Nominal Group Technique

Adapted from George Washington University's Strategic Management & Performance Systems Certificate Program, 2019
Note that this application of the NGT is specific to a SWOT analysis but it can be applied in many other situations as well.

How to use this template

Why use it?
To consolidate, clarify and prioritize the Opportunities, Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses.

When to use it?
Anytime there is a need to prioritize Opportunities, Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses.

Instructions:
This is highly structured process involves full participation by all team members. It is a non-threatening four step process that provides anonymity for individuals while ensuring broad based collection of opinion and analysis of opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses. Follow the four steps described below to complete a paper and pencil SWOT ranking process. *If anonymity is of high value to a team, modify the process so that team members provide their input via online (or some other confidential method).* Meet as a leadership team to review the findings, discuss the implications and draw preliminary conclusions.

STEP 1:   SILENT GENERATION OF IDEAS
Each person silently thinks about the Opportunities, Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses and writes his/her thoughts on a blank sheet of paper. These are usually short written phrases. Each area (such as Strengths) is done separately. Everyone works alone silently during this step. (Another option is to have the team members fill out the worksheets prior to the meeting and then bring the sheets with them to the meeting.)

STEP 2:   ROUND ROBIN REPORTING OF IDEAS
Next begin the round robin reporting of ideas using individuals' notes made in Step 1.   Start with a volunteer, ask for <u>one</u> Opportunity from the individual's list and record it on the flip chart. Ask the next person for <u>one</u> Opportunity from his/her list and add it to the flip chart.

Continue with this process by asking each person to contribute <u>one</u> Opportunity until everyone has made a contribution. A person can choose to pass if they want to in this first round but eventually everyone is encouraged to make some contribution.

The round robin process of collecting Opportunities and recording them on the flip chart continues as long as people have new Opportunities to contribute. No critical discussion of the Opportunities is done during this step. When all of the Opportunities are recorded label each one with a number or a letter…this will help in Step 4. Repeat the same round robin process for Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses.

STEP 3:   DISCUSSION: LOOKING FOR CLARIFICATION AND DUPLICATION

Now open up the discussion for the purpose of clarifying any of the ideas that were contributed. Team members are encouraged to ask each other the meaning of words and phrases that were recorded on the flip chart. Also, at this point combine any ideas that are basically duplicates on any given list, and categorize the remaining items as necessary.

The purpose of this step is to provide individuals the opportunity to give fuller explanations of their ideas. And secondly to combine any duplicate ideas so as not to split the ranking points. Make sure that ideas are not evaluated and do not allow arguments to develop.

STEP 4:   RANKING OF OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS, STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Give each team member a set of OTSW priority sheets - one for Opportunities, one for Threats, one for Strengths and one for Weaknesses. Each person is to write on the appropriate sheet the number (or letter) of the Opportunities, Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses he/she believes most important or highest priority.

For example: On the Opportunity priority sheet each person will write the number (or letter) of the Opportunity he/she feels is of highest priority in the "1st priority" box, the second highest in the "2nd priority" box, the third highest in the "3rd priority box", etc. down to the fifth priority.

Collect all of the priority sheets and tally the rankings on a master sheet. Add up the score for each item. The items with the highest scores can be considered *preliminarily*, the highest priority. There are usually 5-6 items that float to the top as the highest priorities for each of the four areas – Opportunities, Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses. Write the number or letter of the highest priorities at the bottom of each tally sheet.