



Modified SWOT Analysis

An exercise to expedite updating your plan.

In this guide, we will cover:

- ◆ **A Refresher on SWOT Analysis**
- ◆ **What is a Modified SWOT**
- ◆ **When to Use a Modified SWOT**
- ◆ **Steps to Complete a Modified SWOT**

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Introduction

We get it. Doing a SWOT analysis over and over every year can be a drain on your planning team.

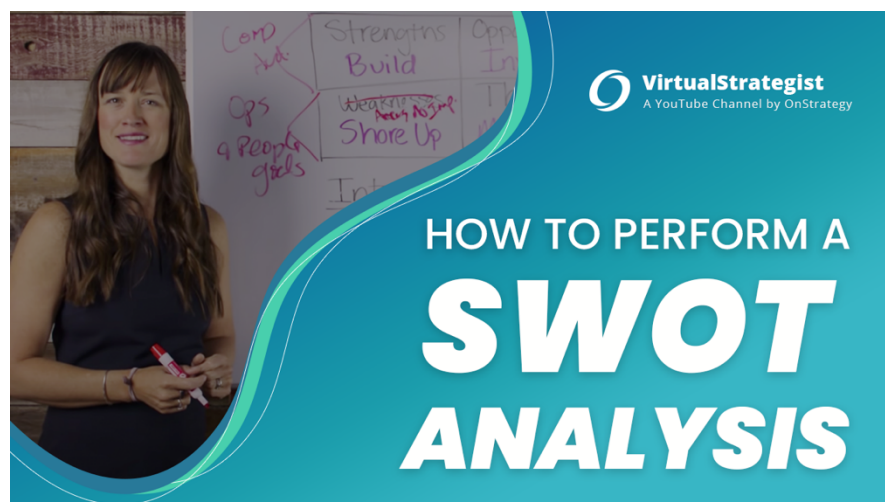
But, as you review your strategic plan and provide a refresh, it's important to assess your current state, what's working, what isn't, and where there are opportunities to improve.

So, we've created the Modified SWOT Analysis as an exercise to review and refresh your plan without completely redoing your SWOT every year.

Refresher: What is a SWOT Analysis?

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This tool creates a synthesized view of your current state, objectively reviewing what your organization is and isn't doing well and where opportunities and threats lie in your competitive environment.

You can see our [in-depth overview of SWOT here](#), and [how to do a SWOT in 5 steps here](#).



[Watch the Video](#)

What is a Modified SWOT Analysis?

A modified SWOT isn't a SWOT at all if we're being completely honest.

Revisiting your traditional SWOT grid over and over can become a drag year after year. To freshen this activity up and make it more valuable and applicable, we've created a way to shortcut reviewing your current state and helping drive the refresh of your strategic plan.

The first key difference is that a modified SWOT analysis looks at individual strategic objectives in your current plan instead of your organization's entire current state.

Instead, you'll be deep-diving into specific sections of your current plan rather than examining all of the internal and external forces impacting your organization. Here's how it looks in practice:

Modified SWOT Analysis

ORGANIZATION OBJECTIVE

(Example) Customer Retention: Achieve an 80% customer retention rate this year.

What is working well?

What is in our way?

What are the biggest opps. for improvement?

As you can see from the grid, a modified SWOT analysis only uses three quadrants instead of four. The purpose is to have your planning team review your organization's objectives against the three following questions:

- ◆ **Quadrant 1:** What is working well?
- ◆ **Quadrant 2:** What is in our way?
- ◆ **Quadrant 3:** What are our biggest opportunities for improvement?

This is a loose application of a SWOT analysis because you're mostly looking at the current state performance of your plan.

A traditional SWOT also examines **the external forces impacting your organization**—things like market changes, the economy, threats from competitors, political forces, etc. This modified SWOT doesn't necessarily address each of these external factors specifically.



Watch the Video

When should you use a Modified SWOT?

A modified SWOT is best for organizations that have an existing strategic plan. Even further, it's best used if you're going to update and refresh your plan for the new year (or quarter if you choose).

It's an interesting way to examine your current state because it allows your organization to examine what is working well, and what is not, and assess opportunities for growth within your previously defined plan.

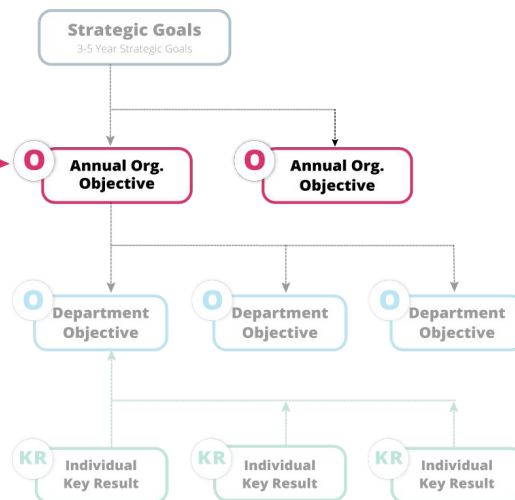
This is especially helpful if your current strategic plan just needs a refresh rather than a complete overhaul.

Where to Work in Your Plan Structure

We understand that many organizations have different plan structures to fit their needs, and that's totally ok!

For this exercise, you'll want to focus on reviewing your annual organization-wide objectives. You might have a different name for them, but here's where they sit in a standard plan structure:

Use Annual Organization-wide Objectives in your Modified SWOT



Pros and Cons of a Modified SWOT

- ✔ **Speed:** Completing a modified SWOT can create objectives much faster than a standard approach.
- ✔ **Lower Effort:** Compared to a standard SWOT, it can take less effort to complete.
- ✔ **It's Dynamic:** For teams that get sick of completing the same SWOT exercise every year, this is a refreshing way to review your current state.
- ✘ **Not Holistic:** This approach doesn't directly address external forces impacting your organization.
- ✘ **Relies on a Current Plan:** You need a current plan to use a modified SWOT.
- ✘ **Easy to Skip Data:** Because it relies heavily on insights from your team, it can be tempting to skip gathering data for this exercise.

Pros and Cons of a Standard SWOT

- ✔ **Complete View:** A standard SWOT creates a complete view of your organization's current state.
- ✔ **Holistic:** A standard SWOT creates a complete view of all internal and external forces impacting your organization.
- ✔ **Data-Based:** A standard SWOT is based on good internal and external data sources.
- ✘ **Heavy:** Completing a SWOT every year can become overbearing and heavy.
- ✘ **Challenging to Synthesize:** Standard SWOTs can become quite large and be challenging to synthesize to use as the foundation of your plan.
- ✘ **Constantly Changing:** External market forces are constantly changing and can date a SWOT quickly.

How to Complete a Modified SWOT

Step 1: Identify the Objectives to Examine

From your current strategic plan, identify the annual organization-wide objectives that need to be reviewed and refreshed.

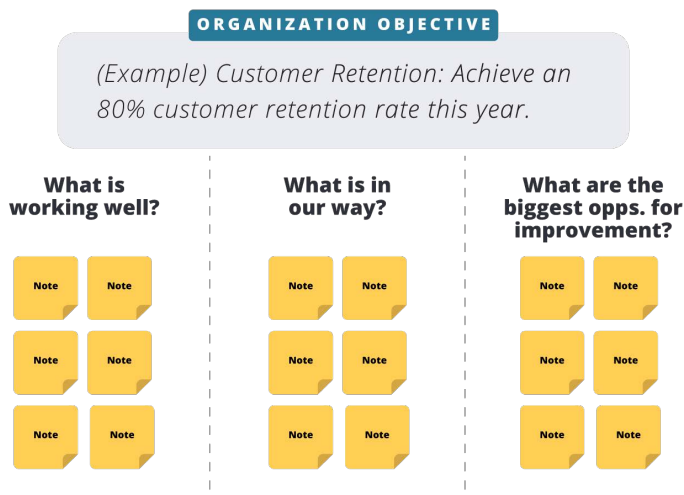
We recommend doing this prior to your planning session, having each grid pre-built, and sending the list of objectives you're reviewing to your planning team prior to the planning session.



Pro Tip: Sending the list of objectives with the 3 questions to answer can accelerate this exercise because your team will have had time to pre-think and gather internal data before the session.

Step 2: Complete the Grid of Each Objective

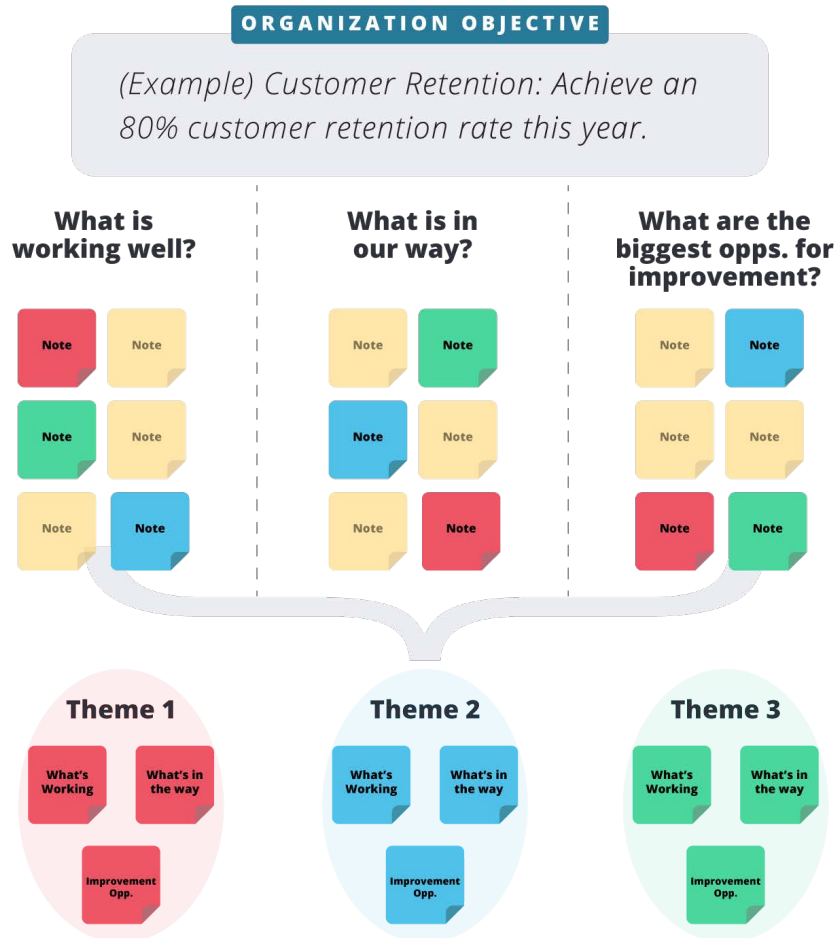
Using a whiteboard with sticky notes, or a virtual whiteboard tool like [Mural](#), have your team provide quick one-answer statements to the three questions underneath each objective from your current plan. **Here's what that looks like in practice:**



Step 3: Theme Your Whiteboard

Using the sticky notes in each quadrant, group common responses or similar notes into themed buckets. These themes can represent multiple ideas across each of the four quadrants.

For example, you could have themes that include notes from each quadrant. **Here's what that looks like in practice:**



Step 4: Set Objectives & Create Key Results

With your whiteboard themed, you can move onto creating your new annual objectives.

Themes Become Objectives

The first step is to take each theme and turn it into an annual strategic objective. Need help writing objectives? [Check out this post and guide.](#)

Sticky Notes Become Key Results/Initiatives

After you've turned a theme area into an objective, you can use each of the supporting sticky notes as the basis for your key results or initiatives for each (or whatever label or language your organization prefers).

Here's what that looks like in practice:

Example Objective and Key Result from Modified SWOT Theme



Shipping: Increase shipping efficiency to positively impact customer experience and increase customer retention.

- **Packaging Standards:** Maintain packaging standards and processes to continue to deliver 99.7% of products undamaged.
- **Shipping System:** Identify new solution and replace our current shipping and receiving system by the end of Q2 of this year.
- **Shipping Error:** Improve our shipping error rate by 5% by the end of this year through increased quality control measures.

Step 5: Rinse, Repeat, Refresh

Repeat this exercise until you've reviewed your plan and created new sets of objectives and key results to focus on for the coming year!



Need help completing your modified SWOT? We'd love to help you review and refresh your plan!

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