# Force Field Analysis

**Description:**

Force Field Analysis is a useful technique for looking at all the forces for (i.e. driving forces) and against (i.e. restraining forces) the decision or plan. The technique enables an assessment of the importance of each force or factor to determine whether a plan is worth implementing and the likelihood of it succeeding. Force Field analysis is a specialised method for weighing up the pros and cons of a plan or decision.

Force Field analysis is based on the premise that moving from the current position in a positive direction, requires the **driving forces** to be stronger than the **restraining forces**. If the driving forces and restraining forces are equal, they will cancel each other out, the current state will persist and no change will occur (i.e. the point of equilibrium). Positive change occurs as a result of one of three movements in the forces:

- ➔ A decrease in the **restraining forces**
- ➔ An increase in the **driving forces**
- ➔ A combination of the two

**Driving Forces:**

Driving forces are those forces affecting a situation that are pushing in a particular direction; they tend to initiate a change and keep it going. In terms of improving productivity in a work group, pressure from a supervisor, incentive earnings and competition may be examples of driving forces.

**Restraining Forces:**

Restraining forces are forces acting to restrain or decrease the driving forces. Apathy, hostility, and poor maintenance of equipment may be examples of restraining forces against increased productivity.

Force Field Analysis is a simple, but powerful tool that can be used either alone or as part of a team planning session.

# Force Field Analysis

To carry out a Force Field analysis, follow the steps described below:

| Force Field Analysis | |
|---|---|
| **Step 1: Define the nature of the problem or change to be evaluated** | |
| | |
| **Step 2: Establish the current position ( where are you now?)** | |
| | |
| **Step 3: Define the desired end result (where do you want to get to?)** | |
| | |
| **Step 4: Draw a diagram showing the forces for and against change (e.g. 1 = weak and 5 = strong)** | |
| **Driving Forces** | **Restraining Forces** |
| | |
| **Step 5: List the actions that can be taken to maximise the driving forces and minimise the restraining forces** | |
| | |

A Force Field Analysis might look something like the following example where there is a problem with stock control requiring some changes to systems and procedures:



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| Force Field Analysis | |
|---|---|
| **Step 1: Define the nature of the problem or change to be evaluated** | |
| Poor stock control resulting delays in production as key items are often out of stock | |
| **Step 2: Establish the current position ( where are you now?)** | |
| Regular stoppages in production due to key items being out of stock and higher purchase costs for late ordering | |
| **Step 3: Define the desired end result (where do you want to get to?)** | |
| Improved management of stock levels with suitable buffer stock levels | |
| **Step 4: Draw a diagram showing the forces for and against change (e.g. 1 = weak and 5 = strong)** | |
| **Driving Forces** | **Restraining Forces** |
| (5) Lower production costs<br>(4) Less frustration for workers<br>(5) Meeting customer deadlines<br>(5) Less down time/overtime<br>(3) Lower purchase/delivery charges<br><br>**Total driving force = 22** | (4) Cost of holding buffer stock<br>(3) Changes to re-ordering procedures<br>(4) Less overtime for staff<br><br>**Total restraining force = 11** |
| **Step 5: List the actions that can be taken to maximise the driving forces and minimise the restraining forces** | |
| 1. Meet with Warehouse Manager to discuss changing stock ordering procedures<br>2. Calculate buffer stock levels and cost of holding additional stock<br>3. Meet with suppliers to negotiate new discount policy and delivery arrangements<br>4. Communicate change in systems to warehouse and production teams<br>5. Re-organise the warehouse racking systems<br>6. Monitor and evaluate impact of the changes | |

**References:**

Lewin K, (1951), Field Theory in Social Science, New York, Harper Row