



IDAHO TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT DBE NEWSLETTER

August 2026



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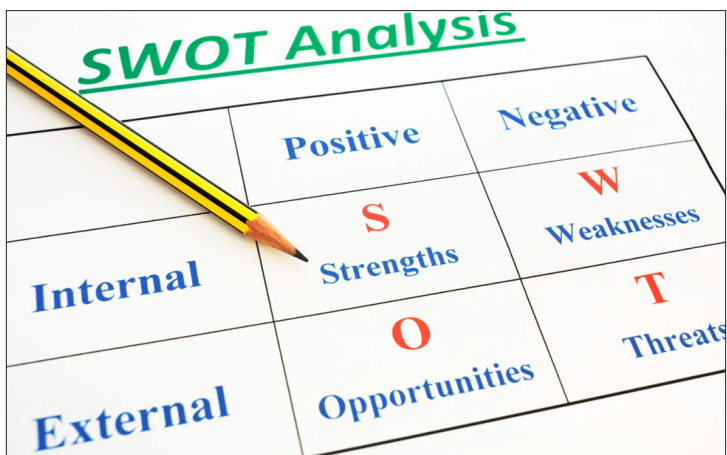
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Leveraging SWOT Analysis to Strengthen Your Business

■ *By Project Solutions Inc. Team*

In the dynamic environment of modern business, it can be difficult to maintain an accurate view of a company's position within its ever-changing environment. However, small business owners need a clear understanding of their companies' capabilities to grow. One effective tool to gain this understanding is the SWOT Analysis. A SWOT Analysis is a framework that evaluates a company's position and potential by asking four simple questions: what are this company's Strengths, what are its Weaknesses, what are its Opportunities, and what are its Threats?



By answering these questions, SWOT Analyses provide a clear picture of a company's current position to help stakeholders make decisions about the company's future. SWOT Analysis can make complex problems easier to, enabling business owners and project leaders to make smarter, more informed decisions. Although there are alternate formats for SWOT that may be more useful for your specific needs, this article will focus on the basic four-box analysis to provide a basic understanding of the methodology and value of SWOT Analysis as a practice.

Understanding The Four Categories

The four SWOT categories can be positioned both in terms of internal and external factors and positive and negative factors that describe a company. These can be long term situations or current trends, but they are all things that effect the company at the moment the analysis is being conducted.

Strengths, the internal positives, are things a company excels in. A manufacturing company might have some proprietary technology that allows production at a much lower cost than its competitors, or a staffing firm might have exceptionally high employee morale right now. These are both strengths that affect current business decisions.

Weaknesses, the internal negatives, are things about the company itself that hold it back from performing as well as its stakeholders wish and need to be improved. A clothing company might have seen a recent downturn in factory productivity, or a software development company might be struggling to create a positive office culture. These are weaknesses that stem from within the company itself.

Opportunities, the external positives, are factors outside of the company itself that are advantageous to it. A health food company would view a rise in health and diet consciousness among the general population as an opportunity, while a company that makes its money on exports would see an opportunity in cuts to tariffs. These things have a positive effect on the company's business but are largely outside its control.

Threats, the external negatives, are factors outside of the company's control that pose a risk to its operations. A declining local economy would be a threat to local restaurants, and a decrease in government spending is a threat to businesses that rely on government contracts. These add risk or reduce profitability in the company's operations, but are not directly caused by those operations.

When To Use SWOT

SWOT Analyses are useful any time a broad perspective is beneficial for decision making, such as when new opportunities are opening up, the business environment has changed in the middle of a project and priorities need to be reassessed, or management is looking for new opportunities for growth. SWOT can also be useful to provide more general awareness and guidance for the people making company decisions. Whatever the case, a SWOT Analysis should be conducted with a clear, specific objective.



Who Should Create A SWOT Analysis?

Although SWOT Analysis is largely a management tool, it is most beneficial when as many perspectives as possible are involved in the process. If a SWOT Analysis is being performed for a specific project, every stakeholder in the project should be included if possible. If the SWOT is being done at a company wide level, as many people as possible from the company should be included. Management and staff at lower levels of seniority will have different perspectives on the company's position and capabilities at any given moment, and each perspective is valuable when making decisions. Wherever possible, companies conducting SWOT Analyses should also try to get answers from outside voices, such as customers or suppliers, who will have their own valuable perspectives on the company's position. If a group has gotten too big to have a productive conversation together, multiple SWOT Analyses can be performed by smaller groups who then have representatives come together to discuss their groups' responses in one big Super-SWOT to form a collated analysis.

How to Conduct a Useful SWOT

SWOT Analyses take the form of lengthy meetings. When setting aside time for a SWOT Analysis, make sure to block several hours. This provides time for everyone to speak, have discussions, work through disagreements, and reach a consensus. Wherever possible, it is useful to educate attendees on the process of a SWOT ahead of time and inform them of the specific reason for this SWOT so that they can brainstorm and collect information before the meeting and come prepared. It can also be useful, especially in larger groups,

to designate a leader of the SWOT. This role is not intended to decide what the group thinks or tell anyone what they should think, but to ensure that everyone is able to speak and contribute, that the meeting is moving productively without devolving into unhelpful arguments, and that when consensus is reached it is recorded accurately. The leader can also be responsible for creating a safe and open atmosphere in the meeting, because SWOT only works when participants feel safe to be honest with their thoughts.

Once the meeting has begun, each quadrant should be talked through, with participants giving their thoughts on what they feel belongs in each SWOT category. These items can then be refined by group discussion to identify core ideas. Once all four quadrants have been filled out to the satisfaction of the attendees, discuss what this means for the company. What trends does it indicate? What strengths can be focused on for upcoming opportunities? How can the company work on improving its weaknesses? What opportunities should it focus on and how can it best capitalize on them? How can the risk of identified threats be mitigated? Remember that the purpose of the SWOT is to create a picture of the company. Even if the individuals involved are not the ultimate decision makers, what they think is valuable information.



How to Utilize a SWOT Analysis

Once the SWOT has been completed, it can be provided to the person or group who will be responsible for making the ultimate decision on whatever topic necessitated the SWOT. The recipient(s) can use the SWOT Analysis to gain a clear understanding of the company's position in relation to this decision, and thus to make policy decisions from a point of stronger knowledge than they may otherwise have had.

UPCOMING TRAINING & EVENTS

August 11

Bookkeeping & QuickBooks Basics

SBDC Webinar

Tues., Aug. 11, 2026 | 10:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

August 13

Business and Tax Basics

SBA Webinar

Thurs., Aug. 13, 2026 | 9:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

August 19

Cash Flow: Is it really Important?

NISBDC Webinar

Wed., Aug. 19, 2026 | 9:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

August 25

Marketing Strategies for Federal Contracting

SBA Webinar

Tues., Aug. 25, 2026 | 10:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

August 26

From Message to Money: Smart Marketing for Small Business

NISBDC Webinar

Wed., Aug. 26, 2026 | 9:30 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

Monthly Contractor Meetings

September 3

September ITD Monthly Contractor Meeting

Virtual

Thurs., Sept. 3, 2026 | 8:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

October 1

October ITD Monthly Contractor Meeting

Virtual

Thurs., Oct. 1, 2026 | 8:00 A.M. MT | Cost: No Cost

[Learn More>](#)

DID YOU KNOW

Free Personal Narrative Support for DBE Recertification

Project Solutions, Inc. (PSI), the Supportive Services provider for ITD, offers complimentary one-on-one assistance to help you develop your personal narrative for the DBE recertification process.

Whether you're starting from scratch or polishing an existing draft, PSI consultants are available to provide guidance and support throughout the process.

Schedule Your One-on-One Session

To connect with a PSI consultant, simply email: dbe@projectsolutionsinc.com

Access the Recorded Workshop and Resources

Take advantage of a comprehensive training developed by Project Solutions, Inc. (PSI) in partnership with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), designed specifically to guide DBE firms through the personal narrative process with clarity and confidence.

This on-demand workshop and supporting materials provide step-by-step insights, practical tips, and helpful tools to strengthen your narrative. Available resources include:

- Full workshop recording
- Presentation slides
- Personal narrative workbook

Access all materials here: [DBE/ACDBE IFR Reevaluation | Idaho Transportation Department](#)

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) has completed the reevaluation period for previously certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Airport Concession Disadvantage Business Enterprises (ACDBE) firms based in Idaho.

What does this mean for firms wanting to be in the DBE or ACDBE program?

- Firms that are certified as interstate (certified in a state that is not Idaho) can apply as a new interstate in the [Certification and Compliance System](#) as of **July 13, 2026**.
- Firms must include a letter showing they have been reevaluated by their home Jurisdiction of Certification (JOC) after October 3, 2025.
- Firms must also include all NAICS codes they are certified in.
- Firms that are wishing to be certified as a DBE or ACDBE in Idaho, and the individual and business resides in Idaho, can begin to submit their applications starting on **August 3, 2026**.
- Firms must include a personal narrative on how they have been socially and economically disadvantaged as noted in [49 CFR 26.67](#)
 - Workshop recording of how to write this is available on our website along with instructions at: <https://itd.idaho.gov/civil-rights/dbe-program/>
- USDOT is in the process of updating the application document to meet the updated requirements. If the form has not been updated by the time you apply, you can disregard the part about race and gender on the form since it will not be factored into the decision.
- Previously certified DBE/ACDBE firms that are based in Idaho who have not submitted reevaluation documentations can still submit the 2025 Reevaluation application now.
- Application is called “2025 Reevaluation” and needs to be submitted in the [Certification and Compliance System](#).
- Firms must include a personal narrative on how they have been socially and economically disadvantaged as noted in [49 CFR 26.67](#)
 - Workshop recording of how to write this is available on our website along with instructions at: <https://itd.idaho.gov/civil-rights/dbe-program/>
- These firms will not show in the DBE directory until they complete the reevaluation and have been approved.
- Firms that do not submit the 2025 Reevaluation can be decertified from the program completely.

What does this mean for project specific goals?

- Projects that were awarded with a DBE goal prior to the program update on October 3, 2025, will continue with commitments to the firms they used to get the contract.
- Removal of firms utilized to get the project must be approved by the Office of Civil Rights by completing the ITD-5555 DBE Commitment Change Form.
 - The reason for removal must meet the requirements outlined in [49 CFR 26.53\(f\)](#)
- Project specific goals will be returning soon after an updated DBE Methodology has been completed.
 - The DBE Methodology will establish the overall goal for ITD to achieve. The goal will meet through contract goals and through neutral means, i.e., on their own without an established goal.
 - The DBE Methodology will be completed with an Availability Study which will start shortly and more information on this will be forthcoming.
- Firms that have been approved for the program can have their participation counted on ongoing and future projects.
- All certified firms can be found in the ITD DBE Directory at <https://itd.dbesystem.com/> which is updated in real time.

Have more questions?

- Reach out to us at civilrights@itd.idaho.gov for more information.
- Want to know more about the change in the DBE/ACDBE program? Review the Interim Final Rule at <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/civil-rights/disadvantaged-business-enterprise/october-2025-interim-final-rule>.

RESOURCES

Project Look-Ahead

The following links to the project look-aheads can be found on the [ITD Contractor Bidding](#) page.

- [90-day Contracts Bidding Look-Ahead](#)
- [18-month Contracts Bidding Look-Ahead](#)
- [LHTAC Leading Local Bridge Contractor Bidding Look-Ahead](#)

Building a High-Performing Team

■ *By Project Solutions Inc. Team*

In the fast-paced world of modern business, success often hinges not just on a great product or service, but on the strength of the team behind it. Building a high-performing team isn't a luxury; it's a strategic necessity for sustainable growth and long-term success. In this article, we will explore practical, actionable strategies to attract, develop, and retain a high-performing team that's not only skilled and productive, but also aligned with your mission and values.



Identify Your Values

To develop a high-performing team for your company, you need to have a clear vision of your company's needs and its future. Before you begin building your team - or training your existing team if you already have one - you need to define clear goals for what that team will become. Determine what you want your company to look like, what its goals are, and what kind of people need to be a part of it to make that happen. This will give you a strong starting point from which to develop your team. Remember to make these ideas clear and easy to communicate, because you will need the people around you to buy into them to make them work. This is also the time to think about which soft skills you will want your employees to have so that you can look for them when you begin making new hiring decisions.

Hire for Potential

A high-performing team is built around high-performing people, so smart hiring decisions are the vital foundation of what your team will become. While work experience is an important aspect of a good candidate, when looking at new hires, it is rarely the most important aspect. The candidate with the most direct experience may reduce your team's performance if they don't mesh with your company culture or don't agree with the mentality behind your business. To build a high-performing team, you want to have employees that think in line with your goals, are adaptable and eager to learn, and feature important soft skills for your company in addition to having the qualifications necessary to succeed in the position for which you are hiring them. Remember that you're not hiring them purely to fulfill one specific role, but to contribute to your company's overall growth, and strategize your hiring decisions around that idea.

To find the right candidate, you will need to devote more significant resources to developing job postings, conducting interviews, and testing candidates than you might be used to, so prepare for that additional investment and remember that it is better to spend more time finding the right person now than to hire and then replace several people who don't fit into your company. A couple great ways to learn about the compatibility of candidates with your vision is to include open ended questions that allow them to show broader problem-solving or interpersonal skills, or to present examples of real situations your employees have had to navigate to see if your candidate's instincts align with your ideals.

Invest in Your Employees

Once you have a team full of people who are eager to learn and aligned with your values, foster that potential by investing in their growth. Encouraging your staff to expand their skill set will improve their performance and your profitability, so do your best to create a culture that supports personal improvement. Some great ways to do this are to offer support for continued education and training through flexible scheduling or financial assistance, providing on-the-job training, or simply being supportive of employees who seek to learn new skills outside of work. Another great way to foster growth is by encouraging employees to help each other learn through cross-training within your company, which allows employees to become more well-rounded and adaptable to the company's needs while improving their connections with their colleagues.



Prioritize Communication

A strong team is not a fire-and-forget item on your business checklist. It requires constant attention and guidance to reach its potential, and the cornerstone of that guidance is a commitment to clear and consistent communication. One of the most important aspects of that communication is in providing frequent feedback on employee performance. Your employees should have clear, measurable goals to strive towards just like your company so that they have a clear direction in which to focus their efforts. Progress towards attaining those goals should be measured at regular intervals that come with useful feedback. By providing both goals and feedback, you can encourage employees' growth in the direction that your company needs. However, remember that this feedback should be positive and supportive, not derisive. Praise areas where employees have done well and provide constructive criticism to help them improve in areas where they aren't meeting expectations. Positive feedback can – and should – extend beyond formal reviews, however, and research shows that companies that offer regular recognition for hard work tend to see better employee performance in return. Celebrate wins, compliment progress, and reward the people who help your business succeed.

Communication shouldn't only be a top-down affair. It's important for employees to feel free to speak to each other as well. Whether this is through cross-team training, providing feedback and advice about work, or discussing things unrelated to their jobs, making employees feel like they have the space to speak to each other will improve their performance and their commitment to their colleagues and the company.

Maintain a Sustainable Pace

One of the biggest threats to a high-performing team is employee turnover. It can be tempting, when you hire people for their strong work ethic, to feel like pushing them to work as hard as possible will get you the most out of that investment. In the long term, however, that kind of pressure tends to reduce productivity rather than an increase it. Most people simply can't work all the time, and even those who can will perform better if they don't. Putting pressure on your staff to overwork themselves will lead to increased stress and burnout, lower quality work, and reduced productivity overall. It will also increase the rate at which employees leave the company. Remember, these people are investments and losing that investment hurts your business. When you need to replace someone, that means going through the hiring process again, recruiting and training a new hire, putting extra strain on your remaining employees to pick up the slack until that new staff member is integrated into the team.

The extra hassle will cost you more time than you gained through overworking the employee that left. To prevent this, you should prioritize developing a pace of work that supports the employees who support you, giving them enough time to do their work well without sacrificing their mental and physical health in the process. Allow them the space to give you feedback if the pace you're setting isn't sustainable for them, and remember that working together to create a work environment that is as healthy as possible for everyone will not only help them live healthier lives, it will increase their productivity and your profitability.



Developing a high-performing team to support your business goals can be a daunting, counterintuitive task, where you don't always hire the candidate with the most expertise, or you give people time off to increase their productivity, but what's important is to remember that by viewing your staff as investments to be nurtured rather than products to be consumed, you're creating patterns that will lead to increased growth for your business over time and stronger employees around which to build that growth.



IDAHO TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT (ITD) AVAILABILITY STUDY

Business Phone Surveys

CALLING ALL BUSINESS OWNERS & INTERESTED PARTIES

ITD commissioned BBC Research & Consulting (BBC) to conduct an **availability study** to assess whether barriers exist for socially and economically disadvantaged businesses that make it more difficult for them to compete for ITD contracts.

As part of the availability study, the project team will conduct phone surveys to gather key business information and insights into marketplace conditions. These surveys, conducted by Davis Research, will begin in August 2026.

If contacted, please participate to support an accurate availability study!

WHO WILL BE CONTACTED?

- Businesses that have worked with ITD in the past
- Businesses located in Idaho and Asotin and Spokane counties in Washington that provide services related to the types of construction, professional services, and non-professional goods and other services that transportation agencies procure
- Not all businesses will be contacted

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE USED?

YOUR INSIGHTS ARE ESSENTIAL!

Information from the surveys will be used to understand conditions in the local marketplace and estimate the **availability** of small businesses and socially and economically disadvantaged businesses for ITD contracts.

Your information will not be shared with any third parties.

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?



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