diversities.

Standard 7: Workforce diversity
Librarians and library staff shall support and advocate for recruitment, admissions, hiring, and retention efforts in libraries, library associations, and LIS programs to increase diversity and ensure continued diversity in the profession.

Standard 8: Organizational dynamics
Librarians and library staff shall participate in and facilitate the development of organizational dynamics that enable individuals, groups, and organizations to continually develop and exercise cultural competence.

Standard 9: Cross Cultural Leadership
Librarians and library staff shall influence, support, and encourage the creation of proactive processes that increase diversity skills; empower colleagues, co-workers, and constituents from diverse backgrounds; share

information about diverse populations; and advocate

Standard 10: Professional education and continuous learning

Librarians and library staff shall advocate for and participate in educational and training programs that help advance cultural competence within the profession.

Standard 11: Research

Research shall be inclusive and respectful on non-Western thought and traditional knowledge reflecting the value of cultural ways of knowing.

The standards listed below are being placed alongside the SWOT matrix to assist the user in incorporating the standards into the matrix. Suggested questions are being used as examples of how the integration may be accomplished and is open for the user to create other questions appropriate for each individual.

Chart 2: ACRL Diversity Standards mapped to SWOT Inquiries

Diversity Standards	*SWOT Matrix Inquiries*
Standard 1: Cultural awareness of self and others	*How self-aware are you of your personal assumptions, values and biases as they influence your decisions, actions, world view, etc.? How culturally aware are you of the culture of others?*
Standard 2: Cross Cultural knowledge and skills	*Cultural competence is not static, which requires frequent relearning and unlearning about diversity; where are you on the SWOT matric?*
Standard 3: Organizational and professional values	*Are there printed organizational guidelines for diversity available and clearly communicated to staff?*
Standard 4: Development of collections, programs, and services	*What evaluation would you make about collections, programs, and services based on SWOT?*
Standard 5: Service Delivery	*Are there service delivery models and standards being used that can be utilized for your personal growth and identified outcomes?*
Standard 6: Language diversity	*Are all needed languages being applied to collections, programs, services, etc.*
Standard 7: Workforce diversity	*Is there advocacy for and strategic planning for recruitment, admissions, hiring and retention efforts in the organization and what is your role?*

Standard 8: Organizational dynamics	*What is the interplay between the organization and your organization. May include committee work, etc.*
Standard 9: Cross-cultural leadership	*How are you using organizational leadership to help fulfill its' mission?*
Standard 10: Professional education and continuous learning	*Are you being proactive and supportive in professional education and continuous learning to help meet your outcomes?*
Standard 11: Research	*In examining current library literature, or research in which you are interested, being developed and used toward cultural competencies?*

Again, since the SWOT matrix is not static further additions can also be used as a supplement to SWOT.

Another Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, is credited with the adage, "Change is the only constant in life" and the acronym PESTs, created by Harvard business professor, Francis Aguilar, suggests that in relationship to SWOT, the PESTs matrix should be completed first. The matrix, established with 4 major categories for change - political, economic, social and technological -are constantly present, not only in businesses but especially in libraries and other information agencies. PESTs are very strong external entities that are difficult for many reasons. First, they are usually entities that cannot be controlled internally nor individually but must be responded to constantly, positively, and constructively. The matrix is very helpful in identifying external changes and further helps to guide one's thinking, through brainstorming in how best to proceed.

Examining PESTs; establishing outcomes and action plans; examining self-awareness and growth through the SWOT matrix within a context of Diversity standards together form a valuable and effective tool that can be used for career development and leadership for improving libraries and making them more dynamic and democratic spaces for all people and cultures in the 21st century.

REFERENCES CITED

Christensen, C. Roland. 1987. *Business Policy, Text and Cases.* New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education Press.

ACRL. 2012. *Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries.* Racial and Ethnic Diversity Committee of ACRL. http://www.ala.org/acrl/ standards/diversity