

Case Study: Analyze the Situation



UMMC's quality and safety team uses SWOT analysis to identify improvement opportunities.

By Jenny Jones

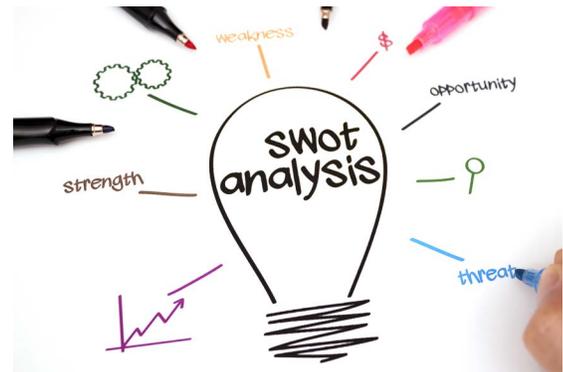
When the University of Mississippi Medical Center's (UMMC) radiology department formed a dedicated quality and safety team in 2014, the group was tasked with uncovering and addressing the department's most pressing quality and safety issues. The team initiated its improvement efforts with a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis — a process improvement tool for assessing an organization's challenges and successes.

The quality and safety officer leading the team, Cyrillo R. Araujo, MD, associate professor of radiology at the University of Mississippi and director of ultrasound at UMMC, learned about SWOT analyses during a quality improvement training session and knew the department would benefit from the method. "It proved to be a very good mapping process to get real and actionable information about our organization," Araujo says. ([Click here for a downloadable tool: How to Conduct a SWOT Analysis](#))

Araujo and his team invited people from different departments, including referring clinicians, radiology residents, administrators, faculty, and technologists, to participate in the analysis. The team gathered participants at a local pizzeria to conduct the analysis. "We wanted to hold the meeting in a friendly environment to trigger good interaction between the members of the group," Araujo explains. "We needed a baseline evaluation involving different perspectives to determine what was going on in radiology — what were our strengths and what were the issues we needed to work on."

Araujo used a dry erase board to collect the group's feedback while members discussed the four elements of the SWOT analysis. "We emphasized our local environment and also discussed national trends and changes in health care and radiology," Araujo explains. As a result, the team determined that the radiology department needed to focus on things like the link between quality and safety and things like outcomes and reimbursements, the important role of information technology in radiology to drive sustained change, and the importance of identifying key individuals within radiology to help build a culture of quality and safety.

The quality and safety team used the information to brainstorm projects that would address the department's weaknesses and threats. It then conducted a *feasibility/impact analysis*, mapping out, on the one hand, the projects that would have a high clinical impact but require relatively minimal effort to implement and, on the other, the projects that would have a high clinical impact but require a lot of effort



to implement. From there, the team prioritized the projects from easiest to most difficult to implement.

"The feasibility/impact grid helped us focus and prioritize tasks that really impacted patient care and quality," Araujo notes. "As a result, we quickly achieved multiple small wins in the beginning that built up the team's morale to tackle the toughest issues. The process was very beneficial to the quality and safety team's success."

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