



Section  
**1**

---

## ANALYSING YOUR ENVIRONMENT: two models

---

The ability to tailor your project to the culture and environment you operate in can be a factor in its success.

Taking time to look at your operating environment, and deciding how to tailor your communications to the particular challenges and opportunities it presents for your project, is important. The tools here will help structure and record that thinking.

**Some principles to guide this work:**

- Try to keep this analysis short and efficient.
- It is best done as a group.
- Try to involve those with the best knowledge of the political, economic, social and technological environments. Gather ideas by email/separate meetings in advance and feed into the brainstorm if necessary.
- Do not let a lack of data or evidence hold back the development of a plan. Use your experience and anecdotal knowledge, if that is all you have available.
- The tools here are often used in tandem but fulfil two different purposes. It is generally recommended that a PEST is done before a SWOT.

## The **PEST** tool

PEST stands for Political, Environmental, Socio-cultural and Technological. It is used to understand the environment your project will exist and operate in.

By understanding the environment, and the particular challenges and opportunities it presents, you can create a communications plan that takes account of, and even aligns with, the changes affecting your potential audiences.

### How to use the **PEST** tool:

- 1** Brainstorm, using the prompts in the PEST model in this section, the relevant external factors that may affect your project.
- 2** Do any of these factors have implications for when and how you might plan your communications?
- 3** Note any conclusions that will actively influence or impact on your communications plan.

<p><b>POLITICAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current or planned legislation (UK/EU)</li> <li>Regulatory or professional body interests</li> <li>Regulation or deregulation trends</li> <li>Government term/change</li> <li>Party policies or manifestos</li> <li>Lobbying/pressure group</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>P</b></p>	<p><b>ECONOMIC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic economic situation/trends</li> <li>Disposable income/distribution</li> <li>Growth, inflation, interest rates</li> <li>Globalisation trends</li> <li>Unemployment/labour costs/labour trends</li> <li>Licensing, patent or trading issues</li> <li>Specific health sector issues</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>E</b></p>
<p><b>SOCIAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lifestyle trends</li> <li>Demographics</li> <li>Language (if international market)</li> <li>Media attitudes</li> <li>Consumer patterns</li> <li>Influencers and role models</li> <li>Ethnic or religious factors</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>S</b></p>	<p><b>TECHNOLOGICAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerging technologies</li> <li>Replacement technologies/solutions</li> <li>Information/communication platforms</li> <li>Data protection</li> <li>Impact of technology on costs</li> <li>Research and development activity</li> <li>Commissioner buying</li> <li>Mechanisms/technology</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>T</b></p>

**The SWOT tool**

The SWOT tool (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) helps to define and differentiate your project. This will help when you start to develop your key messages. It can also help identify any communications risks that will need to be considered and managed at the outset of a project.

**How to use the SWOT analysis tool:**

- 1** Brainstorm, using the prompts in the SWOT model in this section, the relative strengths and weaknesses of your project and organisation in relation to it.
- 2** Brainstorm the opportunities and threats apparent in this work.
- 3** Consider how you will maximise the opportunities and minimise the threats in your communications strategy.
- 4** Note any conclusions that will actively influence and impact on your communications plan.

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <p>What is new, different, better?          Resources, assets, people, capabilities          Experience, knowledge, data          Reputation/perception of organisation/department          Your reach/convening power          Offer of accreditations/qualifications          Level of innovation</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>S</b></p>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <p>Existing levels of interest or demand          Enough that is new, different, better?          Reputation/perception of organisation/department          Access to skills/resource to deliver          Confidence in quality of position/offer or content          Crowded marketplace</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>W</b></p>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <p>How this relates to sector or lifestyle trends          Political environment (eg changes in government policy)          Positioning organisation in a new market          New technology, development, innovation          Partnerships          Seasonal influences          Competitor vulnerability</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>O</b></p>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <p>Political or environmental threats          Possibility of alienating stakeholder or audience          Competitors          Gaps in capability or resource to deliver          Economy – domestic and international          Internal buy-in          Market demand or a crowded marketplace</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>T</b></p>



---

## ANALYSING YOUR ENVIRONMENT: two models

---



---

### Writing into your communications strategy

---

- Once you have completed the analysis phase, be sure to record the key findings in your [communications strategy](#).
- Edit your long list of factors from the PEST and SWOT and prioritise them so that you can concentrate on the most significant ones.
- Ensure that key insights and their implications are carried forward into your communications strategy.