**NOISE**[**ANALYSIS**](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) **AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO SWOT ANALYSIS**

A **NOISE** [**ANALYSIS**](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) is a strategic planning tool that is a useful alternative to the SWOT [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/).  The NOISE [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) allows decision-makers to [analyze](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) the current state of the [business](https://fourweekmba.com/business-strategy/) and create a strategic improvement plan. It incorporates solution-focused language that helps teams build upon their knowledge and goals and overcome identified obstacles.

Although the SWOT [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) is popular and effective, some businesses argue that it provides little scope for delivering improvements.

In some cases, it may unearth opportunities a business never knew existed.

**NOISE** is an acronym standing for:

* **NEEDS,**
* **OPPORTUNITIES,**
* **IMPROVEMENTS,**
* **STRENGHTS, AND**
* **EXCEPTIONS**

**CONDUCTING A NOISE**[**ANALYSIS**](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/)

***Step 1 – Decide on a goal***

In a group consisting of 5-20 people, start by deciding on a goal.

* What will the business look like in a year if the proposed improvements are implemented?
* What will each department be accountable for and how can each foster a culture of accountability within the organization?

### Step 2 – Create the NOISE chart

On a large sheet of paper, draw a circle in the middle with four quadrants radiating out from the center.

### Step 3 – Begin the [*analysis*](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/)

Spend at least an hour collaboratively brainstorming each of the five key elements that comprise the NOISE acronym.

Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, and Strengths should be placed in each of the four quadrants. In the center, place Exceptions.

#### ****Needs (N)****

What needs to be present for a plan or [*strategy*](https://fourweekmba.com/business-strategy/) to be achieved? Needs may be organizational or individual in nature.

#### ****Opportunities (O)****

Which external factors will provide an opportunity for the organization to grow or develop? How are other departments, locations, companies, or teams achieving comparable [*growth*](https://fourweekmba.com/growth-hacking/)? Are there areas of untapped or unrealized potential?

#### ****Improvements (I)****

How must the organization change to establish needs and take advantage of opportunities?

#### ****Strengths (S)****

What is the organization currently doing well? How is success measured? Give examples where necessary.

#### Exceptions (E)

Of the four above quadrants, what is already present or occurring? List all factors regardless of their current impact.

### Step 4 – Identify clusters

* Once the [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) is complete, sort through each quadrant by grouping clusters of ideas that may fit together.
* Furthermore, look for outlier ideas that don’t seem to fit with others. These could be breakthrough ideas that will propel the business forward.
* Then, give each cluster a name based on its general theme or area of interest.
* Once this is complete, write these names on the NOISE chart in the correct quadrants.

### Step 5 – Vote on cluster categories

In the fifth step, ask each team to vote on the category they deem the most relevant. It’s helpful to use a dot or tokenized voting system.

### Step 6 – Create measurements and milestones

For each category, the mediator should ask the team to develop measurements and milestones to gauge progress toward its achievement.

### Step 7 – Create the plan document

* In this step, the mediator or team leader compiles the list of categories into a broad company plan.
* Each member of the team should agree to the plan before it is implemented.
* Feedback must be taken into consideration and changes made as required.
* Lastly, the NOISE [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) plan should be periodically reviewed to ensure that it is both relevant and successful.

### WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A NOISE ANALYSIS?

A NOISE analysis seems to *feel* more positive because it identifies and focuses on needs. To a staff, needs may feel more achievable and targetable than being handed a list of challenges to overcome. To meet needs is often easier than challenges to be overcome.

Utilizing a [vision-based strategic planning technique](https://www.nmblstrategies.com/blog/vision-based-strategic-planning?rq=strategic%20planning) to prepare for the decision-making phase of a strategic planning process is essential for peeling back the layers of an organization. Understanding the organization and its [environment](https://www.nmblstrategies.com/blog/what-is-the-purpose-of-an-environmental-analysis-in-strategic-planning?rq=strategic%20planning), internally and externally, is the first step toward developing a plan for achieving new strategies or refocusing on incomplete ones. NOISE as an alternatives to a SWOT analysis offers different positive aspects, but of course, each has its [gaps](https://www.nmblstrategies.com/blog/the-importance-of-gap-analysis-in-strategic-planning?rq=strategic%20planning). You cannot know where to go if you do not even understand where you are at presently. Using the proper planning analysis and technique is essential for framing your current situation and your future path. Examine the positives and what your organization needs as it develops its strategic plan to choose the right analysis for your organization.

**Summary**

* A NOISE [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) is a strategic planning tool. It differs from similar tools like the SWOT [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) in that it guides improvement implementation.
* A NOISE [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) can be performed on a large sheet of paper with four quadrants representing the categories of needs, opportunities, strengths, and exemptions. A fifth category, exceptions, occupies a circle in the center.
* A NOISE [analysis](https://fourweekmba.com/business-analysis/) can be performed in seven steps using a group consisting of 5-20 people. Ideas are categorized, grouped, and then synthesized into a broader strategic plan.