Valerie Darling
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SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis for CCRI Public Library Dog Training Collection

The CCRI Public Library is located in a very populous area of Chicago where 80% of households own a dog. The library district is has a stable board of directors that is very diverse. The library is currently funded through voting and has been impacted in the past due to property values and changes in the economy. The library is one of four within the county, and the largest in physical and collection size. The community has become more aware of the library because of the exceeding amounts of outreach and the completion of our new building. Our current ILS needs some updating, but has not been a priority as of recent because of the construction with the new building. A goal for the upcoming year is to update the system so that it is more user friendly. The dog training materials have not all been added to the collection, and fields are often empty causing both staff and users to feel frustrated when trying to locate a book. Morale was low with the past economic crisis and layoffs that occurred, but since the completion of the new facility, staff are now more excited than ever. The library needs to stay on top of technological trends. Hardware and software expenses have been costly, however are critical to the operation of the organization. We don't have a stage for holding programs which has been problematic. Our policies and procedures need to be updated.

What is a SWOT Analysis?

A strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis is an exercise that can be used by organizations, businesses, and even with specific programs in mind to highlight successes, discover major areas of improvement, anticipate opportunities, and prepare for possible disruptions so that a solid strategy may be created to help grow a business or make a program successful.

The Purpose of a SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is usually performed using a two-by-two table with the headings (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) written in each cell. Employees, stakeholders, and sometimes users confer to discuss each of the four areas concerning the organization, business, or program. Strengths and weaknesses focus internally while opportunities and threats focus both internally and externally. Because strengths and weaknesses are internal, the issues in these two cells are the ones the organization has the best ability to change. Opportunities and threats include external sources and therefore even when an issue is addressed, it may not be within the organization's ability to change them. Whether the issues can be directly affected by the organization or not, after a SWOT analysis, the organization should have a clear understanding of the overall business landscape that can help in pushing the organization forward towards success.

Explanation of SWOT Analysis

The CCRI Public Library has quite a few strengths in their favor. First, their Dog Training Collection (DTC) is relevant to a majority of the population they serve. Piggybacking on the marketing and outreach they have already been doing to announce the new building, the staff can market their DTC to a demographic that is more inclined to be interested. Marketing efforts have already caused awareness, it must continue but should pivot to discuss the services the library provides and how they can enhance the community. The diverse board of directors can play a role in the success of CCRI by ensuring that there are programs/services reflective of the Chicago community. They also serve as advocates for the library and should be telling friends, family, and co-workers about the work being done by CCRI. With the building

upgrade, CCRI also received updated technology. This is a strength in that the technology can be used to provide efficiency to services that can be automated within the library. Installing all-new technology at once is a strength because staff will need to be trained together in its use. This ensures that cross-training is observed and that everyone is on a level playing field. High staff morale can be leveraged to invigorate programming and services. Ideas from staff should be encouraged and can more easily be implemented when many changes occur at once.

The major weakness of the CCRI Library is its ILS. Without a functioning, efficient system patrons will not continue to visit. If CCRI does not revamp the system, all the marketing about the DTC will be moot. When marketing a product, the product must be ready. This is not the case. This weakness directly relates to their first opportunity - CCRI needs to ensure that all DTC materials are included in the collection, that all relevant fields are completed, and that it is easy for users to use. The second weakness, outdated policies and procedures correlate directly with their second opportunity – update policies and procedures. By updating their policies and procedures, CCRI can ensure that consistent data entry is completed about the DTC and all materials in general. There must be policies in place if any unfavorable issues arise. With written policies, it is easier for all staff to know expectations, how to handle certain situations, or who to contact specifically. Another weakness of CCRI is the lack of dedicated programming spaces. Though the new building is a boon for the library overall, the lack of space for programming seems to be a gross oversight. However, recognizing the problem means that creative solutions can be brainstormed. This weakness can be turned into an opportunity by asking the staff for ideas. With staff morale high, they are more likely to be helpful and enthused about contributing. By asking for their input, library leadership ensures that the staff feels invested in the growth of the library.

Opportunities for CCRI arise not only from their weaknesses but from their strengths as well. Because of their marketing efforts, many new patrons will visit the library for the first time. This is the perfect opportunity to show the value of the library to those who are unfamiliar with its services. For those who do visit regularly, the new building excitement is a good time to reiterate the services, value, and ways CCRI enhances the community. Another strength that provides an opportunity for CCRI is its new technology. Now is the perfect time for staff to undergo professional development. Workshops on the software, hardware, and policies and procedures will ensure that everyone is on the same page. It can also form a positive work environment and demonstrate the value of every position within the library system.

One of CCRI's major weaknesses is also a major threat. The inefficiency of the ILS system can become so unacceptable that regular patrons decide to visit another library. This attitude shift towards the library can then affect another threat – budget. The library is funded by voting bills. Issues such as a down economy are beyond the scope of CCRI, however, if CCRI cannot express its value to the community, the community may vote to decrease its budget. CCRI does have the power to influence this aspect of the budget and should be continuously aware of the community's attitude. Another threat that is beyond CCRI's immediate power is competition. The DTC is a great resource, but some may wish for a more hands-on approach. Also, though CCRI is the largest library, proximity may play a factor in which library patrons choose to visit. The draw of CCRI must be strong enough to overcome that obstacle.

Conclusion

The CCRI Library is in a prime time to undergo a SWOT analysis. With many issues already identified, the hardest part will be laying out procedures and timelines to ensure that opportunities are being pursued. They have many strengths, including their unique, highly specialized, and very relevant DTC. However, their biggest weakness is also a major threat and needs to be addressed immediately. Hopefully, after the SWOT analysis, changes can be made that will provide safeguards against a failing, inefficient system so that major overhauls will not need to happen in the future. By focusing on opportunities that arise, CCRI can help ensure that the value of their presence is felt within the community so that the budget for the library can continue to increase.

SWOT Analysis Chart

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Dog Training Collection - In an area with a demographic that would be interested in the collection - The library is the largest in size and collection in the county - Brand new building - Outreach and marketing - Diverse board of directors - Updated hardware/software technology - Staff morale is high, invigorated	- ILS needs updating - Current ILS is hard to use - Not all materials have been added to the collection - Incomplete entries in ILS - Users cannot locate all materials in the collection - Outdated policies and procedures - No clear program spaces
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Update ILS - Update policies and procedures - Rethink programming to fit within new building - Show value of library to new patrons - Professional development in keeping up with technological trends	- Budget - Based on community's attitude towards the library - Fluctuates based on economy - Outdated/Incomplete ILS - Users not finding what they need, may go elsewhere - Competition - Dog-training (PetSmart, PetCo., etc.) - Other libraries