



HOW TO AVOID SWOT ANALYSIS PARALYSIS IN YOUR LAB

By Sandra Shelton

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Logically, one would think that once SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is learned, people and teams would rise to new heights of productivity and team synergy. However, since that is the rare case and not the norm, perhaps changing the focus and methodology of SWOT is in order. “Analysis paralysis” occurs when a team becomes so lost in the process of examining and evaluating the elements of SWOT that they are unable to make a decision or change a process using the new information.

The key difficulty in approaching SWOT is perception. Perception is that pesky thing that often perpetrates conflict, escalation of conflict, or a “position” that others have to be wrong because you are right. You may be thinking that this upcoming webinar may not be a comfortable, low impact, and little involvement experience. Good. That is, good if your perception is positive about the lifelong need for continuous personal growth that in turn strengthens the workplace.

Perception is pesky because each of us sees ourselves as correct until

someone else offers a different perspective. The cognitive dissonance comes when we decide to consider that new view. Example: You may perceive that your greatest strength is accuracy down to the smallest detail. However, a colleague doing a 360° assessment of you determines that “strength” to be a weakness called *perfectionism*. Your first response might be negative or might be to ignore it. Now for the pesky part. You and others see things not necessarily as they are but more accurately from one perspective. Or, as author Anaïs Nin says, “We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.” Yet when it comes to your personal brand—your professional reputation—it’s not about how you view yourself. What matters is how the world sees you. “If three people tell you you’re a horse, buy a saddle,” says angel investor Judy Robinett. In other words, listen to what the outside world is telling you, because they’re probably right (<http://bit.ly/GABNdR>).

That quote above may sting a bit and is exactly what can defeat SWOT! Rather than approach the SWOT as an opportunity to grow, many approach it as a time to be sure the team understands that you are a contributor to the team and,

more importantly, that the team needs you. Going a bit deeper, there is sometimes a secret hope that the team member who “gets under everyone’s skin” (in your opinion) is shown to be nonessential. Warren Buffett puts it, “What the human being is best at doing, is interpreting all new information so that their prior conclusions remain intact.”

To get to a great SWOT that engenders positive change, nudging, or recognition of heretofore unseen potential, one has to begin with the complete understanding of a team’s relationship to each other. To get there, the team has to become excruciatingly clear about its current status quo individual by individual. That is where the SWOT learning can start to become a part of a lab’s continuing pursuit of excellence.

Sandra Shelton, Med., CTACC is a professional speaker, executive coach and a non-profit executive director. What never changes for Sandra is the need to encourage a clearer understanding of leadership development as it relates to every person’s communication focus, that is, higher levels of service and communication so that each of us perpetuates a portfolio of good working relationships. Contact Sandra at Sandra.shelton@strengthbank.com or 817-230-4523

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Be sure to attend Sandra Shelton’s Lab Manager Academy webinar, “How to Avoid SWOT Analysis Paralysis,” on Wednesday, January 8 (or afterward at www.labmanager.com/swotanalysis to watch the archived video).