

## Strategic Thinking for your Business

In today's world of rapid change, increased competition, and squeezed resources strategy helps you to focus on what really matters in your business. It is well worth taking a little time to examine your business and form or update your business strategy. A strategy is a long term course of action designed to achieve particular goals. Strategic thinking is about keeping the big picture in mind, considering the mission and priorities of your whole organisation on a long term basis, and questioning the status quo with "what if" scenarios.

Strategic Development can be split into 3 main stages:

Stage	Action	How
Strategic Visioning	Defining your purpose & Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider stakeholder needs</li> <li>• Agree high level aims &amp; goals</li> <li>• Develop an organisational mission &amp; values</li> </ul>
Strategic Analysis	Collecting & Interpreting Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research &amp; Analyse External influencing factors (political, environmental, social, technological, legal, ethical, environmental – PESTLEE analysis)</li> <li>• Research &amp; Analyse Internal influencing factors, your physical resources and intangible assets (knowledge, skills, experience, patents)</li> </ul>
Strategic Formulation	Making Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities &amp; Threats – SWOT analysis.</li> <li>• Outline possible future scenarios</li> <li>• Identify viable options</li> <li>• Make decisions on which option(s) to pursue</li> <li>• Identify your critical success factors</li> </ul>

Many tools have been developed to assist with the various stages of strategic analysis and strategic formulation. A SWOT analysis is possibly the most common and can be extremely useful to help you make critical decisions for your business development.

Creating your **SWOT analysis** involves thinking about internal processes and outputs as well as external influences, and can help you to plan for the future.

What are your organisations **Strengths**?

- What is the organisation good at?
- What enables the organisation to perform well?
- What can the organisation do that others can't?
- What unique knowledge, skills or resources does the organisation have?

- Why do good staff stay in the organisation?
- What do clients or customers value about the organisation and its products or services?
- Why do clients or customers buy the organisation's products or use their services?

What are your organisations **Weaknesses**?

- Where does the organisation need to improve?
- What prevents the organisation from improving?
- What can other organisations do that this organisation can't?
- What gaps in knowledge, skills or resources are there?
- Why do good staff leave the organisation?
- What do clients or customers dislike about the organisation and its products or services?
- Why don't potential clients or customers buy the organisation's products or use their services?

What **Opportunities** can your organisation take advantage of? What factors **Threaten** your organisation?

- What external factors could be beneficial for the organisation?
- Think about political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental developments as well as what your competitors are doing.
- Rank opportunities in terms of how likely they are to occur and how beneficial they could be.
- Rank threats in terms of how likely they are to occur and how much impact they could have.

Disclaimer:

The object of this article is to provide useful tips in relation to Irish Tax Regulations according it cannot be regarded as a definitive guide and no liability can be accepted in respect of decisions taken in reliance on the information herein contained.