

Force Field Analysis: A practical planning tool

Force field analysis is social science tool that provides a framework for looking at the factors (*forces*) that influence a situation or decision. It considers forces that are either driving movement toward a goal (helping forces) or blocking movement toward a goal (hindering forces).

By carrying out the analysis you can plan to strengthen the forces supporting a decision, and reduce the impact of opposition to it.

Methodology

- Describe your proposed change in the middle
- List all driving forces (factors that will support and facilitate change) in the left hand column
- List all restraining forces (factors that will act against and inhibit successful change) in the right hand column
- Rate each force, scoring it between 1 (weak) and 5 (strong)
- Then total all the scores for driving forces and all the scores for restraining forces

Once you have carried out an analysis, you can decide whether the change is viable. Where you have already decided to carry out a change project or it is mandatory, Force Field Analysis can help you to work out how to improve its probability of success. Here you have two choices:

- To reduce the strength of the restraining forces
- To increase the driving forces

Often the most effective solution is to concentrate on increasing the driving forces. As a consequence, the restraining forces are often affected.

It's important to note that the rating of the restraining force may increase as you seek to increase the driving force - but this should be off-set overall. For example, training staff may increase the restraining factor of cost by 1, but could eliminate fear of technology reduce fear by 2.

“An issue is held in balance by the interaction of two opposing sets of forces – those seeking to promote change (driving forces) and those attempting to maintain the status quo (restraining forces)” Kurt Lewin (founder of Force Field Analysis)

