

— FMC —  
**TRUE CHAMPIONS**  
**BUSINESS  
BUILDING  
SOLUTIONS**

### In This Edition ...

- The importance of differentiating your business
- What is a SWOT analysis and how can it help you in the marketplace?
- A SWOT worksheet template
- Developing your S,W,O,T
- Tips for applying insights gained in a SWOT exercise

## What's Your Differentiator?

Finding out how you are different and better amidst a sea of competition is the most significant thing a new prospect wants to learn as you pitch your company's services to them. How you answer this question is typically the difference between whether you close the sale...or not. Can you concisely answer this question? If not, how do you go about determining what makes your company different?



### Avoid Selling on Platitudes

A platitude is a statement that is considered meaningless and boring because it has been made many times before in similar situations. How many times have you heard companies use terms like “best service,” “highest quality,” “all work guaranteed” or “green lawn” as reasons for someone to buy from them? If you are also using these terms, it will be more difficult to stand out from your competition when highlighting similar features and benefits.

### Start with a SWOT

A SWOT analysis is a basic marketing concept. SWOT is an acronym for **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities** and **Threats**. While this exercise goes beyond helping uncover a unique differentiator, it provides a starting point to help view your business from your customer's perspective.

As you develop points under S, W, O and T, it is important that these are added as quick bullet points – not long, drawn-out sentences. When you are finished, you should have roughly four to five key points under each. If you have more than that, it will be important for you to pare those down so that your SWOT maintains focus. Review this link: [SWOT analysis worksheet template](#). You will see questions in the margins to ensure you are on the right track.

First, develop your strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand that these attributes are internal, meaning they are specific to your business. Most importantly, these points should be developed from your customer's perspective, not from you or members of your staff. If these are not written from your customer's perspective, you will start off on the wrong track. So, take a hard look from the outside in.

### **Strengths**

Your strengths exist because they are simply resources your company possesses or proactively seeks out. The fact that you are reading this article as an active FMC True Champions member is a strength. You are committed to better educating yourself in an effort to grow your business. Do you attend local, regional or national trade shows to learn about the latest trends or new products in the industry? How about utilize a premium software package to track your routing, operations and customers? Do you donate time or materials to give back to your community? Are you looking to purchase better quality fertilizer and control products based upon university and field trials to provide standout results? If many of your competitors do not see the value in these approaches while you do, then these would be your points of differentiation.

### **Weaknesses**

It's hard to be critical of yourself. Take a deep breath and take a hard look at your business. Where do you get the most complaints? What could you do better? Furthermore, what's the one thing your competition does better than you resulting in them taking or keeping business from you? Are you purchasing inferior products that compromise your results? These are your weaknesses. Note your most glaring weaknesses as they will need to be revisited.

### **Opportunities and Threats**

As the purpose of this article is to help determine a differentiator, it's important to briefly mention the role of opportunities and threats. Although they will require more analysis on your part, note that your opportunities and

threats are external, meaning they are typically from outside your company. An example of an opportunity could be that your biggest competitor just sold their business. This is a specific opportunity for your business. However, it is also an opportunity for others in your market. Threats work the same way. A bad economy or new fertilizer regulations could impact your business. These threats also impact your competitor's business.

### **Now What?**

Look at your strengths. Can you take the top one or two and work them into your marketing message as part of every sales call? For example, when you use Dismiss® NXT to control nutsedge are you selling your customer the added benefit of long term nutsedge control? Keep in mind, with Dismiss NXT, you will get quick knockdown, but also soil activated tuber control for less nutsedge in the future. This helps you develop a long-term relationship with your customer and differentiates your company as a provider of quality products with exceptional results. Similarly, do you offer a mosquito control service? Use the Talstar® Mosquito Promise™ Program, an FMC True Champions Solution Assurance, as an additional way to leverage your expertise with the peace of mind of 45-day control for mosquitos. If you were doing a full SWOT analysis, you would review your weaknesses and determine a plan to make them stronger, develop a contingency plan against your threats and look to capitalize on your opportunities. As a result of conducting the SWOT exercise, you may have uncovered a differentiator that truly helps you stand apart from the competition. Once developed, it is important to make it a consistent part of your marketing and sales message. Share it with your sales team, administrative staff and technicians. Your differentiator should live - not only in words, but with your actions too. When it's demonstrated throughout all aspects of your business, your customers will take notice. That's peace of mind for when your competition comes knocking.