

Force Field Analysis

A Tool for Understanding the Forces that *Drive* and the Forces that *Restrain* Change

Principles

Force field analysis is generally used to analyze the forces that tend to keep a situation in an unchanging state, balanced between equal driving and restraining forces. Kurt Lewin developed the technique in the mid-twentieth century. The technique is best used when a group seems to be stuck, but the situation is unsatisfactory. Equilibrium between driving and restraining forces can be changed in three ways:

- By increasing the number or strength of driving forces
- By decreasing the number or strength of restraining forces, or
- By turning a restraining force into a driving force

Generally it is more productive to reduce or convert restraining forces than it is to strengthen driving forces. Strengthening drivers without reducing restraints can cause destructive stress on the system.

Steps

1. Draw a diagram with a vertical line down the middle representing the problem condition. Draw arrows from the left and the right pointing toward the vertical line. (See attached example.)
2. Brainstorm forces that drive change and forces that restrain change.
 - Say whatever comes to mind without editing.
 - Entire group must refrain from passing judgment about any of the ideas.
3. Put driving forces next to the arrows on the left of the problem and restraining forces on the right.
4. Optional - Rate the relative strength of the forces using a scale. (For example, use a scale of one to five with one being a weak force and five a strong one.)
5. Optional - Total the strength of driving and restraining forces to check for equilibrium.
6. Identify those forces that the group could have the biggest impact on.
7. Develop strategies for changing the state of equilibrium.

References

Gottlieb, M.R. (2003). *Managing Group Process*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.



Team Tools #1



<u>Question or Action:</u>	
Driving Forces →	← Restraining Forces
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Example

<u>Question or Action:</u>		Attend facilitator training
Driving Forces	→	← Restraining Forces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to build better skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time to devote to training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to learn by doing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another appointment on training date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to learn in a group setting 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to travel 150 miles to training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client values my role/skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
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