

Network Positioning Group

Internal – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Strengths:

1. Reliable data available to document the positive economic impact of the program.
2. Return on investment of the program is impressive and verifiable.
3. Inventory of Education, Experience and Expertise of all Business Advisors from recent survey.
4. Center Market Focus survey results to better serve client needs on a statewide basis.
5. High quality of Center Directors and Business Advisors through their education and experience.
6. Statewide presence in all areas of the state.
7. Existing infrastructure to link businesses to new markets through exporting and government contracting.

Weaknesses:

1. Not well known by potential clients who could benefit by our services.
2. Inaccurate perception that we just help “start ups”.
3. Misconception that we are “just another government program” with minimal value.
4. Lack of a centralized, aggressive marketing effort (similar to SCORE branding)

Opportunities:

1. Ability to proactively create a more accurate reputation as a business growth partner
2. Obtain the “T” designation through ASBDC to add even greater value to our Network positioning
3. During difficult economic times, demand for SBDC services will only increase.
4. We have the ability to bring a wide variety of expertise and services to clients through technology, to deliver client assessment and business advisory services.
5. The "T" designation will be a great opportunity IF we brand and market it based on what it will mean to the clients. Simply adding the "T" in SBTDC will not be sufficient.

Threats:

1. Must be sure that all branding efforts are in compliance with ASBDC Accreditation Standards.
2. Available funding from both the federal and state levels to further the outreach effort.
3. SBA lack of marketing of the SBDC Program as their premier business assistance partner.
4. We are marginalized by SBA in their marketing efforts as a partner.
5. There are so many for profit and not for profit small business resource providers popping up on the web that potential clients are confused by these very fragmented messages. Tough to send a loud, clear message.
6. When we gain the "T" designation and the increase in demand for those services, will we have the capacity and funding to adequately deliver those new services?

External – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

External SWOT – Revised as of 9/22/11 - Below is the input received from the group regarding the External S.W.O.T. we agreed to create.

Strengths:

1. Complete geographic coverage
2. Breadth, depth and diversity of education and experience (knowledge) of network advisors
3. Objectivity of advice/guidance
4. Knowledgeable and current on government programs for Small businesses
5. Focal point or point of access (go-to source) for linkage to small business resources
6. Access to excellent “value added” tools (e.g. Profit mastery, Profit Sense, Hill Library, Covey, NxLevel, etc.)
7. Resources available through colleges and universities (host institutions)
8. Center counselors provide quality technical assistance and it is free.
9. TA is an additional resource and benefit to current stakeholders such as banks who can refer their customers for more detailed assistance..
10. Counseling services have no specific time limit for clients.

Weaknesses:

1. Weak brand recognition (nationally and state-wide)
2. No state (or nation) wide Coordinated marketing program/effort
3. SBDC’s still perceived as a resource primarily for start-ups
4. Inability to charge for advanced/value added services (Free services suggests limited value or lesser quality advice)
5. Centers operate with minimal/skeletal staff
6. Clients are suspicious of free counseling services.
7. The brand of the SBDC network is not widely known.

Opportunities:

1. Re-brand as resource for “second stage” and high-growth entrepreneurial businesses
2. Increasing recognition (by public, politicians, economic developers, etc.) that small business is an economic engine
3. Closer tie-ins/partnerships with local and regional economic development organizations
4. High unemployment yields lots of volunteer counselors
5. On-line/electronic counseling and training delivery
6. Develop collaborative “teams” of SBDC talent for quick response/emergency response to high impact businesses
7. The market, demand, and need for SBDC services are large and real, especially in the current economy.
8. Constantly evolving technology and social media needs for small businesses create challenges for new training and counseling skills.

Threats:

1. Minimalized by SBA and others (note the constant promotion of SCORE as SBA’s T.A. partner).
2. Increased and intense competition from SCORE, non-profit entrepreneur organizations, university entrepreneurship programs, consultants, business coaches, etc.
3. People/businesses seeking “quick answers to specific (and seemingly simple) questions. Don’t know what they don’t know
4. Unfriendly business climate and poor economy hinders business launch and growth
5. Restrictive access to capital and diminished personal (financial) assets to capitalize business.
6. The current economic climate and loan availability limits the effectiveness of the SBDC to help the client achieve successful economic impact.
7. Availability of other tools or programs that can assist emerging businesses with public dollars are uncertain in reduced budget situations.