

# SWOT Analyses

For inexperienced fiction writers, first-time self-publishing authors and book marketers

From Hank Quense

# Contents

---

Introduction	3
SWOT Charts	4
Writing Analysis	6
Self-publishing Analysis	11
Book Marketing Analysis	15
Author Business Basics	19
In Conclusion	24
Writers & Authors Resource Center	25
License Notes	25

# Introduction

---



SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It is a popular way to analyze a situation in order to identify ways of improving that situation.

Whenever you start a new endeavor you face a learning curve. When you graduate from college and start a job, there's a learning curve. Enter a trade school and you'll be on a learning curve for the entire term. Want to take up knitting as a hobby? There's a learning curve for that. So too with writing fiction or non-fiction. It has a learning curve. Self-publishing a book and book marketing also have learning curves. That's what this ebook is about: the learning curves you face as you start out writing or publishing or marketing your book.

Books on writing don't talk about the learning curve. It's as if they assume you already know the learning curve exists, so they don't bother to talk about what is involved with learning to write fiction and non-fiction. The same with books on publishing and marketing. Similarly, once your book is published, you own a business whether you want to or not. And you face still another learning curve on what to do with the new business.

The purpose of a SWOT analysis is to point out where you are as you begin on any of these activities for the first time. In that case, you are at the starting point of the learning curve.

This book isn't meant to discourage you. Rather, it will roadmap the way forward using a SWOT analysis to give you a plan.

The main value of a SWOT analysis is to point out areas that can be worked on to improve the situation. It's essential that you view the SWOT analysis in that light. Don't take it as an insurmountable list of obstacles.

These SWOT analyses may not be an exact fit for your situation, but it will be pretty close. You can adjust them to satisfy your unique situation.

Hank Quense

## SWOT Charts

---

SWOT charts consist of four separate areas and often look like the diagram shown below. There a number of variations on this diagram, but they all essentially end up with the same details

Two of the boxes are for external factors and two for internal. Two of the boxes are for positive factors and two are for negative.

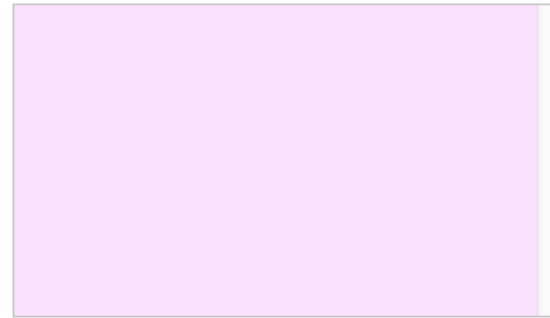
The Strength quadrant is used to list those attributes and talents that are your strong points. Weakness are exactly that: your vulnerable areas. Opportunities are there to be exploited, if you can. Threats are areas that represent a danger to you and/or your business.

# INTERNAL

Strengths



Weaknesses

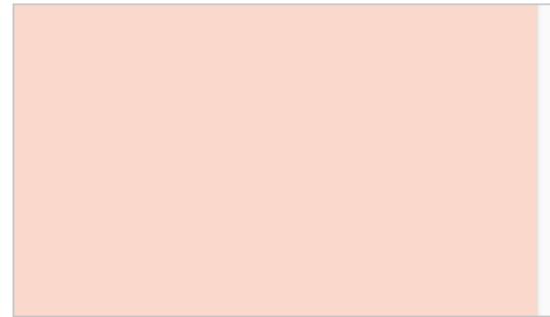


POSITIVE

Opportunities



Threats



NEGATIVE

# EXTERNAL

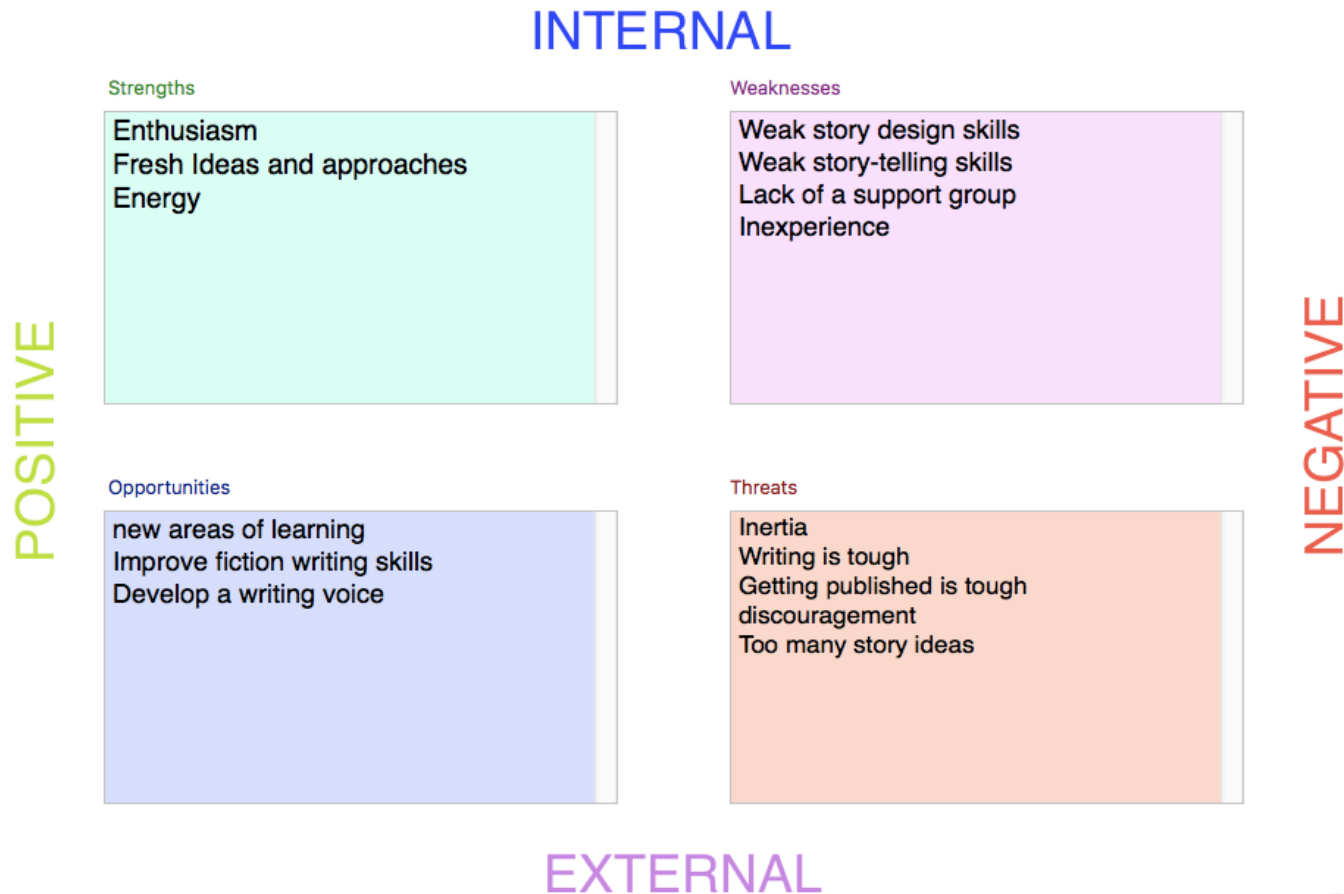


- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
-

# Writing Analysis

When you start out writing fiction or non-fiction, your SWOT chart probably looks like this.

Of course, if you have a degree in English or an MFA, then you aren't exactly a beginner and the chart below does not pertain to you. But assuming, you have decided to dabble in a writing career, then here is your status



Let's examine each item in the chart by quadrants. The chart primarily refers to fiction writing, but much of it also pertains to any type of writing.

### **Strengths:**

Your strengths must be protected and grown if possible. What follows is an explanation of these current strengths. All new writers bring these strengths to their fiction:

- Enthusiasm
- Fresh ideas and approaches
- Energy

*Enthusiasm:* As a newbie writer you are probably brimming with enthusiasm and bursting with story ideas. This is a great strength and you have to fight to keep it at a high pitch.

*Fresh Ideas and Approaches:* Enthusiasm leads to lots of new ideas. This is another strength since all writing is dependent upon ideas, creativity and new approaches to stories.

*Energy:* New writers bring boundless energy to a new project. Keep the energy level high is necessary but it is tough in the face of conflicting demands on your time.

It's important to keep these strengths from deteriorating over time and to grow the list by incorporating new strong points.

### **Weaknesses:**

Along with strengths, new writers have a number of weaknesses:

- Weak story design skills
- Weak story-telling skills
- Lack of a support group
- Inexperience

These weaknesses must be addressed. In a SWOT chart, the value of identifying the weakness is to expose them so they can be worked on. These weaknesses should be viewed as areas that can be turned into strengths over time.

*Weak story design skills:* Starting out means you don't have much experience in developing characters or plots. Your initial stories may not have a character arc or an emotional arc. Scene design may be something you've never heard of. All of these areas fall under the story design issue. The good news is that this weakness can be resolved over time by studying and by writing stories. This weakness is especially vulnerable to critiquing. Having other writers critique your stories is perhaps the fastest and best way to change this weakness into a strength.

*Weak story-telling skills:* story-telling skills are not something we are born with. These skills must be developed through writing stories and getting them critiqued. Story-telling topics to be addressed include point-of-view – perhaps the most technical area of fiction writing. Others are show-don't-tell, stimulus & reactions, foreshadowing and effective dialog. The good news is that this weakness can also be eliminated through study, more writing and critiquing.

*Lack of a support group:* In the beginning you are alone. You probably have a few contacts who are also writers but you may not know anyone who can offer valid criticism of your stories. Family members don't count unless they are also writers. Non-writers don't have the knowledge to tell you how to improve your story and your writing. Only other writers can do that. Over time, your list of contacts will grow and this weakness will diminish.

*Inexperience:* The problem here is that inexperience means you will make a lot of mistakes. Another issue is that with your inexperience, you don't know that you are making mistakes. With critiquing, these mistakes will be exposed and your inexperience will lessen. Another weakness will bite the dust.

Story design and story-telling are covered extensively in my book [Creating Stories](#). That is one way to deal with these two weaknesses.

### **Opportunities:**

These opportunities are waiting for you to exploit them:



- New areas of learning
- Improve fiction writing skills
- Develop a writing voice

You may not be able to address these areas immediately for a number of reasons. These reasons may include: not enough time right now, too much other work at present, may involve expenses that can't be covered at this time. Usually the primary reason is that your workload is too heavy to allow you to spend time on these opportunities. Nevertheless, the opportunities exist and are waiting to be exploited.

The best way to approach these opportunities is to choose one of them at a time to work on. Selecting all of them will probably ensure that none of them get exploited.

*New areas of learning:* There are many books on a variety of writing topics. Poetry is a possibility as are scripts and stage plays.

*Improve writing skills:* This one doesn't need much direct involvement since you'll actually be addressing it every time you write a story or even work on the story design issues such as creating characters.

*Develop a writing voice:* This is an essential growth possibility for any writer. The simple fact is you can't write using your speaking voice. You have to develop a separate and distinct writing voice. Once again, writing stories will help on this issue.

The last two opportunities will be accelerated by having your stories critiqued by other writers.

### **Threats:**

There are a number of threats you must deal with in the early stages of your writing career:

- Inertia
- Writing is tough
- Getting published is tough

- Discouragement
- Too many story ideas

The cumulative effect of these threats can be a decision to stop writing and move on to something else. That would be a mistake. Several of the threats shown here actually dissipate over time and with constant writing.

*Inertia:* Inertia is always a threat and can happen at any time. It usually appears as a reluctance to sit in front of a computer and write. An occasional day off is nothing to worry about, but when it happens consistently it is a sign that inertia has moved in. This often occurs after a series of setbacks such as rejections or critiques that rip apart your latest work. I think the inertia effect is quite natural, but it has to be shaken off. Getting back to writing is the best solution. Starting a new writing project is often the cure for inertia.

*Writing is tough:* Writing quality stories requires skill and craftsmanship. Both of these qualities can be acquired over time, but they require hard work and constant striving to improve. This can wear one down and negative consequences can result.

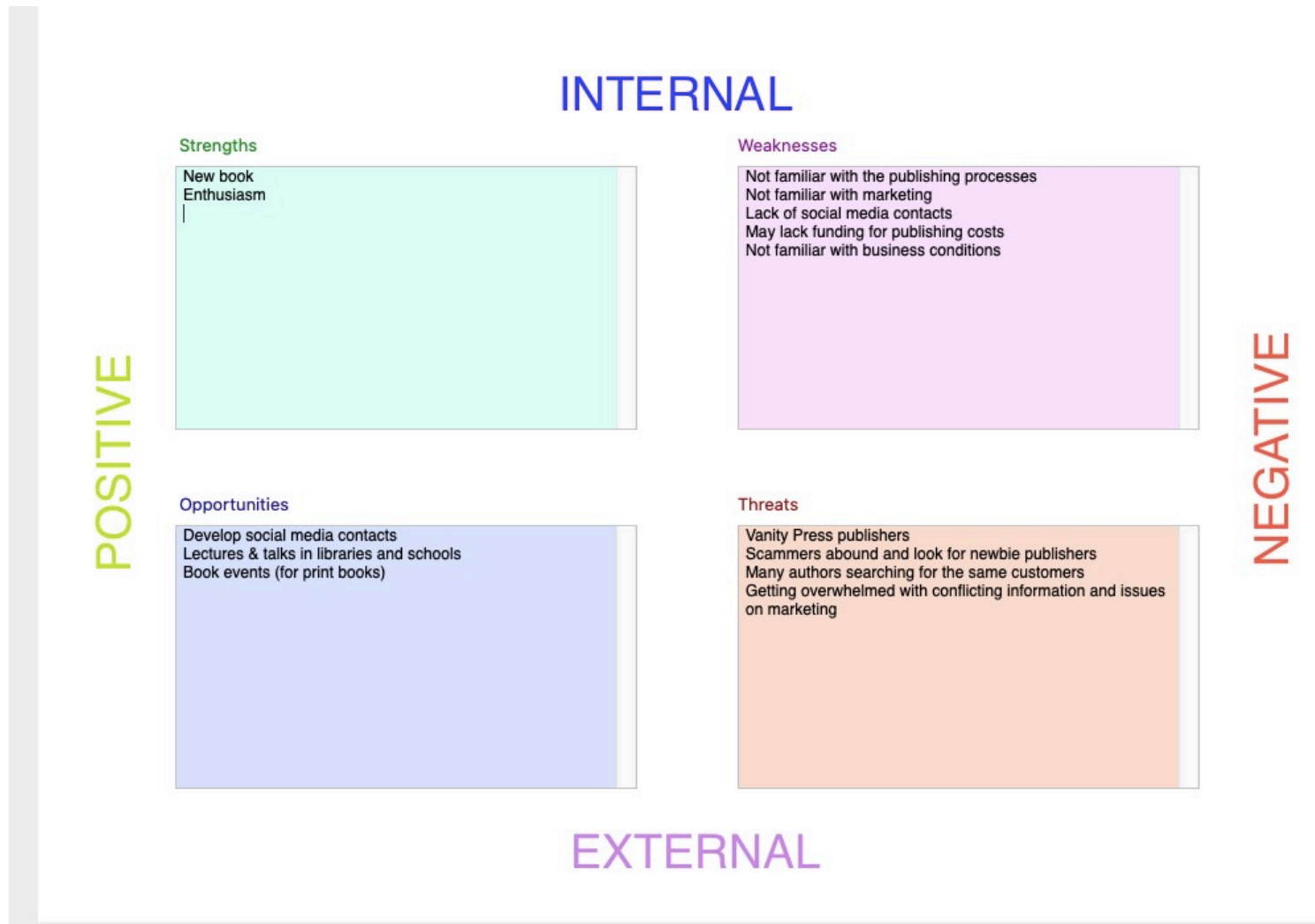
*Getting published is tough:* besides the high standards that many editors and publishers have established, there is an ever expanding number of competitors striving for a small number of publishing slots in magazines and publishing houses

*Discouragement:* Based on the above threats, you can see that discouragement seems almost natural. It takes great effort to fend off this discouragement and to keep writing and submitting

*Too many story ideas:* This may seem strange, but it is a real threat. Once you get the hang of story design and what is required to create a story, you may get flooded with good story ideas, so many that there isn't enough time to write them all. This can lead to a sort of paralysis as you wonder what to work on while a dozen potential stories are competing for your attention. The upshot frequently is that none of them get worked on as you struggle to prioritize them.

# Self-publishing Analysis

Self-publishing your first book is a project fraught with anxiety.



Some of the information about self-publishing on the web is inaccurate and some of it is simply wrong. This SWOT Chart reflects that reality.

So let's go over this SWOT analysis quadrant by quadrant

### **Strengths:**

The primary objective of a SWOT analysis is to grow this list of strengths. All new writers bring these strengths to their writing.

- New book
- Enthusiasm

*New book:* Your new book is unique. No one else has ever written a book exactly like yours. Keep this fact in mind when the going gets tough.

*Enthusiasm:* As a newly published author, you are probably brimming with enthusiasm and bursting with pride. This is a great strength and you have to fight to keep it at a high pitch.

### **Weaknesses:**

Your list of weakness at this point in time is much longer than you strengths.

- Not familiar with the publishing process
- Self-publishing isn't an intuitive process
- Not familiar with book marketing
- Lack of social media contacts
- May lack funding for publishing costs
- Not familiar with business conditions

*Not familiar with the publishing process:* Don't let that discourage you. This is a temporary condition. To use an engineering term, it's a boundary condition. One that only applies at the beginning of the process. Your second book won't have this weakness

*Self-publishing isn't an intuitive process:* It requires research and decision making. At the start, you may not have the information needed to make intelligent decisions and that is weakness that can be reduced or eliminated over time, especially if you can find a mentor for your first project.

*Not familiar with book marketing:* Writing a book and self-publishing it do nothing to prepare an author for book marketing. Here again, the lack of experience is a weakness, a big one. This lack of experience presents a danger: falling prey to scammers and their "offers" to help you market your book. This danger can be lessened by being suspicious. Question every offer to spend money on marketing. Ask other authors about the "offer." As your marketing experience grows, so does your ability to sniff out the scammers. With more experience, your marketing savvy will increase and so will your results. In other words, this weakness is temporary.

*Lack of social media contacts:* At the beginning of your time as an author, you have limited social media reach. In other words, you can't tell a large number of people about your book. Overcoming this weakness is essential to success and it must be worked on. Continuously.

*May lack funding for publishing costs:* Self-publishing a quality book costs money. You need funds for the cover and for editing. There can be other costs associated with your project.

*Not familiar with business conditions:* Once your book is published, you own a book company whether you like it or not, whether you want to or not. As the CEO of your new company, you must make decisions based on business conditions, not on your ego. This may be a bit traumatic at first.

### **Opportunities:**

Having a published book presents several opportunities that can be exploited.

- Develop social media contacts
- Lectures and talks in libraries and schools

- Book events (for print books)

*Develop social media contacts:* A book is a great way to introduce yourself to bloggers and other folks on social media. Some of these contacts can help you spread the word about your book.

*Lectures and talks in libraries and schools:* Organizations such as libraries and schools welcome authors who will come and give a presentation or a talk. This is especially true if the book and the talk will emphasize a topic taught in school or will appeal to the library's clients. These events are natural opportunities to talk about your book and increase your sales.

*Book events (for print books):* Some libraries conduct book fairs and invite local authors to display and sell their books. These are generally free to participate in. Other organizations host events that will require you to purchase a table in order to sell your books.

### **Threats:**

A newbie self-publishing author faces a number of serious threats.

- Vanity press publishers
- Scammers searching for newbie publishers:
- Many authors targeting the same customers
- Getting overwhelmed with conflicting information and issues on book marketing

*Vanity press publishers:* If you explore the web, you will come across pages that show ads offering to publish your book. Almost always these ads are for a vanity press publisher. Vanity presses have no interest in your book. They are only interested in the thickness of your wallet because they intend to siphon out as much money as possible.

*Scammers search for newbie publishers:* Along with the vanity presses, the author has to fend off scammers. Many of these come with slick websites and attractive offers to help publish and/or market the book. For a price! The scammers will take the money and do little if anything to provide the promised services.

*Many authors targeting the same customers:* Thousands of books become available everyday. Many of them cover the same non-fiction topics or fictional themes. Readers have many choices when it comes to selecting a book on a specific topic or theme and doesn't bode well for an author's book sales.

*Getting overwhelmed with conflicting information and issues on book marketing:* This is a serious threat. There are tons of books, webpages and blog posts on book marketing. Much of it is contradictory. Other so-called marketing sites offer generic or bland advice with no explanations on how to implement that advice.

My book [How to Self-publish and Market a Book](#) has a detailed plan that integrates both publishing and marketing into a unified project.

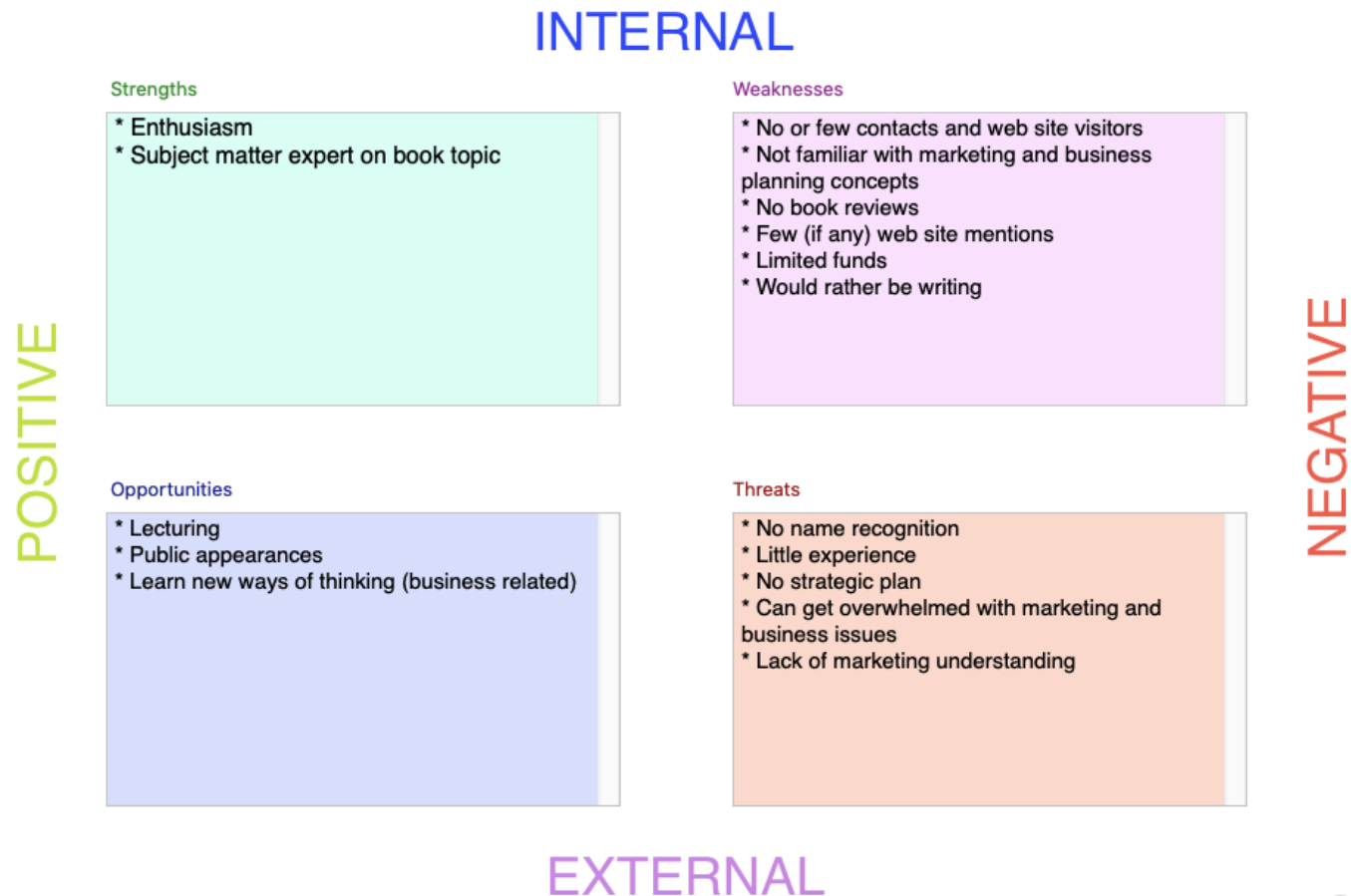
## Book Marketing Analysis

---

Like self-publishing, authoring a book does nothing to prepare you for the book marketing process.

Once again, you can see there are a lot of issues in the Weakness and Threats quadrants. This is the picture facing all new self-publishing authors. It also represents what the author would face if his book was published by a small indie publishing house. The advantage of the indie publisher is in the book publishing process (editing, cover, book design etc) not in the marketing processes.

Not every first-time author will have this exact SWOT chart. An author may have additional items in his personal SWOT analysis and some of the items may not apply to all authors.



?

**Strengths:**

You have a few strengths that be leverage in this situation.

- New Voice
- Enthusiasm



- Subject matter expert on the book's topic

*New Voice:* No one writes exactly like you. You can provide readers with a new, unheard voice. Your stories are different from other writers. If you write non-fiction, you have a fresh perspective.

*Enthusiasm:* You have published a book. Very few people can make that claim. You have accomplished something that many people dream about doing, but never will. Use your enthusiasm. It is one of your strengths.

*Subject matter expert:* That's you. You know more about the book's topics than anyone else. If the book is a novel, who knows more about the world you created than you? If the book is non-fiction, you may not be the world's foremost expert on the subject matter, but you still are an expert on it.

### **Weaknesses:**

Your list of weakness in this situation is lengthy. Don't let this discourage you. These weakness can be temporary.

- Unknown author
- Unknown book
- Limited marketing expertise
- Limited funding
- Limited time

*Unknown author:* While it's true you have an unique way of expressing your stories or viewpoint, it is also true that no one (or hardly anyone) knows about you. That makes marketing the book a bit tougher.

*Unknown book:* Another obstacle is that no one knows about your book. Many of the other books published the same day as yours have had greater exposure to the public giving them a leg up on your book.

*Limited marketing expertise:* Authors generally are good at writing, not marketing. You may have no idea how to go about marketing your book.

*Limited funding:* Most likely, you aren't wealthy. That means your marketing budget is smaller than you would like it to be.

*Limited time:* You probably have a day job and a family. That will limit the amount of time you can spend on marketing your book.

### **Opportunities:**

There are several opportunities you can use in your marketing efforts.

- Media attention
- Book revenue
- Lectures

*Media attention:* If you work the media, you have a chance to gain prominence. That can lead to marketing leads and more exposure which can lead to higher sales.

*Book revenue:* Selling your books will provide income. How much income depends upon your ability to market and sell your books.

*Lectures:* Publishing a book can lead to opportunities in libraries, schools and events. At these events, you can lecture on your publishing experiences or your research on a non-fiction topic. One event will open the door to other events and appearances

### **Threats:**

The threats unfortunately are serious. This list includes:

- Inertia
- Frustration

- Lack of success
- Fear of public appearances

*Inertia:* Having successfully published the book, you may feel you have done enough and it's up to the world to discover your book. That attitude is natural, but self-defeating. You have to accept that it's your job to market the book. Turn off the TV, get up off the couch and start pimping your book.

*Frustration:* Faced with the daunting tasks of introducing your books to the world and the impression (at first) that no one is noticing your efforts can lead to a sense of frustration. You have to fight that feeling and keep plugging away.

*Lack of success:* Your marketing efforts will not have an immediate impact on your sales revenue and/or your name recognition. It takes time for both to happen.

*Fear of public appearances:* this is quite common with many people, not just authors. However, staying in your office or home will waste opportunities to sell books and to get name recognition. How? Think of all the readers who would love to know how you went about getting a book written and published. Get out there and tell them. One-on-one is a great way to start your public appearances. It's much easier than standing in front of a crowd of strangers who expect you to entertain or enlighten them. Actually, there isn't that much of a difference between the two. If you can do one, you can do the other.

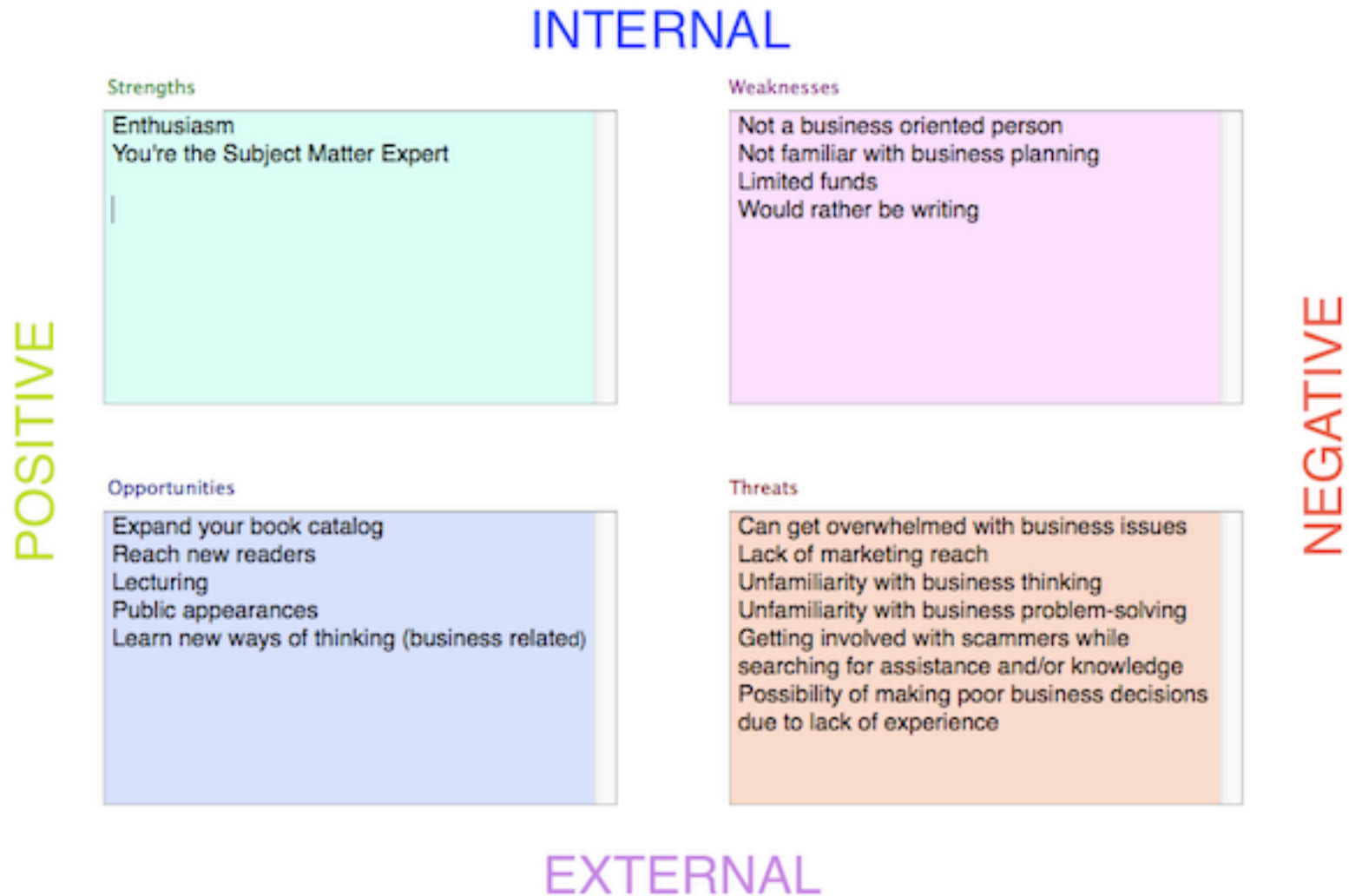
If you have published a book and need marketing help, my book [Book Marketing Fundamentals](#) can provide you with insights to get your marketing activities into high gear.

## Author Business Basics

---

The focus of this analysis is your business rather than your book and it fits most authors with little or no business experience.

It may come as a surprise to learn that once you publish a book, you own a business. The purpose of the business is to market your book.



### **Strengths:**

Your strengths here are similar to the strengths listed in other SWOT charts

- Enthusiasm
- Subject matter expert

*Enthusiasm:* As a writer with a published book, you are probably brimming with enthusiasm and ready to sell your book and to improve your marketing clout. This a great strength in your business and you have to work to keep it at a high pitch.

*Subject matter expert:* You wrote the book. If it's non-fiction, you are now a subject matter expert on whatever topic your book covers. You can use this expertise to point potential readers towards where they can buy your book. If your book is fiction, you are still a subject matter expert. You're the expert on the world you built for your book. Use this expertise to get people interested in your world, your book and your business.

### **Opportunities:**

- Expand your book catalog
- Reach new readers
- Lecturing
- Learn new ways of thinking

*Expand your book catalog:* You're a writer and an author. So, author more books. That's what authors do. An Amazon page with a single book on it looks a bit bare. An Amazon page with two books looks much more impressive. Adding to your book catalog greatly increases the presence of your company.

*Reach new readers:* With each addition to your book catalog, you can reach more readers. This is a big opportunity for you and your company. Find these people. Everyone who reads and likes your books can help to spread the word to others.

*Lecturing:* As a subject matter expert, you can develop a lecture and give it in libraries and schools. Often, these venues will pay a stipend for lecture and these public appearances present additional opportunities to sell your book to the people who attend the lecture.

*Learn new ways of thinking:* As a CEO, you'll be forced to think differently. You'll have to learn new techniques. These are good things; embrace them.

### **Weaknesses:**

Naturally, there are weakness in your current situation.

- Not a business oriented person
- Not familiar with business planning
- Limited funds
- Would rather be writing

*Not a business oriented person:* If you're like most writers, you enjoy writing and would rather not be bothered with business nonsense. Unfortunately, the business nonsense has to be attended to and you're the only one who can handle it. Dealing with the business issues may not come naturally to you and you may elect to ignore these issues until forced to deal with them. In other words, your business will languish and that's not good for your marketing reach or your business.

*Not familiar with business planning:* Similar to the last item, as a writer your main concerns are planning and writing your next book. Business planning is not your priority, but without a business plan, your company will simply drift and will have no focus.

*Limited funds:* This weakness assumes you are not independently wealthy. If you are wealthy, why are you bothering with this stuff? Hire someone to do it for you and go back to writing. If you aren't wealthy, this fact has implications for your business and your marketing since many elements in both areas will require funds.

*Would rather be writing:* This is similar to other weaknesses. You get up in the morning thinking about what you can write today, not what business issue you can deal with. This is just a fact of life for writers. The business issues are obviously a punishment for something evil you did in a previous life.

### **Threats:**

These threats are real and are part of the real world.

- Can get overwhelmed with business issues
- Lack of marketing reach
- Unfamiliarity with business thinking
- Unfamiliarity with business problem solving
- Getting involved with scammers
- Possibility of making poor business decisions

*Can get overwhelmed with business issues:* Dealing with these pesky business issues can inundate you at times and this can cause you to ignore the issues, leaving them to fester and become even more of a problem.

*Lack of marketing reach:* Let's face it. When you're a newbie author, your marketing reach is limited. Extremely limited, and this does not bode well for you, your marketing efforts or your company. Even if you accept the need to think like a business owner, you still have a limited marketing reach and this threat has to be addressed.

*Unfamiliarity with business thinking:* Running a business requires different ways of thinking. In this case, a minor business problem that can be easily solved may not be recognized until it becomes a major issue and demands attention.

*Unfamiliarity with business problem solving:* With the plot in a novel, your characters get in big trouble and you fix the problem by coming up with a creative solution, but your solution is fiction. It isn't real. Business issues don't get solved with creative fiction solutions. They are real world issues that have to be fixed or solved with real world solutions. Developing real world solutions requires a different mind set than fictional world solutions.

*Getting involved with scammers while searching for assistance and/or knowledge:* The internet swarms with con artists and scammers searching for newbie authors. This is a real threat. The offers from the scam artists, whether in marketing, publishing or solving business issues, aren't about helping you. The offers are an attempt to steal money. Your money. Backed up with slick web sites, they look professional, but that is part of their cover.

*Possibility of making poor business decisions due to lack of experience:* You may make mistakes because you aren't trained in business and you aren't about to take business courses in a local college, are you? You could, you know.

My book [Business Basics for Authors](#) addresses many of the issues explored in this analysis.

## In Conclusion

---

So what if you aren't a beginner? What if you have experience in one or more of the topics covered by these SWOT analyses?

Perhaps you can make a single SWOT chart that defines your current *combined* situation. That could be an interesting analysis. What can you add to your strengths? What weakness can you eliminate? What opportunities can you exploit? What threats can you neutralize?

This exercise certainly can't hurt and it very well may be helpful.



# Writers & Authors Resource Center

---

This free ebook has been prepared as part of the content available on the Writers ARC website.

The material in WritersARC consists of text, books, videos, graphics, spreadsheets, Kanban boards and more. Much of the content is unique. The main page is at <http://hankquense.org/wp/writers-and-authors-resource-center/>. It has links to all the other pages. Check it out and see if there is something you need or could use.

## License Notes

---

© 2020 Hank Quense  
All Rights Reserved

### License Notes

Thank you for downloading this free book. You are welcome to share it with friends. This book may be reproduced and distributed for non-commercial purposes, provided the book remains in its complete original form. Thank you for your support.  
Published in the United States of America.  
Published by Strange Worlds Publishing