How to Write an ACP

The first step in any planning process, whether for business or personal is a completed Analysis of Current Position (ACP). It is a position paper on almost any topic of immediate interest. An individual might write a personal ACP to help them make life decisions. In the business environment, all parties involved in carrying out an eventual plan should offer their analysis of the facts as they interpret them. A consolidated version of the ACP may be created that can be ratified by all, leading to the next step: creating a Plan.

The key idea to remember is that the ACP is a prose ANALYSIS of facts, not a mere listing of facts. It is an ANALYSIS, which ultimately conveys your "position". It doesn't really make any recommendations. That doesn't mean it won’t present observations and solutions, it just won’t be making any further action plans for those opportunities. The (summarized) process is as follows:

- write (on separate pieces of paper) four lists: Strengths, Weaknesses, Voids and Opportunities in regards to whatever you are analyzing. This is the Trial Balance. Topic ideas are below.
- Do not be concerned about the accuracy of your categorizations, as the prose version will take care of any inaccuracies, as you will soon see.
- put all in clear view and let your eyes and thoughts travel from one list and topic to another.
- outline your key thoughts
- write the first draft of the ACP. As the name implies, you are writing an analysis of "facts" in the Trial Balance.
- finalize the prose ACP and optionally attach your Trial Balance

The process you are about to undertake is not a short one. You should probably budget a number of hours. There is only one measure as to the adequacy of your ACP --- does the reader understand the writer’s position? With this as a measurement standard, you can see how an ACP can be written on almost any subject.

Feel free to make a stab at it, and remember the first draft will probably not be perfect. My first sure wasn't. Length is not important, as you'll see very effective ACP's less than one page; some take several pages to present your position.

If you want, you can send your first draft to me. I will read it, and we can discuss any questions you have. Then you can perfect it.
TOPIC IDEAS for the Trial Balance:

Business:

- Products
- Markets
- Competitive Position
- Marketing Intelligence
  - Customer Profile
  - Needs and Desires
    - Product
    - Service
    - Communications
    - Distribution
    - Sales Coverage
    - Human Resources
    - Training

Personal:

- Social
- Career
- Financial
- Physical
- Mental
- Communication Skills
- Family