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## Using a SWOT Analysis in your Career Planning

A key tool in the strategic planning process can also be applied to career planning. This tool is a marketing analysis using the SWOT technique. A SWOT analysis focuses on the internal and external environments, examining strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment and opportunities and threats in the external environment. Imagine your SWOT analysis to be structured like the table below:

### SWOT Analysis

|                 |                                    |                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Internal</b> | Your Strengths                     | Your Weaknesses              |
| <b>External</b> | Opportunities in Your Career Field | Threats in Your Career Field |

To construct your own SWOT analysis to set a course for your career planning, examine your current situation. What are your strengths and weaknesses? How can you capitalize on your strengths and overcome your weaknesses? What are the external opportunities and threats in your chosen career field?

Explore your own self-perception of your **strengths**, but also put yourself inside a prospective employer's head as you consider your strong points. Avoid false modesty, but also be brutally honest and realistic with yourself. Start out by simply making a list of words that describe you; chances are many of these characteristics comprise your strengths.

One of your greatest strengths can be loving the work you do. Learning to "follow your bliss" should be a critical component of managing your career. Some people know from an early age what kind of work will make them happy. For others, nailing down the self-knowledge that leads to career fulfillment comes from a process of exploring interests, skills, personality, learning style, and values.

In assessing your **weaknesses**, think about what prospective employers might consider to be the areas you could improve upon. Facing your frailties now can give you a huge head start in career planning.

As humans, we find it relatively difficult to identify the areas where we are weak. But this assessment helps to identify areas where we may need to improve. If you identify a skill that you know is in your chosen field, but you are weak in that skill area, you need to take steps to improve that skill. Past performance appraisals and even your grades and teacher comments from school provide valuable feedback.