

SWOT analysis for strategic planning for statistical activities

Example

Example taken from the report on the second working session of the strategic planning for Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and the Pacific.

Background

The report presents the guidelines for a SWOT analysis and the results of the working session. It identifies key elements of the mission and the organisation of the SWOT analysis into four items : strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Day 2: 15 January 2004

Module 2: Strategic Planning for Statistical Activities

Report on Working Session 2

Guidelines for Module 2 - Working Session 2

Instructions

1. Form 4 groups according to the group list circulated yesterday
2. In each group, select a rapporteur
3. In each group, select a facilitator
4. Each group will discuss all of the issues below
5. The group rapporteur will report back to the plenary, using computer or overhead projector.

Time allocated: Two hours

Issues for discussion

1. What are the key elements of the "mission" of a NSO?
2. What values (or principles) should a NSO hold dear (list 6 or 7)?
3. What are the 5 greatest Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) confronting NSOs in the region?

Consolidated summary of discussion group reports on issues for discussion

Issue 1 – Mission

The key elements of the "mission" of a NSO, identified by the four discussion groups were:

- To collect, compile, analyse and disseminate the statistics and to provide the statistical services required by governments, the public and international organisations to plan for a better future for the country and its people. This requires statistics to be:

- relevant to the needs of users,
 - accurate, reliable, timely and compiled in accordance with international standards;
 - readily accessible; and
 - disseminated in such a way as to protect the privacy and confidentiality of providers.
- To coordinate statistical activities across the national statistical system

In undertaking this role, it was recognised by several groups that the NSO had to be open and transparent in its operations as well as being cost efficient. The importance of educating users in the use of statistics was also identified as an important aspect of an NSO's role and reflects a focus on the desired outcomes from the NSO's activities (eg. informed decision making) and not just on the outputs (statistical products and services).

Issue 2 – Values

The values identified under this item were consistent with the key elements identified as being important in an NSO's mission statement. These most consistently reported "Values" were:

- Quality
- Impartiality- objective and independent
- Privacy/confidentiality – trust of providers
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Capable and motivated staff
- Openness and transparency.

Another value identified by one of the discussion groups was innovation and a willingness to take up new challenges. Public confidence and a good reputation were also both commonly mentioned in the context of values.

Issue 3 – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

There was a significant overlap in the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by the four discussion groups – see summary table overleaf. It was noted by some groups that an NSO's strength could also be a weakness (eg. if it prevented the NSO from being flexible). It was also noted that some areas where NSOs had a comparative advantage or strength (eg, qualified and experienced staff) could also be a weakness (eg. if there are not enough of them). It was also recognised that some opportunities (eg. growing demands for statistics) could also be threats if those demands for statistics and expectations of NSOs could not be met or managed. Finally, it should be noted that not

all of the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats apply to all countries in the region.

Table: Consolidated Summary of SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good legal basis • Well established statistical system • Coordination within the statistical system • Qualified and experienced staff • Public confidence • Independence • Trust from providers • Self sufficiency in equipment • Brand credibility • Good long-term planning • Good management team • Good international support • Relevant to users	• Poor coordination • Insufficient professionals • Resource gaps (staff, infrastructure, IT) • Inadequate research, innovation and analysis of data • Inadequate compensation of staff • Low priority given to statistics • Insufficient finance and high cost • Delays in release • Insufficient cooperation from providers – delays in data capture • Insufficient HR development • Inadequate statistical literacy in the community
Opportunities	Threats
• Increased demand for statistics – planning and MDGs/HDR induced • Developments in IT • Good connections internationally through websites • More support and training for NSOs by international organisations • Increased regional cooperation and networking • Access to administrative data • Global trend toward improved corporate governance	• Low priority of and support for statistics and NSOs • Political intervention eroding independence • Turnover of professional staff • Insufficient staff • Coordination and cooperation within the national statistical system • Budget constraints • Lack of independence • Competition from convenient "quick-data" providers • Computer security • Security, health, safety and other concerns • Increasing demand but declining allocations • Increased pressure on the statistical system