



## Force Field Analysis

### Analysing the Pressures For and Against Change

When you're making difficult or challenging change, it can be useful to analyse the factors supporting and those acting as barriers to the desired change, and considering each in order to increase your chances of success.

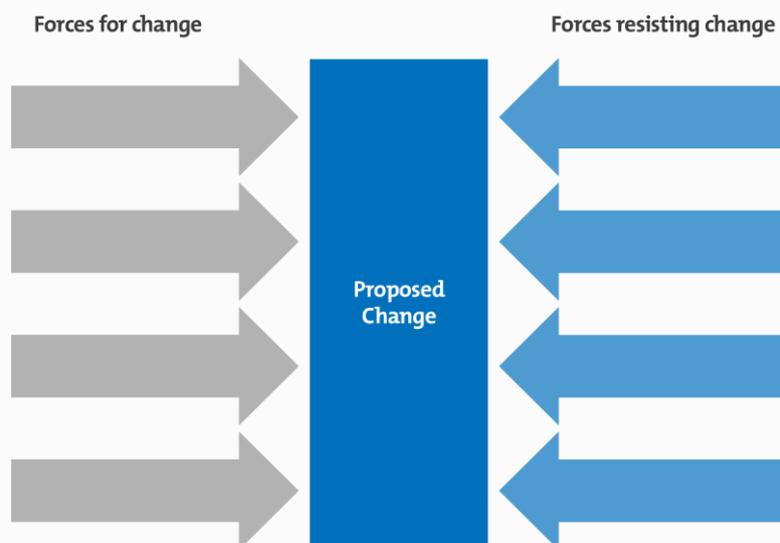
Force Field Analysis is one technique which can help with that analysis and this worksheet explores what it is and how you can use it.

### About the Tool

Force Field Analysis was created by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. Lewin originally used it in his work as a social psychologist. Today, however, it is also used in business, to analyse barriers to change.

The idea behind Force Field Analysis is that situations are maintained by an equilibrium between forces that drive change and others that resist change, as shown in figure 1, below. For change to happen, the driving forces must be strengthened and the resisting forces weakened.

**Figure 1 – Force Field Analysis**



### How to Use the Tool

To carry out a Force Field Analysis, use a blank sheet of paper or a whiteboard and follow these five steps. It's important to identify as many of the factors that will influence the change as you can. Where appropriate, involve other people, such as team members or experts in your organisation.

### **Step 1: Describe Your Plan or Proposal for Change**

Define your goal or vision for change, and write it down in a box in the middle of the page.

### **Step 2: Identify forces for change**

Consider the kind of forces that are driving change. These can be internal or external.

**Internal** drivers could include:

- Budget cuts
- Declining team morale
- A need to increase service offer

**External** drivers could include:

- A volatile, uncertain operating environment
- Disruptive technologies
- Changing demographic trends

The following questions may help you to identify forces that will influence the change:

- What benefit will the change deliver?
- Who supports the change? Who is against it? Why?
- Do you have the resources to make the change work?
- What costs and risks are involved?
- What business processes will be affected?

When you've identified the forces that are driving change, add them to the left-hand side of your Force Field Analysis.

### **Step 3: Identify Forces against Change**

Now brainstorm the forces that resist or are unfavorable to change.

Internal resistors and restrainers could include:

- Manager expectations unknown.
- Existing organizational structures.
- "That's not how we do it here" attitudes.
- Estates challenges

External factors might be:

- Existing commitments to partner organizations.
- Government legislation.
- Obligations toward your students.

Use the same questions to prompt your thinking. Now add the forces against change to the right-hand side of your Force Field Analysis.

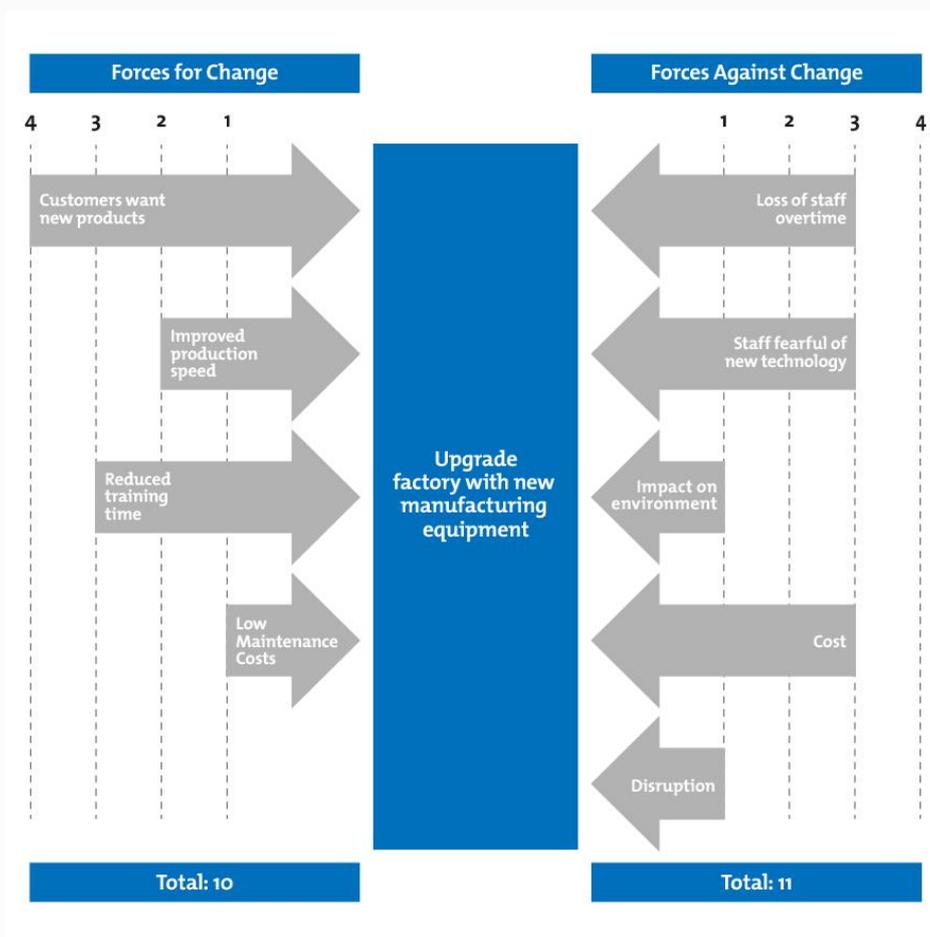
### **Step 4: Assign Scores**

Next, score each force, from, say, one (weak) to five (strong), according to the degree of influence each one has on the plan, and then add up the scores for each side (for and against). If you have a larger group of people, you can ask them to each tick their top 3 or 5 forces for change and against change.

For a visual representation of the influence that each force has, draw arrows around them. Use bigger arrows for the forces that will have a greater influence on the change, and smaller arrows for forces that will have a weaker influence.

By now, your Force Field Analysis should look something like the example in figure 2, below.

**Figure 2 – Example Force Field Analysis**



**Step 5: Analyse and Apply**

Now that you've done your Force Field Analysis you can use it to think about which supportive forces you can strengthen and which opposing or resisting forces you can weaken, and how to make the change more successful. Bear in mind that, while Force Field Analysis helps you to understand the impact of different factors on your change, it can be subjective.

Some factors, where you need absolute certainty in order to make a good decision, don't fit well with this approach. Considerations that affect people's health and safety, for example, aren't suited to Force Field Analysis. Be sure to deal with these appropriately, whatever the outcome of your analysis.

Don't underestimate how much work a Force Field Analysis can involve. We've used a simple example here, but there will be many factors that you'll need to consider for complex decisions and changes. If in doubt, pick one barrier to change per discussion and focus the conversation on that issue, rather than trying to deal with all the barriers to change at once.