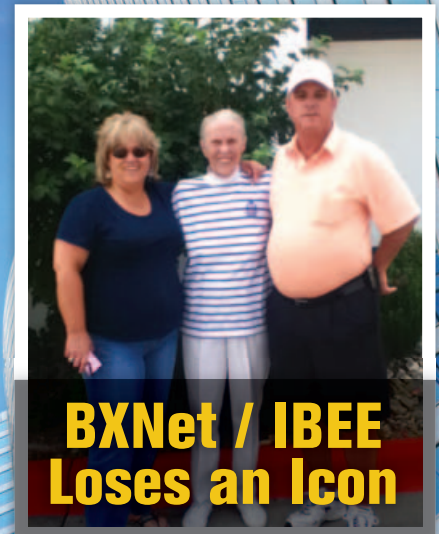


## Summer Marketing Strategies to Boost Your Small Business



**BXNet / IBEE  
Loses an Icon**

**The Evolving Employee  
Handbook:  
Six Issues to Consider**

**The case for  
P3s for public  
buildings**

**Reporter Training  
Summit Scheduled  
at Last**

**Personal SWOT Analysis:  
Finding Your Career  
Strengths & Weaknesses**



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Submissions, articles and other information for content is compiled from members of the organization.

Suggestions or submissions can be sent to:  
[info@bx-net.org](mailto:info@bx-net.org)  
855-719-0733

## President's Column

Well it's summertime again and that's the time for doing things. It's not the time for staying inside and being bored.

Last year, I was inspired to create a summer to-do list, and while I didn't accomplish everything on the list, it was helpful for setting goals and making plans (however loose) for how I wanted to spend my time.

This year, I am going to give you a couple of ideas to try during your "spare time". I know you have some free time on your hands and I don't want you to waste any of it.

Here's what's I have on your list:

**Play a sport.** In most places, summer is a great time of year for outdoor sports, as long as you can stand the heat. If you don't have a favorite sport yet, there's no better time to pick one up. Get friends together or join a class to play team sports such as soccer (association football), basketball, or kick ball. Find an activity for one or two people, like surfing, urban golf, tennis or pickleball.

**Learn to cook.** If you don't know how to cook or you don't know much about food, you could learn some recipes now. There are thousands of recipes available online or in cookbooks from the library or bookstores. There is nothing like cooking for your friends, so invite them over and cook them dinner.

**Volunteer.** Helping your community can be satisfying, uplifting work, and of course you're working towards a good cause of well. Look for organization in your area that picks up trash, works with injured or abandoned animals, or works for political causes. Volunteering also looks good on your resume, and you will feel really good about helping others if you are genuinely interested in the work.

**Act like a tourist in your own town.** Look at your town's or region's tourism website or brochures advertising events and find out what attracts people traveling from other locations. There might be anything from museums to merry go rounds lurking in your town, or in areas a short drive away.

**Get in touch with old friends.** If your current friends are out of town or busy, look through your old yearbooks, phone contacts, or emails and reconnect with people you used to know. Any of the activities above can be more fun with friends, or you can simply spend an afternoon catching up with each other or reminiscing.

**Make cold drinks and desserts.** A cold beverage or a bowl of ice cream can be wonderful in hot weather. Making them yourself is even better for curing boredom. Make popsicles and keep your freezer stocked all summer. Make some Jell-O shooters using your favorite alcohol and invite some friends over for 'dessert'.

**Organize or redecorate a room.** Some people like this activity more than others, but even if you're not much of a decorator it beats sitting around doing nothing. Even just sorting through old clutter can help you find old toys, books, and other nostalgic objects. For a larger project, paint or hang new pictures.

There's other stuff you want to do, I know, but this list is a good start. If you accomplish all of it, I think it's safe to say this will be a good summer.

What else is on YOUR summer 2015 to-do list? Let BxNet know by writing a short report at the end of summer and sending it along for the BxNet Newsletter. We can all be kids again and write that "What I Did This Summer" report when school starts in the fall.

**Phil Davenport, BXNet President**  
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Phil Davenport



# The Evolving Employee Handbook: Six Issues to Consider

By Nicole Fallon, Business News Daily

Many organizations issue an employee handbook, an official document that covers their policies on everything from computer use to vacation time. As new technologies and business-related laws take hold in the office, human resources departments must update those policies to reflect the most current trends.

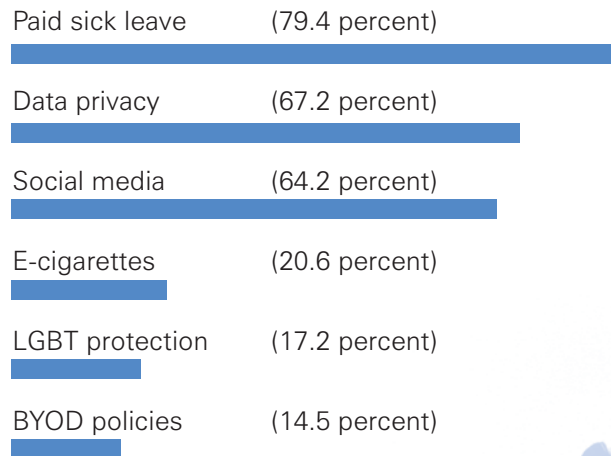
But this is easier said than done. A new survey by HR compliance resource XpertHR found that, although the majority of businesses (78 percent) have made revisions to their handbook within the last two years, the biggest challenge for 41 percent is continuing to keep their handbook up-to-date with an ever-changing workplace and workforce.

"Employee handbooks continue to be a perennial challenge and opportunity for employers," Peggy Carter-Ward, head of content at XpertHR, said in a statement. "The challenges of keeping up with a changing workforce, new laws and just getting employees to read the handbook are not new, yet addressing evolving workplace issues ... [is] complex."

Though it may be a difficult task, it's an important one: Updating your handbook to include emerging laws and trends, even if they haven't affected your company yet, will help head off any confusion among employees should a situation arise. Staying ahead of the curve can also help your business stay out of legal trouble.

"Handbooks can be an excellent tool to ensure consistency in employee management as well as to make sure that all employees and supervisors are familiar with their rights and obligations," Carter-Ward said. "However, improperly drafted handbooks can create potential liability for employers and leave them susceptible to employee legal claims based on the content of the handbook."

According to the XpertHR survey, these are the top new and emerging workplace issues being addressed in the latest iterations of U.S. employee handbooks:



Although wearable technology and medical marijuana are hot topics among the general population, just 4.1 percent and 6.4 percent of organizations, respectively, tackle them in their official handbooks.

No matter which topics you ultimately decide to address in your handbook, make sure you discuss them with your staff and get their input before issuing an official policy.

XpertHR surveyed 521 representatives from public, private and nonprofit organizations about their workplace policies and employee handbooks.

## ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Be sure to visit the "Vault" at [www.bx-net.org](http://www.bx-net.org) to view copies of the BXNET newsletters, slides from past Annual Meeting presentations, articles of interest, sample documents and much more!

USERNAME: ibmember    PASSWORD: 2015BXnet

Why re-invent the wheel? Have sample documents or information you think would be helpful to your fellow members? Simply email it to [info@bx-net.org](mailto:info@bx-net.org) to be uploaded into the vault.





# BXNet / IBEE Loses an Icon

IBEE Executive Director Fern Nagel assists Bob Lyons, Executive Director of the Builders & Contractors Exchange, Hampton Roads Virginia at the IBEE Convention in Traverse City, Michigan shortly before her retirement.



By Brenda Romano

Earlier this year, I lost my friend and the Builders Exchange community lost one of its staunchest advocates. On Valentine's Day, Fern Nagel, former Executive Director of the International Builders Exchange Executives (IBEE) passed away a few months shy of her 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. Fern never accepted the name change of her beloved organization, so for the sake of her memory, BXNet will have to bow to its predecessor for a few more paragraphs.

Fern was born on July 17, 1927 to a Montana ranching family. Ranching is a demanding life. Cattle don't care about office hours or dress codes, nor are they impressed with titles and net worth. Coaxing a living from the four-legged beasts depends on everyone working together as long and as hard as it takes to get the job done for a minuscule profit. Those born to it learn quickly that self-reliance is mandatory, slacking can't (and won't) be tolerated and complaining is a waste of time.

Those values shaped Fern's character and they served her well over her long life. They saw her through the ups and downs of nearly nine decades of living, including the Great Depression, WWII, marriage, divorce and the loss of everything she owned in the catastrophic Black Hills Flood of '72. When the floodwaters subsided, all that remained of her antique-filled home was a single silver spoon. In typical Fern fashion, she picked up the spoon and pragmatically started over.

Like many of her generation, Fern was strong and tough. Feisty might be a better word. Her gritty back-

ground gave her the gifts of direct speech, rigorous honesty and strong convictions. The wicked wit was embedded directly in her DNA. I loved the combination and I marveled that the passage of time seemed to have no impact on the power of it. Fern was as sharp witted on the last day of her life as she was on the first. That dry, acerbic wit is what I remember best and what I will miss the most.

Over the years, I acquired quite a collection of "Fernisms". My personal favorite was delivered when she sized-up those she felt were a bit too self-important. I can still hear her low, gravelly voice pronouncing rancher judgment on the character of those she considered puffed up beyond their worth, "*Big hat. No cattle.*"

Her get-the-job-done-no-matter-what philosophy was clearly reflected in her dogged devotion to our small, under-funded organization and its members.

Fern began her BX career in 1971 as the manager of a Builders Exchange in South Dakota. That job led to two stints as IBEE manager, culminating with her second "official" retirement in 2002. "Her contribution to IBEE has been priceless," said IBEE President Del Walker at the time. "Fern has been the backbone of IBEE for years, and we all owe her a debt of thanks." Few would argue against those sentiments. It is indisputable that she worked tire-

# SAVE THE DATE



Left to right: Brenda Romano, Fern Nagel and Roger Romano, Rapid City, South Dakota, August, 2011.

lessly for the IBEE membership with few resources and no expectation of reward or recognition. Fern was there as we evolved from typewritten bulletins to sophisticated online software, arguing every step of the way that we must make sure smaller organizations had access to the same opportunities as everyone else. She was a one-woman advocacy group for all things Builders Exchange. Quite simply, Fern loved IBEE and everything it stood for and she devoted over 30-years of her life to its principles.

Fern counted IBEE members as her personal friends and she fretted over each of us right to the very end. She called frequently to ask about our health, our children, and our state-of-mind or shame us into calling so-and-so who had been sick or was celebrating a birthday. In the chaos of daily work, it's easy to miss that people are more important than projects. Fern never forgot that fundamental truth and she reminded the rest of us to honor it.

The end of her life, when it came, was unexpected and mercifully quick. A broken hip and the cascade of consequences that often follow with the elderly made for a brief hospital confinement, perhaps a small blessing for such a fiercely independent personality. At least that's what I tell myself. I wasn't expecting the loss then and I still can't believe it now. I miss Fern. I miss the phone calls. I miss hearing her distinctive voice on the other end sharing some new tidbit of gossip gleaned from the IBEE grapevine. I miss her rapier wit, her endless optimism and her unflinching honesty and practicality. Fern Nagel had character and she was a character. I'm honored to have called her my friend and I will miss her terribly.

# JANUARY 19-21, 2016

# BXNET ANNUAL MEETING


# HYATT REGENCY SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Interested in presenting?

Like to hear about a specific topic?

Volunteer or email your suggestions to [info@bx-net.org](mailto:info@bx-net.org).





# The case for P3s for public buildings

Public Private Partnerships (P3s) have come to prominence mainly as a tool for delivering civil infrastructure projects. Look all over the country for examples of big P3 transportation projects: the Chicago Skyway, California's Presidio Parkway, the Miami Access Tunnel. The list goes on.

Increasingly, states (and the Sun Belt states in particular) are opening the door to P3s as a tool to help them address their infrastructure needs. And why not? You don't have to look far to find another report that decries the state of the nation's transportation infrastructure. The most recent one penned by the American Society of Civil Engineers, for example, estimates that more than \$2 trillion is needed to rehabilitate and expand the country's existing—only existing, mind you—transportation infrastructure. To make matters worse, politicians seem unwilling to raise taxes to boost government infrastructure funding. The federal gasoline tax, which historically paid for most of the nation's road, highway, bridge and tunnel projects, has been frozen since 1993. Public spending on construction is at its lowest level since that year as well—at just 1.5 percent of GDP.

Turning to the private sector to help fill the gap left behind by federal funding only seems to make sense when state and municipal governments face overwhelming demand to keep roads open, water flowing and traffic moving. Governments in other countries—Canada, Australia and parts of Europe—are embracing P3s as a method to get infrastructure in the ground in a hurry and pay for it later. Canada in particular, which has one-tenth the population of the United States, spends more on P3s annually than the United States does.



# What is a P3 and why build one?

A Public Private Partnership is a contractual arrangement between a public-sector agency and a private entity (usually a consortium that includes lenders, investors, designers, builders and facilities maintenance people) to plan, design, deliver and operate a building or other public-sector asset.

The advantage of using P3s is that they help get projects built faster. Governments pay for a portion of the project costs upfront while the private sector funds the remainder and makes its money back by operating the facility on a long-term basis. The government wins by getting the project in the ground sooner than if it were to pay for the project itself (and usually gets a better designed, more innovative structure), the private consortium wins by obtaining a large and long-term asset to manage, and the public wins by gaining access to new infrastructure.

Critics worry that P3s let private sector companies profit at the public's expense and lead to lost public revenues.

## Slow to take hold with public buildings

As much as P3s have proven valuable in the transportation and civil-infrastructure sector, they have been slow to catch on for delivery of public-sector buildings. A few examples in the ground—such as California's Long Beach Courthouse and the City of Indianapolis Consolidated Justice Facility—and on the books: the expansion of the Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department water treatment plant, Oregon's Multnomah County Courthouse show that uptake has been slight, especially compared to other countries in the world where P3s are routinely used to deliver healthcare centers, schools, and justice and other civic buildings.

Yet the reasons for doing so, says the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships (NCP3P) are compelling. P3s for public buildings offer cost, time and budget certainty. They encourage innovation, enable better risk management and transfer, are better supervised by financiers, and—most importantly—get projects in the ground faster. So what's holding us back?

## Six factors limiting P3s for public buildings

Authorizing legislation is one factor, and a big one. About 34 states have laws on the books that permit public agencies to use P3 as a method project delivery, but only a handful of those allow the use of P3s for buildings: North Carolina, Florida, Indiana, New Jersey, Texas and Virginia. This year, legislators in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York and Tennessee are expected to consider some form of P3 legislation.

According to the NCP3P, the lack of authorizing legislation not only prohibits construction of buildings using P3s, but also makes P3 procurement vulnerable to protests and legal challenges, and adversely affect project implementation.

Adapting the risk allocation-model from transport P3s is another potentially limiting factor. Complexities such as interfaces between the design-build and facilities-management contractors is one concern, as are the outsourcing of services traditionally seen as core to government and stakeholder management and involvement in design review.

A third is the question of user-pay fees. P3s have been successful on road projects in particular because it's easy to charge tolls to drivers, and most of that money is returned to the private sector. It's not as obviously simple to do so at a courthouse or a city hall building, for example. The revenue sources for private sector companies have to be more creatively established.

A fourth limiting factor is education. The public sector in particular needs to open its eyes to the idea of using P3s to deliver buildings. It's true that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the delivery of P3s, but therein lies the beauty of the model. It is entirely flexible and adaptable to

almost any kind and size of project. That said, owners do have to be properly structured to procure via P3s, and they have to adopt the right approach to choosing the right partner for delivery: the lowest bidder need not always win.

The fifth limiting factor to the widespread adoption of P3s for public buildings is the concern regarding outsourcing of services to the private sector. Critics of P3s argue that the private sector is less accountable to the public than the government. They also argue that P3s lead to the loss of public-sector jobs and raise the cost of government services.

Finally, P3s for public buildings require skill sets not otherwise found on transport projects. They involve the private sector in different ways in the maintenance of the asset over its lifetime, but the strength of the P3 model is such that it brings a wide range of expertise into the design, construction and maintenance of the facility.

## Where next?

Only time will tell us the extent to which governments will adopt P3s for public sector buildings. A handful of successful projects, such as those currently in the ground and on the books, will beget more P3 projects. In time, governments across the country will be more habituated to the idea of P3s and more trusting in the ability of the model to help deliver infrastructure projects quicker and better than ever.

# Dreams Do Come True

## Reporter Training Summit Scheduled at Last



by Brenda Romano

Most of us have dreams that we keep buried in the deepest recesses of our heart. You know the type - winning the lottery, being stranded on a deserted island with Russell Crowe (or Sheryl Crow), getting a Board Chairman who agrees with every one of our ideas, etc. One of my longest held and most cherished dreams is finally in the works, and I'm not above begging to make it a reality.

My dream involves hundreds of BX reporters in a room working together to figure out how to get better at what we do. Obviously, my dreams are a little twisted, but anyone who knows me won't find that surprising.

Over the past fifteen years, Exchange Execs have repeatedly talked about getting a large group of reporters together to reap the same benefits we all get from meeting and learning from each other while sharing war stories. With that in mind, BXNet has at long last scheduled a Reporter Training Summit for this fall in the Windy City. Yours Truly will be the trainer (see what 36-years of digging away in the Plan Room Salt Mine will get you). All we need now are attendees to make this little dream come true.

Get out your calendar. The first Annual (hopefully) Reporter Training Summit will be held in Chicago on **Wednesday, October 14 and Thursday, October 15, 2015**. In order to make this venture as accessible as possible, **BXNet is paying the training costs for every attendee**. Yep – that means registration is free. Repeat, free. The only costs involved will be schlepping your people to Chicago and paying for their hotel and meals.

In looking at our own staff, VBX decided there are six of our employees who would benefit the most from attending, so I dutifully checked out all the cheap airfare sites and crunched the numbers. After consulting the Excel Oracle, the total figure for six people comes to about \$3,500 for airfare, hotel, meals and ground transportation. That

amounts to \$600 per person for the opportunity to geek up our staff again about dragging bidding information out of the unwilling. I think that's a pretty reasonable investment. Those of you in the Northeast who book travel early can probably do even better.

Bottom line – please, please send your staff to this meeting. The more people we have in the room, the more opportunity we have to tackle the good, the bad and the ugly of a job that is becoming increasingly competitive. If your staff has attended a Reporting Training session before, please let them know we have lots of new information and techniques to share. All we need is a room full of bright-eyed captives to make this dream a reality. I'm begging you to help make this a success by sending in your registration ASAP. If you have any question, feel free to call me at (877) 221-6418, Ext. 114. Don't forget Texas is on Central Standard Time.

## THE TRAINING PROGRAM

### Tackling the Top Five Problems of Construction Reporting

- 1 Understanding the Construction Industry.
- 2 What is our value? How do we compete when there are so many options today?
- 3 Getting Owners / Design firms / GC's to cooperate.
- 4 Getting access to Private Work.
- 5 Making it all happen with limited resources.



# 2015 REPORTER TRAINING SUMMIT REGISTRATION

Yes, we will send the following individuals for training & networking:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Function: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Function: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Function: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Function: \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Sorry, we can't make it, but keep us in mind for next time.

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City

Zip

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**October 14-15, 2015** (8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.)

**Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport, Terminal B**

**\$169 per night – ask for BXNet Room Block**



**The BXNET's Mission, Vision and Strategic Goals**

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE**

**"Serving Construction Association  
and Builders Exchange Professionals"**

# CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



**Nomination deadline: December 1, 2015**

Send nominations to:

**Builders Exchange Network (BXNET)**

One Regency Drive, P.O. Box 30, Bloomfield, CT 06002

Telephone: (855) 719-0733 Fax: (860) 286-0787 Email: [kloney@ssmgt.com](mailto:kloney@ssmgt.com)

## MANAGEMENT AWARD

This award recognizes exemplary skill, vision and leadership in managing the individual's own organization. The winner is required to accept the award in person at the Annual Convention. Staff and self-nominations are encouraged. Awards are given on the basis of merit, and may not be given every year.



The following points contribute to eligibility for the **Management Award**:

- Developing an effective solution to a challenging situation or problem.
- Developing a program or process that significantly improves the operation or services of the managed organization.
- Demonstrating exemplary management skills, including insight, vision, creativity and foresight through the achievement of a specific goal.

I hereby nominate the following individual to receive the **Management Award**:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Entries may include supporting documentation; such as pictures, testimonials, newspaper stories, brochures, etc. *(attach additional sheets if needed)*

1. Please explain the type of problem, challenge, program or process that was addressed by this individual:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Please explain the approach that was taken to address the problem/challenge; develop the program/process or achieve the goal:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Please explain the Plan of Action that was developed to address the problem/challenge; create the program/process or achieve the goal:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please explain how the Plan of Action was implemented:

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Please explain the results that were derived from implementing the Plan of Action:

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Please list any additional information or conditions you feel may be relevant (i.e. observations about reactions, conclusions, costs, etc.) to evaluating the suitability of this nomination for the Management Award:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_





## NO BOUNDARIES AWARD

This award recognizes an individual who has consistently demonstrated boldness, creativity, vision and a willingness to challenge perceived limitations. Awards are given on the basis of merit, and may not be given every year.



Eligibility is open to BXNET members and their employees and other individuals of merit. Nominations must be initiated by a third-party (no self nominations) and winners will be selected at the sole discretion of the three most recent winners by unanimous agreement.

The following are examples of characteristics that might be considered in nominating a recipient for the **No Boundaries Award**:

- Exemplifying initiative, vision, creativity, and “out of the box” thinking.
- Approaching challenges in a way which inspires others to push the envelope of accepted belief.
- Developing programs and/or processes which now serve as a model for implementation by other individuals or organizations.

I hereby nominate the following individual to receive the **No Boundaries Award**:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Entries may include supporting documentation; such as testimonials, articles, results, etc.  
*(attach additional sheets if needed)*

Please explain the ways in which you believe this individual personifies the intent of the No Boundary Award:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

# Personal **SWOT** Analysis:

## Finding Your Career Strengths & Weaknesses

By Chad Brooks, Business News Daily

Whether you are starting your business life or changing careers, making an informed decision about where best to apply your talents is a challenge for even the most self-aware. But a personal SWOT analysis can help you determine where your particular skills are most likely to find success in the professional world.

SWOT analysis, first devised as a business tool in the 1960s, stands for "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats," and conducting an analysis of those factors will help job seekers know more about where their talents lie and uncover opportunities for work they may never knew existed.

SWOT can help people become the best version of themselves, said Marlo Zarka, co-founder of coaching partnership Designed Alliance.

"Self-assessment is a key activity in striving to achieve a sense of one's personal best," Zarka told Business News Daily. "The SWOT analysis exercise ignites an enhanced awareness of what one brings to the table in a balanced light of both advantages and challenges. Organizations roll out elaborate schemes to remain competitive as well as innovative. Why wouldn't individuals want to achieve the same level of excellence for themselves?"

Ian Christie, founder of BoldCareer.com and a contributing writer for the job-search site Monster.com, said that while most job seekers look at what their strengths and weaknesses are, a SWOT analysis takes things a step further by forcing them to think about the external factors that bear heavily on the health and direction of their career.

"Looking at the quadrants together can be a creative way to think about where you are in your career and the directions you could take," Christie wrote on Monster.com.

### Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

To conduct a SWOT analysis, job seekers need to ask themselves questions about each of the four areas being examined. For each factor, honesty is crucial, or the analysis won't generate the results you are trying to achieve. With that in mind, try to see yourself from the standpoint of a colleague or a bystander, and view criticism with objectivity.







It's also important to imagine the potential of what you can become, noted Caroline Smith, copy and commissioning editor at leadership training company Mind Tools. "Don't limit yourself to the strengths that you're currently exhibiting in your job," Smith told Business News Daily. "List all of your strengths, even the ones that have been dormant for a while. And pay particular attention to the things that you have that your peers don't — how are you different, unique and special?"

**STRENGTHS:** This part looks at what the employee does well and where his or her skills shine. Questions to ask include:

- What do you do better than others?
- What positive traits do you have?
- What sets you apart from others looking for jobs, such as education or certifications?
- How strong is your network of connections?
- What do other people see as your strengths?
- What resources can you access?
- What values and ethics set you apart from your peers?

**WEAKNESSES:** This part examines the areas in which an employee needs to improve and that will set him or her back when searching for certain types of positions. Questions to consider include:

- What are your negative work habits and traits?
- Does any part of your education or training need improving?
- What would other people see as your weaknesses?
- Do you have any limited resources, such as time or influence?
- Do you have a weak network of connections that will hurt your chances of finding work?

What negative feedback about your personality or work habits have you received?

**OPPORTUNITIES:** For this section, job seekers must look at the external factors they can take advantage of, to find a new job or career direction. Questions to ask include:

- What is the state of the economy?
- Is your industry growing?
- Is there new technology in your industry?
- Is there new demand for a skill or trait you possess?

- Are there certain job openings that can't be filled by the current crop of job seekers?
- Have customers given you feedback about new services you could provide, or ways to improve your manner?
- What advice can your contacts offer you?

**THREATS:** This part takes into account the external factors that could hurt a job seeker's search for new work. The factors to take into account include:

- Is your industry contracting or changing directions?
- Is there strong competition for the types of jobs for which you are best suited?
- Do your weaknesses inhibit your ability to rise in your company or change jobs?
- How much internal competition do you face for the same positions?
- Are there any new professional standards you cannot meet?
- Is there any new technology that will hurt your chances of finding work?
- Do you have any family obligations that will reduce your chances of finding a new job?

Finding the necessary objectivity to conduct a personal SWOT analysis can be a challenge, Zarka said. "If one opts to outline a SWOT inventory, they will be best served if they invite others to review the compilation of ideas by asking the simple question of, 'Does this sound like me?' Oftentimes, we cannot see how we come across in our interactions with others, so their feedback is valuable."

In some cases, you may be well served by getting the help of a professional. "Oftentimes, I would encourage someone to work with a professional certified in various assessment instruments, or to research assessment tools online that can provide measured feedback for consideration," Zarka said. "It goes back to the old adage, 'We don't know what we don't know.'"

## Example of a SWOT analysis

There are numerous examples of personal SWOT analyses that job seekers can find online to help them better understand how this method can aid their job search. One example is from the career site Mind Tools and provides the perspective of a female advertising manager:

## STRENGTHS

- I'm very creative. I often impress clients with a new perspective on their brands.
- I communicate well with my clients and team.
- I have the ability to ask key questions to find just the right marketing angle.
- I'm completely committed to the success of a client's brand.

## WEAKNESSES

- I have a strong, compulsive need to do things quickly and remove them from my "to do" list, and sometimes, the quality of my work suffers as a result.
- This same need to get things done also causes me stress when I have too many tasks.
- I get nervous when presenting ideas to clients, and this fear of public speaking often takes the passion out of my presentations.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- One of our major competitors has developed a reputation for treating their smaller clients poorly.
- I'm attending a major marketing conference next month. This will allow for strategic networking, and also offer some great training seminars.
- Our art director will go on maternity leave soon. Covering her duties while she's away would be a great career development opportunity for me.

## THREATS

- Simon, one of my colleagues, is a much stronger speaker than I am, and he's competing with me for the art director position.
- Due to recent staff shortages, I'm often overworked, and this negatively impacts my creativity.
- The current economic climate has resulted in slow growth for the marketing industry. Many firms have laid off staff members, and our company is considering further cutbacks.

As a result of performing this analysis, the ad manager proposes a new direction for filling a colleague's maternity leave that involves both her and her co-worker Simon. Based on the SWOT analysis, the ad manager proposes that both she and Simon cover the job's duties, working together and each using his or her strengths.

## Outcomes

Once your personal SWOT analysis is complete, it is crucial to follow through on the insights you received, Zarka emphasized.

"SWOT analysis can fail to be effective if it is simply treated as a 'laundry list,' without any tie in to how the elements identified in the analysis can be put into play for the individual carrying out the assessment," Zarka said. "For example, how can the identified strengths move the needle in the endeavor to achieve a key goal? Or how can one navigate a potential threat once it is identified so as to ensure no ground is lost?"

"The best outcome is to take action and succeed in the opportunities you have identified," Smith added. "This can benefit you on a personal and professional level, and set you apart from your peers and colleagues."

## Going further

While SWOT is a significant tool for helping you achieve clarity about your personal strengths and weaknesses, it can be augmented by other forms of analysis. "SWOT analysis is really best utilized in a brainstorming capacity with multiple voices adding to the input," Zarka said.

According to Zarka, the following tools can help individuals attain even more focus and clarity:

- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)**, based on the work of Carl Jung and Isabel Briggs Myers, provides insight into strengths and preferences in navigating the world.
- **Clifton Strengths Finder 2.0** examines the theory that each adult individual possesses a certain number of fixed universal personal-character attributes, called "Personal Themes," that, in combination, affect the individuals' tendencies to develop certain skills more easily and excel in certain fields while failing in others.





# Summer Marketing Strategies to Boost Your Small Business

By Claire Prendergast, agencyEA

Summer is the time when people like to get out and soak up the sun. It's also the perfect opportunity to get creative with seasonal marketing tactics that will boost your audience and sales.

Here are proven marketing strategies to help your business avoid the dreaded "summer slump."



## Free giveaways.

Does your product or service have a special use during the summer months? If so, it's a perfect excuse to engage face-to-face with loyal and prospective customers with a branded street team positioned in high-traffic areas, handing out samples and delivering key messaging. If not, there are plenty of summer-related products you can give away, consider water bottles, coolers, Frisbees, etc. (all tastefully branded), to distribute to your target audience.

## Partner with a non-competing business.

Think about another business that shares a similar customer base, but does not directly compete with your offerings. Build a strategic partnership and put together a customer-pleasing summer sales package. Create a unique offer in which both (or multiple) businesses offer a special promotion while also assuming shared responsibility.

Partnering businesses "can sell at a higher volume for less effort, make more profit, and the customer gets an amazing package at a discount price," notes PsPrint Design's Brian Morris at Business 2 Community. "The possibilities are endless — you just have to find willing partners."



## Sponsor or participate in a local event.

Summertime kicks off a variety of outdoor events—concerts in the park, little league baseball games and endless marathons. Invariably, these events require sponsors to help pull them off, which provides a great opportunity. Your business can highlight its local involvement with the community and boost customer awareness. Investigate local sponsorship opportunities and heighten your brand visibility with signage to advertise your company name and brand.

Outdoor events generally include booths where you can distribute brochures, flyers, business cards, product giveaways, etc. Brainstorm ideas about how to set your business apart during the event, perhaps with eye-catching vinyl banners or a demonstration showcasing the many features and benefits of your product or service.

