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 INFO 5200 Denton
 SWOT

A SWOT analysis is an evaluation that analyses the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of a process or business. It can be used to evaluate the organization as a whole as compared to its competitors, or a process or project within the organization. It is a simple approach that can be applied in myriad ways.

Scenario 4

BQ Environmental Agency (BQEA) holds a specific library collection of Nevada environmental materials for internal agency users and researchers. The Agency is not open to the public. All materials are located in one location despite having three offices within the state. Materials are exchanged via interoffice mail and USPS. A recent survey of users provided detailed information on collection needs and changes that should be implemented. Downsizing of the library collection and staff has impacted the service levels. The library is not used as frequently as hoped because it is both difficult to locate at the central location, has limited hours, and is deeply hidden within the BQEA internal website. There has been a lack of outreach and even maintenance of the collection. Despite these issues, the librarian (of 6 months) is determined to turn the library and its collection around with the idea to increase engagement and improve service levels. Budget constraints have continued to be a challenge. Technology needs improvement including the library system that is archaic.

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <p><i>An energetic, new librarian</i></p> <p><i>Recent survey of users</i></p> <p><i>A specialized library of materials all in one space</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <p><i>Location of collection is not easy for all agencies to access</i></p> <p><i>Need to distribute materials via interoffice mail and USPS slows down the sharing of resources</i></p> <p><i>Hard to find on the agency website</i></p> <p><i>Archaic technology</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <p><i>Survey points library to what users want and need, and they have a librarian who wants to improve the collection</i></p> <p><i>Open the library to outside users for a fee</i></p> <p><i>Digitize the collection to make distribution easier</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <p><i>Lack of maintenance and outreach</i></p> <p><i>Budget cuts</i></p> <p><i>Decreased services</i></p>

Strengths

An energetic, new librarian

This is probably the most important asset this library can have – someone coming in with fresh eyes to evaluate the collection, how processes are being done, and how to improve on the collection's weaknesses and embrace new opportunities. The fact that this person wants to increase engagement and improve service means that this SWOT would help him figure out how best to do that.

Recent survey of users

Even better, the new librarian has data on what users want and hope to see from the collection and library services. He should have a great collection of suggestions from this survey to help him determine what to focus on when considering opportunities for improvement. It's possible that the poor visibility on the website (**weakness**) is on that list of feedback from the survey; showing the web management team that users are asking for better site navigation gives him the support to argue for site improvement.

A specialized library of materials all in one space

The BQEA has its specialized collection all in one location. This makes it easier to locate materials as compared to collections that are distributed between multiple locations.

Weaknesses

Location of collection is not easy for all agencies to access

Need to distribute materials via interoffice mail and USPS slows down the sharing of resources

The downside of the BQEA only having one location is that the agency has three offices across the state. With Nevada being as large as it is, and the collection having to deliver physical resources to users via interoffice mail and the USPS, it takes a long time to get resources. In conjunction with the lack of outreach (listed in **threats** below), this might cause users to stop using the library and look elsewhere for resources – if users are tired of waiting for resources, and they don't know what services are being offered or who can help to find them, they may not come back to this library for resources.

Hard to find on the agency website

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality is a similar agency with a difficult to navigate website. Perhaps like the BQEA, if a user goes to the TCEQ agency website directly, it is difficult to find the library through navigating the site – one has to go through Reporting and Data to get to a link for the library. This would have to be addressed with the webmaster for the agency, who would manage this type of project. If the librarian improves outreach to frequent users, the site would get more traffic, which could help to convince the web management team to make the library more visible on the website.

Archaic technology

This is definitely a frustration, but the only reason this should be considered a threat is if it adds time to an already lengthy process for getting users resources. Spending time and money on updating and learning a new system would take time away from implementing improved services for users. It would also be a challenge for a new librarian to ask for the money to do this after budget cuts and downsizing; smaller requests are more likely to be fulfilled.

Opportunities

Survey points library to what users want and need, and they have a librarian who wants to improve the collection

The good news is that the new librarian has some great information to refer to when considering how to improve the library's services. Having that data should help to focus his attention on what would best help his users, and it gives him data to point to when asking for money for these improvements.

Open the library to outside users for a fee

Surveying the TCEQ website confirmed that monetizing the resources for outside users might be an opportunity. Since the agency is currently not open to the public, having reports and resources available for outside users – at a cost – would be one way to raise money to pay for some of the improvements suggested in the survey.

Digitize the collection to make distribution easier

The challenge with this opportunity is that the librarian would need some technology in order to implement this opportunity, and it sounds like the current technological situation is minimal at best. He would need to evaluate what resources are most frequently requested and how much it costs to send them via interoffice mail in order to compare those costs to an investment in the technology to create and organize digital versions of the resources. But it could reduce the length of time it takes to share resources, and pending whether it's possible to post on an internal part of the agency website, the resources could be posted for users to access directly, saving the librarian time to work on other projects – if the website is updated to make these accessible, and if the library has the time and money to invest in the technology.

Threats

Lack of maintenance and outreach

Budget cuts

Decreased services

It's not surprising that the collection has not been maintained well after budget cuts and downsizing – these threats are all inter-related. The danger is that users give up on the collection if they have not heard from the librarian (lack of outreach/**threat**) and cannot find what they need to request on their own (location on website/**weakness**). The librarian needs to correct this action and implement a marketing or communications plan to make sure users know what services continue to be offered, as well as what he is planning to carry out over the next 6-12 months. Budget cuts also make it more difficult for the librarian to ask for investments to correct **weaknesses** like the website (a minor investment) or a new system to manage the collection (a major investment).