

**SWOT Analysis for Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)**

Never Too Late To Live (NTL2L)

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OGL355: Leading Organizational Innovation and Change

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## **SWOT Analysis for Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)**

There are a multitude of industry analyses that ought to be conducted on an organization when analyzing its current position and future potential. In this paper, we will go in depth to examine both internal and external aspects of MAPS to determine which strategies the organization should employ. Internally, we will be assessing MAPS on its strengths and weaknesses while the external analysis will focus on opportunities and threats. This method, known as a SWOT analysis, is a technique to strategically plan around an organization's best advantages. This analysis will delve into strengths such as MAPS' position as a pioneer in the psychedelics industry as well as their solid scientific backing through their years of research and how these strengths create opportunities for the loosening of current regulations regarding psychedelic treatments. Other notable potential opportunities include the societal acceptance of these treatments as alternative trauma care and the ability to expand this form of treatment to other mental health issues that currently lack comprehensive care. MAPS is not without weaknesses, however, and does suffer considerably as its infrastructure is not adequate for rapid scale growth nor does it have a large sample pool from which to hire staff from as more members are deemed necessary. These internal shortcomings coupled with the external threats of for-profit organizations taking over as legal circumstances change could negatively impact MAPS as it continues to move forward in its plight to discover better treatment options for patients. The conclusions of this research will be compiled into an easily digestible diagram with a further explanation of each SWOT section.

## SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis for MAPS sheds light on the internal and external obstacles faced by the organization as well as the resources at their disposal to potentially overcome them and improve upon their current environmental position. While there are some internal issues surrounding human resources, the organization is well respected within its field and is able to financially support itself through private donations. Externally, the organization has seemingly limitless opportunities to expand from its current research based model into one that satisfies an untapped market and unfulfilled consumer needs. The set back they face is the legality of psychedelics in American society and the threat of pharmaceutical companies taking over once legality is no longer an issue. This analysis helps MAPS better gauge their position within the psychedelic mental healthcare industry as a non-profit organization.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Involved and respected in the community</li> <li>● Strong fundraising to support their work</li> <li>● Strong scientific based resources available</li> <li>● Brand name recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Entire organization is built on an illegal industry</li> <li>● Strained for staff resources with experience</li> <li>● Limited infrastructure to scale for growth demand</li> <li>● Bridging diversity and reciprocity in hiring</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wide spectrum of mental health issues that can be treated with psychedelic therapy</li> <li>● Societal acceptance of psychedelic therapeutic modalities for mental health treatment</li> <li>● Loosening current regulations for legalization</li> <li>● Serve as an accrediting body for training programs in the field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Not currently legal in the United States</li> <li>● Large pharmaceutical companies with limitless resources</li> <li>● Educational institutions promoting traditional treatments</li> <li>● Affordability of treatment covered by insurance and liability</li> </ul>

## **Internal Strengths**

Strengths in a company are internal characteristics that give them a competitive advantage. MAPS has a few key strengths that set them apart from other competitors. One key strength is that they are involved and respected in the psychedelic community. One example of this is through their creation and work with the Zendo Project. The Zendo Project provides support at festivals and beyond for those who have undergone difficult or traumatic psychedelic experiences (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies [MAPS], 2020). Another strength MAPS has currently is their strong fundraising base. MAPS recently published that they reached their goal of 30 million dollars in donations in 6 months. This money will fund the remainder of the research needed to obtain the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD (MAPS, 2020). The MAPS website is a clear example of well organized research and resources offering clearly labeled sections with information on the research they have done as well as published articles on relevant topics. This level of organization makes it easy for donors to view MAPS research and feel confident in their support. Because MAPS is a pioneer in the field of psychedelic research and one of only a few organizations of its kind, their strong brand recognition is a valuable strength of MAPS.

## **Internal Weaknesses**

The legal status of all the psychedelics that are currently undergoing research at MAPS and their affiliated research partners still remain on the Schedule 1 drug list with no current medical use and high potential for abuse per the DEA website. The internal

weakness associated with the status of these substances is the fact that MAPS entire organization focuses on work that doesn't have a legal area to divert their focus in the event that regulations never change. Some of the other internal weaknesses of the MAPS organization all stem from the same issue of their size as it relates to the needs of the broader community. Beginning with the limitations of staff resources, there is just simply too much work and not enough time. This brings us to the next weakness which is the infrastructure for scaling growth quickly. Given the demand for talent and subject matter expertise in this niche market, MAPS has to be strategic in how they plan to expand given the volatility of this type of research and treatment. Lastly, reciprocity and bridging the wisdom of where these forms of healing began with the potential for future commercialization is a tough topic to adequately respond to. The professional demands of the jobs at MAPS won't always align with the skills of those who have indigenous roots in this work. There is an extensive need for strong business, process, and operational skills at MAPS and building reciprocity is a hot topic on everyone's radar inside the organization.

### **External Opportunities**

MAPS has several external opportunities due to the need for alternative health care medicines. There is an incredible unfilled customer need for those who require non-traditional mental health care and an increased acceptance within society for alternative methods to be legalized. Until regulations are loosened to legalize therapeutic modalities for mental health care, there will continue to be an opportunity in

this untapped market. MAPS also has an opportunity to leverage on one of its strengths which is their brand name recognition. This could help them lead the way in serving as the International Coaching Federation (ICF) equivalent whose focus is on creating “an expert understanding of the regulatory process” (ICF, 2019). By capitalizing on their name brand strength, they can become an accrediting body that oversees the requirements of psychedelic assisted training programs for other research institutions.

### **External Threats**

Psychedelic research has been difficult to conduct due to the illegal nature of the substances being studied. Although exceptions have been made, the United States government and federal enforcement agencies have a job to do. This entails enforcing the strict laws surrounding the possession and use of schedule 1 substances. "Through perseverance and patience, MAPS has obtained approval from government regulatory agencies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to conduct research on Schedule 1 substances” ([MAPS.org](https://www.maps.org)). As the laws and attitudes have changed in regards to medical and recreational marijuana, MAPS hopes to gain similar acceptance as attitudes evolve. They are determined to be a substantial contributor to the field of psychedelic research and conduct breakthrough clinical trials using psychedelic prescription medication.

A major threat for MAPS is the large pharmaceutical companies entering the psychedelic therapy space. MAPS funds its operations with private donations and does not have the billion dollar market cap that the industry giants have. The threat of losing market share could come to fruition if companies like Pfizer decided to enter the space.

They have a large enough budget to sustain losses that MAPS may not be able to sustain. The majority of pharmaceutical companies will not have interest entering into research on federally illegal compounds. Many of these companies receive federal funding that permits them from studying illicit substances in most cases.

Traditional medical professionals are trained by institutions backed by scientific fact and decades of proven effective methods. These institutions are often publicly funded and associated with a conservative governing board. These institutions are bound to the legal limits of the law because of the establishment they identify with. MAPS is at the forefront of alternative treatments that are still in their infancy. Despite the high percentage success rates, there is a need to prove treatments dependable, sustainable, consistent, and replicable.

Unless the federal government changes its classification of MDMA, THC, and LSD, it is unlikely that insurance companies will cover the financial costs associated with treatment. Medical marijuana requires a prescription from a licensed physician in many states where it is still not legal for recreational use. It also requires that physicians provide follow up care to these patients. The medical marijuana model has demonstrated how expensive alternative treatments can be. Even though there are endless amounts of positive data and documented successful trials, insurance companies refuse to cover this medication because of its federally illegal status.

### **Conclusion**

Our SWOT analysis of MAPS includes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and the threats presented within our organization. The module created a clearer picture of

MAP's current environmental position. MAPS has many strengths and has done an excellent job of creating valuable relationships in the psychotherapy and psychedelic industry within the United States, Europe and Canada. They continue to be highly respected due to the in-depth, thorough and scientific based research they have completed for many years.

Overall, MAPS has many strengths and weaknesses to work on internally to ensure their research, development and education on MDMA-assisted psychotherapy can continue to heal the psychological and emotional damage caused by trauma. Externally, there are threats and many opportunities for this organization to become successful in society and hopefully to legalize this unconventional treatment in the United States.

APPROVAL: (Sign off with initials by 11:59pm AZ time 9/10/2020)				
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