



# Dream of Travel Writing

## Annual Review Part 3: Taking Stock of the Past Year – How to SWOT Yourself Into Shape

We'll get going. So, like I said, today we're going to talk about something that is not on this slide because I didn't finish updating it. So I'm just gonna go back to the title slide while we talk about that. So the things that we're gonna focus on today, like I said, are about SWOT. And we're gonna talk about SWOT and what exactly that is. But the foundation of it is doing an assessment not only of yourself and what has been going on with you in the past year that can be improved, which is what the focus of last week's webinar was, but also looking at the world around you, whether that is your own personal world or the greater freelance world.

And so we're gonna talk more about what SWOT means and how it works, but I'm also gonna give you a lot of different ways that you can do your SWOT analysis. So SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. And like I said, we're gonna go way, way into what that means. But this is the kind of thing that I think a lot of us as freelance business owners find to be quite, you know, esoteric or "business-schoolly" or just generally not something that we need, that it's too much for us, like doing a big long business plan or a big long book proposal if you're just doing a self-published book.

But the thing is that I find that a lot of times this SWOT analysis, which is actually just a very very quick thing that you can do rather than something really long and involved like putting together a business plan, is often misconstrued in terms of its effectiveness because people think they need to do it for their whole business. They think that, you know, oh my God, well, how can I possibly come up with every single strengths, or every weakness, or every opportunity for my business. And so one of the things that we're gonna look at is a lot of different points of your business that you can use this to analyze. And we're gonna talk about how that can help you make some really solid and significant steps forward.

So as we move into what we're talking about today, I see in the chat box and people have been talking about, what does the O and SWOT stand for or what is this. And like I said, we're gonna break that down in a lot of detail. But one of the things that we're gonna talk about today and then I wanted to kind of highlight is that the whole way that we're going about this SWOT analysis is to look at what is specific to you.

And I've actually had I think because of some podcasts I've been on and a couple things, a lot of people asking about my book, "The Six-Figure Travel Writing Roadmap" recently. And the thing is that even though that book clocks in at 400 pages, and even though I do map out a plan that if you follow it will take you to six figures with your travel writing, everybody does have unique circumstances. And someone wrote me the other day saying, you know, "I know this, that, and the other thing, but I have a very unique set of circumstances." And I hear that all the time.



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And when I was first working on the book, a lot of the reasons that people gave me for not getting as far with their travel writing as they thought that they should, were tied to these unique circumstances. But what I found talking to people who are successful by their own in terms of success but also by what anyone else would consider financially, or in terms of the number of clients they have, or the stability that they have with those clients, those people all follow a similar set of, not rules per se, but a similar set of actions, but they just apply them differently to their own circumstances.

So a lot of what we're looking at today are things that you really need to take this technique and see how it fits you. This isn't gonna be one of these things where I say, "This is exactly what editors wanna hear," or "This is exactly the things that I would pull out of this press trip to then pitch." This is gonna be something that's highly personalized to you.

So first of all, I know I usually have, before we get this train moving, and I asked a question, you know, that's more of the basis of why we're talking about what we're gonna talk about today. But it's really important for me to know as we move through this series how many folks on the live call, and for you to think about if you're attending at home, have caught the earlier webinars in this series? Because like I mentioned in the newsletter, they're very sequential. And even, as I just said earlier on this call about Chris Guillebeau's Sheet of Goal Setting, you can certainly not do any of this prep work and then go make goals for yourself, but I can't guarantee to you that they will be so useful.

And this is one of the issues that I think a lot of people find, not just with their freelance travel writing business period, but also just with, you know, goal-setting or following some tips from some writing teacher, writing coach, or business teacher, business coach is that if you implement part of an approach to something, especially if it's been created really as a wholesale way to go from point A to point B, it's not even, like, I can't or those people can't guarantee your success, but you're really doing yourself a disservice. And so this isn't, you know, a sales pitch like "Please buy this and that for me." But I just really want to say in the year going forward that as much as we are all different, we all have our own circumstances and everything.

If you are embarking on something that has been well-crafted, you are doing yourself a disservice to jump past that intro stuff. Because especially as I, and I know some other of you have been doing this as well, get really into writing books, especially nonfiction books, you really come to see why there are like two, three chapters that just kind of seemed like introduction in the beginning. I used to do, not debate, but mock trial when I was young, and I took some classes and involved debate. And one of the first things that you do is you set the



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definitions, and you set the problem, and you get everyone on the same page in terms of the word that you're trying to use, and the things that you're trying to solve.

And so what this means to say is not just about this annual review that we're doing, but say that you wanna write for magazines. Are you reading magazines? Are you looking at what magazines are publishing? Are you looking at what they're publishing by freelancers? Are you reading FOLIO? And I'm going to write that because everyone always asked me. So FOLIO is a website, which is for people who work in the industry. And it says, "When things close, or when things open, or when, you know..." Time just got purchased by somebody the other day. So if you aren't doing this building block type of work to see how the magazine industry works, then you are doing your magazine pitching a disservice.

And one of the things that we talked about in one of the earlier calls in this series, I think it was last week, was really getting up on the industry that you serve and how that helps with ideas. And I've been working with some people in the various coaching programs this past week or a couple weeks on writing LOIs or... I'm gonna write this in the chat box as well. Or a letter of introductions, letter of introductions, really, for... Yes, Kerwin, I think that's right. Let me just check. Letters of introduction for travel trade magazines.

And we have a couple of webinars in the webinar library on working with travel trade magazines. Because this is a really great way, especially if you have travel industry knowledge, to get recurring work where you don't have to pitch the editor every single time. And so I've been working with some folks on that, and the editors of the magazine have been responding favorably to their letters of introduction, and say, "Hey, send me some pitches." And then everything grinds to a great big halt. Because not that they don't know in the industry that they're pitching for, but they don't know what type of pitches a trade magazine publishes, because they're not up on what magazines look at.

So whether it's setting your goals right now or the work that you're gonna do in the year ahead, make sure you're not shorting your opportunities for success by skipping those intro steps. And that's actually kind of all of what we're gonna talk about this week. I've got a really great quote that I want to start us out with.

But those of you who have joined us in the past, last week we talked about pulling together the specific numbers of what we had achieved in terms of earnings, what we had expended, in terms of investing in our education, in terms of business, the ebbs and flows of those month-by-month, and if you haven't joined us for that in the past, then you're gonna just kind of be thinking back on your year as we work through these questions. But it is very useful,



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like I said, to pull together those numbers in terms of your specific income month-by-month and client-by-client as well as your expenses.

So as we have that data, now we have to figure out how to analyze and how to pull it apart, how to draw things to it, and how do we do that. So this SWOT analysis, and we're gonna go through, like I said, 25-point what do those things mean is a really great way to do it. And here is why.

So this quote is from "The Art of War," which it's just amazing how this book continues to be such an enduring point for business owners, for military leaders, and other strategists for literally centuries and centuries, that the wisdom within this book is relevant no matter the errand amount of the circumstances. And that goes, like I said, to this idea, or rather this realization in really coming to terms with that no matter how specific your circumstances are, everyone has specific circumstances. And learning how to know which ones cause a change in your strategy and what times you should just follow what everyone else is doing is part of this battle, is part of this concept of coming to terms with your past year and where you really are in your freelance travel writing career.

So as Sun Tzu says in "The Art of War," I've got a lot of sort of breaking out and emphasis on here because it's really important for the work that we're gonna do today. So it says, "So it is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you can win a hundred battles without a single loss." But "If you know yourself but not your opponent, you may win or lose." However, "If you neither know yourself nor your enemy, you will always endanger yourself."

So the trajectory here is basically, obviously, that knowing yourself and your enemies is the best course, right? And so that leads into this SWOT analysis that we're gonna talk about today, which, as I mentioned, is looking both at yourself as well as at external things. But the reason I wanted to include this whole quote here is that it's really important. If you only know yourself, you might get somewhere, okay? If you feel like you really have a solid sense of what you're good at and what you're not good at and you proceed with that, you might do well. But if you don't know the market, if you don't know what editors are looking for, if you don't know what other people are or aren't doing, you can't guarantee that success.

But the next part of that is if you don't even take the time to know where you really stand, then you're pretty much guaranteed to not get anywhere. And it sounds really horrible, and I talk a lot about how, like, most people that I encounter who aren't where they wanna be have this, this, this, and this trait. And those traits aren't set in stone. These are things that you can



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change. But self-awareness and awareness of your standing in terms of your business is really one of the best things in terms of changing where you are. And that doesn't seem like something that's very easy to learn, right?

I feel like, especially as, you know, someone who...my husband is a computer scientist, like, I probably would have been an engineer if I didn't take some writing classes when I was very young, both my parents are engineers, and as somebody who has that background, I think a lot of times people are told that in today's society particularly that your amount of self-awareness is somehow, like, genetically wired, or it's the product of how you were raised, or this or that.

But the thing is that this is something that you can absolutely move the dial on. And you need to. And as we go through the different parts of the SWOT, which one of them is weaknesses, if you feel like you don't have a good understanding of where you are with your abilities or in relation to other things, that's something that you should definitely put in one of your weaknesses.

So let's dive into that. So, like I said, SWOTing allows you to ask, realistically and in a self-aware manner, various questions of yourself and to gain that knowledge. And this is really one of the reasons why I'm dedicating a whole webinar to this today. It's not because it's a fundamental technique that people who go to business school use, or who are in high-level executive positions use, or that it's a very easy little chart that you can draw for yourself. I don't even include the chart in this webinar because I don't like the chart version of the SWOT.

So the whole reason that I'm teaching you SWOT is that it teaches you to be self-aware. That's literally the whole point that we're doing this. It is a mechanism to start to force yourself over time, first by doing it kind of manually or painfully depending on how you view self-analysis, to think about these things. But then it will become more and more natural and automatic.

In fact, when I first started learning about it, when I used to freelance-write for...or go straight, rather, for website about freelance writing for a business professor and we were talking about this, I realized that I had never seen it written down, but a lot of people who write pro and con lists are sort of doing this thing but in a slightly less structured manner. And part of this, you know, realization that I had that it is something that a lot of people do self...sorry, subconsciously is that they can't actually pinpoint where SWOT analysis came from.



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There was somebody who started using it, but he didn't know where it came from. It seems to be something that a lot of us have done anecdotally. And that to me really pinpoints to why it's such a great technique to use. Because it evolved organically, it's very organic for people to use, it is very adaptable, and there are a couple of things that people think of as downsides to this method that we're gonna look at the end and how to mitigate those.

So as we're going through this, the concept that we wanna keep in mind is that this helps us become aware of things. And, again, I talked a bit about why that mattered, but particularly in this context, it helps us become aware of things that will affect the goals that we make for the year ahead. And we wanna know these before they affect those goals so that we can make plans around them.

I read a really great quote tonight, and I literally just have piles of quotes around planning and reviewing now from all this research I've been doing for you guys, but I read a really great one that was, I believe, from Eisenhower, if Eisenhower was also a military in addition to a politician. But I believe it was Eisenhower saying that "Plans in battle are absolutely useless. You basically never use them. But that doesn't mean that you shouldn't plan."

And this goes back to that circumstances thing that I've talked about a lot because I know that this is one of the things that rears up for a lot of people. Like, oh, well, I know I'm supposed to do that, but it doesn't work because my mother is very old and sick. And, you know, I just had to totally can my plans for two weeks to take care of her. But those are things that you can factor into your plans in the first place. So that's really why we wanna do this is we want to make plans that are realistic for you for where you are.

I feel like this is, like, all we're talking with this week. But I didn't just find this graphic out of the blue. I looked for it particularly. And I wanted to touch on this point as I'm talking about circumstances and everything. I think that there has been this, in popular culture, a lot of people misconstrue this concept of being special. And I think it's because a lot of millennials when they were young we're told like, "You're special. You're special." All the time. And a lot of people who aren't millennials joke about, you know, kids getting awards for everything or how everyone gets an award.

And I think that there is now, like, this double-edged sword of your circumstances, or what's special, or what's different about you that's out there. Is it on the one hand people might feel proud of it, but on the other hand there's this general diminishment of being special. And a lot of people say "Don't be a special snowflake." Have any of you guys heard that? Don't be a special snowflake? Like, I have literally been on group tours I've heard that people say this



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to each other. And sometimes it's when somebody has, like, a legitimate medical issue or something like that. They said, "Don't be a special snowflake." They mean don't ask for special treatment.

But here is the business secret, okay? About two, three, maybe four years ago, there were a lot of small business coaches that came out that we're talking all about what is special about you, not this whole thing of, you know, what is the intersection of your passion and your skills, which was a little earlier in terms of business trends, let's say, but what is special about you and super pushing that. Push on all of your eccentricities, push on everything that is specific to you. And then you will only find the customers, the clients, the tribe, whatever word you wanna use, that love all of that that, that get all of that. And then at that point, that is how you have a really successful business.

Well, there's certainly aspects that you need to keep in mind in terms of communicating professionally, and running your business, and treating your business like a business, and all these things. There is a lot of strength to that sentiment that I've seen happen again and again and again, that as people really reach a point of stability in their careers, it's because of embracing their special "snowflakeness," or their special "unicornness," or whatever you want to call it.

And so this is one of these things that I really want you to dig into as we do this SWOT analysis, is that there are, and like I said, we're gonna get really into what each one is, but there are positive things. There's strengths and opportunities. And there's negative things, which are threats and weaknesses. And I think each of you, depending on what is going on in your life and your own personal disposition, are, you know, predisposed to focus on the strengths or focus on the weaknesses. And that in it of itself is going to be a strength or a weakness. You know, probably a weakness because you should be looking at both.

So that is also something to be mindful of as we are going through this. Are you being too glass-half-full or too glass-half-empty. Okay, so I feel like I'm teasing you with all these different letters in SWOT, but I promise we're gonna get to them. As I looked at these slides, I kept trying to move the slides where I talked about what the S, O, W, and T were up, and then I just kept thinking, no, no, no, we need to talk about all these other things first. So before, still before, we get into what the SWOT actually stands for and how you work through each of those letters, I wanna talk about what you use this analysis to analyze.

So as I mentioned way back at the top of the call, I think a lot of people find difficulty in using this type of analysis as small business owners, or as freelancers, or people who are



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currently hobbyists or bloggers who are looking to move into a full-time freelance business because they try and analyze everything. They try to analyze their whole self, their whole business, the whole world of writing, every different type of travel writing, every different opportunity that they could possibly have.

And it doesn't fit. It doesn't fit on one piece of paper. But it also doesn't fit in terms of one goal-setting session. It doesn't fit in terms of one year. It doesn't necessarily fit in terms of one lifetime. But it certainly doesn't fit in terms of one person's circumstances. So before you start walking through the steps of these SWOTs, you need to think about what your objective is gonna be.

So there's a couple other business concepts here that I'm gonna sort of briefly explain, but you don't really need to know too much about them. But a lot of folks talk about the Four Ps, which eventually became the Seven Ps, and the Eight Ps. And they also talked about the Four Cs, and there's actually two different types of Four Cs. So all of that sort of nomenclature doesn't matter, but I've put the ones that are useful for us to consider up here.

And I just want to look at them quickly. Because as I was saying in the email newsletter and the blog post that preceded this call, one of the biggest failings in people who fail to get their freelance business off the ground is not treating it like a business. And so it's really instructive for us, not just to do something like a SWOT analysis, but to know what type of things, you know, "big businesses" or "real businesses" are considering when they do this. And so some of these words feel a little awkward for us as freelance writers, right? Commodity, in particular.

But you'll notice that a lot of these kind of math across, we've got product and commodity, price and cost, communication, which can be like promotion, channel, which can be placed, consumer, which can be people. But I really want you to consider these because you may never have considered them before. You may have never thought about yourself in terms of process. And by yourself, I mean your freelance business. But yourself as a business owner as a freelancer, do you have a process that you follow every single time when you write an article?

I know a lot of people who have blogs may have one in place for how they blog even if it's somewhat, you know, non-codified but something that you just do automatically as you're putting your blog post together. You know, first you take an idea from the list of ideas that you keep for yourself. Then you do some research. Then you write an outline. Then you write





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the post. Then you find the photos. Then you set it up in WordPress. Then do the metadata, etc. Etc.

So you might have a certain process just like you probably go process for how you take a shower. Like, I'm quite conscious of the fact that I do things in an exact same order every day when I'm in the shower, but you might not be. You probably have a process to a lot of things that you do. But do you have a process for the parts of your freelance business where you're struggling? I bet the answer is no. And that is probably one of the weaknesses that you're gonna wanna put on your analysis.

But all these different things that I'm giving you here are different areas that you can focus on in your SWAT, but there are also just things that you might want to consider as you think about your strengths and your weaknesses particularly as well as your opportunities and your threats, okay? So I'm gonna skip past aside. If you guys have any questions about other specific things on here, now is a good time to ask them. We can always come back this slide if you have questions after I move on.

But like I said, there's some particular ones in here that I want you to focus on. And so, product or commodity, I also talked about it a lot as an offering, is one to really think about. Do you know what your product/offering/commodity is? Do you have one? Do you have several or are you just doing whatever work comes your way? Should you do a SWOT analysis just around pursuing a specific type of product commodity offering?

Likewise, with consumer, are you targeting only, and specifically, and effectively, and with a process a specific type of consumer, who may mean editor, who may via trade editor versus a consumer editor, or a national editor versus a regional editor? They have different me if. There are different types of consumers, okay? So, for us, what are some things that might make sense as freelance travel writers to focus our analysis on, okay?

It might be a new initiative. For instance, I've just picked things that I see a lot of you guys talk about to put in here. So it might be whether you wanna move specifically into travel content marketing. You may have been doing freelance blogging before but not necessarily under the umbrella, and the flag, and the ground of travel content marketing. And working with CVBs, say instead of companies or vice versa.

It might be moving in to a different type of content marketing. For instance, if you've been writing blog posts but you want to work into writing, move into writing, white papers, or



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doing social media management, or perhaps take things even further and work on doing overarching strategies almost setting yourself up like a mini digital agency that works with smaller CVBs that don't have the budget to go to an agency.

You might want to take a look at what magazines you're working on or you have taken a look last week. Found that you have been getting a lot of work from a certain type of magazine but it's just not something that interests you. And that there's a different type of magazine that you want to move into but you haven't had success so far or you simply haven't been pitching them. So you want to see what is going on with that. Is it really feasible for you or not?

There might be things that you're already doing, such as if you have a freelance business now, you probably have been over the years acquiring clients in some fashion. So you might wanna do a SWOT analysis on how LinkedIn is working for your business, or going to conferences is working for your business. This is actually something that I've been working on this week as we've been going through, you know, our different expenses for the year and things like this.

I have been thinking, and always think a lot about because they're big investments for us, about what conferences we do. And I even just got an email today about a situation that I need to kind of look into. I'm working on a very special trip tour kind of thing with the Women in Travel Summit where it'll almost be like a mini version of what we do at the Freelance Travel Writing Boot Camp, where in the morning I talk to you about how to come up with ideas, and what magazines you're looking for, and then we go out on a tour, and then we come back in the afternoon and we talk about where to pitch them. And I just got an email that seems like something totally different than what I had in mind. And so now we have to have kind of like a mini SWOT analysis of if it makes sense for us to do it in the manner that they're asking or is that not going to be a good long-term fit for us.

So these are the kind of different things that you can be looking at with your analysis. So like I just mentioned in the case of this Women in Travel Summit opportunity, you can even do this kind of like a pros and cons sheet, like I mentioned earlier, with new opportunities that come in. For you for instance, I have something that I was doing just before I got on the call with you is that I'm actually like a little irate. I'm trying to talk calmly about this.

But I have a full coaching program member who had this company that she had pitched for some blogging work. The company took forever, the owner, to get back to her with the contract. So the contract had been set up with certain dates, and then she just didn't sign it for



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a while. And so, then the freelancer billed her for, you know, the dates in the contract, which she had signed, and is trying to then make up the work to get back on schedule. But now the person won't pay the bill even though it's two bills that are due now, and now is pushing off their meetings and wants to get on the phone and talk about probably, but we can't tell because she won't put an email, changing the terms of what she already agreed to. And it's just like boiling my blood that this woman signed this contract weeks and weeks late, putting this freelancer in this position, and now is trying to change the terms.

So this is the kind of thing where we were figuring out today what makes sense to do here. Like, what are the potential things that could come down the line of acquiescing of this situation, you know, how does it affect her if she just drops his client entirely, and so on and so forth. So these are different things that you can do a SWOT analysis on.

So that's why I really wanted to make it clear up front that this is something that you don't have to do for your whole business. You shouldn't even do it for your whole business. And you can do them throughout the year. But right now as we're working on putting together our goals for the year ahead, it's super important to use these in a resilient manner, to not just use them to evaluate everything, but to use them to evaluate some things that we're thinking about so we can really take into account all of these factors around that issue, or initiative, or whatever it is as we make our plan.

So now we're gonna talk about what S, W, O, and T stand for. But I just wanted to remind you that on the vein of plans, in the two webinars that are coming up in this series, that's where we're gonna get really into the plans for the year ahead. And for those of you that have been following us for the previous two webinars and this one as well, I hope you can see we're really digging in and we're really gonna make some things for the year ahead that you can follow, that you'll have no trouble following, and you can excel with.

So next week, we're gonna talk about how to make goals that fit and that are resilient. And so, like I've talked about earlier with the little special unicorn special snowflake bit, is that your goals really need to be unique to you but you should pursue them in the way that works for everyone. And, like I said, you know, I use the example of somebody whose mother is very ill, that your plans should be resilient for the things they already know about. But it's also important to make them resilient for the things that you don't know about, good or bad.

Somebody who had joined us for the Idea Fest event in the fall has gotten a book that now she's spending all of her time working on to get out as soon as possible because it's quite related to contemporary events. And so things that totally change your plans can be bad or



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good, but it's really important, like I said, with this, I think it's an Eisenhower quote, that you have those plans in place in the first place, that you have thought about all of these factors to go into those plans. Because that's how you make good decisions when your circumstance has changed down the line.

So let's look at what to think about. So in the first two parts of the SWOT analysis, our Strengths and Weaknesses. And the reason those are the first two parts is that you start with internal factors. And then after that, you move to external factors. And I'm not sure why they set it up like this in the first place. You know, obviously SWOT sounds better than OTSW. I don't know what you would even say that as. But I think it's important because once we psychologically start considering what's going on in the greater world, it can give us a lot of sort of jitters about our self, and our standing, and things like that.

So that's one of the reasons why I find it really useful to start with these internal things. And like we said in the last couple slides, to be focusing in on specific things. Because otherwise, it's very easy to not find or to find too many, depending on your disposition, strengths or weaknesses to consider. And the ones that you find might not be relevant to what you actually want to analyze.

So as we launch into this, tell me in the chat box how many of you have, in some work context or another, performed some sort of SWOT analysis in the past.

So, yeah, we've got a lot of nos. A couple people who have. Great. Oh, great, great, great.

So I have an example. Lenora, hello. I have an example coming up in a couple of slides that I'm just gonna skip to first for those of you who have never done this before so that you can kind of get a picture of what this looks like if you've never done it in the past. Because I know that it feels a little obtuse and esoteric as an analytical framework if it's new to you.

So for this fake SWOT that I've done, so, like I said, we've got strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. So for this fake SWOT that I have done, for this fictional travel writer, I didn't even base this on anybody I know even in the most remote sense, okay? So we can talk about it, you know, as nitty-gritty or constructive detail as we want because it's not based on a real person.



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So in this one, I have constructed a writer who has been content marketing for agencies basically. And in this case, I'm using somebody who's been doing it in-house rather than somebody who, perhaps, like some of you, has been doing freelance content marketing for these third-party connectors who, you know, might work with Hilton or Hertz or whoever it is to the contract, and then assign those things out to writers that they might have already in their system. Then they work through a content management platform, and they have various levels of editing to make sure that they provide the thing for the writer.

So those sort of setups as we've talked about a lot before, Contently, Demand Media used to be one of them, Byline is one, those systems can be kind of hard. So in this case, I've chosen somebody who let's just say worked in-house for a content marketing agency that was doing various types of writing for big clients like Priceline, things like that. So this person has decided that she definitely has the chops to quit her job. And she knows how to do that, she knows I get this work done, she knows what the client atmosphere is like because she's seen, you know, the salespeople in her own company in the types of gigs that she gets. And she's decided that she has a really good idea how this works and she wants to go freelance.

But then as she's looking into going freelance, she's decided that she actually wants to write for magazines because that's more of the type of writing that she envisions herself doing if she's gonna leave her well-paid job. And so as she's making this transition, one of the things that she also decides is, because she's not married, or perhaps newly divorced and doesn't have kids, that she wants to move abroad. And she has background, family background in Eastern Europe and has visited several times.

And Montenegro to her is just one of the most beautiful places in the world. And so she's decided that's where she wants to settle, at least temporarily, as she makes this switch. Because the cost of living is very low, and there's a lot there that she feels that she can write about because there aren't really any, you know, writers or big blogs that are covering it. And in fact, in preparation for this move, she's been writing a blog about traveling to Montenegro for about 18 months or so to establish herself in that niche. So that's our setting. That's our fictional character.

So what we're looking at in the SWOT analysis for her is if she can hack it. If it really makes sense for her to set herself a BHAG. And I'm gonna write this down because I'm sure people are gonna ask, but we'll talk to him about this next week. So BHAG is a Big Hairy Audacious Goal. And I cannot tell you, and I don't know if I can feel audacious while speaking, I cannot tell you where this term came from. It's something that a lot of corporate types use, which seems funny thing for a corporate type to say hairy in a normal business



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term. But that's what it is. So she's decided to check out if it makes sense for her to set herself a Big Hairy Audacious Goal around magazine writing or if she needs to just stick with what she knows. So that's the purpose of the SWOT analysis for this fictional writer.

So in her strengths, she knows from her previous experience that she can handle quick deadlines, that she knows how to do the research and get the work done. So she feels like even if she has to take a large amount of lower paying work to get started to make sure that she can make ends meet in the short term just writing for magazines that she can make that work. She feels very comfortable with that, and she knows that that's something that she might have to do. Another thing that I didn't put in here is let's just say that from her previous corporate writing work, she's got a pretty good amount of savings left. So she's putting in here as a strength that she doesn't need to worry about hitting income goals in the short term.

Now this is something that I didn't write on here initially because I've often seen people think of that as a strength that they have money saved up from when they've left their corporate job and instead find themselves just kind of tootling around for a while. Not that they aren't working, but that they are doing a lot of research, and learning, and different types of things, but they're not focusing on bringing in income. So then they get used to kind of living off of their savings. And by the time they get to the point where, you know, they're at the three-month or even the two-month countdown of running out of money, they just don't have an adequate system set up to replace that income in terms of a pipeline of clients.

So I didn't write that on here in the first place. And so it's up to you to consider whether you find that to be a strength or not. But I personally have over the course of working with different people seen that it tends to lead to a sort of I'm-on-a-grown-up-gap-year type of vacation sensibility. And I really like that term grown-up gap year. And I think I'm gonna write it up...write it down. So those are her strengths.

Some of her weaknesses, though, are that she's not accustomed to working from home. And another weakness that I didn't put on here is that she has spent a lot of time in Montenegro but not in a long-term way and always staying in hotels. And in her experience, she can find a reasonable internet but she's not necessarily sure what it's gonna be like in apartments. So one of the weaknesses might be that her internet is spotty or that she doesn't have internet when she goes into rural areas to do.

But not being accustomed to working from home is gonna be a really big weakness for her that I recommend those of you who are in a similarly transitional setting in terms of wanting



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to move out of other full-time occupation into full time travel rating consider. Because this is a big jump. Even people who have been at it for two or three years, unless you've had some kind of intervention in a productivity forcing way, it can be really hard to make the same sort of daily production goals that you would in an office setting for a lot of different reasons.

I've spoken with people lately who use housework as a tool to clear their mind, but then find that it can easily become something that they do to feel productive instead of getting their work done. You know, there's the obvious temptation of Facebook. I used to never ever watch TV during the day because I thought that was, like, the worst thing ever to be working for home and watching TV. And then, ironically, I've started watching TV during the day because it helps me in that afternoon sometime when I would otherwise not get work done because I'm just not very productive at that hour. And so not knowing what your limits, your weaknesses, and strengths specifically about working at home is a type of weakness in it of itself. They can definitely affect your freelance writing.

So another weakness that I have in here for her is that she doesn't have any experience in doing her own sales and marketing. I mentioned that this fictional person in her fictional life had spent several years working in-house at a content digital agency, and so she's been exposed to a lot of these sales and marketing people, and she knows what kind of clients they learn, and for what kind of things. But those aren't gonna be the same to her clients. So there's a single person, as a single freelancer, she's gonna land. So even though she does have exposure to that, she really doesn't have experience, and she doesn't have processes in place.

And then another liability for her, liability is another way to think of your weaknesses or threats. I kind of like the word liability because I feel like it makes it more of, like, you have to do something about this. But another liability for her is that she does have this blog, which she had set up before leaving her job, with the intention for it to set her up as a specialist in the region. But what she's found now is that she just gets a lot of people asking her questions essentially for, like, free travel advice or, like, what do I do here. So she has a certain amount of maintenance that her blog requires even if she's not putting up new posts.

Okay, so that's the stuff that's internal. That's specific to her. So as I had looked at on this other slide, before we jumped ahead, there's internal parts of your SWOT analysis, but then there's external parts. So the external parts are quite different because they don't have anything to do about you or your background and your circumstances. This is a really important line in the sand to draw, that those external things need to really be things about the larger world, the larger market.



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So in this case, you know, she's chosen Montenegro. She's moved there because it's just a really stunning area that is still quite inexpensive for the type of beauty that it has, especially given that Croatia had now become completely overrun to the point where... Dubrovnik is one of the city that's right up there with Venice and Barcelona that have the most issues from tourists' visitation overwhelming the local population. So unlike Croatia, Montenegro also has, you know, coastal as well as these amazing mountain settings, but it's much, much, much cheaper and that makes it a really attractive offering for a lot of different magazines as long as she spins her ideas correctly.

Okay, so that's an opportunity. But I wanted to mention that there's a corresponding threat, which is because this isn't Paris or Venice, it's not something that a magazine, a specific singular magazine, is gonna be able to cover every month. So that means it's gonna be difficult for her perhaps to work regularly with the same writers if her focus on Montenegro is too narrow. And this is something that I've seen people get caught in, not necessarily because they have geographic areas that they write about but they can't write about too regularly, but because they get sick of them over time. And I had this myself with Italy, which seems like it's so big that you wouldn't get sick of it.

But this is one of the reasons why when we talk about diversifying your clients, or diversifying your type of writing, or should you pick a niche, I never recommend choosing just one. Actually I recommend a kind of a battery approach, that you have geographic topics that you specialize in and more topical area of interest things that you specialize in. And that you have three of each so that you give yourself a lot of leeway, and you can kind of get bored of one for a while or find that it's not as interesting to people, and focus on another one. But that you have the ability to jump around and keep yourself interested.

But in this case, she's really established herself about Montenegro. And because it's quiet, let's call it off the beaten path, it's not something that one magazine specifically is going to be able to cover more than once every 18 months at a minimum. So this is actually gonna be a threat for her as well. So it might be easy for her to get one-off gigs, but it might be harder for her to get recurring work, okay?

So, however, one of the things that might mitigate that in the opportunities area here is that there are several new Eastern European magazines, that are airline magazines specifically, that are opening up. So those might be some opportunities for her to write regularly about this area.





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But then a corresponding threat particularly for her to establish herself with these magazines is that there are other writers who have lived in this area longer, who have bigger publication credits, who are already kind of the go-to person for a kind of Travel and Leisure on that area.

So I walk through all this stuff for a fictional person. So I want to just check in with you guys now about questions that you have about this fictional example before I go back through and explain each thing and exactly what you should do. Because that will help me guide what I'm saying about each of these things. But in this fictional example like you've seen, we made really, you know...this is a short list that I have on here, but I'll talk to you more in depth about each of them, but I were really trying to kind of give, not a balanced perspective per se, but to take as many different points as possible into consideration here.

And you'll notice that one of the things that this SWOT for this fictional travel does is it doesn't tell her exactly what to do. And that's really important. Because that's not the purpose of the SWOT. And that's why we're doing SWOT before and hand-in-hand with doing our pre-prep of pulling together the data and looking at the data for our past year. And then next week, we're going to work on our goals. And the following week, we're gonna work on the actual roadmap for the year ahead.

So this SWOT, like I said, it's an awareness mechanism that's part of your plan, an integral part of your plan, but it's not a plan in it of itself. And so it's different in a lot of ways than a pros and cons lists also, because even though we're calling them strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and threats, it's not the same as dos or don'ts, right, or, like, pluses or minuses, right? A weakness can be something that you can work around. It doesn't have to affect you. A strength can also become a liability in a different setting.

So this is more of an inventory that we're doing about the factors that are affecting this decision that we want to make. So I'm not sure if the time delay is caught up but it looks like you might not have any questions about the example that I just gave. So let's go back through and talk about the different things that I took into account on each of these now that you've seen kind of a picture of how this works.

So the Bare Bones Basic, the BBBs of how the SWOT works. So like I said, we start with the internal factors. And I talked about why I prefer to start with the internal factors. I really think it's easier. And I think is a little harder for you to get to them if you do the external factors first.



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So as you start in the external factors, you also do something that psychologically makes it easier to move into this, which is that you start with the plus sides. You start with the positives, okay? And anytime you do any sort of annual review anything, if you look at Chris's annual review, or I've looked at a lot of other people who do similar annual reviews, you'll see that people always start with what went well in the past year. If you've ever been in a class and done some free writing, professors don't, or teachers, writing teachers don't usually start with something super, super negative because it makes it hard for you to be in this brainstorming process. So we start with the strengths.

So another way for the purposes of this discussion to categorize or to call your strengths is the characteristics of your business that give it an advantage. So you can also call this Advantages. And that, I think, can also be an easier framing mechanism for you. So, you know, whether you are somebody who has had a blog in the past so you're very familiar with content management systems, or whether you are somebody perhaps who has a journalism degree and a background, you know, 25 years ago and a completely different type of journalism, these are all things that are either present or past, so either from your circumstances now or your background, that give you some kind of edge.

So they could be knowledge that you have that other people don't. It could be experienced that you have that other people don't. It could also just be some sort of characteristic like you don't sleep very much, you know. So, like, you can work more hours and other people. Or, you know, it could be something like you are very loquacious and you just chat people up easily, which gives you an advantage in terms of getting story ideas when you're traveling. So, again, what you come up with your first strengths depends a lot on what you're choosing to focus on. But these are just some starting points for very basic strengths that you could be bringing to whatever travel writing question you're asking.

Another good thing to put in here is proven successes. So this is the kind of thing where especially if you're somebody who tends to be a little bit down on yourself, if you don't necessarily think that you can do this, think about how many articles you've written in the past, whether it's in a different business setting, or, you know, if you're mid-career writer and you're just feeling like you're not sure that starting to do a bunch of pitching is the right path for you, or if you should go to conferences and make face-to-face connections with editors. You might do two different SWOTs around those two different things and see what you bring to each of those equations.

And so if you do have success whether it is that even though you don't send that many pitches, every single one of them has struck up an ongoing relationship with an editor even



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though you've only sent like 8 pitches in 20 years. That would be something to put in here as a strength, okay?

So a couple of the things they consider. Remember I talked before about how we don't often think of our product, or of our process, or of our customer? These are other things to put in here. So attributes might be that you know your ideal customer very well because you already are that person, or because you have a very big network, or you might have a really good system in terms of coming up with ideas because you're also a photographer who regularly accompanies these tours, these safari tours, okay? So these are different things that can go into your strengths category.

Weaknesses. Okay. This is the harder part to talk with. But I think some of you might, like I said, be in the position where you come up with more weaknesses or more strengths. It's important to look at this. You know, you might be somebody who puts as a strength that you, you know, have gotten "blah blah blah" assignments. But if those "blah blah blah" assignments are all from places that don't pay you and they don't give you a tutorial insight, I'm not sure if it's a strength.

So, for instance, there's somebody, Roy Stephenson, who teaches, I don't know if I wanna say travel writing, but he teaches kind of how to get yourself on press trips. And on his website, he says something, I never remember the number because it changes all the time, where just like he's had 1,100 articles published in 800 magazines. And I was just looking at this and my husband the other day because he have never heard me mention this guy before. And it came up in our business that we're looking at him and trying to make a decision. And he looked at the website. And I was like, "Just look at the website and figure out who he is." And he read this number, and then he stopped for a minute. And he said, "Wait a second. That's a lot of different mag...Is he only writing one article for each magazine? That's not good, is it?"

And so that's the kind of thing where many numbers can go one way or another unless you know exactly what the point of your SWOT is, what objective you are trying to put these items together for. Things can go one way or the other. So it's really important that as you think about your weaknesses, if you're having trouble coming up with them, if you're not having trouble coming up with them...like I said, think about this about your strengths, whichever one you are having a harder time coming up with, think about them very strictly in terms of the objective that you're trying to evaluate.



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So let's look at the external factors. Because I think these are going to be difficult for more of you to come up with especially if you aren't super up on what's going on in the industry. But Kerwin was kind enough to put the link in here earlier. And I will recopy it. So FOLIO is a great place where the folks talked about the magazine industry. There's also...wow, okay, I can't seem to kind of paste it very easily. There's also the several websites about content marketing like I believe it's the Content Marketing Institute. Personally, I really like Contently, which is a content shop, but they have a blog called the Content Marketer. That's a really great place to read about these things if you're more content marketing than magazines.

So if you're stuck on these external factors or if the external factors are coming in but they're very vague, like there's a lot of other travel writers out there with more experience than me, then you want to really dig into that, okay? So like I said, the FOLIO: Magazine website is a good place to look for what's going on the writing. Obviously if you don't already have a subscription to the Travel Magazine Database, it's gonna give you a much better picture about what type of articles, different magazines you're looking for and how you can help serve those needs. The Content Marketer by Contently is a really great place to learn more about the big-picture stuff that's going on in content marketing world.

So as you're evaluating these different opportunities and threats, think big. Think about economic factors. Think about how the travel industry is going in this country or in the region that you write about or in the region where you work. Think about trends. Skift, which is so awkwardly spelled, is a really great place to see about trends in terms of what different CVBs or companies are doing, okay? So for opportunities, these are things that you can exploit, okay? Again, like, kind of edgy word there. But this is something that's kind of lying around that you're not yet using to advantage, right?

So this might be the kind of thing where you think, oh, well, I've gone on all of these trips that I haven't written about yet. That could be an opportunity, right? Or I know all of these people at all of these CVBs because I used to work in PR, or I used to be a magazine editor but I didn't really write when I was there. But that's an opportunity because now I know a lot of other magazine editors that I met at conferences that I can go talk to and pitch.

So there's a lot of different ways to look at opportunities. And like I said, it's important that they're related to your goals, but it's also important to think quite specifically here, okay? So don't think like, oh, well, I wanna do content marketing for tour companies. There's so many tour companies out there. Think, well, that segment is increasing at a rate of 166% a year made of statistic, but there's some real statistics out there that are very similar. Or, you know,



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if you are like our fictional travel writer, you can say, you know, Inc. Global, which is a publishing company, alone has added five new magazines in this area in the last two years.

So threats, likewise, are things that are potential liabilities, potential weaknesses to your endeavor, this objective that we're analyzing that are out there in the world. They're in the environment. So these might have to do with other writers, but it's really important at this threat stage to think bigger, to think really about what is going on a macroeconomic level. And so what I mean by that is, you know, if you are looking at getting into content marketing in terms of pitching yourself as a content marketer, it's really important to think about as a threat those big large agencies, those third-party connection systems that are working with Hertz and Hyatt and how that is affecting your ability to get business, okay?

So this is the type of things that you wanna look at in terms of threats and opportunities. So, for instance, when we did something like this last year for this business as we were getting this business started and setting up what we were going to do in the year ahead, and who we wanted to target and why, we actually ran the big competitive analyses that I commissioned on everyone else that has a similar offering at a similar level. So we looked at a lot of different businesses. So when I talk about being specific, I'm saying things like this.

So we looked at a bunch of other businesses offering this. We looked at every single thing they offer and how much they charge. We look at how regularly they offer it. And we looked at all the features involved with what they offer, if it was, like, a course or a, you know, workshop program or something like that. So you might, to figure out your threats and opportunities, you might take a couple writers who are at a similar level to you, or who have a similar geographic area that they focus on, or a similar area of interest that they focus on, you know, like a Renaissance history or something like that, and run a competitive analysis on these different people.

And what I mean, again, by competitive analysis is who do they write for. How regularly are they writing for those people? What type of topics are they covering? Are they only writing this specific article? Type of article, you know. Are they only writing roundups and not narrative features? And that will help you by seeing what your peers or the people you would like to have as your peers, by seeing what they are doing, then you will get the same kind of self-awareness thing of seeing your strengths and weaknesses in comparison to those other writers.

And that will show you if you have a strength that other people don't seem to have because they're not doing a certain thing. There is an opportunity. Or if you thought that you had a



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certain strength but everybody else is already doing that thing, that might be a threat, okay, to what you thought was gonna be a big moneymaker for you.

So that's why we want to do the SWOT analysis before we get into doing our goals. Because this is where we really pull together, not just that data...last week we pulled data, right? Last week we pulled numbers. We thought about some of the reasons why things might be happening. But now we're pulling together the factors that will affect the plans that we're gonna make for the year head.

So we already went through this, the fictional travel writer example. If you guys have some questions about this or for yourself or some different focuses that you might be thinking of doing a SWOT and you're not sure if they make sense, let me know because we've gone a little bit over. So I want to get to wrapping up the call. But please let me know if you have questions.

As we're wrapping up, I mentioned that I wanted to touch on some weaknesses that this method has. And I alluded to it a little bit earlier when I said you'll notice that this SWOT, this fictional SWOT that I did for this writer who is moving to Montenegro, that it didn't tell us what she should do, right? It didn't make a clear plan, the SWOT itself, because that's not what it's supposed to do. SWOT is awareness mechanism. But part of that awareness is knowing that just because we're doing the subtle one, you know, I guess one-dimensional, what-have-you, two-dimensional sheet of paper on this plane, that doesn't mean that everything is equal. It doesn't mean that each strengths is necessarily equally strong or has an equal weight in terms of your decision-making.

So what I really like to do is to take two or three passes at your list. So those of you who are listening at home and those of you who are here this week, please pick something that you think you wanna do for the year ahead. And do this swap before the next call because it's going to influence what we're gonna talk about next week, okay? So pick an objective, pick something that you wanna do, change, think about, evaluate whether you should do in the next year. Make a great big SWOT about it. Make your four lists, okay? And then put it aside, okay?

And then some time before our next webinar, go through, look at each of the things and circle the ones that you really think are more important. Make sure you have at least one from all the different categories, okay? So strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Circle at least one that you think is most important from each category up to, say three, okay? And



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then what's gonna happen is that next week as we're talking about what your goals, what your rallying cries for the next year should be, after you do that, you're gonna go back and look at the items that you picked. And that way you're gonna have your goal that you work on. And then you're gonna see the factors that you need to consider.

And then as we move into the last week's webinar in this series, we're making really specific, actionable, and sustainable, that's the important thing, plans about how to move ahead. You're gonna be aware of these factors that you need to consider that you can plan in advance about how to avoid them, mitigate them, or just change your plans so that liabilities that you foresaw aren't actually gonna be liabilities at all, okay?

So I've mentioned this already, but in the next couple weeks, we're gonna talk, next week specifically, is about goals, okay? This is about setting your goals for the year ahead. But goals are separate than implementation. And it's really important and useful to think about those two things in separate mindsets in separate minutes, okay? And so we're gonna have one webinar where we talk really about what your goal should be, about how to make sustainable goals that are like really Teflon to all the things that can come up in your business.

But then after that, when we talk about actually mapping out your goals on a month-to-month, or week-to-week, or quarter-to-quarter level, we're gonna have a webinar where I work through them with various ones of you who wanna step up to the plate and get your plans for the year ahead workshop.

So thank you guys all so much for joining me, and I'll talk to you more later.